

# WORKERS VOICE

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## Bosnian agony is already

# The Result of Imperialist Intervention



The pressure for military intervention in Bosnia is building up. The daily reports of the desperate situation in Srebrenica, a town about the size of a Yorkshire pit village, all add up to pressure on the Western states for military intervention. Morons like Joe Rogaly in the *Financial Times* have thrown petrol on the fire by praising Thatcher's calls to arm the Bosnians and attack the Serbs.

*Her intervention this week has been magnificent... For the former prime minister is right. We must not accept that no military counterforce can be deployed when a gang of warriors, acting in the name of national identity, commits every atrocity, every slaughter, in order to gain lebensraum on European soil. If we do, we are nothing.*

This is of course nonsense. Thatcher is quite clear in her aim. She has the somewhat confused

idea that the Croatian leader Tudjman is a free enterprise capitalist in her image (this ignores his past as a general in the Yugoslav army and communist bureaucrat). To her simple mind the Serbs are simply unreconstructed communists, and thus she is still fighting the Cold War (no wonder the Tories pensioned her off! No wonder Defence Secretary Rifkind called her antics "nonsense"). But behind all the talk of intervention and all the agonising over the fate has **already** been massive intervention. This war is a product of interference by the "international community" in the affairs of ex-Yugoslavia.

When the crisis in Yugoslavia began the German bourgeoisie had no problems about its policy. Feeling flush from the re-unification with the East they aimed reestablish a German-

dominated MittelEuropa which would allow them to dominate Eastern Europe. The German and Austrian bourgeoisies played a major role in starting the bloodbath in ex-Yugoslavia by their insistence that the UN and the EC recognise the independence of Croatia, Slovenia and then Bosnia. Given the green light Tudjman's HDZ militia started to sack and disenfranchise Serbs who found themselves in the new Croatia. This in turn sparked off Serbian fears of the by Ante Pavic's para-military Ustashe. It was this that led to the fighting in Eastern Croatia two years ago. At that time 200,000 Serbs demonstrated against the war-mongering Serbian government of Milosevic and even came close to overthrowing it. But Milosevic survived because he had at this time a more powerful godfather - the USA.

### The USA and the New World Order

When Bush announced (on the eve of the war against Iraq) the "New World Order" the stress was definitely on the "order" part. Having won the Cold War the USA intended to enjoy it. To ensure that it can it has not been slow to intervene militarily to defend its interests. We saw this in Panama, in Somalia and most dramatically in the Gulf. So what is so different about ex-Yugoslavia?

The answer is not simple since the US State Department's policies have shifted with each new turn of the ex-Yugoslav conflict. What is clear above all is that "the new world order" has turned out to be more of a problem than the triumphalism of the Bush regime tried to make out. The US may have won the Cold War but the collapse of the USSR has simply created a new range of problems for imperialism.

### Wounded Cold Warrior?

The first of these is that the massive military expenditure of the Cold War years has severely damaged the US economy. Arms spending had jumped from 5% to 7% of the Federal Budget in Reagan's first two years in office. By 1990 the US total defence budget was 50% higher than it had been in 1980. This was an even more dramatic transformation when you consider that for the previous thirty years arms spending as a percentage of GDP had tended to go down. The consequences of this for the trade and budget deficits were, and are, dramatic. The USA had a 2% surplus on trade in 1980 but a 3% deficit by 1986 and Germany overtook the US as a trading nation in 1987 when the US share of exports fell to less than a fifth of the world total.

And the budget deficit had to be paid for by government borrowing (since Reagan and Bush refused to raise taxes). US government

### Whose Side are the Unions On?

## The Golden Rules of Union "Action"

Every time there is a strike the bosses quickly point out two things — that the strike isn't working and that it's hurting innocent members of the public. The fact that these two messages contradict each other doesn't seem to matter, they're just broadcast anyway. As a result we are inevitably treated to a feast of propaganda which at some stage usually includes an assortment of dreadful individuals, carefully selected for their reactionary views and passed off as "the public". They are usually paraded onto our TV screens to tell us the strike is a failure and that workers should stop being so selfish and should get back to normality, and to work, as quickly as possible.

And so it is with the recent one day stoppages by miners and railway workers. Strikers know they will have to contend with a hostile media, but there is a force which is far more dangerous and destructive, and which is much closer to home. It is their own unions, and the recent disputes are a shining example of the sabotaging nature of trades unionism today.

The first golden rule of trades unionism is: try not to do anything. After all, strike action could be costly, you might have to pay out strike pay and you could face legal actions. Worse still, a strike may hurt your industry and so the very survival of the union itself. Both the RMT and the NUM are good at not defending their

members. Had the RMT been serious about defending jobs they would have fought to protect the 8000 workers whose jobs have gone since last year. And if the NUM is the great defender of workers the left says it is, why has it waited all these months before calling for any actions? Last October's rally in support of miners ended to choruses of "Jerusalem", not calls for class action. Like other unions, the RMT acted only when forced to do so by the militant mood of its membership. The RMT doesn't want to lose face with railway workers. It doesn't want to lose any of the £500,000 it gets in subs every month either.

The second golden rule of trades unionism is: if you have to do something, make sure it's not very much. The aim of the game is to damage your industry as little as possible, and get your workers back to work as fast as you can. So Jimmy Knapp has been breaking his back to reach a speedy solution and he can't understand why the bosses aren't as eager as he is to end the dispute. Maybe the rail bosses aren't exactly quaking in their boots at the effect of a one-day strike. After all, they do have the RMT to ensure they're not badly hit. The RMT has kindly chosen Fridays on which to have its strikes so as to cause as little inconvenience as possible. Or, as *The Guardian* put it on 7th April 1993: ... a strike on that day will not cause as much inconvenience to either BR or the public. Learning

*from the experience of last Friday, the RMT believes that with busses and Underground operating in London, most people who want to will be able to get to work.*

A one day strike is a great method of diffusing workers' anger without really hurting the bosses.

Golden rule three — pretend your members have nothing in common with other workers. Thus the RMT and ASLEF tell us they're fighting for completely different things: the RMT wants a guarantee no jobs will be lost in the run up to privatisation, whilst ASLEF is striking in a completely separate dispute over threats to its redeployment agreement under privatisation. Spot the difference? Well, whilst workers in both unions are fighting the loss of jobs in the same industry facing privatisation, the difference is they're being divided by two completely different unions! Unions always stress the differences between workers rather than uniting them. This isn't a psychological oddity, it's a way of keeping workers divided and weak.

Which brings us to golden rule four — claim to take solidarity action whilst not really doing so. Arthur Scargill and the NUM are masters at this one. Of course, Scargill is right when he says the miners' fight is the railworkers' fight —

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# ITALY: Corruption Hits the Headlines As Workers Face Mounting Attacks

having to pay off local politicians. However, the accusations of corruption would never have been allowed to reach so high up the political and business ladder if the old Cold War constraints had not been broken. In the old days the Christian Democrats and the Socialist party enjoyed a cosy power-sharing relationship whose overriding *raison d'être* was to keep the Communist Party away from direct access to the reins of state power. (Despite the CP's adoption of Eurocommunism in the 70's and its avowed policy of keeping Italy within NATO.) In other words, Italy was to be kept securely within the US imperialist bloc and the existing political set-up had the direct backing of the US. (The extent of US involvement

inside the Italian state itself - from 'toleration' of the Mafia to undercover involvement via *Gladio* in terrorist outrages and incitement of the Red Brigades, in cynical moves to undermine the 'Left' in general, is only now beginning to be admitted publicly.) The result of this combination of circumstances is, in the words of a comrade in Italy, not only

*a profound crisis in the old political apparatus ... but above all a profound division inside the ruling class itself.*

## Tangentopolis viewed from an internationalist standpoint

"This division can be read at two levels. First, on the immediate socio-economic level, there are divergences amongst the various fractions who stuck together in the (post-war) period of expansion and which the crisis is now increasingly separating:

- the 'small entrepreneurs', comprising small and medium firms which have existed hitherto on the basis of easy credit and wide profit margins but which are now being strangled by the financial system and weighed down by debts and the costs of industrial leases;
- the few big industrial-financial families (Agnelli, Gardini, Ferruzzi, De Benedetti and a handful of others);
- the nomenklatura in the state's industrial apparatus;
- the bankers.

There isn't a worker who hates Agnelli as much as the small industrialist from Brianza. Consider then, the stupidity and ignorance of the individual capitalist (who sees his tragic future awaiting him in ex-Yugoslavia). For him the economic crisis is caused by the excessive amount of public debt, the responsibility for which he places with Amato and the *partyocracy*. The fool forgets that the public debt grew in order to allow him to restructure his firm in the 70s and 80's. It was this that allowed him to make workers redundant, that gave him access to easy credit facilities and soft loans so that he could restructure and introduce new technology, which kept up internal demand so that he could continue to sell, etc.

The divisions inside the bourgeoisie can also be read from a different angle: the political one which emerged 'after the fall of the Berlin Wall'.

Previously everyone was united behind the USA and if there was any doubt about this there was always the CIA to take care of things, with massacres, the Mafia, the masons, and whatever else. Now that the Cold War is over so also is the old-style American policy of intervention

in Italy and - starting with the *Gladio* affair - it is now possible to bring out the dirty linen from the past. But the skeletons being brought out of the cupboards are turning into an avalanche which has left no sector of the political establishment untouched. In addition to this there is the 'providential' campaign against corruption and - miraculously - great blows have been delivered against the Mafia (some big Mafia 'families' have been routed), apparently signalling a decision 'by the state' to beat the Mafia. But the Mafia is itself part of the state and operates within the circulation of large-scale finance capital in Italy and Europe. It is an expression of the old American superpower. As the political pages of the newspapers focus on the myriad of episodes, events and magisterial initiatives they reveal, without realising it, the key to all this: Here in Italy the bourgeoisie is now deeply divided over its possible options in the aftermath of the Cold War. In fact its two options are simple: either continue under the wing of the USA and thus objectively be against German hegemony in Europe, or else stand decisively with Germany for the new imperialist pole against the USA.

Di Pietro (the 'heroic' magistrate who initiated the battle against *Tangentopoli*) was a Mr. Nobody with no great political aim. If he has been able to march ahead it is only because his way has been cleared by people at the top - as part of the struggle against others in the real centre of political power. As for being able to define exactly who is pro-American and who is pro-German, that's not yet possible, given the little information available to us. However, the broad outline is there.

The paradox in the present drama is that despite the growing divisions within the bourgeoisie, these have not prevented them from making concerted attacks on the proletariat to which there is no response. The situation facing the working class is becoming increasingly serious."

## The Working Class: Facing Massive Attacks but Without the Weapons to Fight Back

When Italian workers took to the streets in their thousands last autumn and when the trade union leaders who had negotiated pay cuts and redundancies were showered with missiles from angry workers, we in the CWO and naturally our comrades in Italy of *Battaglia Comunista* asked whether this was the first signs of a real fight back by the working class. That is, by a working class which was beginning to recognise that the trade unions, just as much as the bosses with whom they stitch up their deals, are part of the problem and not the solution. In the special November edition of *Workers Voice* we reported briefly that base committees (Cobas) were being revived as part of the opposition from rank and file workers to the union machine and we asked whether they would go on to organise themselves outside of the unions. From their standpoint closer to these events, our comrades in Italy, saw that the question was not so simple. In the first place, rank and file opposition was no only limited to the Cobas. Also being formed were union base committees (CUB) and a movement of left-wing trade unionist for reform of the unions (Essere Sindacato). What *Battaglia* had to ask themselves was whether this movement to create new unions or to reform the old unions was the first phase in the revival of the workers' movement or the last throes of the old unionism and its base organs.

"Our opinion is that it is the latter. We are not yet witnessing a powerful workers' response since almost all the so-called autonomous base

organs are in reality organised by ex-unionists from the CGIL or CSIL and by elements from the old PCI political network, the new 'Democratic' Left, and by Rifondazione (both stemming from the old CP). We are not so much seeing a reaction by the working class base, but a manoeuvre by those who have been expelled from, and want to re-enter, the great political institutional game of the bourgeois state."

Subsequent events - or rather the absence of them have born this out. Instead of a strengthening class-wide movement, involving more and more 'ordinary' workers, active opposition to the present round of bosses' attacks has become limited to those elements of the workforce who are already politicised. In today's circumstances this means in the main the ex-Communist Party supporters who are now part of the PDS (Party of the Democratic Left) or those from Rifondazione Comunista who want a revamped CP. Inside the workplaces these elements are battling to establish a new base for themselves by leading the call for trade union reform or even the formation of new unions. Whether they recognise it or not, these people are acting in the service of capital against the workers.<sup>3</sup> It was clear last autumn that the established unions had lost all credibility with the majority of workers. Instead of seeing this as a starting point for the creation of mass organs of workers' struggle - with directly elected strike committees and revocable delegates, etc. - these elements simply used opposition at the 'base' as a springboard for their own alternative trade union schemes. No wonder the bulk of the working class switched off.

As *Battaglia* say, a stronger mass response to the bosses' attacks would have left these new-unionists behind. "Even this, though, would not mean that the danger of trade unionism had disappeared all together, as the Polish example of 1980 teaches us. We must expect to meet other forms of trade unionism when the working class begins to move - forms which are thought to be 'revolutionary' and which are quite likely to exist alongside a genuinely revolutionary project. However, in a situation of growing class struggle such pseudo-revolutionary forces will tend to be contained and restricted by the fact that workers are abandoning mediation and going on to the attack ... We must prepare ourselves for these clashes, but they will occur in a different form from the present ones. Meanwhile, we have to fight against today's new unionists for the autonomy of workers' interests from capital and the national economy."<sup>2</sup>

This is one of the tasks our comrades have set themselves. Unfortunately at present the majority of the working class in Italy - as everywhere else - is still far from seeing where their own interests lie. While it would be absurd to see the present political crisis as a plot manufactured by the ruling class it is also clear that the bourgeoisie has realised that it can use the campaign for clean government to persuade workers of the necessity to make 'sacrifices'. The need to reduce the national debt (higher taxes and cuts in welfare spending), for more efficient and competitive industry (further job losses and increased exploitation), in short - for general belt tightening - all this is being linked to the campaign to clean up Italian democracy and the call on all Italians to make sacrifices. (A call which has been taken up by *Rifondazione* with its demand for "equal dignity and personal wellbeing".) Instead of considering how to fight back as a class against the united onslaught of the whole bourgeoisie workers are being drawn by the revamped Stalinists and the full force of the bourgeois media propaganda into contemplating the renewal and clean-up of

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In recent issues of *Workers Voice* we reported on the sudden increase in attacks on workers' jobs and living standards in Italy and the angry response from the working class last autumn. This struggle received hardly a mention in the mainstream press here. (The last thing British bosses wanted was news of mass demonstrations accompanied by workers jeering union leaders. News like that might have 'encouraged' a similar response here just as workers' anger was boiling over with the announcement of the 31 pit closures.)

It's been a different story with the Italian graft and corruption scandal - the revelations of bribery, backhanders and Mafia involvement which until now have been an everyday part of the post-war political set-up and which have implicated some of the highest in the land. In this case the media are enjoying reporting on the arrests and investigations which have seen hundreds of 'top people' held in prison. The corruption scandals have extended from the north to the south; from politicians (such as Bettino Craxi, who has had to resign as leader of the Socialist Party) to high level businessmen from both the state and private sector (such as Fiat executives and the Chairman of ENI, the state energy group) alike. Now Italy's "most illustrious post-war statesman" and seven times Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti is under investigation after someone in the Mafia began to spill the beans about the high-level links between the Mafia, the Christian Democrats and other established political parties and the state. At the time of writing Italians have just voted in a referendum for a change in the electoral system; for a clean up of the system and an end to *tangentopolis*. (the system of kickbacks and bribes.

Yet it would be naive to suppose that corruption is the special preserve of Italian democracy. Why then has this particular scandal - which has blown the post-war political set-up apart - erupted now? The answer lies in the coming together of two principal factors: first the sharpening of the economic crisis and second the end of the Cold War, or rather its implications for the Italian political system. As regards the former, it is not just that the cost of corruption (estimated at about £2bn annually) has become something of a luxury for Italian capital as a whole in today's straitened circumstances (the state alone is in debt to the tune of £84bn.) but that there has developed a real clash of interest between the petty bourgeoisie and big business. Paying out for a local government contract, for instance, can mean the difference between profit and loss for a small firm tottering on the edge of bankruptcy. It's no accident that this whole scandal began when a small businessman in Milan complained to the police about



## Italy

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Italian democracy; into voting in referendums; into supporting regionalist parties (the Northern League); into supporting new unionism and imagining that there can be an "equality of sacrifice" of the Italian nation. All this in a system which, no matter how re-vamped, is based on exactly the opposite - a nation divided into exploiters and exploited where the working class must submit to the sacrifices demanded by capital's ceaseless drive for profits extracted from their labour power. - That is, until workers frame their own internationalist response.

ERM jr.

### Footnotes

1. From an IBRP (International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party) circular of *Battaglia Comunista* 22.2.93.
2. From an unpublished article of BC on the situation in Italy, written in November 1992 which arrived too late for publication in *Workers Voice*. A synthesis is available in French in *BC Inform* no.1, Dec. 1992. (Write to the PCInt. address.)
3. In fact it is difficult not to recognise that *Rifondazione* is operating completely within the framework of how to solve the problem of Italian capital. For instance, they recently proposed a "new model of capitalist development" with "selective relaunching of investment, qualitative widening of the productive base, fiscal and tax reforms which would guarantee the small savings of workers". Quoted in *Battaglia Comunista* 3, March 1993.

## Bosnian Agony & Imperialist Intervention

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debt rose from 19.1% of GDP in 1979 to 30.4% in 1989. In 1987 the USA owed the rest of the world \$1,536,040 millions. The leading military power in the world was in hock to the bankers but now that the USSR was no more the USA also reckoned that the bankers owed them something back for protecting them from the "communist menace" for nearly half a century.

As far as the US ruling class are concerned the price was worth paying to keep their NATO alliances etc. in check. But once the Cold War was over then the reckonings began. The US was quick to use military force against Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait. It was largely opposed by Western Europe although Britain as usual was enthusiastic to demonstrate its subservience to US imperialism. The French too sent troops once it was clear that Iraq was isolated even in the Arab world. Germany and Japan, both lacking other sources of oil pleaded their constitutions as reasons for not joining in. However the US wasn't prepared to accept this and both Germany and Japan as well as the richer Arab states were forced to cough up 80% of the costs of the Gulf War.

The US impatience with Western Europe and Japan has also been spelled out in the GATT negotiations. Accusations of dumping, protectionism and hidden subsidies are, of course, not new. But that US government has never had such a sustained campaign against its former allies in order to clearly make them recognise that there is a new economic offensive on the way. The election of Clinton has further underlined the US policy of putting "America First" with threats of a real trade war (as opposed to the rhetoric of the present one) constantly looming.

### The USA and Yugoslavia

The US Government under Bush clearly saw Yugoslavia as a very small problem initially. They thought it could be left to their old NATO allies to handle in the interests of stability. This is essentially consistent with what the US has stood for since the Cold War ended. A stable world would be a US-dominated one. They have thus tried to maintain "order" in the "new world" wherever they could. Old conflicts have largely been brought under some kind of control or else have been ignored (e.g. East Timor, Cambodia, Azerbaijan etc.). In strategically sensitive areas near to the control of the world's

oil supplies they have intervened - but only where there was no fear of a Vietnam-type long war (Somalia, Kuwait). The aim here was to prove to would be "loony tunes" (as Reagan put it) that confronting the power of the US was decidedly not a good idea.

In ex-Yugoslavia the US tried to withhold recognition to the breakaway states. This in turn encouraged the Serbs to believe that the US would support their efforts to hold the Yugoslav confederation together by force (after all the USA is a federation whose most bloody war was in 1861-5 - precisely to hold their federation together). In this they were supported by Serbia's traditional ally, the Russian nationalists (who share a religion, alphabet and Slav ancestry with the Serbs). Until recently they had consistently undermined attempts to make sanctions against Serbia tougher and hoped that they could do a deal with Milosevic to bring about their kind of peace in the area. Thus German and US interests in the area clashed and this has produced the present paralysis. With the whole world watching 250,000 people, hardly any of them carrying weapons, have been killed in less than eighteen months.

However as the conflict developed so did the economic crisis. In Germany the costs of unification have been greater than Kohl expected (he should have read *Workers' Voice* two years ago - we told him so in issue no. 56). Taxes have had to be raised, unemployment is soaring and the workers in East Germany are striking to get the government to keep its wage promises. With this renewal of internal problems the German government has hardly been in a position to lead the EC into any more precipitate actions in Bosnia.

### US Global Policy

And what of the US' policy today? Maintaining the new world order is turning out to be a bit like knitting fog. If the US doesn't provide more assistance to the Muslims in Bosnia then Turkey and Saudi Arabia (who are already training militias) will do so. It would endanger US control of the Islamic Middle East.

However an even bigger problem is the former Soviet Union. If the US were to agree to military action against Serbia what would happen to the US' man in Moscow - Boris Yeltsin? Support for Yeltsin demands that he is not undermined at home by the nationalists. If the USA were to

attack Serbia Yeltsin's position would be threatened by the assortment of careerists, ex-Stalinists, militarists and proto-fascists in Russia. His fall could lead to the break up of the Russian Federation and the present wars on its borders could make Yugoslavia look like mere military manoeuvres. At the moment to US still has some influence over Serbia (the Serbs have been told by the US that there a war over Kosovo or Macedonia would lead to military retaliation by the US. However the pressure is on the Clinton government to take more concrete military action. This will have to await the outcome of the Russian referendum on April 26th. Once the position of Yeltsin is cleared up the US will have a clearer policy in Bosnia.

The failure of US imperialism to conjure up an "Operation Restore Hope" in Bosnia isn't then just a question of military fear about fighting in Yugoslavia (these are much exaggerated since they would mainly be fighting semi-trained militia) but arise from a coherent need for the US to impose stability wherever it can. But as this crisis shows the capitalist crisis has a not just taken its toll of the Eastern bloc. All the Western powers are manoeuvring for their own "interests". For many these are of the vaguest kind (i.e. not wanting to lose out to a rival) and the rivalry is generally expressed in the discreetest of diplomatic language. However it is a straw in the wind for the future. The new world order is not new (it is old-fashioned imperialist rivalry) nor is it order. And the present military disasters around the world are not accidents. They are the product of ongoing imperialist rivalries which under the impulse of the economic crisis will get worse.

The working class has no interest in getting involved on any side in any conflict. There are no progressive sides in imperialist wars. Nor should workers join in the hypocritical wringing of hands over the humanitarian disasters created by these imperialist war. War is the ultimate attack of the capitalist class on the working class. As their system slides further into crisis and chaos our task is not to mourn but to organise, to unite workers across all races and nations. The words of the communist Manifesto are even more appropriate than ever today "Workers have no country". Our enemy is to be found at home amongst the national leaders of every country. We must resist war at all costs whatever the supposed reasons or motives. Supposed humanitarian aid to Bosnia today is aid for one side in imperialist conflict.

Jock

## The Golden Rules of Union "Action"

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if the pit closure programme goes ahead 5000 railway workers will lose their jobs. But real solidarity is a bit more than Scargill showing his face on a rail workers' picket line. Scargill and the NUM ensured the miners fought alone in the 1984-5 strike, and miners were defeated behind the isolating slogan "Coal not dole" (see *Communist Review* 2). Holding one day strikes on the same day as other workers can't be passed off as "solidarity action", because in reality workers are being kept separate from each other and are being prevented from undertaking any real mass class action.

Thousands of workers sitting at home on the same day is not the same as uniting workers behind a common goal to maximise the impact of industrial action and forming lasting links with other workers. The unions' practice of solidarity is another method of dividing and isolating workers. Thus in the first railworkers/miners' strike, tube and bus workers in London struck, but ASLEF got its members to work. In the second, tube and bus workers weren't called out but the ASLEF train drivers were. Unions don't exist to defend the working class. They exist to defend their own particular members but only after their defence of themselves and the industry in which they exist and on which they depend.

And so to golden rule five: turn the strike away from the defence of workers' interests to the defence of bosses' interests. Thus the rail unions and miners' unions are busily trying to persuade their members that they should be fighting for the defence of the railways and mines. The logic goes like this - to protect jobs and pay, the industry or service needs to be healthy and profitable, because if it's not the

workers will suffer. Therefore workers should strike to defend the industry. One small fact has been omitted - capitalism is in crisis. If it wasn't it wouldn't have to restructure or close down mines or privatise or do any of the desperate things it does to try to protect profits. The defence of jobs won't come about by defending capitalism - in fact the opposite is true - supporting capitalism means supporting a system where unemployment and harsh attacks on the living standards of workers is the order of the day. This is truer today than ever before. Workers will only be able to defend themselves by fighting the very system which attacks them. Since the unions depend on capitalism for their very existence it's not very surprising they'll do everything they can to protect it in reality whilst occasionally denouncing it verbally.

The unions have their allies which help them peddle the myth that they are defending workers' interests. The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is a faithful old advocate of the trades union movement. The SWP, realising that workers have seen the way unions have betrayed them in practice, push the theory (in common with most left-wing organisations) that the unions are really organisations for the defence of the working class but just get a bit side tracked by conservative leaders. The beauty of this argument is that there is plenty of evidence for the anti-working class nature of trade union leaders. Thus the SWP cite the example of the NALGO leader in Newham who managed to successfully stop NALGO workers striking on April 2nd. The problem with this argument is that it's not true. It's not the leaders but the unions themselves which are anti-working class. Where unions face the choice between their own existence and that of their members, they will sacrifice their

members every time. They have never existed to defend the working class as a class against capitalism. If it were a simple question of leadership, why do rank and file unions attack the working class with as much, if not more ferocity, as did Solidarity in Poland (see *Workers' Voice* 1, 2, 5, 6, 13).

But the SWP's argument about bad leaders isn't even consistent. They won't criticise Scargill, even though the NUM have waited months before calling for any actions, during which time thousands of miners have given up hope and left their jobs. Those left to fight have been called out on ineffective one day strikes, some from pits which aren't even producing any more. The SWP do well to defend the unions, because they're both enemies masquerading as allies.

In the meantime the miners and the railworkers will be called out on token stoppages until some compromise is reached which will no doubt lead to redundancies and be passed off as a victory. Unless workers facing the same threat and the same enemy can unite across union divides, no victory can be won. Successful class action today is as much about fighting the unions and their apologists as about fighting the bosses. The opportunity exists for real solidarity action. Firefighters, railworkers, miners, the Timex workers, bus and tube workers and civil servants are all facing the same attacks at the same time. There is too much at stake to leave everything in the hands of the unions. Unofficial mass actions by workers organised with elected and recallable delegates can beat the unions and the bosses. Unless workers can take unofficial action to link up and fight, further defeat is in store.

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# 5. Imperialism

Today the whole world seems to be awash with a wave of ever increasing misery. Countries which at the end of the Second World War were relatively healthy, like most of South America, are crippled by crisis and more of their populations is being pushed into ever deeper poverty. African and Asian countries which looked forward to a bright new dawn with their independence now look instead down into the abyss of mass starvation. In the face of all this obvious need the workers in capital's heartlands are being made jobless by a system blind to need and responding only to its own lust for profit. The result of this: more misery, this time for the workers in capital's centres.

On top of all this, there is the danger of war. Yugoslavia has been torn apart by economic crisis and the tensions between its various bourgeois factions which are a consequence of this crisis. Not only are the various "Great Powers" waiting to turn the Yugoslav tragedy to their own advantage, but the crisis behind the tragedy is also manifesting itself within the "Powers" themselves — with the obvious corollary of tensions between them. Yugoslavia is a mirror which shows the workers of the world a version of the future capitalism has in store for them.

But why has capitalism gone from a period of boom after the reconstruction following the Second World War to crisis and misery? Why is the threat of war ever present, especially after the "end of history", when the major conflict (so far) of the post-war period, the cold war, has been won?

## Capitalism and Imperialism

Capitalism has always been subject to periodic crisis due to the tendency discovered by Marx — the falling rate of profit. This fall has its roots in the diminishing proportion of capital which is spent on labour-power compared with that spent on machinery, etc. Labour-power creates new value, whereas machinery, etc., merely passes its value onto the product without expanding it. Consequently, the amount of new value falls relative to the original capital as the amount of value creating it (i.e., wages) falls relative to the original capital<sup>1</sup>. This tendency leads to crises, despite calling forth counter-tendencies, as it eventually overcomes these<sup>2</sup>.

In the nineteenth century, capitalism was able to extricate itself from these crises through one of their effects: the devaluation of capital. By wiping out part of the value of the constant capital (predominantly that owned by the weaker capitalists), the ratio of constant to variable capital (called the organic composition by Marx) was reduced and the cycle could begin again.

But, around the turn of the century, there was a qualitative change. This change was a reflection of the fact that capitalism had laid the basis for a higher society: communism<sup>3</sup>, in that the productive forces could now better be developed under the conscious control of society. No longer were scarcity and the relations of struggle between people based on that scarcity the necessary lot of humanity. Production to satisfy need was now a possibility.

But the positive power of the already achieved organisation of production under conditions of socialism could only be transformed into the negative power of the organisation of war under a system which has competition at its heart. The devaluation of capital through an economic crisis by itself was no longer sufficient to enable a new cycle to commence. Moreover, capitalism had undergone structural changes. The concentration of the ownership of capital has increased throughout capitalism's existence, especially in times of crisis when stronger capitals devour weaker ones. These two phenomena resulted in the qualitative change mentioned: to capitalist imperialism.

## Lenin's Contribution

Lenin, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, described how the increasing concentration of capital led to capitalist imperial-

ism. This change was accelerated by one of its manifestations — the changed rôle of the banks, which went from being marginal lubricants of capitalist production to becoming organisers of it, through the concerns which they either partly owned or made loans to, or both. These concerns themselves had more and more become monopolies controlling whole branches of production, and the banks' levers over the concerns enabled them to co-ordinate production, overthrowing "free" competition.

But, although free competition had well and truly become a thing of the past, this process did not do away with competition itself: instead, it brought it to a higher level. Despite the advantages that the high concentration of capital confers on the monopolies relative to their competitors, the monopolies are still affected by the disadvantages that this concentration brings to the economy as a whole: primarily the fall in the profit rate. This means that they must fight for every scrap of profit. And the monopolies fought (and fight) amongst themselves, using economic (e.g., selling goods at below cost price to destroy weaker rivals) and extra-economic means (e.g., industrial espionage as in BA's campaign against Virgin). Nor did things stop there: the state was drawn into this monopolistic network, both visibly, by state officials being given seats on the boards of banks and their larger industrial dependants, and through a thousand and one hidden acts of

possibility of a socialist organisation put at the service of humanity: given only the socialist revolution necessary for the realisation of that possibility.

## After Lenin

The degeneration of the Russian Revolution<sup>5</sup> resulted in the emergence of a state which dominated the entire economy. Although this was different from the imperialist states in the rest of the world, the difference should not have its importance exaggerated: the workers remained wage-workers, exploited through wage-labour and the extraction of surplus-value, and those exploiting them were still capitalists<sup>6</sup>.

The contrast was rather between the Russian formal domination of the state over the economy and the formal independence of the monopolies from the state elsewhere. In both cases, the real domination of the state by the capitalist class was disguised, and, in both cases, there was the sufficient precondition for imperialism, the concentration of capital to the extent that the pursuit of extra-profit was an unavoidable necessity.

Moreover, this concentration has continued to increase. In *On the Right of Nations to Self-determination*, Lenin cites the example of Japan against Rosa Luxemburg, who had argued on economic grounds that national liberation was obsolete:

... In Asia itself the conditions for the most complete development of commodity production, for the freest, widest and most rapid growth of capitalism have been created only in Japan, i.e., only in an independent national state ..

Lenin's argument that national liberation was progressive because state independ-

ence was the best possible political form for the development of capitalism, and thus of a strong working class, has lost its force precisely because of the further development of imperialism. Today, there is no room for national bourgeoisies outside of the imperialist framework. This is demonstrated by the case of China, which has had the benefits of a national state for over 40 years and now hopes to complete its development by ... opening up to the export of capital!

There has emerged a vast interweaving of various imperialist relations, resulting in an hierarchy of imperialisms. For example, Yugoslavia, which has scarcely benefitted from imperialism in the recent past, has made capital exports to Iraq<sup>7</sup>.

In this situation, slogans of national liberation in the peripheral countries can be nothing other than slogans of the mobilisation of the proletariat behind the bourgeoisie for their faction fights. The progressive rôle of the bourgeoisie is over, everywhere.

Another consequence of the vast concentration of capital is that "ordinary" economic crises no longer wipe out sufficient capital to enable a new cycle of accumulation to be launched. This means that imperialist war, although it can scarcely be described as healthy for humanity, plays a positive rôle for imperialism itself: it reduces capital's organic composition by wiping out capital, allowing a period of reconstruction and boom (see the graph), which in turn lays the basis for another crisis.

## The Present Cycle of Accumulation

At the end of the Second World War, the victorious imperialisms divided the world between themselves and the present cycle of accumulation opened up. Out of the slaughter, after the reconstruction, there sprung forth a period of relative prosperity, at least for some. Even alongside this prosperity, there still existed poverty, both in the centres of imperialism, among the poorer workers, and outside these centres, among all but the bourgeoisie. Even in this period of boom, there were still inter-imperialist tensions, in which the imperialists fought out proxy wars (Korea, Vietnam, Ethiopia), and, as the boom faded and gave way to crisis in the late '60's and '70's, these tensions seemed destined to increase without limit.

As Russia's position relative to the US weakened throughout the '80's as result of its inability to win its war in Afghanistan without escalating it or to profitably exploit the areas under its sway in Eastern Europe, generalised war seemed inevitable as the only way Russia could avoid further relative decline.

## The Collapse of an Imperialism

Although the general ideas behind our analysis of imperialism hold, history still had surprises up its sleeve. The impact of the world economic crisis on the Eastern bloc was especially great, partly because of the US strategy of drawing the USSR into an arms race it could not afford. Instead of going to war with the Western imperialists before the deterioration in Russia's position became too great, the Russian imperialists backed off from a conflict they felt was unwinnable. They chose the option of believing that the solution to the Russian manifestations of the crisis could be found through Western investments in their economy<sup>8</sup>, and to encourage these exports of capital, surrendered their hold over their bloc, allowing East Germany to go. Not only have no great Western investments appeared to rescue the ex-USSR but, even if they had, Western credits would have carried with themselves the interest demands (and demands for control) which are crippling the economies that have been "given" them in the past.

The collapse of the Russian bloc was an event of world-historic importance, comparable with the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact<sup>9</sup>. But it has not signalled the existence of a new era, as the lightning flash of World War I illuminated the presence of imperialism: we still live in the age of imperialism.

In the second part of this article we will look at the consequences of this, both as they have manifested themselves in and since the Gulf War, and in the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In algebra: constant capital (machinery, etc.) =  $c$ ; variable capital (wages) =  $v$ ; surplus value (value created) =  $s$ .

Before production, the total capital is  $c + v$ , after it is  $c + v + s$ . The rate of profit is  $s/(c + v)$ . If  $c$  is increased proportionately more than is  $v$ , and  $s$  increases in the same proportion as  $v$ , then the rate of profit falls. For example, if  $c = v = s = 10$ , the rate of profit is  $10/20 = 50\%$ . If  $c$  increases to 15 and  $v$  and  $s$  to 12, the rate of profit is  $12/27 = 44.44\%$ . ( $v$  is called variable because it increases its value — by the addition of  $s$ ,  $c$  is constant because it does not vary).

<sup>2</sup>We recommend Marx's *Capital* for a fuller and clearer exposition (which really does require more space than we have here!). Also useful is CWO Pamphlet No. 1, *The Economic Foundations of Capitalist Decay and Money, Credit and Crisis*, available from the group address, £1.50 inc. p&p.

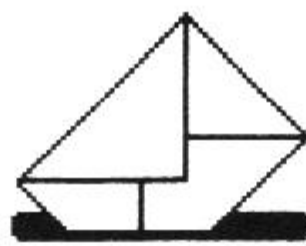
<sup>3</sup>It should not be thought that capitalism exists in order to lay the basis for communism: that would be teleological. Bees do not exist in order to make honey, but they do it nonetheless! The natural history of human society is amenable to human analysis, just as the products of nature are. Teleological arguments are a poor substitute for such an analysis.

<sup>4</sup>This figure of speech inverts the real relation between the state and the monopolies: the capitalists own the state; the state doesn't own the capitalists.

<sup>5</sup>The Revolution resulted in a proletarian dictatorship, in other words, the political power of the working class over society. This political power was only able to begin the process of transforming



# Letters to the Editor



*Political debate and discussion are the lifeblood of any organisation which wishes to be part of the formation of a revolutionary class consciousness. Workers' Voice appeals to all readers to become an active part of that process by sending in their comments and criticisms. All will be printed (with initials only) and where necessary replies furnished.*

## Were the Bolsheviks Bourgeois?

**A Letter from "Subversion"** more considered response in *Workers' Voice*.  
**28th February 1993**

Dear Comrades

In *Workers' Voice* 64 you carried a report of your meeting in Sheffield on "Red October" which attempted to summarise and then criticise the views expressed by members of **Subversion** at that meeting.

It seems that you had some difficulty understanding our views at the meeting. We did distribute, for the purpose of discussion, an article entitled *The Hunt for Red October* from the London *Wildcat* magazine which expressed views close to our own. We know that at least some of your members have previously read this article, but even if there wasn't time at the meeting to absorb its contents, we might have expected you to take it into account in your

So, briefly, for the record:

1. We do regard the events of 1917 as a watershed in working class history. It was the first time that a major section of workers made a serious start on the expropriation of the old ruling class, the smashing of its state apparatus and seizing power over their own lives, e.g., the takeover of the factories. The Russian working class set an example to the working class of Europe and the world. Had that example been followed throughout Europe and even beyond we might have experienced the **first** stages of a genuine socialist/communist revolution. To succeed, however, it would have had to overcome, in addition to everything else, the reactionary obstacle of Bolshevism.

2. We accept that workers who were members of, or influenced by the Bolshevik Party amongst

others, played a major part in the initial success of that movement.

3. Contrary to what you assert in your article we **do not** reject the actions of Russian workers or the political groups they belonged to at that time because they didn't have a "perfect communist programme". But we do insist on a rigorous examination of the ideas and actions of both in an attempt to learn from their experience. We can see little value in simply projecting ourselves back to those events and aligning our own groups with one or other of the factions, inside or outside the Bolsheviks. This obsession of both left-communist and anarchist groups with replaying the events of the past with themselves as the players has only stood in the way of a genuine analysis of the period.

4. For revolutionaries today an understanding of the weaknesses and dangers of Social Democratic ideology in both its mainstream and Bolshevik varieties is essential. To the extent the Bolsheviks broke from mainstream Social Democracy by opposing the war and calling for all power to the Soviets, they were able to have a healthy influence. But their failure to go beyond a partial break, for whatever them to turn against the workers. In our opinion that process started well before the events of 1921.

5. In particular, Lenin and most of the Bolsheviks never really gave up the idea that some kind of vaguely defined worker controlled state capitalism would form the transitional phase between capitalism and socialism/communism. However "understandable" the holding of such views might have been at that time, it was a factor which weakened the progress of the workers' movement and certainly today should be thoroughly rejected. From our own discussions with the CWO we are not convinced that you have **thoroughly** rejected this idea.

and also to minimise the crime of the Communist Parties return to Social Democracy though United and Popular Front tactics — a crime which still has echoes today in the practice of Trotskyism.

We also note the phrase "turn against the workers". So the "reactionary" Bolsheviks were with the workers at some point?

5. "Lenin ... never really gave up the idea that some kind of ... state capitalism would form the transitional phase ...". This is again ahistorical and echoes the worst methods of the right wing historians. The issue of the views held by the Bolsheviks is very complicated but broadly the Bolshevik ideas of the immediate possibilities of transforming the economic and social basis of the revolution rested on two bases. The first was the progress of the international revolution, the second the actual material conditions inside Russia. It is not surprising, as we demonstrated in our meeting that Bolshevik optimism about the immediacy of social transformation was greatest in the period Oct. 1917 to march 1918 when things were largely going the way of the proletariat. Equally as we also demonstrated Bolshevik ideas became less optimistic and increasingly statist as the conditions for revolution waned. It was only when famine threatened and world revolution was off the agenda that measures of state capitalism were defended in 1921 and defended as a step backwards.

Your technique, like that of *The Hunt for Red October* and the right wing historians is to wipe out any sense of historical change. It is enough to quote Lenin in 1902 and then again in 1922 and leave out the revolutionary phase in-between in order to arrive at the unwarranted assertion that Bolshevism was consistently social-democratic. The fact is that the Bolsheviks (whatever their failings) were the most conscious part of the class movement and echoed the hopes and failings of that movement

6. So Subversion accept a transitional period. But doesn't a transitional period contain elements from the periods which it separates? And when the transition takes place under difficult circumstances don't the elements from the period preceding the transition dominate for longer than they otherwise would? Of course! And, to be concrete, the period between capitalism and communism contains elements of capitalism, and contains more elements of capitalism the more difficult the circumstances are. If you accept this, then you cannot possibly

6. Rejection of this idea does **not** mean we think full blown communism can be achieved overnight by a sheer act of will. There will have to be a period of transition from capitalism to communism. Our disagreements with the CWO are about the **nature** of that transition. We reject the idea of a **rigid** separation between political and social revolution. Rather we think it is a case of political being predominant over social in the early phases of the growth of the revolutionary movement. That balance will change as the revolution spreads geographically and becomes more firmly rooted in the mass of the population. We do insist that the revolutionary movement of the class must **start** to socialise (not nationalise) the "economy" and destroy all forms of bureaucratic organisation from the very beginning, even if only small steps can be taken at first. We fail to see how you can describe this as a "back door" to "socialism in one country". Rather it was the Bolshevik central organs' restraint of this process which led in that direction.

The anarchists in the past have rightly been criticised for promoting social and "economic" revolution whilst ignoring the need to make a positive assault on state power (viz., the experience of Spain), but the answer to this is not to try and confine the revolutionary movement of the workers in time or space to a purely political form. It is first and foremost, unlike all previous revolutions, social.

On all the above points Subversion is agreed. Beyond that we do have differences of opinion which are openly expressed outside the group. There are inevitably many questions still to be answered in the light of experience.

Subversion

### Our Reply:

## The Hunt for Red Herrings

Dear Comrades

Thanks for your response to *Workers Voice* 64. To keep things simple, we will look at Subversion's points one by one:

1. We agree with all of this except the last sentence. As it asserts that the Bolsheviks were reactionary, we look forward to some proof later on. At the moment, though, we restrict ourselves to observing that this assertion is in line with what one of the Subversion comrades stated in our meeting on "Red October": "the Bolsheviks were bourgeois".

2. Firstly, we regard it as a matter of historic fact that: "workers who were members of, or influenced by the Bolshevik Party ... played" the "major part in the initial success of that movement"; that all the "others" who played a positive rôle later joined the Bolshevik Party; and these workers played that rôle because, they were "influenced" by the Bolshevik Party. Even where the "masses were ahead of the Party", it was on the basis of a relationship with the best elements of the Party.

3. This is an odd point for Subversion to make. If anyone plays the game of projecting themselves back into history, it is Subversion. The

Bolshevik-influenced workers, you almost admit, played the major rôle in setting a genuine communist example for the "working class of Europe and the world" (the only way you can avoid admitting this is to point at someone or something which played a greater part — and this you haven't yet done). Yet the Bolsheviks were "reactionary", because they lack the clarity of Subversion! You cannot compare the Bolsheviks to yourselves unless you ignore the 70 years of history you are heir to: unless you pretend that your "clarity" could have been present 70 years ago — unless you project yourselves back in history. What we recognise but you do not is that Bolshevism was not created in 1902. It was a product of the proletariat's aspirations in 1917. It was a result of both the theoretical struggle to break with Social Democratic reformism and the practical struggle of the working class in 1917.

4. In political history there is no such thing as an absolutely clean break. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks' break with Social Democracy (not "mainstream Social Democracy"), or rather their refusal to follow Social Democracy's break with the working class was decisive. To minimise this break is to minimise the difference between "defence of Fatherland" and "defence of the international working class"

*continued from facing page*

the economy, which remained capitalist. Those Bolsheviks who politically led the Revolution understood that it was the first step in a world revolution which was necessary for the transformation to socialism throughout the world and in Russia itself. The degeneration brought on by the failure of the European revolution to materialise led to the overthrow by stealth of a political dictatorship in the absence of the necessary economic basis for its continued existence. That degeneration was a counterrevolution.

6. Notwithstanding the fact that, during the "heroic phase of the revolution", Russia came closer than any society before or since to doing away with capitalists, to becoming a "capitalism without capitalists", after the Stalin nationalisations of the late '20's the capitalist class, which had re-emerged in the meantime, was reorganised, and not abolished.

7. The share of the unpaid part of one deal due to Slovenia is \$37 million.

8. By making this choice, they have provided a lesson

to those who think that there is a workable imperialist alternative to war, when war is on the agenda — all such alternatives mean ruin for those that take them. This lesson will not be ignored by those who find themselves in a similar situation in the future.

9. The signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact "should" have marked Stalinism as an idea whose time had gone — given only that the lifespan of ideas is determined by their consistency, both internal and with the world they are supposed to explain. But Stalinism was also the expression of the material interests of a class which could still utilise it. Similarly, Trotskyism's persistence has not ended with the demonstration that the "non-capitalist" USSR is mysteriously affected by capitalist crises: Trotskyism continues to be the ideology of the alternative bureaucracy of the "labour movement" which has an interest in depicting nationalisation in favourable hues.

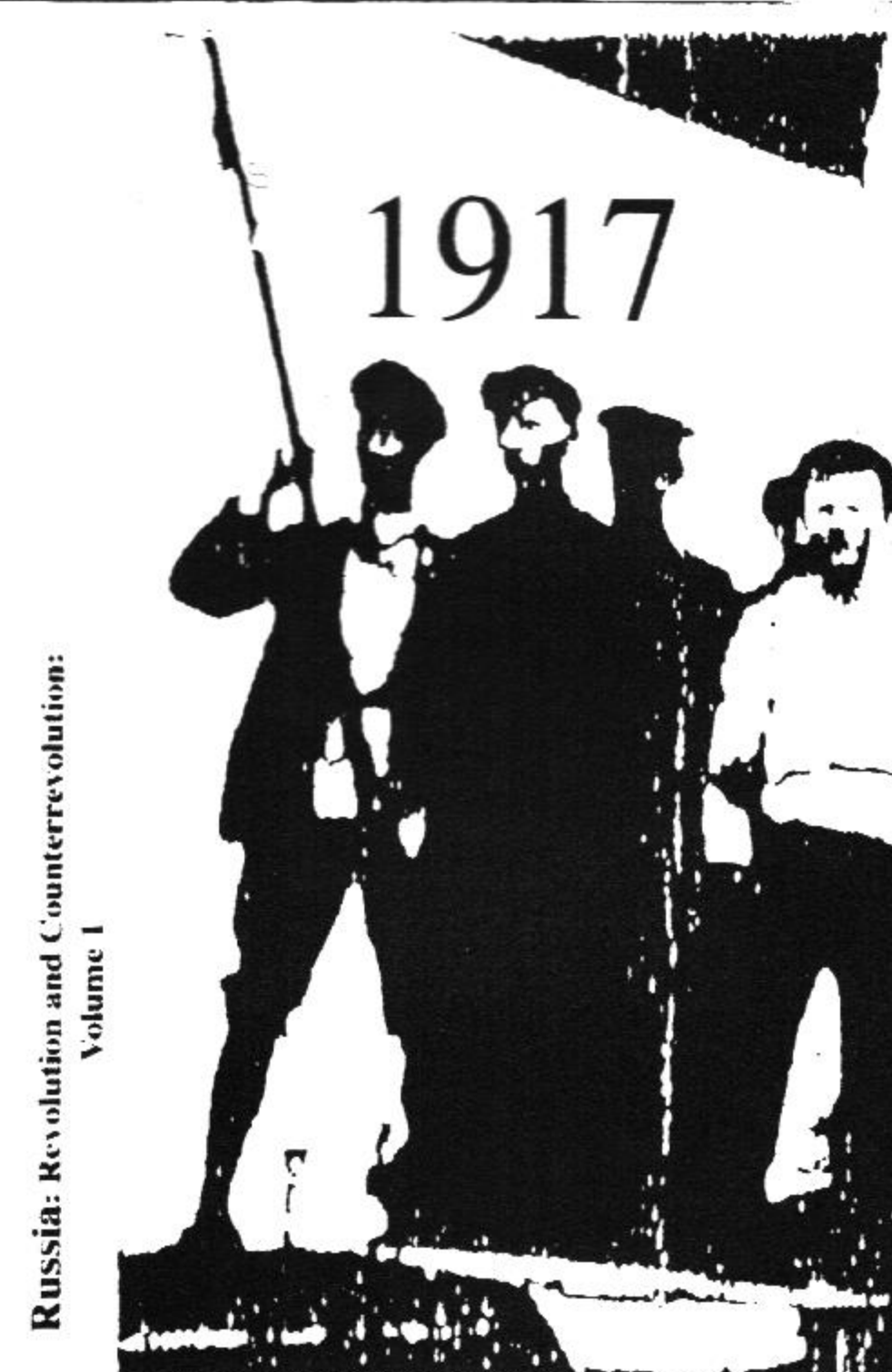
EDL

"really give up the idea of capitalism forming the transitional phase", for, if this "really" is not just a simple accusation of dishonesty, it must mean rejection of all capitalist traits in a transitional period. Which seems to amount to saying that there can be no such thing as a transitional period.

This point also contains the red herrings. We agree with the points you put forward as disagreements: we too "think it is a case of political being predominant over social in the early phases of the growth of the revolutionary movement", although we would be more precise: unless the proletariat smashes the bourgeois state power and establishes its own (a political task), its social gains cannot possibly held. We too "insist that the revolutionary movement of the class must start to socialise ... the 'economy' and destroy all forms of bureaucratic organisation from the very beginning". It seems to us that Subversion still has to face up to the reality of the proletarian revolution but this correspondence should be the beginning not the end of the debate.

Communist greetings

EDL  
(for the CWO)



CWO Pamphlet Number 2.



# Two Important Episodes in the History of the Working Class

For a brief period the 1917 October Revolution in Russia opened up the possibility of a new order of freedom and equality in which exploitation and war would have been banished for ever. But, as Rosa Luxemburg so correctly stated in 1918; the question of socialism could only be posed in Russia, it could not be answered there. With the defeat of the working class in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Bulgaria the Russian Revolution remained isolated. The Western strongholds of capitalism held out and the Revolution ultimately failed.

What began so heroically and hopefully in October 1917 ended in miserable defeat. The Russian Revolution then degenerated from within. Stalinism was the culmination of a process, a state capitalist counter-revolution which turned the workers' dreams of 1917 into the USSR nightmare. Since then the capitalist counter-revolution has reigned everywhere. The lie that Stalinism was communism, the mobilisation of the working class during the Second World War for the defence of capitalist democracy, the integration of the old Social-Democratic and Labour movements and the trades unions into the capitalist apparatus of control have left the workers without an independent programme of their own. The two episodes commemorated here, coincidentally exactly 25 years and 50 years ago represent small breaches in the wall of counter-revolution. Although their overall effect was to be short-lived they did represent stages in the rebirth of the forces of the Communist Left.

Who are the Communist Left? Well, we have their origins in those forces who tried to fight the degeneration of the Communist or Third International in the 1920s. When the Third International attempted to give itself a mass base through the opportunist tactic of the United Front with the pro-capitalist Social Democrats it was the Communist Left who opposed it. The shameful nature of this United Front cannot be underestimated. In 1914 the Social Democrats had almost universally supported imperialist war. It was this which led to the left breakaway at the conferences of Kienthal and Zimmerwald. It was this issue which separated the future communist leaders Lenin, Leibknecht and Luxemburg from the old Second International. It should also be remembered that it was the Social Democrats who came to the aid of the capitalists after World War One. The Social Democrat leaders Noske and Ebert, in conjunction with the proto-fascist Freikorps murdered the workers' leaders in Germany, Leibknecht and Luxemburg in January 1919. And yet less than two years later the Bolsheviks were recommending that the Third International should do deals with these gangsters. These are the solid grounds why the Italian Left, at that time leading the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) rejected the united front. They argued that the important thing was to defend the clarity of the communist programme not try to make opportunist and ultimately useless gains by doing deals with capitalist factions. Communist workers would not understand why the communists were making deals with the same Socialists who only a few months before had lined up with the fascists to kill communists. Many today, including the Trotskyists still support the discredited united front policy. They argue that our political ancestors were sectarian. This is nonsense. First because the Communist Left not only founded but still led the Communist Party of Italy in 1922 when the united front was adopted. They carried it out in line with their duty to the International but still continued to argue for its abandonment. Second, the Comintern itself abandoned the policy in 1928 having made no gains from it. As our comrades at the time argued what sense could workers make of these opportunist shifts in tactics? And today, more than three quarters of a century later, we can see that the cause of communism have been better served in the long run by a principled defence of the real communist programme. Since socialism has to be the work of the immense majority of mankind it cannot be built by trickery but only by the conscious will of the workers. Today that is

what the Communist Left defends against all the state capitalist deformations of the so-called Leftists who still think that tactical tricks (e.g. entryism into the Labour Party) are compatible with communist politics.

This was also what the Internationalist Communist Party stood for in 1943. Most of its leaders had been important in the founding of the Communist Party of Italy in 1921. As the Stalinist counter-revolution replaced then first with the more pliable Gramsci, and then his colleague Togliatti, most were gradually expelled from the "bolshvised" PC d'I. In the fascist prisons the Stalinists and internationalists continued their ideological struggles. These struggles led to the formation of the two parties mentioned in the text below. The one clearly the creature of Stalin, the arm of Soviet imperialism in Italy, the other the authentic expression of the revolutionary will of the Italian working class. We say Italian with some regret. Despite a series of strikes in other countries at the end of the Second World War (e.g. France, Belgium and Northern England) there was to be no repeat of the revolutionary wave that followed the First World War. The Internationalist Communist Party flourished for awhile amidst the crisis which followed the collapse of fascism with thousands of members, papers in most major Italian centres and a growing political influence which so worried the Stalinists that they murdered two of its leaders, Mario Acquaviva and Fausto Atti. Subsequently the establishment of the Italian Republic, the activity of the US secret services and the Marshall Plan all allowed the Italian bourgeoisie to stave off the proletarian threat. In 1951 the Party suffered its one and only split when the followers of Bordiga (who had himself never joined the Internationalist Communist Party) split arguing for work inside unions, that Russia was not a capitalist state and with sympathy towards bourgeois national liberation struggles. They also held the conception that the Party was the class, a view rejected by the internationalists as wrong and undialectical.

With the post-war boom the Internationalist Communist Party's membership inevitably declined to a handful. However it did keep alive and develop the communist programme within the working class through its paper, Battaglia Comunista. When the cycle of boom gave way to the present crisis the Party was able to intervene and in a small way grow.

## France 25 Years Ago May '68

This brings us to the second anniversary - that of May '68 in France. After twenty years of continuous growth unprecedented in capitalist history. This growth was based on the massive destruction of World War Two. But in the mid-Sixties there were already straws of a new crisis in the wind. The British Government had been forced to devalue, the US trade balance had gone into the red and the rate of increase of working class living standards had begun to slow down. In Britain alone the number of strikes had tripled in the decade up to 1967.

This was the background to the biggest mass strike ever seen in Europe. On May 9th, 1968 ten million French workers went on strike. The movement had begun with a rash of factory occupations which now became a flood. Intense political discussion took place in about a quarter of the workplaces despite the determined opposition of the Communist Party union, the CGT. At first, no economic demands came from the workers. Only when the unions negotiated a wage rise of 10% (inflation was 5% at the time) did the question of wages surface, and even then the class at first united in massive rejection of the offer. However the movement had no political direction, and no independent programme. The fact that the spark to the movement came from the student battles with the police in the Latin Quarter in Paris with their vague rejection of consumerism and incoherent libertarianism only underlines its weakness.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the student leaders of May 68 actually theorised the movement's weakness. As he told Jean-Paul Sartre in a famous interview

*Our movement's strength is precisely that it is based on an 'uncontrollable' spontaneity, that it gives an impetus without trying to canalise it or use the action it has unleashed to its own profit.*

The Student Revolt - The Activists Speak (Pan



Mario Acquaviva: internationalist worker killed by Stalinism 1945

out of steam the union leaders of the French CP in the CGT were able to get an improved offer of 15% and a return to work. Even then this only happened over a period of weeks and after De Gaulle, the French President, had mobilised the Army for a showdown.

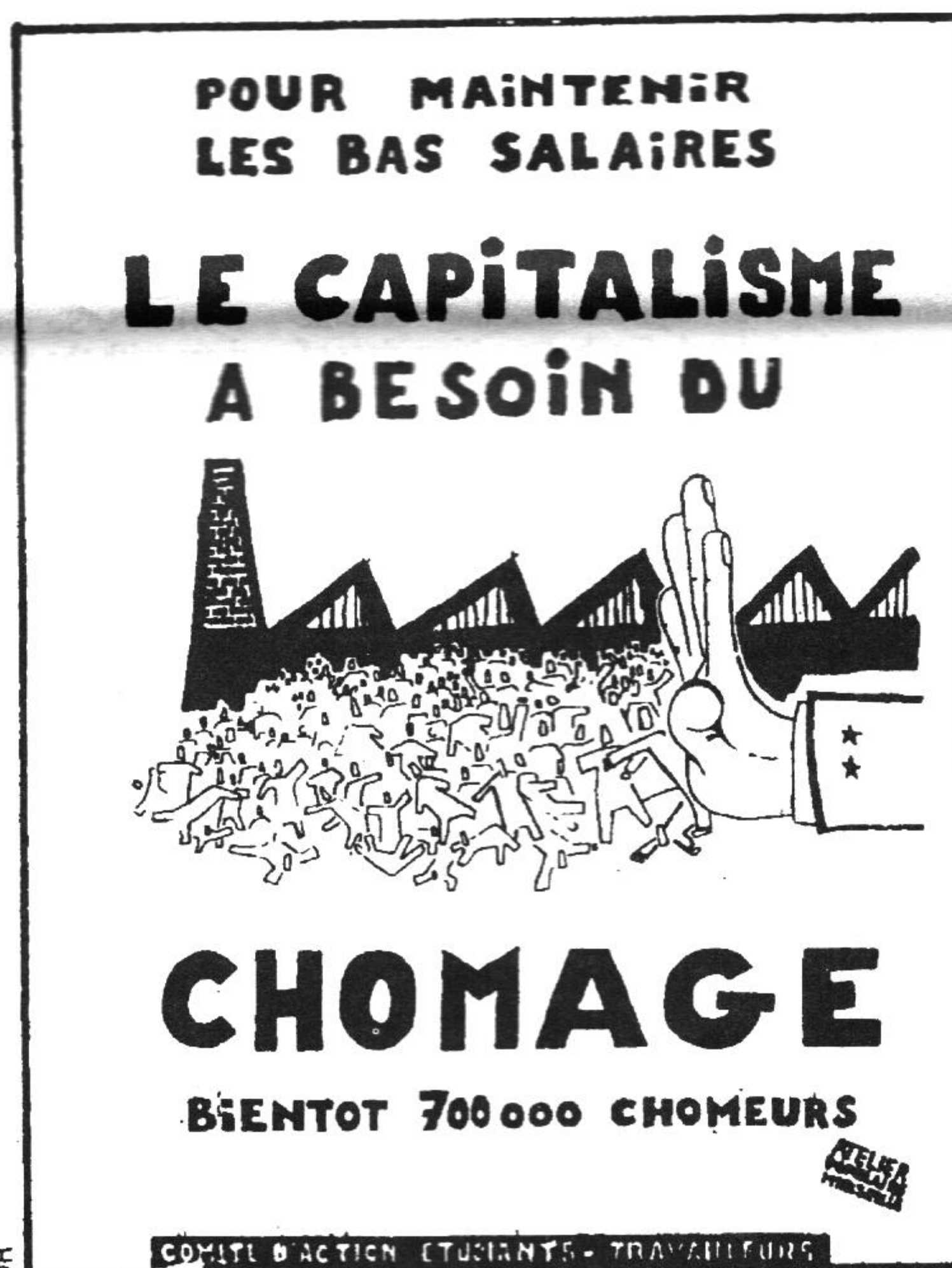
Although a few action committees of rank and file union members had begun to break out of the old framework, the working class never really challenged the unions to any significant extent in May '68. The capitalist crisis was still in its infancy at that time. Capital still had the leeway to make concessions to such a massive movement and thus the unions were able to deliver wage increases. The unions were also very strong at this point. The CGT, for example could organise 20,000 stewards to police demonstrations, to prevent students talking to workers and to generally control much of what went on in the factories. At the same time it was easy for the Communist and Socialist Parties to seize on De Gaulle's offer of a general election to divide the radicals from the less convinced militants. This allowed the CGT to bring the strike movement to an end within three days at the beginning of June.

This paved the way for the reaction. The CRS, the dreaded French riot police went on the rampage killing a high school student and beating up workers who had been occupying factories. Even then it was mid-June before the car plant were back at work and only after offers like the 40% the workers at Renault's Flins plant had gained.

For many though, the economic gains soon evaporated but a series of major workers' struggles took place in many countries (Spain, Italy, Argentina, Poland, Portugal and Britain all gave hope that the challenge to capitalism could develop into a revolutionary movement. In terms of revolutionary minorities there was a faint echo of 1943 as many new groups operating on the position of the communist left emerged. One of these was the Communist Workers' Organisation which was founded in Liverpool in September, 1975. At that time its platform shared some of the libertarian notions of the 1968 movement but discussion and debate with other groups, most notably the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) gradually led to our adoption of the political inheritance of the Italian comrades by 1982.

Meanwhile the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) had initiated the International Conferences of the Groups of the Communist Left in 1977. The CWO adhered to these, and subsequently, in 1984, we formed the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party which sees itself not only as the heir of the struggles of the internationalist communist left but also as a point of reference towards the formation of the future world party of the proletariat.

JD.



Prophetic poster from May '68. It says: To keep wages down capitalism needs unemployment which is already 700,000. We know the rest of that story!

Books, 1968)

This expresses the truth of the energy of the movement especially when faced up to the reactionary "Communist" Party. However by the same token there was no programme which was clear about the situation. Nor was there a counter-organisation to those of the capitalists of both left and right. May '68 proves beyond all shadow of doubt that the working class has to have a militant minority who can direct the movement to attack the schemes and organisations of capitalist domination. In short a communist programme and a militant organisation are indispensable weapons of the working class. This the students of May '68, many of whom accepted the idea that the workers in Western Europe had been bought off by capitalism, failed to understand. Inevitably such movements without aims or direction begin to run out of steam. When this one began to run



Italy: 50 Years Ago

# The Strikes of March 1943

*Fifty years ago the Italian Communist Left began the reorganisation of the class party*

On March 5th 1943 the workers at workshop 19 of the Fiat-Mirafiori factory in Turin downed tools in the first of a series of sudden work stoppages. These gradually spread to other factories Microtecnica, Fiat Grandi Motori and Fiat Lingotto, Savigliano, Riv Westinghouse and others in the city. In the days following, despite the arrests of hundreds of workers, almost all the works in the Piedmontese capital were stopped by strikes which had by now widened across the province.

The workers had been driven to despair by an increasingly unbearable economic and social situation, both through the hardships and sufferings provoked by the continuation of the war, and the fascist dictatorship and the superexploitation which they had to submit to in the factories in return for starvation wages. The strike movement put forward the following demands; compensation for forced evacuation equal to 192 hours wages; a cost of living allowance; an increase in food rations, the freeing of their comrades who had been arrested and the right to have a "real representation in the factories". These demands were set out in a small manifesto signed by the "Workers' Committee".

## The Reactionary Role of the Italian CP

The communist workers were very active and at this point the PCI (the Stalinists of the Italian Communist Party) tried hard to weave together its own clandestine organisational network. It recruited as many elements as possible who would therefore be politically controllable in the event of the fall of fascism and the transition to a democratic regime. This wasn't an easy task for the PCI's National-Communist leaders especially as they repeatedly had to denounce "an excessive spirit of sectarianism" amongst both the old militants and the youngest recruits.

At this time the PCI leadership tactically preferred not to give any political direction to the strikes and was concerned only to have a successful strike around exclusively economic slogans. This rule also applied in the Milan strikes when from March 23rd to March 28th the workers of Breda, Magnaghi, Falk, Pirelli-Bicocca, Ercole Marelli, Borletti, Olap, Face-Bovisa (where to the song of *Bandiera Rossa* [Red Flag] the workers took on the carabinieri), Caproni etc. entered the struggle.

The entire PCI National-Communist apparatus took up the task of channeling the workers' protests towards a united inter-class movement: a National Front where you could find next to the PSI (the Socialist Party) and the Party of Action, even the monarchist anti-fascists and the loyal opponents of the fascist regime.

This political line aimed at amongst other things reassuring Stalin's Anglo-American allies who were alarmed by "the strikes and disturbances in Northern Italy" and were suspicious, as was the Italian bourgeoisie of the real intentions of the PCI and Russian policy towards Italy. And from Radio Moscow, Mario Correnti (Togliatti) in his "Speeches to Italians" was practically silent about the March strikes. He limited himself to propaganda for a popular anti-fascist people's movement for peace, capable of drawing together the ruling class, the Army, the big bourgeoisie and monarchist circles in a "huge National Front".

After a series of sudden collapses in the course of various political and tactical turns imposed by Moscow and by Togliatti's secretariat [in Italy] the PCI National-Communist organisation reorganised its own leading group under strict instructions: avoid violent social clashes and revolutionary tendencies in the working class; conduct a moderate policy of class conciliation aimed at achieving close collaboration with the Anglo-American military forces, and involvement in the war against the Germans to lighten the pressure on the Russian front.

After expelling from its own ranks any possible left opposition by pitilessly hunting down Trotskyist-Bordigist "bandits" the PCI had for some time worked to penetrate and recruit new ideological and political cadres in the university milieu of the Fascist Littorali, of the kind set up in 1937-8. Profiting from the dissidence towards Fascism and the liberal-democratic orientation which was developing here and there in the undergraduate atmosphere of those "cultural competitions" imposed by the regime, they established secret contact with the young Amendola, Pinto, Trombadori, De Grada, Guttuso, L. Lombardo Radice, Alicata, Ingrao and others, who all flowed into the new leading centres of the PCI.

## The Origins of the Internationalist Communist Party

But besides the new Italian version of Stalinism, whose role the traditional Italian patriotic bourgeoisie later recognised by dedicating celebrations in their honour, the Communist Left were also stirring in the most absolute secrecy in the Fascist gaols and in their places of internal exile. The first internationalist groups, had already been formed at the beginning of 1942. These had, with some difficulty, established contacts, despite being trapped in a vice between the Fascist police and the provocations and denunciations of the party of Togliatti. They thus managed to secure a presence, albeit a weak one in the agitation of March 1943 in Turin and its province (about a 100 comrades) and in Milan which, from that time on, could claim to be the centre of the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party. More "official" witnesses have pointed out the active participation of the militants of the Italian Left in the workers' struggles in the industrial triangle of Northern Italy.

*The internationalists are relatively strong in Asti and have shown themselves to be active in the strikes of March 1943.*

G. Vaccarino, "Aspetti della Resistenza in Italia".

*The workforce of the cement works of Morano sul Po and Ozzano Monferrato of the Unione Cementi Marchino have gone on strike in Casalese. Particularly lively in this zone are small groups of internationalist communists headed by Mario Acquaviva.*

G. Pansa, "Guerra partigiana tra Genova e il Po".

Employed in the Tazzetti di Casale factory, where the internationalists were in the majority on the Internal Commission, our widely-respected leader, Acquaviva, was slaughtered by Togliatti's thugs in July, 1945.

We must remember too that in January 1943 the workers of Waj Assauto in Asti had carried out a protest demonstration for three hours in front of the Fascist union offices and on March 10th had shut down the factory. On March 9th the workers of Ferriera Ercole went on strike, followed by the engineering works of Cendola and Tribulzio, la Miana, le Vetrierie and the workers of La Saffa. Nine men and ten women from the workforces were sent before military tribunals.

The signs of a revival of class struggle were thus obvious at the beginning of 1943 after two decades of ferocious bourgeois reaction and unchallenged Fascist domination. The reconstruction of the revolutionary programme for communism and the internationalist communist party were beginning too.

Those days are remembered because they gave the first signs of an active presence of the militants of the Italian Communist Left at the start of what was — on a world scale at that time — the only response organised on the basis of the marxist and revolutionary communist tradition to the open betrayal of the proletariat by the Stalinist Parties of the Third International.

*Translated from Battaglia Comunista 3, March 1993*

## Life of the Organisation

### Who are we?

The Communist Workers Organisation has existed since 1975 but the political origins of our positions are much older. We regard ourselves as heir to a common tradition which goes from the Communist League of Marx and Engels through the First, Second and Third Internationals to, most recently, those left currents which were expelled from the Third International in the 1920's as the process of Stalinisation developed.

We have always been opposed to Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism and all the other counter-revolutionary distortions of Marxism.

Since 1984 we have formed part of the **International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party** initiated by **Il Partito Comunista Internazionale** (*Battaglia Comunista*). The Platform of this organisation can be found in the first edition of its journal *Internationalist Communist Review* (formerly *Communist Review*) (£1 from the group address) but our basic positions are at the foot of this page.

### Appeal to Readers

Fifteen years of capitalist onslaught have left communist groups as tiny minorities compared to the tasks in front of us. Our resources are inadequate to fight the lies of the capitalists (both free market and state varieties).

We therefore appeal to all contacts, readers, sympathisers and subscribers to help in the struggle to give an authentic internationalist communist voice to the process of self-emancipation of the working class.

You can help by sending for bundles of leaflets or papers. The essence of political organisation is debate so you could also help by sending us letters (however critical), either about articles in previous issues or about your own experiences or ideas.

**The continuation of capitalist rule depends on the passivity of the exploited class. Help us to break that cycle.**

### Other Publications

#### The Platform and Statutes of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

These are now available in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Bengali and Farsi. Each price £1.

#### Internationalist Communist Review

is the central organs in English of the IBRP. Each individual issue is £1.50.

#### Revue Comunista

in French (write to CWO address),

#### Internationalist Notes

in Farsi

#### Prometeo

Theoretical journal of the Internationalist Communist Party (Italy)

#### Battaglia Comunista

Monthly paper of the PCInt (Italy)

We also have publications in **Bengali, Slovene, Czech, and Serbo-Croat.**

Please write to the appropriate address. (PCInt for **Internationalist Notes**)

### Subscription rates

Subscription to **WORKERS VOICE** (6 copies): £2.50 in UK and Eire, £4.00 elsewhere

Subscription to **WORKERS VOICE** (6) and **Internationalist Communist Review** (2): £4.50 UK/Eire £5.50 elsewhere  
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Cheques should be made payable to "CWO Publications"

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Please send local currency OR if writing from abroad **INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS** (within the sterling area postal orders are acceptable). We regret we cannot cash ordinary cheques as the international banking system takes the first \$9 out of \$10 for doing this).

### Pamphlets

CWO Pamphlet No. 1  
**Economic Foundations of Capitalist Decadence** £1

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**1917** £2

## Internationalist Communist Review 11

is now out and includes articles on:

**The War in Ex-Yugoslavia  
Trotskyism and the Collapse of the USSR  
Imperialism and the Working Class**

Price £1.50 from our address or in the bookshops mentioned on p.3

New publication in French

### Bc Inform No. 1

is now available containing articles on the situation in Italy, a polemic with *Le Proletaire* and an editorial on the purpose of the publication. It will be sent free to any subscribers who request it. For others it is 50p per copy.

### Meetings

#### Sheffield Public Debate

with Dave Douglass (Class War)  
**Are Trades Unions  
Revolutionary?**  
Monday, May 24th 1993  
The Grapes, Trippet Lane

#### London

#### Readers Meetings

These will be held regularly in Conway Hall. The next is in May. Write to group address for details

### Addresses for all correspondence

CWO  
**BM Box CWO, London WC1N 3XX.**

Il Partito Comunista Internazionale,  
**CP 1753, 20101 Milano, Italy.**

## Our Basic Positions

1. We aim to establish a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which *the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all* (Marx): **COMMUNISM.**
2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.
3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an international political party for the promotion of world revolution.

4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist states anywhere in the world.

5. The **International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party** was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to achieve - the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!



# Anti-Privatisation — Another Leftist Diversion

## Capitalist crisis - left capitalist responses

Workers in Britain, in common with our sisters and brothers across the "developed" countries, are confronted with a generalised onslaught in which real wages are cut and more workers are thrown out of the productive process every day. In addition as capitalism seeks to reduce non-productive state spending (i.e. those expenses which contribute indirectly rather than directly to capitalist profitability by providing an adequate infrastructure and a reasonably healthy and content working class) and welfare provision is being reduced to pre-1945 (and sometimes pre-1900) levels. Although there can be no doubt about the anger which many workers feel and their desire to launch an effective fight there is still a general paralysis. Workers largely feel helpless and disarmed in the face of these attacks. Of course the Labourists and Trade Union leaders, at all levels, cannot stand by idly in these circumstances. They recognise that, to preserve their salaries and positions in society, they must prepare campaigns which will divert workers onto terrain which will be safe for the capitalist system.

### Why anti-privatisation?

One particular variant which is being wheeled out is the anti-privatisation slogan. That particular sham has a whole number of features which commend it to the Trade Union manoeuvrings. Firstly, the Unions are able to use the same arguments in a whole number of different circumstances. The anti-privatisation card can be used as a diversion on issues as disparate as the opting-out of Local Authority schools, the restructuring of the Rail network, maintaining the unity of British Coal or the increasing breakdown of Civil Service Departments into neo-"quangos". By providing this consistent leitmotif, not only are the Unions' logistics eased but when necessary the various elements of the Unions can pool their resources and run various "broad front" type activities. One example of these offshoots from anti-privatisation are the emergence of *Unite* (Unions in Transport and Energy) which provides networking opportunities amongst the remnants of the former Communist Party/Labour left influenced Union bureaucrats both nationally and in the localities, around Trades Councils etc. Another variant is the Public Services

Alliance, a barely concealed front for Trotskyism's latest bastard offspring, "Militant Labour". A second advantage for the Trade Unions is that the slogan can be raised in response to real attacks without allowing workers to see any hope of organising to defend themselves. Time and again workers are persuaded that anti-privatisation is the right road to follow because of its appeal to public opinion and/or national interest. For instance while tens of thousands of jobs are being lost from the Civil Service and the Unions were accepting wage rises of 1% (a pay cut in real terms even according to the Government's own figures) the Civil Service Unions ran a series of meetings under the theme of "Services First". The anti-privatisation card is also used to distract attention from the role of Labour Councils in reducing local services. The anti-privatisation game is played in numerous Council services but is perhaps clearest when it comes to providing schools for working class children. Labour Councils up and down the country have been shutting down schools and making teachers redundant but have bleated on about opting-out being the major enemy. The Labour Councillors and their Trade Union chums con working people with the illusions of local democratic accountability to take sides with the local job-slashing councillors against those who have fallen for the alternative diversion of independence from the local Council education system.

### Defending State Power

Apart from any tactical considerations the Labour and Trade Union leaders have a far more fundamental interest in spreading the ideology of anti-privatisation. Ever since its appearance as a significant movement the British Labour movement has been dominated by a poisonous belief in the similarity of growing capitalist state power and the emergence of socialism. The roots of that deception were present before 1914 in the influence of the Fabians and other elements which helped nurture the early Labour Party. The situation was further aggravated following the Stalinisation of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties. By the 1930's there was an almost universally accepted belief that a strong and efficient state administering the economy and welfare provision equalled socialism. This view of socialism as a series of 20th Century enlightened despot-

isms had many international variants for the leftists to bow down to ranging from Hoxha's Albania or Castro's Cuba through to the Swedish Social Democratic model. In Britain the tendency towards state capitalism was virtually unchallenged for most of the four decades following the outbreak of the second world war in 1939. As British capitalism desperately seeks to restructure the economy it needs to explore every avenue for redirecting available capital. Expenditure available for social provision via Local Authorities and Central Government was already being squeezed down during the 1970s. Since the start of the 1980's this pressure increased and acquired the ideological trappings of monetarism and Thatcherism. This reduction in social provision has resulted in the reappearance of diseases such as rickets amongst children in Britain and the mushrooming of cardboard cities in every major urban area. For the Labourists and Trade Unionists the far more worrying effect has been the loss of the traditional network of "beer and sandwiches" meetings where the Unions can be seen to be sitting with the bosses and their governments to smooth out the excesses of capitalist exploitation. The changes which have resulted in the tendency towards privatisation have therefore also challenged the unions' role in the organisation of the state. The union bosses are not fools. They realise that to regain their position and the degree of influence which they exert over the working class they need to maintain and extend the state capitalist structures wherever they can.

### Leftists Fall into Line

Where the Trade Unions lead the leftist camp-followers are never far behind. It is hard to find an edition of any leftist paper which does not have its own recipe for building the anti-privatisation campaign more effectively. Perhaps the crassest formulas are expressed in the *Militant* (2/4/93). Their "What we stand for" column is scattered with pleas for a State capitalist solution such as calls for "Reversal of all Tory (!) cuts and a massive programme of public spending on housing, education and health" and "Nationalisation of the 150 largest companies, including banks and insurance companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with **compensation only for any shareholder in genuine need(!)**". A

of social security the situation is explosive. However the South African state has not been slow to channel anger into conflicts it can cope with. State funds and state agents have created a mini-civil war between the poorest workers, pitting Xhosa against Zulu, ANC members against the followers of Inkatha. If the blacks fight each other they won't fight the system.

### ANC to the Rescue

But the best defence of South African capitalism is the ANC. For years the US and British-based multinationals, in their aim of maintaining stability for their investments have been pushing for an end to apartheid. Their preferred candidate has been Mandela. After the murder of Hani it was Mandela, not De Klerk, who called for calm. Whilst De Klerk didn't bother to come back from his holidays, Mandela insisted on making two broadcasts for peace on South African TV on the day of Hani's death.

*Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for - the freedom of all of us.*  
Financial Times 19.4.93

ANC marshals on the streets have largely kept the angriest of the youth in check. This has been the role of the ANC since long before Mandela's release three years ago. The African National Congress is in reality the movement of the South African black bourgeoisie. Its leaders no longer live in the townships but in previously white suburbs like Boksburg where Hani was gunned down outside his home. There are now black

more direct call for a left cover for the Unions' manoeuvres is in *Workers Power* (February 1993). In an article headed "Fight privatisation!", WP argue for a rank and file railworkers' movement to be organised to fight against the Tory restructuring of British Rail.

### A Communist Response

For the leftists in general and the Trades Unions in particular anti-privatisation has been an opportunity to lecture workers about the benefits of a strong and well-organised state machine. Posed with these charades workers would do worse than recalling the words of Daniel Guerin when describing "democratic anti-fascism" -

*Beware of "anti" formulas. They are always inadequate because they are purely negative. One cannot conquer a principle except by opposing to it another principle - a superior principle.*<sup>1</sup>

At present workers are not yet taking any consistent defensive actions against attacks on jobs, wages and social provision. The leftists "anti-privatisation" theme has been prepared to divert any developing struggles into arguments about how best the capitalist state and its agencies should organise services. Communists must warn against such diversions. Workers have no interest in preserving capitalist forms of organisation whether in the shape of the 1945 welfare state, the posturings of the 1970's and '80's Labour Councils, or the Thatcher-Major devolved and means tested "safety net"ism. Against the siren songs of the leftists, communists counterpose our "superior principle" - the struggle for a revolution which can only be based on workers organising to fight in their own interests to overthrow capitalist social relations. That revolution will lay the basis for a world in which concepts such as National Health Services or privatised health care will have no more relevance than the magic and totems of prehistoric wall paintings.

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> D Guerin - Preface to 1945 Edition *Fascism and Big Business*

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## South Africa after the Hani Murder

# The ANC - The Shield of South African Capitalism

The murder of Chris Hani, a leading member of the South African Communist Party and one-time head of the ANC guerrilla organisation, has once again created a major crisis for the apartheid regime in South Africa. It seems likely that this was the intention of the murderers. Those accused are connected to the fascist AWB of Eugene Terre Blanche and the extreme right wing of the ultra-racist Conservative Party, although the role of the South African security forces has yet to be explained. For years the ultra-right have been systematically outmanoeuvred by the National Party led by President De Klerk for years and this is an act intended to disrupt the slow process towards a power-sharing system between the ex-colonial white minority and the black majority. Plunging that process into chaos is their best bet of avoiding black majority rule.

### Conditions of the Majority

Amazingly the black supporters of the ANC have shown considerable restraint. It is true that Mandela was booed by the youth element in the ANC when demanding calm, and it is true that there have been some riots. However the scale of these has been relatively small. The death-toll (some 28 people) in the week of Hani's funeral has largely been down to the indescribable brutality of the South African police against black demonstrators. It is also lower than the normal weekly average.

This restraint is all the more amazing when we remember that, for all the talk, the situation of the blacks in South Africa is worse than ten years ago. Black workers still earn only an eighth of white workers and unemployment in the townships has risen to almost 50%. Income per head has fallen 1.5% every year since 1981. As inflation is around 20% and there is no system

millionaires who finance the ANC and supply Mandela with a wealthy life-style. As the CWO has argued for almost twenty years the ending of apartheid will only marginally improve the civic status of blacks. It will not end their exploitation and poverty. In fact the ANC's democratic programme for blacks is essential to maintain the capitalist state in South Africa. As the Financial Times concluded

*The expectation that talks, due to resume soon, will set a date for elections, was a vital safety valve.*

In an editorial on 19th April, 1993.

It will change nothing for the working class in South Africa which must develop its own programme. As we wrote only last year,

*South African workers should not be diverted from their own programme as apartheid's collapse dominates the agenda. Workers should continue to fight on the economic front for better wages and conditions and against redundancies. Here they will immediately come into conflict with the ANC-dominated unions. These will call more and more openly for workers to give the ANC a chance, be patient and even make sacrifices for the "good of the country". All this shit has been heard before. South African workers will have to break with the millionaire businessmen who fund the nationalists and their henchmen in the trades unions. With the collapse of apartheid the real class struggle can begin.*

*Black Bosses Closer to Power — No Change for the Workers* (*Workers' Voice* 61, p.3)

J.