

WORKERS VOICE

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Gaza and Jericho:

U.S. Imperialism's Triumph in the Middle East

The sudden announcement of the secret talks in Oslo between the Israeli government and the PLO should have taken no-one by surprise. Last January the Israeli government rescinded its own law which put anyone talking with the PLO into prison and throughout August there were signs in the PLO camp that Arafat had gone behind the backs of the official Palestinian negotiators at the peace talks in Washington. The outcome of historic mutual recognition of each other's existence by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation only underlines what we have been saying for decades. No other area on earth confirms the communist analysis of imperialism and the national question better than the Middle East.

In the first place there is no such thing as a genuine struggle for national liberation today. All such "struggles" are simply covers for the manoeuvres of the major imperialist powers. There are equally no states or even proto-states today which can be considered anti-imperialist since all of them play the Great Game of trying to expand their own bourgeoisie's interests at the expense of another's. As always the ultimate and most savagely treated victims of these games are the working class of all lands. The end of the Cold War did not bring an end to this imperialist manoeuvring. It simply changed weakened old alliances and potentially created new ones. The present defeat of the PLO's aim of establishing a state to replace "the Zionist entity" is part of that process.

Appeals to nationalism are simply calls by the bourgeoisie for their national capitalist interests. This is no less true for Palestinians under the sway of the PLO than it is for Israeli workers. Workers taking part in a national struggle cannot be fighting for their own demands which are all

against their exploiters — the parasites of the national bourgeoisie.

The Imperialist Origins of Israel

Israel was born of imperialism. During the First World War the British had worked with local Arab bourgeois and local feudal rulers to combat the Turkish imperialists. They also sought to secure Jewish support by promising the Zionist lobby (then a far smaller influence amongst European Jews than the various socialist elements) a future state in Palestine. The Arabs, subjected to control by French and British imperialism alike (under the notorious mandate system of the League of Nations) were thus increasingly driven towards pro-German positions in the Thirties. Having backed the wrong imperialist horse they suffered what is now euphemistically called "ethnic cleansing" at the hands of Zionist terrorist gangs after World War Two. Thousands were murdered and millions were "displaced". The wartime Allies (the USSR included) all sponsored the formation of the

state of Israel in 1948. The surrounding Arab states immediately attacked but with no support from outside (the Israelis were supported by funds from the US) they were convincingly defeated. "Palestine" was reduced to the West Bank and Gaza and three million Palestinians today live in the diaspora mainly in Algeria, Lebanon, Syria, the Yemen and Jordan.

The Arabs however took comfort from the split in the wartime alliance and the beginning of the

Cold War. They now looked to the USSR which sponsored a number of "national revolutions" in the 1950's in Iraq, Syria and Egypt as well as Algeria and Libya later. Three wars later however it was clear that there was a gross discrepancy between the strength of the two so-called super-powers in the Middle East (and elsewhere). The USSR was not capable of matching the USA in either financial or military

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This "peace" is nothing but an American victory, and will not end the bosses' attacks on all proletarians.

Timex: Lessons for Us All

John Smith's hypocritical claim at the TUC Conference that the Labour Party had supported the Timex workers should have made every class-conscious proletarian vomit. It was a case of a crocodile's tears before a bunch of sharks. The AUEE delegates who applauded Smith's

sudden discovery of the barbarism of a British capitalism (which he will, of course run in a more civilised fashion) were not exactly innocent in this defeat either. By attacking any workers who gave picket line solidarity, by threatening to expel Timex workers who went beyond the

union's stranglehold of the strike the AUEE were amongst the chief architects of the isolation of the Timex workers.

But this was not a "betrayal" as the leftist press like *Socialist Worker* make out. These union hacks were acting within the political framework they support — capitalism. This is why they urged respect for the capi-

talist law and tried to isolate the Timex workers from the rest of the working class. The fake solidarity they, the Labour Party and the other unions organised, were not passive acts of sabotage but part of a deliberate strategy to limit the struggle to the trades dispute level, the level at which any struggle can be contained by capitalism.

Now the closure of the Timex plant four months early signals the end of what the bosses media called

one of the most bitter disputes in Britain with the worst picket line violence since the miners' strike... Daily Record 10.8.93.

In earlier issues we have saluted the militancy and courage of the Timex workers, and their attempts to get international solidarity. With the end of the strike it is time to draw a balance sheet.

As we warned throughout the strike failure was inevitable if the struggle continued on in isolation. You can have the most militant mobilisation of pickets in the world but if the struggle is isolated to a single factory the bosses can live with it. They can move production and capital and simply outmanoeuvre the workers. This is especially true today when international capital movement is so easy and multinationals like that which owned Timex have alternatives. The defeat in Dundee has only reinforced the weakness of the workers in other Timex plants like Besançon in France. This is why isolated struggles like that at Middlebrook Mushrooms (owned by the multinational, Booker (of Booker Prize fame)) and Burnsalls in Smethwick are likely to go down the same road as Timex. It also explains why the lunatic slogans of left capitalist groups like **Workers' Power** and **Scottish**

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Tales of Mystery and Imagination

The Great British Recovery

Strange as it may seem, the British Tory Party is beginning to resemble the old Workers' Revolutionary Party. The WRP used to seize on the slightest evidence of economic crisis as proof that the final collapse of capitalism was underway, that the masses were about to turn to

international capitalism is in crisis, and the cause of this crisis is the fall in the rate of profit.

International capitalism today is so interlinked that there can be no unaffected areas when it goes into recession. If a capital's trading partners can't buy its goods, it suffers too. "Buoyant" areas (and Britain is 'töne) are like balloons in the ballroom of the Titanic — when the ship goes down, they go down too, no matter how "buoyant" they are compared to their surroundings.

A glance at Chart 1 will show how little there is an inter-

national recovery. Only Australia, Canada, the UK and the US had GDP's which grew at all. And even then, Australia's growth was not matched by a growth in industrial production, i.e., roughly speaking³, its contribution to the real world economy shrank, even if it was able to drain profits from elsewhere.

The Myth of "Jobless Growth"

Of the four countries which show a year-on-year increase in industrial production (Canada, Sweden, the UK and the US) in Chart 1, only the US shows a year-on-year reduction in unemployment in Chart 2, and this reduction bears no relation to the increase in production. This circumstance has led to the idea of "jobless growth".

For Marxists, the concept makes no sense on a world scale, as the only source of value is living labour, workers working for capitalists and producing surplus for them. However, it is perfectly possible for a capitalist to sell his products as if they contain more value than they do. In this sense, "jobless growth" is possible, but it is the growth of part of the capitalist economy at the expense of the whole, and cannot lead to a recovery for the whole.

Conclusion

Despite the recent statistics, even if these could be trusted, the British economy is still a part of the world economy and this is still in recession. The basic crisis that capitalism is facing is that of the end of a cycle of accumulation. Too much constant capital has been accumulated and needs to be wiped out before accumulation can begin again. This requires war, just as the previous cycles this century required the First and Second World Wars. This crisis remains even if this recession allows of minor local revivals as various economies become better adjusted to it, or offload its effects onto their rivals, but does not have a capitalist solution other than world war. The evidence that the British recovery is undergoing one of these local revivals is exceedingly slim. If short-term statistics could be relied upon to say anything of importance, then the recent

ones would be counteracted by today's news (10th September): despite Tory allegations that Britain is coming out of recession as the rest of the world is entering it more deeply, Britain has a trade deficit of £3.4 billion in this quarter!¹

EDL

Notes

¹4th September 1993 — the same issue is the source of the figures used to produce the graphs in this article.

²Aus stands for Australia, not Austria.

³Roughly speaking, because part of industrial production is waste production (e.g., armaments) and part of non-industrial production produces value (e.g., transport of goods) as contrasted to banking, say.

⁴Even if this figure is better than expected, and better than that for the preceding quarter, this just means things are getting worse for British capitalism at a slower rate!

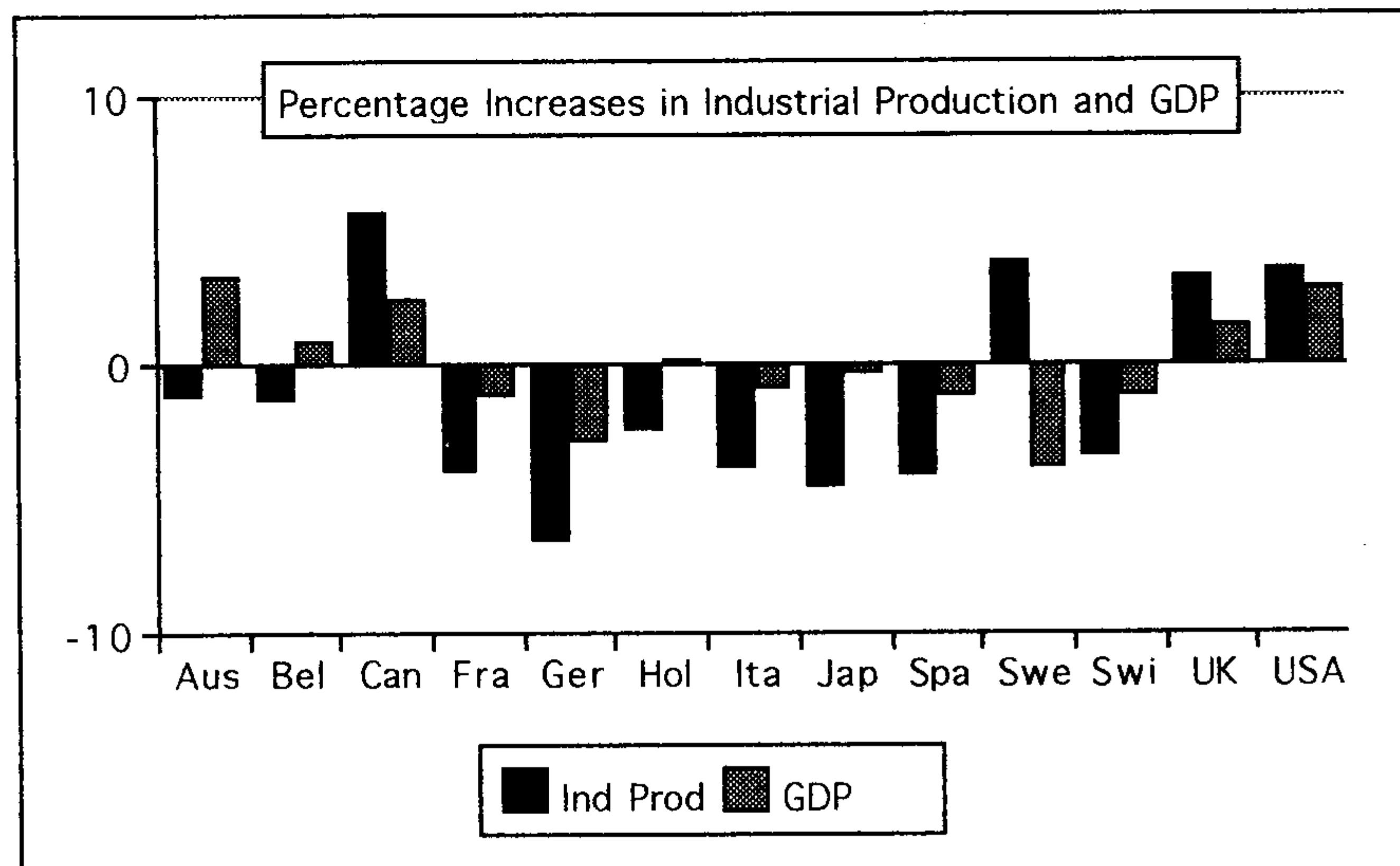


Chart 1

them as a "good" leadership, as an automatic result of the crisis, and the WRP would lead the way to the promised land. Although the Tories can't compete with the bizarre idea that socialism is a basically question of leadership rather than of consciousness, or that there is anything "good" about the WRP, their continual seizing on the slightest blip in British capitalism's downward progress and hyping it up to be the recovery's first signs is becoming reminiscent. After all, they've been doing it for years in the face of the stubborn refusal of the recovery to arrive, just as the WRP's leadership rôle has failed to materialise.

If a bunch of madmen say something is going to happen, even if they said it was going to happen on each of 99 days when it didn't, that is no proof that it is not going to happen on the 100th. This being so, we should at least look at the evidence.

A Powerful Case?

The problem is, there just isn't much evidence to be found. Yes, both industrial production and Gross Domestic Product are up in Britain (see Chart 1), but not by enough to compensate for years of overall decline. Yes, unemployment has had a slight fall over past months (but there is no real evidence that this is really a result of things happening in the economy rather than of the government's campaign to get people to sign off for other reasons — see *More Crisis, More Cuts* opposite), but more people are unemployed now than a year ago. Two blips don't make a recovery.

Even the *Economist*, in its article *Wrestling with the Deficit*¹, after stating *the recovery is proving more robust than expected, and so unemployment benefits will fall and taxes revive more quickly*, has to admit, in the same article, that the amount needed for social security will grow by 3% in real terms. Other problems for the State are that debt-interest payments are growing by 9% a year and that the oil revenues and privatisation receipts it used to pay debts are running out. Hence the desperation to find something to privatise that someone actually wants implicit in breaking up vital infrastructure like the railways — but even this is made more difficult by the fact that investment has been "neglected" (read "was not profitable enough"): it fell from 9% of GDP in the mid-'70's to 1.5% in 1992.

The International Dimension

Back in the mists of time, or rather a few months ago, the Tories were telling us a different tale. Then, before seizing on the spurious signs of a recovery which is all due to their magnificent handling of the economy, they were spinning the yarn that the economy couldn't be controlled by anyone, that the recession wasn't anything to do with them, that it was an import from abroad, that it was the fault of the international recession. And, in truth, this version was closer to the reality. And it still is. Apart from the "detail" that the British recession wasn't (and isn't) caused by the international one but rather reflects and fully participates in it, it is still true that in-

...and in Italy

WORKERS' INSURRECTION Faces All the State's Forces

Anyone who has seen the Enichem plant in Crotone will understand the isolation of the workers there. It is the only industrial plant in the whole of the eastern part of Catanzaro province. Its closure, with the loss of over 330 jobs will condemn a town where tourism and the tertiary sector are virtually non-existent to social extinction. Crotone, the birthplace of Pythagoras, has found that capitalist economics add up to destitution.

The revolt, which broke out on September 6th, in which workers stormed the factory, burning some of it and occupying the rest, can thus be understood. Today the workers wait with tons of phosphorus and ammonia ready to ignite the rest if the police move in. There is a general strike supported even by the petty bourgeois shopkeepers who would also be ruined by the closure. Relatives of the workers have set up blockades including one on the tracks of the main south coast railway line from Taranto to Sicily (see picture). Crotone is under siege but not just by the Carabinieri and the army. It is being assaulted by

attack from all sectors of the bourgeois state.

• Government promises of "new industry" (a tennis racket factory!) have never materialised. Now, in the face of the insurrection they have postponed the layoffs ... for a week. The workers have not been fooled. However...

• The trades unions, the left part of the capitalist state, not only "negotiated" the closure of the plant (without consulting the workers) but are today condemning the workers' resistance. Lama, the Norman Willis of Italy has called for an end to the revolt saying it will "harm the workers case".

• No less predictably the right-wing press are saying the closure is a necessity in order to cut Italy's budget deficit (which owes plenty to the corruption amongst their pals). As always the workers must pay for the crisis created by the capitalists.

• The PDS (Party of the Democratic Left), the ex Communist Party, which runs Crotone town council has suddenly woken up and is trying to regain control of this spontaneous movement by

preventing Enichem from extracting methane from rigs offshore from Crotone.

A one day (!) national general strike has been planned by the unions in order to divert the anger of the workers throughout Italy who were already involved in struggles against the latest cuts and layoffs throughout the country.

The Crotone revolt is an act of desperation. It is isolated. The news from Crotone reached us as we were going to press and in our next issue we will publish more information from the Catanzaro section of our sister group, in the IBRP, **Battaglia Comunista**. All we can say at the present is that one slogan circulating among Italian workers is "One, two, many Crotones". It would be good if this happened but the Italian workers are, like workers in many countries, facing a sophisticated ruling class which includes the PDS and the unions. They have to overcome them all if one isolated outburst of anger and despair is to be turned against a system whose main product is misery.

STOP PRESS

Our comrades of BC tell us that the unions have taken over the action. The unions are, for the moment, maintaining the occupation, and will, no doubt, ensure there is no damage to capital.

Although this is a dangerous game for the unions to play (as they have nothing to offer the workers), the present strength of their hold in Crotone is shown by workers denouncing a paper seller of *Socialismo rivoluzionario* (the largest Italian Trotskyist group) to the police, who then made an arrest!



The Welfare State

More Crisis, More Cuts

Since the start of the present economic crisis the message has been clear: accept cuts today and "we" won't be in a mess tomorrow. However, this idea loses its edge once it's been used for 15 or 20 years and it's obvious for anyone who cares to look that the cuts in services are a direct way of making the working class, mostly the poorest sections of the working class, pay for the crisis.

It's worth remembering that cut-backs in services are not the invention of the Tories. In the late '70's Labour, under Callaghan and Healey, was urging us to "tighten our belts" for the common good. Today the Tories can afford to be more blatant and after years of grinding down the working class they hardly try to hide the fact that the cuts are all about making workers pay for the present mess.

Morality Tales from Asil's Friends

Peter Lilley's **No Turning Back Group** feels quite confident in pushing out ideas like abolishing state earning-related pensions and child benefits, halving housing benefit and drastically cutting back invalidity benefit.

Although there is an element here of the Tory Right taking soundings for their ideal measures to see what the Tories could get away with, there is no doubt that another set of draconian cuts are on the way.

The "moral" path for cuts in the Social Security budget was laid with the much publicised crackdown on "fraudulent" claims in August. The Department of Social Security and the Employment Service have been competing with each other to see how many people they can either prosecute for fraud or withdraw from benefits. Peter Lilley's gang at the DSS claim to have saved £500 millions by cracking down on so-called scroungers. On closer inspection this amount is a perfect example of "lies, damned lies and statistics". It is arrived at by taking the amount actually saved and multiplying it by 32

(to make up for the benefits that would have been lost had the fraud not been "detected"). It also includes the DSS's own mistakes.

In reality, the amount of DSS fraud is tiny — only 1.4% of all unemployment claims. Even with the 1989 Social Security Act making it more difficult for people to claim benefits, 1.4% is a miserly figure. It cost the Government £26.4 millions to manage this, money well spent if it's the successful advertising campaign they hoped for.

By labelling those who are least able to fight back as "scroungers", the Tories hope to divide the working class further into "respectable" home-owning types and those living off the state.

The much hyped "dependency culture" problem is trotted out before cuts are announced. The Government's moral indignation at those who want "something for nothing" is a sick joke made by the chums of Ail Nadir, the Guinness fraudsters and a whole host of multi-millionaire parasites, and this is without mentioning the taking of directorships by Tory ministers like Lamont, Tebbit and Gummer. But the Government will make sure its class won't be the one to pay for the crisis. Some of the plans in the pipeline include:

- cuts in grants to Housing Associations. From next April the Government grant will be reduced from 67% of housing development costs to 62%. In two years' time it plans to reduce it to 55%. By then some 85% of Housing Association tenants will need Housing Benefit to pay the massive increase in rents. The Government has already said in advance it will tighten eligibility for housing benefits and hopes to halve the amount spent.

- VAT on domestic fuel. People on benefits and low incomes spend a larger percentage on fuel than anyone else. VAT on fuel will hit seven times as hard on the poorest 10% as on the richest 10%. Single parent families, the states'

pet hate, will have to spend twice as much of their income on fuel as other families. The Government's attempts to bring VAT gradually is not going to be enough for millions on low incomes. VAT will be introduced at 8% from 1994 and 17.5% from 1995; some 5.3 million pensioners and 2.6 million disabled people will not be eligible for any help with the cost.

- increased charges for water and sewage services are on the way. Whichever scheme is eventually chosen (be it meters or licences, etc.) the worst-off will be low paid workers and pensioners and the best-off will be the countries' highest earners.

- cuts by the Department of the Environment of some £700 millions from local authorities are due next year. As well as services, the Government wants to cut the pay of teachers and other local authority workers. Again the old divide and rule method is being used here, and the question is being posed as cuts in services affecting mostly those with no or low paid jobs or cuts in wages for those with jobs.

The Welfare State — No Longer Needed by the Bosses

The Welfare State has outstayed its welcome for the present ruling class. The present cuts in services and the ideological attacks on the "dependency culture" are only symptoms of the dismantling of the welfare safety net.

The Tories won't do away with the welfare state altogether: some safety valves will remain as a buffer against social unrest. No doubt many in the Labour "movement" see this act as a great betrayal, and cannot believe that the Labour Party stands by whilst the Welfare State, upon which so many had pinned their hopes, is being hacked to pieces. In fact the Labour Party, whilst it prattles on about two-tier systems, is not actively jumping to defend the idea of the

Welfare State in its old form anymore. Even the Left Wing **Tribune Group** is interested only in enhancing Labour's credibility for the next election.

In the meantime the Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has stated the Labour Party has done away with its election promises to tax the "better-off" and increase public spending including increasing Pensions and Child Benefit.

"Tax and Spend" has been quietly replaced with "invest and grow". The pretence of Labour as defender of the Welfare State has worn out. Gordon Brown sounds like any Tory politician:

Public services exist for one purpose — to enhance people's opportunities and prosperity. Whenever spending has become divorced from these purposes then it is wasteful and we should cut it or eliminate it.

quoted in the *Guardian* 18th August 1993.

Little wonder, then, that the original Labour founders of the capitalists' Welfare State feel disgruntled that the original aims of Social Democracy are now being dropped by the Right. In a speech made in London in November, J.K. Galbraith, the pro-Labour US economist, stated that the Right was only able to abandon the Welfare State now that Social Democracy had carried out its function in stabilising capitalism and contributing to social peace.

Given the fact that neither Labour nor the Tories particularly want to (or can) finance the Welfare State in a crippling period of recession, and given the fact that neither perceive any present danger from social unrest, it's hardly surprising the proposed level of cuts is so dramatic. Nor is it surprising that at a local level left-wing Labour councils are at the forefront of cutting services. As unemployed workers in Sheffield recently discovered, a council which claims to be Socialist can cause as much damage as any other. Some 4000 unemployed workers who have enrolled on courses in Sheffield College may now be handed the bill for their tuition because of cutbacks by Sheffield council. As Sheffield's Director of Education stated, the council is in a tough financial position. It's as simple as that. There's no sign of the defence of living standards of workers here.

The real losers from this are not the Labour Party which suffered defeat in the election, or the Labour Left suffering a lack of credibility by doing what it does best — capitalism's dirty work. The people who have lost most are those sections of the working class who were the worst-off anyway. But even worse is to come. Peter Lilley and his Tory Right want to put pressure on the unemployed by privatising Job Centres and encouraging them to bring in schemes to make the "work shy" take jobs at below market rates. Unemployed workers face attacks on all sides: wages are so low they can't afford to work. Benefit is cut to make them work, and so they're forced to accept the "illegal" low paid dirty and dangerous jobs. If they're caught they lose their benefits and are fined or imprisoned. They're labelled as scroungers by the greatest scrounging class in history. Unemployment is set to rise, and so are the state's attacks against the unemployed. In the meantime the bosses and their allies can find the money to award themselves huge pay rises. The leaders of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Unions have awarded themselves a pay rise of 20% for their previous good work in signing no-strike deals for their members.

There is no way out of the present crisis this side of world war. No matter what Labour and its left hangers-on promise, it can't make capitalism work and it can't turn it into a humanitarian system. Its attempt to do this with the introduction of the Welfare State after the Second World War has failed and the state cannot carry the necessary level of expense in the economic crisis. The era of an all-caring Welfare State has ended and with it the hopes of millions of workers who were brought up to believe that Labour could somehow make life permanently better. Capitalism has nothing to offer us except more of the same misery and worse. Its political destruction is long overdue.

RT

See the recent Hain/Berry pamphlet *Labour and the Economy*.

Timex: the Lessons for Us All

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Militant that the factory should have been occupied are equally futile. Sitting in a factory which produces nothing will not harm bosses who are prepared only to make massive wage reductions or cease production. It simply imprisons the workers in their own struggle.

To their credit the Timex workers themselves had more sense than the leftists. They recognised, as one of them put it that

have not coordinated their struggles). If a huge section of the working class as the miners were in 1984 can be contained because they fought alone what chance small factories?

In the present climate solidarity action of this kind is unlikely. With an unemployment level over 4 million (let's stop quoting the sham figures of the state) the bosses are on the

an individual basis. It is a capitalist appeal. It has nothing to do with an action requiring class solidarity and collective action like blacking and picketing. Not surprisingly those who tend to tail-end the Labour Party have rallied round including the Glasgow Anarchists who put out a leaflet calling for support for this diversion

We ask for your support in boycotting Timex products and blacking all companies that do business with Timex.

These types of appeal are just like the calls to donate to Oxfam. It might make workers feel better but it does nothing to change the real situation. It encourages passivity and discourages active solidarity action by workers who all basically are in the same plight.

In the present crisis there is a potential for winning even partial victories if workers in a single factory, area or industry take on the bosses on their own. The traditional boundaries of Trade Unionist solidarity are a prison which workers have to break out of. Workers in all sectors need to build links with each other and take the direction of struggles into their own hands and away from the unions. This is the lesson that Timex gives to us all.

JK

Ten Years Ago

Many workers now realise that their backs are to the wall and there is no further room for retreat. At the Timex factory in Dundee, after the bosses enforced 1,900 redundancies with union co-operation, the demand for another 200 led to an occupation and seizure of £40 millions of machinery destined for shipment to France. Though encouraging, the workers failure to spread their struggle was a serious mistake; they have relied on publicity rather than on solidarity action to spread their strike. And the union has succeeded in locking up the workers in the plant while they organise phoney support, and tell the workers that if they behave, the Norwegian millionaire Fred Olsen might buy the works.

From Unions Act to Divide the Workers (Workers' Voice 11, June 1983)

offensive. Savage attacks on wages and working conditions like that at Timex are being repeated all over the place. The bosses know they can get away with it. The only consolation the Timex workers have is that they kept their pride and showed other workers the need to fight. But even now the fake campaigning goes on. The Labour Party Left under the leadership of Tony Benn have launched a diversionary boycott campaign. This is an appeal to consumer society on

We're not just fighting for ourselves. When we win you'll all win.

The problem was that the solidarity that the workers at Timex got was not really effective. The trades dispute nature of the struggle was maintained successfully by the unions as white collar workers in the MSF continued to scab, even when it was clear that the struggle was about even-tying in the factory's future. Collections and mass pickets did raise workers' consciousness of the seriousness of the struggle but not enough in this context to be able to offer the one practical step which really would have helped the Timex workers — solidarity strikes. All over the country there are a large number of small strikes and other guerrilla struggles going on at the present time. However they are not linked (even the 4 print plants in the country that are on strike

Nigeria: Democracy or Dictatorship, the Working Class Will Pay

Nigeria is still in turmoil. Elections called by the military dictatorship have passed and been ignored. While the winner of those elections, Moshood Abiola, whines to the west for support him in power, the protégé of the military, Ernest Shonekan, is in power at the head of a transitional government, appointed by the military. Babangida, the ex-dictator, should now be relaxing in his Ivory Coast mansion. The response to this situation has been a general strike and demonstrations, paralysis for the economy

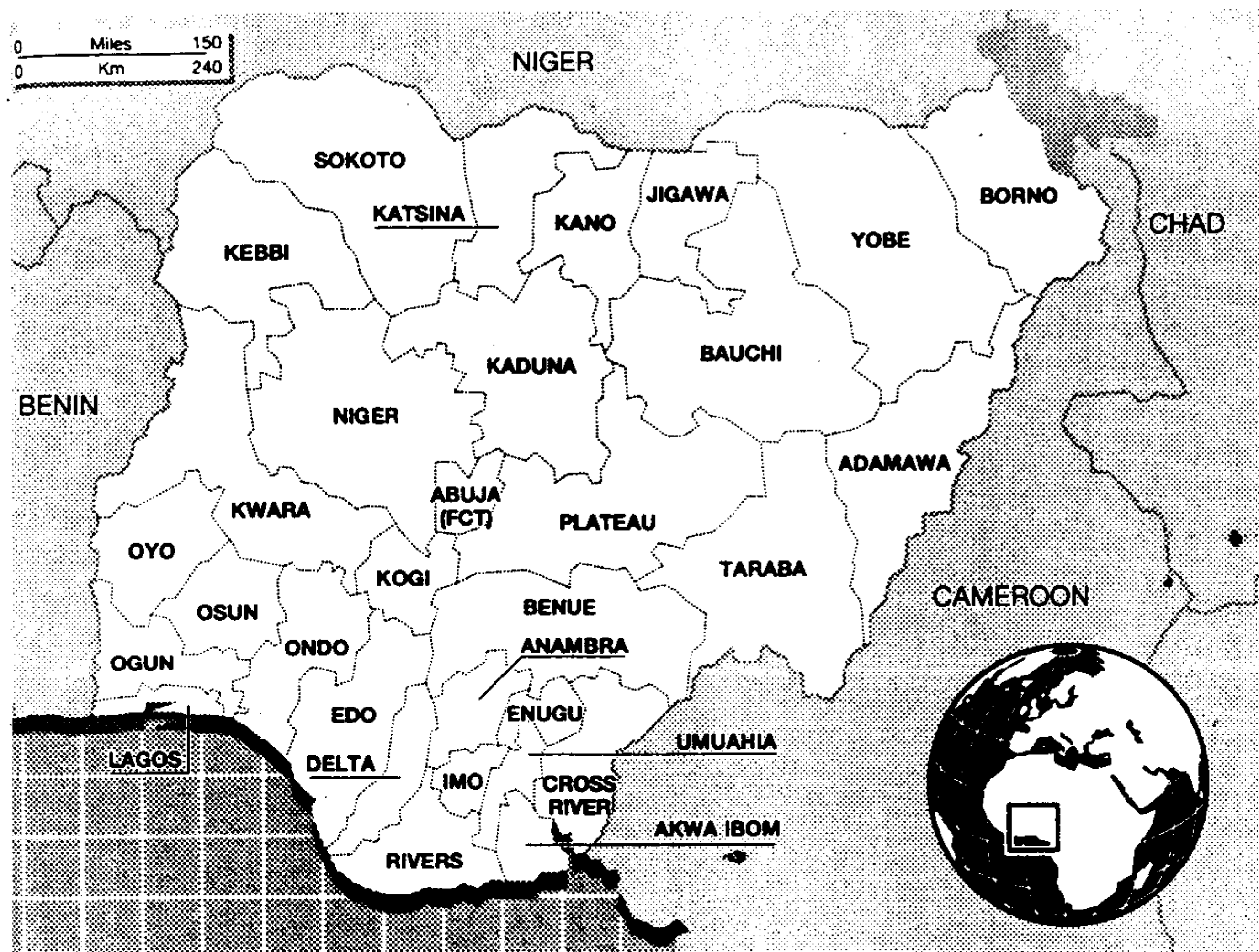
in 1989 to fight elections lasted six months until government pressure ended it. The NLC is said to be split between 'Marxists' and 'democrats' — it seems the democratic spirit is in the ascendant rather than any other.

Crisis

Why did elections take place? Elections were held for the sake of capital and not through mounting popular pressure. Crisis is the watch-

classes hemmed in not only by wage slavery but gross corruption and profiteering. Diversification has occurred to some extent, away from oil and natural gas (prices depressed), cocoa has been promoted (but this also has a depressed price), as has car assembly. A massive steel plant is under construction but has run foul of what is called the "Nigerian factor". This Abiokuta steel plant is running massively over budget (\$2 billion over), but it has been a great source of corrupt profits for the elite and so is rigidly defended by the military and their protégés.

section of the bourgeoisie with the military at its core wants a political system which will not hamper its ability to profit, either domestically through its control of the internal economy, or through its links via the government with international capital. The vote for Abiola had nothing to do with the welfarist politics of the SDP but centred on the fact that he was less of a puppet of the military (unlike Tofar). The battle is not between forces for and against democracy but between those in power and in profit, and those who work and starve to supply that profit.



and the military killing hundreds or imprisoning the most vocal.

But what promise does democracy hold for Nigerian workers? The democratic process has been touted around Africa by Babangida but so limited by him and his dictatorship to be totally meaningless. It has been shown for what it is, a means for the bourgeoisie to get the working class to accept the terms of their own exploitation.

Left, Right, Centre

The two parties involved in the elections were creations of the military. One to the left, one to the right of a mythical centre, each had their programmes written for them by the military, and have few differences. The political reality they sprang from was the reality of military dictatorship. Their active bases came from their affiliates in the elite. Abiola, the local head of ITT, brought support to the SDP from the south, the Ibo political centre of the UPN and the old Shagari presidency. Tofar, also a wealthy businessman, drew support for the NRC from the Gowon dictatorship, the old NPN, the Muslims of the North and West (see glossary). Ernest Shonekan, head of Unilever in Nigeria, was Babangida's chief instrument in the Transitional Council, now heading the interim government.

What other political forces exist? CAFORD, the CAMpaign FOR Democracy has sponsored demonstrations and has acted as a counterweight to bodies such as the Association for a Better Nigeria. A grouping of pro-military businessmen. Far from being a popular organisation, CAFORD is an off-shoot of the elite, regrouping elements of the professional and trading classes who have not done well under Babangida. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), with 3-5 million members, has successfully called a series of general strikes to oppose the military, but is itself a creation of and limited by the elite. Its attempt to form a Labour Party

word of African economy at present, and this is definitely the case in Nigeria too. In 1980 per capita income was over \$1000, now it is under \$300. Inflation presently stands at 65%. Measures brought in under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) have hit the poor, the agricultural and industrial workers, very hard — 2 million redundancies, currency devaluation, price rises (particularly petrol), and deregulation of the economy. Between 1991 and 1992, \$6 billion was removed from the economy for debt repayment while the trade balance fell to \$5 billion because of falling oil revenues. Here we see the global crisis of capitalism unfolding in dramatic fashion, in Africa where western imperialism grazes intensely. The Nigerian bourgeoisie is inflicting its own need for profit and the needs of its imperialist sponsors on the ravaged working classes.

This deregulation under SAP is the policy of imperialism. The current interest being shown in the Nigerian economy by such companies as Rothmans, Colgate and Unilever capital is showing how its interests are changing — away from using Nigeria as simply a source of oil. In common with most African economies Nigeria had its export earner, in this case oil, and a second economy, a subsistence agricultural sector. However, for some time attempts had been made to diversify. Unfortunately every such move was circumscribed by the Nigerian elite. Even though elements of corruption, such as the commodity boards, were removed the working

The Nigerian economy is a perfect example of an African economy. Presently Western capital is happy still extracting its ton of flesh from the oil fields, but it hopes to profit further in the consumption goods sector. Bata shoes, ITT and Unilever are already enjoying themselves but there is far more of an economy to exploit. The population of 88.5 million has a GDP of \$32.4 billion (1990). We are witnessing the deepening of capitalist exploitation of Nigeria, its expansion into further areas of the economy, which the masters of capital have believed is best served not by dictatorship but by bourgeois democracy. The Nigerian economy and its politics are being pushed into forms and behaviour serving the interests of Western imperialism and sections of the Nigerian bourgeoisie.

Nigeria's history since independence has had little civilian rule. There have been five dictatorships, and only Obasanjo gave up power to allow Shagari and the NPN to take power with an elected civilian government. Every government has been characterised by corruption — huge levels of imports for the conspicuous consumption of the elite, kickbacks on contracts, printing money to pay the military and the profiteers. The populace has variously been controlled or diverted from their interests by carefully managed ethnic and religious conflicts — Muslim/Christian, Ibo/Yoruba/Hausa, North/South — and the use of oil. One current bone of contention has been the huge rise in the petrol price — petrol had been kept at a price below the price of production, allowing smuggling to earn money across the borders. Unable to continue its petrol bribe the military government is trying to recoup its budget deficit by further taxing the working classes.

Elsewhere similar struggles are emerging. There is a tendency towards bourgeois democracy in opposition to one-party or military rule. In most cases such moves towards democracy are encouraged only if they occur in a manner acceptable to those sections of the local bourgeoisie with power to hand — witness Ghana and Rawling's manipulation of the democratic process to reinstall him to power, and Togo where Eyadema has repudiated a recent vote against his dictatorship. None of this is a question of oppressed national bourgeoisies, nor is it a mystical unfolding of sacred democracy — it is the emergence of changes in the various needs of imperialism and local bourgeoisies attached to it.

Nigeria's working classes, along with the emerging working classes in the rest of Africa have to come to understand that bourgeois democracy means nothing. If they look to democracy then they will get the politicians they deserve, the politics of piracy, indeed vampirism. There is only one course open if they desire freedom and the end to centuries of exploitation — not the dubious pleasures of bourgeois democracy but the future provided by revolutionary politics, the international communist vision.

Claire

Glossary

SDP — Social Democratic Party, populist, welfarist.

NRC — National Republican Convention, pro-military.



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Democratisation

The whole process of supposed democratisation has not been the altruistic giving away of power, neither has the ignoring of the elections been a simple reneging on previous promises. That

UPN — United Party of Nigeria, defunct mainly Ibo party.

NPN — National Party of Nigeria, defunct mainly Muslim party.

Gaza and Jericho

US Imperialism's Triumph in the Middle East

continued from back page

There is equally no guarantee that five years of good behaviour from the Palestinians will lead to further concessions by the Israelis. The Israelis can, at any time, simply tear up the agreement. It is, in short, the ideal solution for Israel. In 1969 the PLO replied to the question as to why it did not accept the idea of a mini-state on the West Bank as follows:

1. *This pseudo-entity will become, in effect, a colony exploited by Israel.*
 2. *The formation of this state involves the creation of an Arab Administration designed to act as a pawn in the hands of the Israeli authorities to suppress any revolutionary trends that will appear in this so-called state.*
 3. *Any guarantees given by the Great Powers or the World Organisation (UN) to safeguard the sovereignty of this pseudo-state will be worthless. In the past guarantors have been unwilling to condemn Israeli aggression except verbally.*
- quoted in P. Marshall *Intifada* p.178

A quarter century later all that has changed is that the size of the mini-state on offer is considerably smaller. Jericho (on the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip, both surrounded by Jewish settlements will be even less sovereign than the West Bank of 1969.

Islamic Fundamentalism and US Imperialism

For the Israelis another gain is that the responsibility of dealing with the Palestinian rejectionists (like the **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine**), the **Hamas** (Zeal) movement of the **Muslim Brotherhood** and the **Islamic Jihad** will fall to the PLO. If they fail then the agreement can be torn up. If they succeed then Israel no longer has the apparently insoluble problem of dealing with the *intifada*.

For the US ending the *intifada* also had an international dimension. The deal with the PLO looks like being accompanied by a settlement with Syria over the Golan Heights especially since it was Syrian intervention that led to the ending of *katyushka* rocket attacks on Israel from Lebanon by Hezbollah. Islamic fundamentalism is seen by the USA as the biggest threat to its total hegemony in the Middle East. Already there have been *intifada*-type riots in US ally states, Algeria and Egypt. These were mainly led by Islamic fundamentalists. To stop this spreading further the US has to achieve a greater degree of peace and stability (with the hoped-for prosperity to follow) in order to remove the economic and ideological reasons for support to flow to fundamentalism from the Arab masses. It remains to be seen just how far this strategy can be successful in face of the growing global economic crisis of the capitalist system. What is clear is that an enormous effort is being made to ensure that the fundamentalists are denied any space to operate. Arafat is getting finance to train 20,000 PLO police in the Gulf in preparation for running the "pseudo-state". At the same time Saudi Arabia is awaiting US instructions to restart funding the PLO and the World Bank has already announced a \$4,300 million programme of emergency aid for the West Bank and Gaza. The plan will run for eight to ten years and

...would initially assist the Palestinian authorities to set up administrative agencies, schools and public services. Bank officials said the plan was designed to meet basic needs among the nearly 2 million Palestinians in the territory.

The Guardian 3.9.93

Of course only a cynic would ask why the World Bank was responding with such speed: the accord had not even been signed when it produced its Plan! More pressing humanitarian needs in much of Africa are a real threat to the

imperialist world order³. Warren Christopher has also been twisting Arab arms (especially the Saudis) to set up a fund to be jointly administered by the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. But achieving some stability in the Middle East affects more than the interests of US imperialism. The EC countries which have done very well in arms sales in the area up to now also want to cash in on possible future developments. To this end Jacques Delors has promised Shimon Peres, the Israeli Foreign Minister, a fund of between \$300 and \$500 millions as well as contributing to the US scheme.

However, the long term aim of the US is to reduce the economic costs of *Pax Americana* and thus to cut its own deficit. The Gulf War was fought to maintain US control of the area where over 50% of the world's long term oil supplies are to be found. The Gaza-Jericho deal only confirms the hegemony that has been achieved by the US in the region. It is unlikely to achieve a lasting peace.

Already there are new strains in the area and previous oil-rich allies of the US, like Saudi Arabia, have begun to run into debt problems⁴. The costs of subsidising Israel (\$3 billion a year) and Egypt (\$2.5 billion) alone have become too heavy a burden for the US but without massive capital injections into the area new explosions are likely, since the global crisis of capitalism stubbornly refuses to go away.

War and the Working Class

The long-drawn out conflict (or rather series of conflicts) in the Middle East have been enormously successful in keeping workers from fighting for their true interests. In Israel a workers strike wave is ended by the bombing of Lebanon and demands for national unity. In the ranks of the Palestinian working class it is even easier to convince them that the real enemy is Israel since in the Occupied Territories they pay a 30% tax to Israel for social spending which is only delivered in Israel proper. But the Palestinians workers eke out a miserable existence in Gaza whilst the PLO leadership leads the good life in Tunis on the backs of taxes on Palestinian workers in the Middle East. And just how disdainful of Palestinian workers the PLO are can be seen in events around the Gulf War. When the *intifada* broke out the Kuwaiti Royal Family gave the PLO \$5 million. In return Arafat went to Kuwait to order Palestinian workers back to work who were striking and demonstrating in support of the West Bank and Gaza. These same workers were soon to face massacre and deportation as a result of Arafat's decision to support the invasion of Kuwait.

This is just a taste of the future for Palestinian workers in any new PLO statelet. All that will change for the Gaza workers will be the language spoken by the exploiters. Once this becomes clear and the workers look around for new vehicles for their struggle the main beneficiaries are likely to be Islamic Jihad and Hamas. They will use this anger to fight for yet another nationalist "solution" to workers problems. The Islamic fundamentalist solution will also offer some kind of social security (delivered from the mosque). The fundamentalists may reject Western imperialism but the Islamic corporate society is only another form of bourgeois exploitation as Iranian workers can well testify.

Nationalism and Leftism Against the Working Class

But it is not just the strong material basis for a successful development of nationalist ideology which explains why the Palestinians (who in percentage terms are one of the most proletarian of peoples) don't look to the politics of working class liberation like Marxism. The fact is that the only "Marxism" the Arab world has known since the 1930s is Stalinism. With the

complete subservience of the pro-USSR Communist Parties to both a bankrupt state capitalist authoritarianism and the local national ruling classes the very name of communism has simply been discredited.

And no sooner are the Stalinists being swept aside than the bourgeoisie throw up another counter-revolutionary distortion of Marxism to replace it. At present the Trotskyists are barely present in the Middle East but are not short on a programme for the area. Their solution? Basically the same as the Stalinists in their support for the national struggle. They differ on perception alone. For the Trotskyists the Stalinists mistake was to rely too much on Arab leaders so they will rely on "the masses". With this perspective baptised in the holy water of "permanent revolution" they argue that any national struggle supported by the working class will inevitably pass straight on to the struggle for a workers state.

Try telling that to the Algerian workers! They eventually joined their bourgeoisie and put their faith in the FLN in the struggle against French imperialism. Once the fighting was over the FLN turned against the working class. Some were shot, thousands were imprisoned. In all cases like this victory to the national bourgeoisie has only given them control of the apparatus of state repression (often the same one used by the old colonial power). The working class has everywhere been the first and most numerous victim. In Algeria the national struggle ended in 1962. "Permanent counter-revolution" has reigned ever since.

Even if the national bourgeoisies were as weak as the Trotskyists fondly believe this is not the real problem. There are in the epoch of imperialism no independent national movements. Whatever the origins of such struggles they only have significance if they are part of the inter-imperialist rivalry around the planet. Without imperialist support they are nothing (witness the fate of Bosnia today). The Trotskyists' formula for this issue is a counter-revolutionary one which places them firmly on the other side of the class barricade.

The struggle to end exploitation and abolish all national frontiers in the Middle East will not be a short one. Nor can it be resolved by the workers of the area, Israeli or Arab in isolation. Only an international revolutionary wave of struggle which is capable of paralysing the capacity of the imperialists for military intervention and political manoeuvre can destroy the capacity of international capitalism to crush the working class. But such movement has to have at its head a programme which consciously recognises what the goal and the immediate tasks are. It is to contribute to this process that internationalist communist groups like the Communist Workers' Organisation and the International Bureau to which it belongs are dedicated. It is not just in Palestine that the workers have no country. Against all talk of US imperialist peace our response is international class war.

Notes

¹Quoted in *Athens News* 26.8.93.
²Figures in this section from *Le projet palestinien en question* in *Le Monde Diplomatique* September 1993.
³And what the imperialists mean by humanitarian can be seen in Somalia (see *Workers' Voice* 62 and 64).

⁴Saudi oil revenues have fallen from \$113 billion in 1981 to about \$35-40 billion today (and that only because the Saudis are producing 8.3 million barrels of oil a day which is much higher than their original quota in the now-defunct OPEC cartel). The Saudi debt is currently \$60 billion and a programme of spending cuts (which excludes new fighter aircraft) has been instituted. See *Le Monde Diplomatique* September 1993 p.14.

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Obsolete Trotskyism: A Counter-Revolutionary Bacillus

A review of the SWP's re-issue of Lenin's "Left Wing' Communism — an Infantile Disorder"

'Left Wing' Communism is about the worst text that Lenin ever wrote. It lacks both Lenin's normal grasp of detail and a coherent argument. It even lacks an accurate account of the history of the Bolshevik Party. Due to its insistent repetition that the success of October 1917 was due to the "iron discipline of the Bolshevik Party" it was to become the bible of Stalinism¹. Bourgeois and anarchist writers, for their parts, never tired of quoting the infamous passage in which Lenin exhorted communists to fight against right-wing elements that would try to expel them from the unions;

One must know how to resist all this, to accept any and every sacrifice, even — in case of necessity — to resort to every kind of trick, cunning, illegal expedient, concealment, suppression of the truth, in order to penetrate into the trades unions, to remain in them, to conduct in them, at whatever cost, communist work.

This is the version in the original Stalinist translation. On p.63 of their version the SWP provide a slightly more sanitised version which only talks of "artifices", and "evasions and subterfuges". A subtle change but an indicative one since Duncan Hallas invites us to "read and read again" this important text. And it is important — but only in a historical (or as our Italian comrades say, an archaeological) sense. It shows us the nature of Lenin's thinking over the issues that had arisen in Western Europe in 1920. It does not have general application to today's situation as Hallas obviously thinks (although his pathetic, and sometimes inaccurate, six page introduction cannot explain why).

We can explain its significance. In 1920 the Bolsheviks had just won the civil war in Russia. Internationally the working class had been defeated in its first assaults on capitalism (Berlin, Bavaria, Hungary, and, to stretch the point,

Turin). Communist parties belatedly splitting from Social Democracy, were coming into existence. However these parties identified the reason for the success of Bolshevism as the fact that it alone had had programmatic clarity. It alone of the major European parties had detached itself from the reformist wing of Social Democracy before the betrayals of 1914. The Bolsheviks had been a small group of hundreds in 1912 but by the autumn of 1917 they had the active support of four fifths of the Russian working class. Thus many of the Communist Parties in Western Europe wanted to create programmatically clear kernels as communist parties.

The Bolsheviks however were in a hurry. In 1918 Lenin had proclaimed that "without a German Revolution we are doomed". In 1920 the international prospects were not good. The German communists were split between the KPD and the Communist Workers' Party of Germany (the KAPD). The latter had been expelled from the KPD at Heidelberg in 1919 despite being a majority in the party. The KAPD wanted nothing to do with tactical compromises with the SPD or their trades unions. This earned them the title of the ultra-left. In fact, cut off from Western European news, Lenin did not appreciate the depth of difference between Russia and Western Europe. In Russia reformism had been weak since even the most basic of economic struggles were illegal and thus immediately political in direct confrontation with the state. In Russia the state was an autocratic one which was so centralised that it actually eased the victory of the proletariat. The capture of Petrograd and Moscow had meant victory in the whole country. This was not the case in Germany where the decentralised nature of the Kaiser's Second Empire and the strength of reformist parties (the SPD and the USPD) meant that the tactical issues were different. Alliances with the USPD (the more radical socialist party) had already meant that the Spartakists had found it difficult to distinguish themselves programmatically from parties which by supporting imperialist war had revealed themselves to be capitalist organisations. The SPD had butchered thousands of communist workers in the immediate post-war period in order to "save Germany". It was not a confused party like the Mensheviks in Russia

had been. It was one of the chief pillars of German capitalism. This helps to explain the sterility of the debate between Lenin and the German Left Communists. This included people like Pannekoek (Horner) who Lenin had praised in *The State and Revolution* as the representative of Marxism in the confrontation with Kautsky. The debate was however fraternal and Lenin made repeated attempts to get the KAPD to rejoin the KPD. This they mistakenly refused to do and left the Communist International rather than do so. This too was a serious error and Lenin was quite correct to criticise them for underestimating the party issue and not working wherever the class was to be found. When invited to stay in the Comintern (which for all its faults regrouped the best class-conscious workers in Europe) the KAPD should have fought their case (the issues of unions and parliament they themselves called 'tactical'). The subsequent failures of the right-wing leaders of the KPD would have undoubtedly meant that they would have had an opportunity to move the German communists on to their policy lines. However by this time the counter-revolution was growing apace. The KAPD split and split again and subsequently left little trace except for a few councilist groups who concluded that the October Revolution was bourgeois². Meanwhile the degeneration of the Russian Revolution continued with the introduction of NEP, the suppression of Kronstadt and the banning of factions within the Bolshevik Party. As the normally apologetic E.H. Carr commented, 1920 was the beginning of the process later known as Bolshevisation (i.e., Stalinisation). As far as Western Europe was concerned

This task was different from anything that had confronted the Russian Bolsheviks, and far more subtle and complicated; and the misunderstanding of this difference explains why the prescriptions offered to the West by the Bolsheviks, and afterwards by the Comintern, so often seemed inadequate and inapplicable. It was many years before a situation was reached in which uniform decisions handed down from Moscow were automatically applied by docile communist parties with little or no validity in the light of local conditions and opinion. But the first insidious beginnings of the process must be traced back to the period of Lenin's Infantile Disease of

'Leftism' in Communism and the second Congress of the Comintern.

E.H. Carr *The Bolshevik Revolution* Vol 3 p.186

This text should be read for its limited historical value³ (but don't buy this overpriced SWP version). We can leave it to counter-revolutionaries like the SWP dig up the sources of their own degeneracy. That the SWP has never had any revolutionary credentials we have no doubt but today it has published this wretched tome as ideological support for its present dash for growth in members. Thus "do you hate the Tories and have you got 50 pence" are now the intellectual arguments of the day to win members. Anyone in Britain who is looking for more political clarity than this will clearly be anathematised by the SWP as "infantile". As the rightward drift of the Labour Party opens up a space all kinds of smaller acts on the capitalist left will leap in to grab it. The SWP is just one of them. Lenin's least revolutionary works are republished to disguise this counter-revolutionary turmoil as something to do with proletarian revolution.

J.

¹The falsity of this claim is of course proven by thousands of examples (including the famous Zinoviev/Kamenev revelations of the plans for the overthrow of the Provisional Government on the eve of October 1917). What Lenin was trying to impress on the German communists was the need for a strong communist party which regrouped all communists.

²For a criticism of the German Communist Left see *Revolutionary Perspectives* 18 *The KAPD and the Party*.

³*The Reply to Comrade Lenin* by Herman Gorter gives an equally weak response from the leading theoretician of the Dutch and German Left. It is obtainable from **Wildcat** (BM Box Wild, London WC1N 3XX). Space prevents us from taking up Lenin's tentative comments on Bordiga and the origins of the **Communist Party of Italy** (which was not formed until 1921). It is enough to say that he was understandably confused about what was going on in Italy.

Left Wing Communism — an Infantile Disorder, V.I. Lenin (with an introduction by Duncan Hallas) is published by Bookmarks at £3.95.

No Marks for "Poor Lenin"

Marx often used to refer to nineteenth century anarchist thinkers as "muddleheaded". They were however intellectual giants compared with their present day descendants. This pamphlet is another illustration of this. It is a reprint of a chapter from a book by Bob Darke, a repentant Stalinist and one time local Communist Party councillor in London. It doesn't seem to have occurred to the publishers (some of whom are members of **Class War**) that the book was produced as Cold War propaganda in the early 1950's to extol the virtues of social democracy and life in capitalist Britain generally.

What has occurred to them is that they can use the revelations about CP trickery inside the working class to show not only that Stalinism was a monstrous and counter-revolutionary distortion of working class politics but that Stalinism was all Lenin's fault! Further (and all this in a one page introduction!) Darke's revelations can be used to smear all partyist (particular Trotskyist) groups. To put it (very) mildly these are simply capitalist smear tactics which might help the self-righteousness of anarchists but does little to dent the counter-revolutionary convictions of today's Trotskyists. It is not

helped by the fact that Lenin's revolutionary *April Theses* of 1917 are cited as the source of his views on the party when in fact the authors are referring to *What is to be Done* (or perhaps *"Left Wing" Communism*). It only underlines what you suspect all along; that arguments against Lenin are usually founded on ignorance of what he actually wrote (let alone knowing the context in which he wrote). But, as his very name has become an icon for the Stalinists, it therefore must be anathema to anarchists.

The Trotskyists are counter-revolutionary but not because they try to sell as many papers as possible (**Class War** members pretend they don't!) or because they try to trick workers into supporting them (although this gets nearer to the real issue). The Trotskyists are counter-revolutionary because they have a capitalist programme. Their *Transitional Programme*, dreamed up by Trotsky in 1938 supports national capitals (the ones the Trotskyists spend hours arguing over whether they are anti-imperialist or not, Ayatollah Khomeini the day before yesterday, Saddam Hussein yesterday, and who knows tomorrow), and social democratic parties and trades unions which are today the

bulwarks of capitalism inside the working class. The crisis of today's revolutionary movement is not as they have been saying for fifty-five years "a crisis of leadership" but one of class consciousness. The Trotskyists, by peddling recycled reformism (disguised under the convenient catch-all of "permanent revolution" which means you can support counter-revolution today because this will lead, somehow, to revolution tomorrow) are just one more obstacle in the road of the working class attaining its consciousness of how it can destroy capitalism. One of the first steps on the way will be to recognise that the old Labour movement is a capitalist movement which the workers will have to smash along with the capitalist state. However our anarchist muddleheads can't attack the Trotskyists on this ground because they support trades unions (see *Workers' Voice* 67) and some have even called for "tactical" votes for Labour in the past. It is therefore difficult for them to distinguish themselves from the counter-revolutionary Trotskyist swamp on programmatic grounds since they are sitting in it themselves.

At the end of the pamphlet there is a list of groups which the authors baptise as pukka revolution-

ary groups. We are pleased to see that the CWO is not amongst this assortment of councilists and anarchists but we note that **Subversion** and **Wildcat** are. We hope they will now recognise the futility of flirting with anarchism since they at least understand these vital class issues from their acquaintance with the Communist Left tradition.

A final comment on the actual text. As a Stalinist of nearly twenty years standing Bob Darke was hardly a reliable witness of the events from 1935 to 1952, but even if only half of what he stated is true it makes depressing reading. Not the revelations about the manoeuvres of the CPGB (that story is too well-known) but the fact that Stalinism destroyed the enthusiasm and the class consciousness of a whole generation of workers. It echoes down to our own time when Stalinism and state capitalism are still identified as communism. The publishers would have been of some use to today's workers if they had devoted themselves to the task of debunking that myth.

JD

Poor Lenin (March, 1993, 24 very small print pages, no price given) is available from irate press, c/o achilles balls, 52 Call Lane, Leeds.

LABOURing in Vain

The pamphlet *Labouring in Vain* is produced by the group **Subversion**¹. It is a welcome publication which traces the history of the Labour Party, from its origins to the present day. From the very first days, when the Labour Party is shown to have been a nonsocialist organisation designed to give the unions their say within capitalism, through its years in power, when the Party vigorously defended capitalism against the working class, to today, when, like in its previous stints in opposition, the Party, at "best", tells the working class to passively accept the attacks on it, or, at "worst", actively supports these attacks, the pamphlet completely destroys the Labour Party's credentials as a socialist organisation.

In government, the Labour Party most clearly showed whose side it was on. Every time it was in power, working class living standards fell. In what its most enthusiastic supporters on the left regard as its finest hour, the post-war government of 1945, it used troops to break strikes, and what is painted as its "socialist" achievement, its nationalisations, was in reality to bail out bankrupt capitalists. More recently, in its last government, '74-'79, it presided over the trebling of unemployment and fought inflation by keeping wages down (with the help of the TUC).

Out of government, its crimes against the working class include Labour councils' implementation of the Poll Tax, using bailiffs and the courts against workers, to name but one.

In fact, the real riddle is that anyone thinks that the Labour Party is socialist at all. The answer to this conundrum is that the reality, as documented in the pamphlet, although "freely" available, is systematically concealed. The Labour Party itself wants to hush up the services it has delivered to capitalism, in order to deliver them the more easily in the future. The other mainstream capitalist parties claim that Labour is incompetent, despite the fact that Labour has proven itself indispensable (to the bosses!) in times of class struggle in the past. And the Left, in the form of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) and other groups inside and outside the Labour Party, don't want to "alienate" those workers who support the Labour Party as being "better" than the Tories — that is, they see politics (or at least the kind of politics workers are capable of) as primarily a matter of which Party you support, and merely want to displace the Labour Party in workers' affections. The Left's criticism is thus "muted" and "comradely".

Consequently, if only to counteract this "conspiracy of silence" (really, a coincidence of interests), we welcome the widest possible dissemination of the pamphlet. But we have a few minor criticisms and one major point to make.

Firstly, the government of '45 gets off lightly. Not only did it use troops to break strikes, but the government of the "brotherhood of man" (Clem Atlee's description of his government) welcomed the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, secretly developed the A-bomb and punished British workers' solidarity with a Canadian seaman's strike in the courts, to mention but two instances (see *Workers' Voice* 61).

Again, not only were the '45 government's nationalisations not even steps towards socialism, but they were also directly (not just on the ideological plane) anti-working class: they led to shut-downs and redundancies, because when the bosses go in for reorganisation like this, they also smuggle in rationalisation. This is true whether the reorganisation is privatisation or nationalisation.

There is also the passage:

Politicians who try to ignore this [the reality of the society we live in] are soon brought to account by Stock Market crashes, galloping inflation, flights of currency and capital, currency crises and more. Then they have to return to capitalist normality. This has been the fate for left wing governments the world over, and as we have seen has forced various Labour governments to viciously attack working class living standards.

This implies that the various Labour governments have been forced to attack workers by forces they don't understand, that they have been made up of misguided friends of the working class. Although it is possible that a few (or more than a few) naïve individuals have found their way into the Labour Party, it is impossible to believe that they could rise to the leadership without realising what the Party stands for. Fortunately, this is not a thread that is consistently followed in *Labouring in Vain*.

Subversion's more serious confusions are contained in the final section, *Is there an alternative?* This contains the passage:

What links these struggles the world over is the way that working people are fighting to improve their living standards, the way working class people are trying to get some control over their own lives away from capital.

What we need to do is link up these struggles to build a community of resistance, a community that will take the struggle forward to fight against the whole of capitalism and its state. It is here that revolutionary groups like Subversion have a role to play. We exist to spread information about struggles, to show where they link up, to show that they inevitably [our stress] lead to a struggle not just against capitalism, but for communism.

What is missing here is the idea of a party to complement the "community of resistance". It is not an inconsistency that **Subversion** think that workers' struggles inevitably lead to a struggle for communism. Such a position must reduce the political organisation to being at most an accelerator of the inevitable development of a communist struggle. For us, however, it is a matter of historical fact (proved again and again, from the October Revolution to the British miners' strike) that there can be no genuine "community of resistance" unless it at least knows about the revolutionary idea of the overthrow of capitalism, and this "community's" struggle will not be communist unless it embraces this idea. It is the task of a proletarian party to propagate this political programme and it needs a party to develop and defend revolutionary theory against the ideology of the enemy class. Councilist groups like **Subversion** do the working class a disservice if they act to deprive it of this vital weapon.

EDL

Subversion, Department 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 1HW.

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.
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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

CWO Pamphlet No. 2
1917 £2

Internationalist Communist Review 11

is now current 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. 5.

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
See the advert on this page.

Readers' Meetings
London
These will be held regularly in Conway Hall. 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!

Sheffield Public Meeting

CLASS WAR TODAY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM

The emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves

Karl Marx

7:30pm, October 13th
The Foresters Arms, Division Street.

Against all the deformations of Marxism (Stalinist, Trotskyist, Maoist and Social Democratic) and against anarchism, we pose this question: is there something to learnt from the legacy of Marx. Lenin and the revolutionary internationalism of the communist left?

Civil Service — Unions

Manoeuvre, Workers Suffer

Workers in the Civil Service continue to suffer attacks on their pay and conditions. This year's pay settlement of less than 1.5% continued the well established sequence of pay settlements below even the official rate of inflation. Tens of thousands of jobs have also been lost with every prospect that the November budget will increase the pressure on job numbers.

The vast majority of job losses have been accomplished by 'natural wastage' (not filling vacant posts) or by Union-approved early retirement schemes with enhanced pensions etc. being offered as the bribe to join the dole queues. Other jobs have been lost where chunks of services have been transferred from State capitalist control to private or quasi-private capital. This was particularly marked in cases such as Astra where the firm which was given 45 Skill Centres and £11 million subsequently went into receivership.

Unions — Rôle in Management Undermined

For years the Unions have continued to sit in the corporatist Whitley² Committees while jobs have been slashed, wages held down and workloads increased. In the recent period this rôle as part of the management structure has been eroded from two directions.

On the one hand the ideologues around the Government have slashed into the traditional structures by introducing a plethora of Quality Circles, Working Parties, Consultative Committees etc. within all Government Departments. These bodies have been foisted on workers, just as they have been in other workplaces, to increase the illusion of democratic participation by workers in the process of their

own exploitation. Their creation, though, is a direct challenge to the long established rôle of the Trade Unions to claim to represent workers via the Whitley Committees.

The second part of the challenge to the Unions' place in the corridors of power results from chunks of the Civil Service have being 'privatised'. Despite the pleadings from the Unions the new bosses (for example in the Training and Enterprise Councils) have found it more expedient to deal with a different Union or sometimes none at all.

This loss of membership and the erosion of their position has led to a series of mergers and reorganisations as the respective sets of Union hacks jostle for a slice of a reduced cake.

Unions' Strikes — Taking on the Bosses or Conning the Workers?

The Union bosses may be deficient in many areas. However, when things get tough their instinct for survival is never lacking.

During the summer the Civil Service Unions have organized a whole series of sectional strikes around the Government's programme of Market Testing (a process of awarding the contract for areas of work to the lowest bidder).

Of course, it is clear to most workers in the Civil Service that Market Testing is a way of attacking their wages and conditions.

This is despite the months of efforts by Union officers at all levels to sow illusions in the power of European law and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) legislation.

In fact, so long as the programme continues workers are in a no-win situation in that either the in-house bid succeeds by workers accepting Management (and often Union) proposals to speed-up and reduce overall costs or else they are taken over by the likes of Astra or the numerous cleaning contractors who have grabbed lucrative contracts based on appalling wage-levels.

It is inconceivable that the Market Testing programme can be defeated in any real sense by anything less than mass class action involving strike action uniting workers beyond the confines of the Civil Service. Such strikes would have to unite unemployed workers with all those workers, right across the economy, who are confronted by lay-off and speed-up.

In contrast to any such class action the Unions' campaign has been a classic case of channelling workers' anger into isolated and controlled actions. Workers in each Department have been encouraged to take action separately from each other. In many cases actions have not been agreed by all the Unions within a given section. Likewise, there have been cases where only a handful of workers within major buildings have been officially allowed to take action.

Of course all the legal niceties of giving the bosses plenty of notification by conducting state-approved ballots have been observed, as have the laws which forbid effective picketing.

The low-point of these activities have been Union-run actions where the majority of workers have been instructed to cross picket lines because they're in the 'wrong' section or Union.

Unions — Defending the National Interest

As we predicted in *Workers' Voice* 66 a major plank of the Union's arguments has been about defence of state capitalism and defence of the national interest.

Workers who are being threatened with wage cuts and the dole receive endless Union propaganda about the joys of being exploited directly by the state rather than private capital. At rally after rally they are urged to join the leftist campaign to prop up the capitalist state with arguments that private capitalists (and of course the Tory Government) will not have National (i.e. ruling class) interest at heart like loyal Civil Servants are expected to.

The peak of the Union's manoeuvres is planned for November 5th when a Day of Action (a deliberately ill-defined activity) is planned.

Time for Real Fireworks

November 5th is being planned by the Union bosses as an exercise in proving their ability to manipulate Civil Service workers. Civil Service workers should take the initiative away from them by organising independent actions involving other workers, both employed and unemployed. If this happens even in a single location then 5th November will really be something to remember, remember.

KT

Notes

¹Figures taken from *NUCPS Journal* (August 1993).

²A series of joint Union-Management Committees at various levels within and across Government Departments.

U.S. Imperialism's Triumph in the Middle East

continued from front page

terms. The process now began to unravel. The first step was that Egypt reneged on its deal with the USSR and took part in the 1978 Camp David talks which recognised Israel in return for the Sinai Desert, lost in 1967.

The Decline of the USSR

The real turning point came in 1982. In that year the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon showed to Syria that it too could not hope for much help from a declining USSR. As we wrote at the time

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon demonstrates that the so-called peace initiative of the USA — the Camp David agreements between Egypt and Israel — was not a step towards any idealised general peace settlement. Instead it was a prelude to the establishment by force of American domination in the region to the exclusion of any competitors, specifically Russian imperialism.

Reagan and Begin's New Order (Workers' Voice 8, Autumn 1982)

Since then there has been only one arbitrator in the Middle East. The PLO also learned this too. Arafat concluded at the time of Camp David that the Americans hold all the cards. This statement alone was enough for the USSR and Syria to organise a revolt inside the PLO against Arafat (led by Abu Musa and mainly based in Tripoli in the Lebanon). But financed as he was by the oil-rich conservative Arab states Arafat survived because he held the PLO purse-strings. But after 1982 the PLO lost its headquarters in Beirut (it moved to Tunis). For the first time since the Six Day War of 1967 the PLO did not have

a base "on the enemy frontier". The PLO was going nowhere when the *intifada* broke out in Gaza and on the West Bank in December 1987.

The PLO did not start the *intifada* nor, at first, could they control it. This is because the PLO is the movement of the Palestinian bourgeoisie outside the occupied territories. The *intifada* was a spontaneous and desperate response of the working class inside the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As such it was uncontrollable despite tens of thousands of arrests and deportations and a death toll now numbering over 3000. But it was the PLO who stole the political leadership of the fight by setting up a Unified Command in the territories.

Another PLO Disaster — The Gulf War

At the same time Arafat made his bid to win US support. In 1988 he tacitly recognised the existence of the state of Israel and renounced terrorism. These were the very two demands that the Israeli government had made as a basis for negotiations. The Shamir government and the Bush Government in the US did not respond. By this time Arafat was under pressure from the Muslim fundamentalists to retain his support inside the West Bank and Gaza. This explains his desperate act of support for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Kuwait was not only a supporter of the PLO (the Kuwaiti ruling family had donated millions to support the *intifada*) but also the home of many of the Palestinian proletariat whose taxes to the PLO helped finance its organisation. Like Saddam, Arafat underestimated the degree to which the West would go

to thwart any challenge to its domination of any part of the planet. The support given by the other Arab states (with the sole exception of the Yemen) to the US further isolated the PLO.

"The American Siege"

Political disaster soon turned into financial catastrophe. The US prevented any Arab state from sending cash to the PLO. This meant that the 5% liberation tax levied on Palestinian workers in Saudi Arabia was cut off (as many of them had been expelled this was cut anyway). Arafat's ability to control the Palestinians through his vast patronage resources now began to disintegrate under what one PLO economist called "the American siege". The Palestine Red Cross ceased operating a year ago. In Gaza 10,000 families of "martyrs" have not received their compensation for 5 months. The total amount sent by the PLO to Gaza and the West Bank was estimated at \$300 millions on the eve of the Gulf War. Today that has collapsed to \$40 millions. When it is remembered that the per capita income in the Occupied Territories is only \$1300 the scale of the deprivation can be understood. For the 16,000 families of political prisoners, for 25,000 doctors as well as aid workers and journalists in PLO pay this has been a disaster. In East Jerusalem two of the four PLO papers (*Al Fajr* and *Al Chaab*) have shut down as well as several university journals². Only a deal approved by US imperialism could restore the flow of funds. And only funds could restore Arafat's ability to resist leading PLO militia bosses like Munir Makhdah who called for his

resignation. Hence the timing of Arafat's capitulation.

The Defeat of the PLO

The new US government for its part is one of the most pro-Israeli of recent decades. Democratic Party Presidents are always pro-Zionist but Secretary of State Warren Christopher saw service under the Carter regime that engineered Camp David. The demands that have been put by the US to Arafat have been as draconian as any ever suggested by the Israelis. Perhaps the significance of this can only be understood by looking at what is not included.

° Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories will not be stopped and there is no statement that new ones will not be established.

° There is no recognition that the Palestinians are a people with their own right to self-determination (this despite the fact that the PLO is recognised by more states than is Israel).

° The text of the agreement does not use the terms of Resolution 242 of the Security Council of the United Nations which talks of "the Occupied Territories". This text talks only of "occupied territories" or "disputed territories". This implies that the whole of the West Bank will never be under Palestinian control.

° There is no mention of the future of East Jerusalem.

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