

10p

Wildcat

ISSUE NUMBER THREE ... JAN/FEB 1985. ***

FREE
TO
STRIKERS

THE MINERS STRIKE:

MAKE IT A REAL VICTORY!

From the beginning of the strike, militant miners, those who want to win and are prepared to do something towards it, have found a growing need to organise themselves independently of the N.U.M.

Always the initiative has come from the miners themselves. The first 'miners'wives support groups' were independent of the union. The first support groups in the towns and cities were the initiative of working class militants. The 'hit squads' are outside union control, as are the small vigilante groups who do so

much to keep the strike solid in Yorkshire and Northumberland. More recently miners in Yorkshire have produced their own propaganda in the form of 'news sheets' delivered to the homes of all those on strike.

These independent actions of militant miners and their supporters show the way forward.

RAISE THE DEMANDS

These are some of the demands which have been made by rank and file miners during the strike, which have not been taken up by the NUM:

- * An end to the productivity deal
- * A massive wage rise as compensation for hardship suffered during the strike.
- * Four day week
- * Full compensation for all victims of industrial accidents and disease
- * Release of all imprisoned miners; refund of fines paid, and charges dropped against all those awaiting trial in connection with the strike.
- * Destruction of all police and NCB records of the strikers.

Scargill and the other NUM leaders have already shown that they are prepared to settle the strike without any of these demands being met. If the strike is settled on Scargill's terms it will mean defeat for the miners.

The dockers have been out and gone back, the NACODS strike was called off; both were described as victories by their unions, both won nothing.

To make sure that the miners strike ends in a real victory, militant miners must organise to put forward their own demands, and fight for no return to work until all these demands are met.

STRIKE COMMITTEES

Many militant miners when talking about their union branch will be quite scathing. Comments like "You'd wait for ever if you'd wait for them" or "we all know the union branches are alright for organising the Christmas raffle, but when it comes to the strike, they're hopeless", comments like these and worse are common. Militant miners can see that running a strike is different from running a quiet union branch.

The obvious solution to this would be to replace these union strike

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committees with strike committees elected from the most active militants. The NUM rulebook and tight control of funds make this no easy task, but it must be done.

When it comes to the national leadership however, most militant miners seem to have complete faith in Arthur Scargill and only slightly less in the other 'militant' leaders.

Even if the national leadership was totally behind the strike and shared the same goals as the militant miners it would be a mistake to follow them. There is no good reason for putting the control of something so important to so many people into the hands of a tiny minority of union leaders. Those who support the strike with their money and their time, the miners wives and the mining

communities, what say do they have in running the strike? Even the miners have little control over their own leadership.

The tight secrecy surrounding all the talks between the NUM and the NCB, are a symbol of the miners' lack of control over their strike.

Much can be learned from the strikes of 1980-81 in Poland. In 1981, when Polish miners were being shot as they occupied the pits and when so many Polish workers were locked in a desperate struggle with the state, Arthur Scargill condemned the strikes as anti-socialist and anti-working class. In the Eastern Bloc states the unions are totally integrated within the state. This is not a happy position from the workers point of view, but gives a secure and powerful position to the union leaders. Many 'leftist' leaders like Scargill and others, see the

position of the unions in the Eastern Bloc as admirable. They seek a similar position of power for themselves in this country and see the Labour Party as a way to get it.

What workers in this country should really admire from the events in Poland '81 are the means of organising developed by the Polish workers: Delegates to strike committees were instantly recallable. Meetings between delegates and management were in public and were even on tape so that workers who could not be present could know what went on. The whole community was involved in controlling the strikes.

All those involved in the strike should organise now, with the aim of seizing control of the strike from the NUM! Make the victory real!

TEAR UP THE RULE BOOK

We quote below from a passage which clearly reveals how the unions hold back the struggle and how the Left try to make workers accept the unions' manoeuvres. The passage was written by a miner who is also a member of the Socialist Workers' Party:

"In our pit, we pulled a few of the lads who'd been arrested together. I managed to pull 3 lads round me and we started to go round knocking on doors and had some success with getting people out.

Then we put a resolution to the branch. It said that we should get a list of everyone's name and address who has been arrested and can't go out picketing, and form them into recruiting teams. We should also get a list of everyone who's been passive and decorating or doing the gardening, and then the recruiting teams could visit them.

Unfortunately, this was not passed by a branch committee - you have to put a resolution through the branch committee and this had got knocked back - but it still had to go through the correspondence.

So the week before it was due to come up we went round the soup kitchen, asking lads to come to the meeting.

We got 150 to the branch meeting where we usually get 35. The branch president refused to admit the correspondence so I got up and asked what had happened to it. He said he didn't know anything about a letter and threatened to put me through a window.

But the lads who had come along to the meeting spoke up for me, so the branch president asked them if they wanted to hear the letter. Much to his surprise they all shouted yes.

It just showed what an advantage we have got over the officials. We work with the rank and file day and day out, while our branch president is up there at the area office in Barnsley and is so out of touch it's unbelievable.

So I explained the case, how

we must step up picketing if we are to win the strike and moved a resolution condemning the branch committee for not supporting such a necessary step.

I got a big cheer for this, but they had a fall-back and ruled it out of order. I think that shows you we've got to know the rule book and how we've got to intervene."

(Socialist Worker 15 September)

What is actually shown is that militant workers need to tear up the union rule book. Instead of waiting weeks for proposed actions to be passed through union branches, these miners should have organised the recruiting teams themselves and ignored whatever the NUM tried to do to stop them.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

French coal miners are taking direct action to stop the transport of coal to Britain. On the 22nd November at Calais, miners unloaded 1,000 tons of coal from railway wagons and dumped it on the tracks.

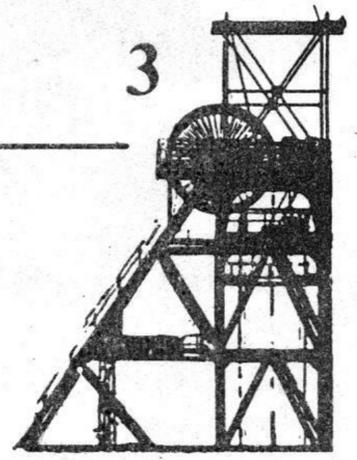
Meanwhile in Denmark, dockers picketed the entrance to the port of Aarhus in an attempt to stop scab lorry drivers from moving South African coal on to

the British ship "Militence", which was to take coal to Britain.

(Info. from "COUNTER INFORMATION", a regular bulletin of news of miners and workers resistance. Available from: Box 81, First of May Bookshop, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh.)

MINERS STRIKE

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Spreading the Strike

The key to winning the miners' strike is, as it has been since the strike began, co-ordinating the actions of the miners with those of other workers. When, for instance, the car workers and dock workers were on strike, the miners could have gone to them to propose mutual solidarity actions. Had they been successful, the balance of forces in the class struggle in this country over the last few months could have been tilted against the bosses. Numerous groups of workers have struck for their own demands, but a joint struggle has not arisen except embryonically at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Liverpool.

At the point when workers in major industries began to take strike action, raising the possibility of the formation of joint strike committees between the miners and other workers, the NUM urged miners to move onto the defensive.

The NUM has directed the most militant strikers to merely picket their own pits and has instructed

strikers that the only way to win the strike is to first stop the scabs from working. Given the ability of the police to continue to outnumber pickets at pitheads, that has proved impossible.

In order to maintain their control of the strike, the NUM and the Left have attempted to limit picketing to the coal industry alone when the way to win is to spread the struggle outside the coal industry and across trade union divisions.

Picketing pits is important; for instance, it helped put NACODS members solidly behind the strike, forcing their union to blatantly disregard its membership. However, to argue that all scabbing must be stopped before the strike can spread to other workers is to say that the strike cannot be spread at all.

To prevent miners taking their case to other workers, when numerous other workers have shown a willingness to fight, is to sabotage the possibility of victory.

NUM RECORD

NUM leaders have already offered to end the strike on the basis of no pit closures without their agreement.

Would this protect miners jobs? If, after a return to work on this basis, the NCB and the NUM agree to close pits, what would happen?

At the end of 1982, S Wales miners voted 80% for strike action to stop pit closures. The NUM ignored the vote. Meanwhile in Scotland, miners were sitting in to save Kinneil pit. McGahey called off the action and the pit closed.

In February 83, Welsh miners came

out unofficially. Yorks NUM officials opposed attempts by Welsh pickets to spread the strike to Yorkshire.

In October 83, as Scots miners prepared for all-out action to support the strike to save Monktonhall pit, the NUM called off the action claiming a "victory". None of the strikers demands were met.

In January 1984 Polmaise miners attacked McGahey for calling off a strike which had started at Bopside and Polmaise pits and was spreading throughout Scotland.

RIOTS AT SPANISH SHIPYARDS

Workers in Bilbao in the north and Cadiz in the South have been involved in bitter opposition to the "Socialist" Government's plans to impose layoffs and new work practises at the yards. Buses have been burned and used as barricades as running street battles have erupted. Sounds familiar

LOCK THEM OUT!

DHSS computer workers at Longbenton, Newcastle, locked union leaders out of a meeting held to discuss the final demoralising defeat of their seven-month strike.

IF THEY'D LOCKED THEM OUT AT THE START, THEY COULD HAVE WON.

If you are in agreement with the Wildcat basic principles we would urge you to contact us with a view to further discussion and membership.

Even if you're not in complete agreement with us you could still help by writing short articles, servicing your local radical bookshop with our paper, or selling copies at work and to friends etc.



WILDCAT Pamphlets

FRONT LINE NEWS FROM THE CLASS WAR - four articles about recent class struggle in Britain and Europe.

LABOURING IN VAIN - a communist critique of the Labour Party.

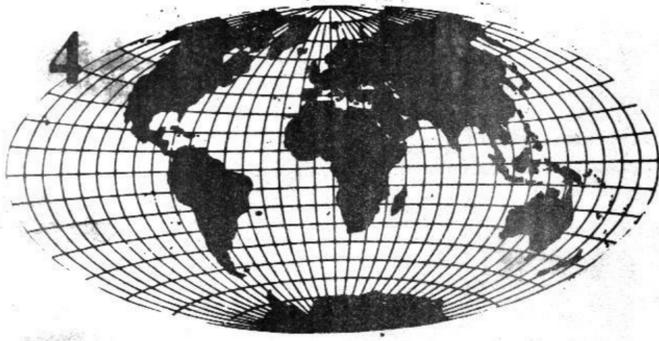
HOW SOCIALIST IS THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY?

These last two are being updated and will be available soon. All cost 30p (incl. p+p) from the WILDCAT group address.

****NEW PAMPHLET COMING SOON****

The Wildcat group will shortly be publishing, in pamphlet form, a collection of articles from Solidarity, the newspaper published during the Second World War by the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation in Glasgow. There will be sections on: Principles and Tactics, The War In Spain, The Second World War, and The Party and the Working Class, each with a brief introduction. There will also be a general historical introduction to the APCF and an afterword discussing the relevance of the APCF's ideas for revolutionaries today.

The cost of producing this pamphlet will be in excess of £100. Anyone wanting to see this project brought to fruition can help by sending us advance orders and financial donations (cash or blank postal orders).



FEED THE WORLD

OVERTHROW CAPITALISM

In 1981 Oxfam estimated that 780 million people in the world were suffering from hunger and mal-nutrition, and that every year 30 million people die of hunger. At the same time, in other parts of the world, there is such an abundance of food, apparently, that vast amounts of it have to be locked away in cold stores or else simply destroyed.

Even the most 'concerned' sections of the capitalist media encourage the belief that this state of affairs is an unavoidable fact of life which ordinary people are powerless to change:

"...what should we do when we see a starving child on television, brought to our home from some distant part of the world? First, we must come to terms with the fact that we can do nothing about it. It is an important facet of world-reality, but one beyond our control." (Guardian, 7 December 1984).

In fact, while the problems of hunger and starvation are inescapable consequences of the present world system of food production, it is well within the potential power of the world's working class to destroy this system, and replace it with a totally different one, in which such problems could soon be eradicated.

PRODUCTION FOR PROFIT

Under the existing world system - capitalism - food isn't directly produced to be eaten. Like everything else, the production of food is geared towards the realisation of profit through the sale of goods on the market. Considerations of price, profit and the market, rather than the satisfaction of basic human needs, are the factors which determine what is produced.

When we hear of record 'surpluses' of foodstuffs, therefore, it obviously doesn't mean that everyone is so full-up they can't eat another mouthful. It

simply means that, in market terms, the supply of food exceeds economic demand for it to the extent that the sellers are in danger of being unable to get a profitable price for their goods.

Production for profit via the market also means that

- if there is no prospect of a profit to be made by producing something, then it simply won't be produced. In January 1983, for example, the Reagan administration introduced a programme designed to reduce by half the acreage of land planted with wheat, maize, rice and cotton. U.S. farmers were to be paid to not produce these crops, because the government already held large stocks of them and they could no longer be sold at a profitable price.

- if goods have already been produced in the expectation of making a profit, and this expectation becomes unfounded for some reason, then these goods will not be sold, and might even be destroyed. The much-publicised EEC 'food mountains' are an example of this. In May 1984 the EEC also announced that in the previous 12 months it had destroyed over 500 thousand tonnes of fruit - this food had been bought from farmers to maintain guaranteed prices, and then left to rot.

Even if the U.S. government or the EEC didn't make such interventions, these absurdities would still occur anyway, as inevitable consequences of the market system itself.

PRODUCTION FOR USE

Since mountains of 'surplus' food and millions of starving people exist side-by-side because under capitalism there is no direct link between the production of food and the satisfaction of basic human needs, it follows that the only way to solve the problem of world hunger is to do away with money, prices, profit and all other trappings of the market system, and replace it with a society in which everything, in-

cluding food, is produced directly for use.

This will entail wrenching all means of wealth-production out of the hands of the minority which owns and controls them at present, and giving everyone an equal say in how the world's resources should be used. If this were to happen, it would be hard to imagine a majority of the world's population voting to continue to devote resources to the production of harmful or unnecessary crops such as tobacco, for example. The basic requirements of the most needy would be the first and most urgent priority.

During the miners' strike, many mining communities have taken steps towards organising the distribution of basic necessities such as food according to need, dispensing with the market system of buying and selling. Without these examples of mutual aid and communal sharing and solidarity, the miners' strike could not have been sustained for as long as it has been. Actions such as these offer some small proof that workers are capable of re-organising society on a different basis, and that the communist society of the future will emerge from the struggles which the working class is involved in today.

At present, however, these actions have been restricted to part of the defensive struggle of just one section of the working class, fighting to maintain its standard of living. But, if this struggle is extended to more and more sections of the working class; if it is changed from a defensive to an offensive struggle; if the working class begins to not only distribute wealth according to need, but starts to take over the means of production in order to produce directly for use; and if workers organise to resist all the forces of the ruling class which will oppose this offensive; then we will be on the road towards the revolutionary overthrow of the present capitalist system, and the establishment of world communism based on common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources.

ETHIOPIA

Let the Guilty be Punished

The present famine in Ethiopia is occurring in a year when world cereal production rose by 8% to all-time record levels.

The EEC has sent about 120 thousand tons of food aid to Ethiopia this year. But the 'grain mountain' of 'surplus' cereal being stored by the EEC amounts to almost 4 million tons. The British government spends about £1300 million each year buying up surplus grain, butter and other foods - most of which is either stored or destroyed. This is over £200 million more than it spends on overseas aid.

These obscene figures are the result of the fact that, under capitalism, food is not produced in order to feed hungry people. Like everything else, it is produced in order to make profits.

THE ECONOMIC CAUSES OF FAMINE

The years of drought in the Sahel have placed a tremendous strain on agriculture in the area. But drought does not automatically lead to famine. More than rain is needed to make crops grow. Agriculture, like any other industry, needs investment. The Ethiopian ruling class has chosen to invest in coffee production, for export, rather than production of basic foods. Last year, coffee production in Ethiopia rose by 9%.

Throughout Africa, and in most other underdeveloped countries, governments have systematically diverted resources away from the production of basic foods, towards profitable cash crops for export. Often this is done by force, by turning traditional subsistence farmers off the land in the most fertile areas, to make way for plantations of cash crops such as coffee, cocoa or rubber. In Africa as a whole, food production has declined by 1% per year for the past 15 years, except for production of luxury foods for export, which has continued to rise.

The income from these cash crops is needed to pay for imported



industrial technology - and also, in Ethiopia's case, for military hardware for use in the long-running war in Eritrea. African rulers have found that it is cheaper to also buy food for their growing urban populations from the industrial countries, rather than from their traditional suppliers in the surrounding countryside. The remaining farmers there have no buyers for their surplus produce. They have neither the incentive nor the funds to modernise their farms or increase production, or even to carry out basic maintenance work. They are forced to run down their farms in order to survive.

The results of this long-term disinvestment can be seen on the ground in Ethiopia. Farmers still use wooden hoes and ploughshares pulled by oxen. The crops are cut with small handscythes. Donkeys are the only means of transport.

As the Western world plunged into recession in the mid-1970s, Western businesses were unwilling or unable to borrow money for investment. As a result, Western banks offered more and more of their spare cash as loans to the underdeveloped countries. But the same recession deprived them of

the income they were relying upon to repay these loans, as Western demand for their industrial products and raw materials collapsed.

Declining agricultural production is the result of economic policies giving priority to industrial development. But the slump in agriculture is only one aspect of the growing economic crisis in the underdeveloped world. Until recently, Western banks have been only too willing to help finance industrialisation there - with loans that are usually given on condition that they are spent on goods from the lender country (so-called 'aid' normally has the same strings attached: two-thirds of British aid is tied to the purchase of British goods).

WORLD DEBT CRISIS

The effect of the world economic crisis has been to ensure that, one way or another, virtually all the money loaned to the underdeveloped world flows straight back to the industrialised world, leaving third world countries with nothing but a growing mountain of debt. The gap between rich and poor countries is growing faster than ever before.

Billions of dollars from the underdeveloped world reaches the industrialised world via the Middle East oil-producing states. Imported technology needs expensive imported oil to keep it going. Half of Sudan's and Tanzania's export earnings are spent on oil imports - these are typical examples. Oil-producing countries invest these revenues in Western banks, or use them to buy the latest Western-built weapons systems. Ethiopia's near neighbours in the Middle East are the arms industry's biggest customers. Military aid to Iraq in its war with Iran alone has cost the Arab countries more than \$35 billion.

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US ARMS BOOM

In the past two years the plight of the debtor countries has been worsened by the economic policies of the Reagan government. The broad aim of these policies is to make the rest of the world pay for the gigantic \$200 billion U.S. budget deficit, which in turn finances the U.S. arms programme.

The lynchpin of U.S. policy has been the high interest rates which aim to attract overseas investors, and which have succeeded in sucking funds into America from the four corners of the globe. The total value of funds transferred into the U.S. in 1983-84 is estimated to be \$150 billion. By contrast, lending to the underdeveloped world has slumped - from \$40 billion in 1981 to \$12 billion in 1983. This is barely enough cover the increased interest payments of the debtor nations, which rise by \$4 billion for every one per cent rise in U.S. interest rates. 90% of new loans to Brazil in 1984, for example, were solely for the purpose of financing interest payments.

As investors rush to buy dollars to invest in the U.S., the value of the dollar has soared, leading to steady decline in the cost of U.S. imports. Prices of raw materials produced by underdeveloped countries have been particularly hard hit. The average dollar price of raw materials has declined by 25%, with metals falling by almost 40%. In other words, not only have interest charges to debtor countries increased; in addition the goods they have to sell to pay these charges are worth less and less.

PUBLIC MEETING

* FEED THE WORLD *
* OVERTHROW CAPITALISM *

WEDNESDAY 13th FEBRUARY,
7-45pm, downstairs
at THE MILLSTONE PUB
Thomas Street (off Oldham
Street), Manchester city
centre.

* ALL WELCOME *
* BRING YOUR FRIENDS *

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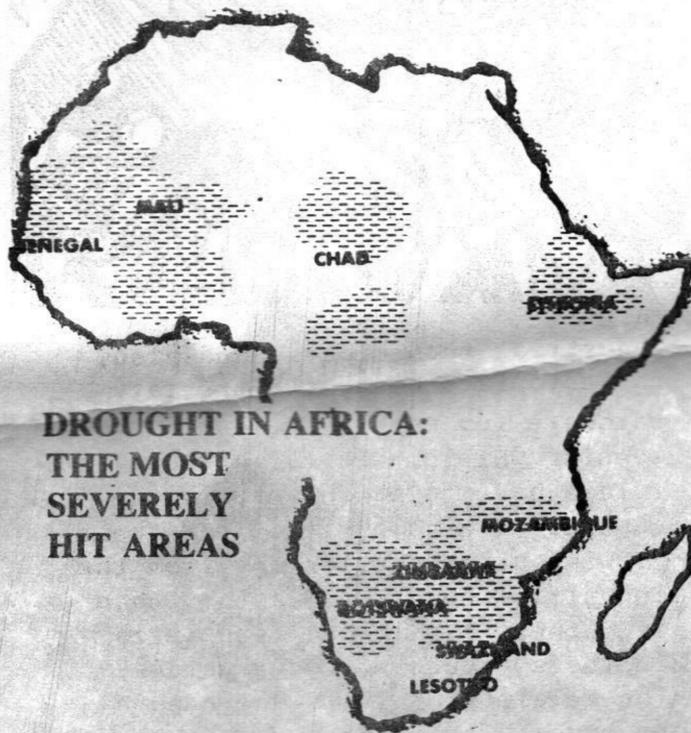
ETHIOPIA

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)



Not surprisingly, there is now a real possibility of a major third world debtor defaulting. This would lead to the collapse of Western banks which have lent heavily to the third world, plunging the entire world economy into chaos. Indeed it has been calculated that sustained world economic growth of at least 3% is required to avert a generalised default by third world debtors. Since 1973 average world economic growth has been barely above 2%!

The American response to this threat has been, through the IMF, to impose savage austerity measures on the debtor countries.



**DROUGHT IN AFRICA:
THE MOST SEVERELY
HIT AREAS**

In a typical case, a large devaluation of the currency of the debtor country is enforced, making their exports cheaper on the world market. As a result, cheap exports are now flooding into America, paid for in overvalued U.S. dollars - which immediately return to the U.S. as interest payments on loans, at the artificially high rates engineered by U.S. policy. Superficially the export countries seem to be enjoying an 'export boom'. In reality all this means is that America is now not only raking in money from the underdeveloped world, but desperately-needed products as well.

Devaluation also means that the price of debtor countries' imports of all kinds - including vital foods - rises dramatically. Food prices have been doubled, at

the insistence of the IMF, in countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and the Dominican Republic. For the urban working class, IMF-imposed austerity measures mean that living standards plummet. For example, since 1981 real wages in Chile have fallen by 20%, in Bolivia by 25%, and in Brazil by 30%.

The overall result of U.S. policies has been a massive transfer of resources from poor to rich nations, estimated at \$20 billion during 1983 alone. The Reagan administration has vetoed all attempts by the World Bank and other agencies to raise relatively tiny sums of money to avert catastrophe in the poorest countries in the world, such as Ethiopia. The Reagan administration has its own ideas about how to combat the effects of poverty in the underdeveloped world. American 'aid' goes mainly to reliable allies such as Israel, Egypt, Indonesia, the Philippines, Tunisia, Morocco and El Salvador. It consists of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of the most up-to-date weapons - much of it specially designed to defend the rulers of these countries against the urban insurrections which the IMF's austerity policies are expected to provoke.

REVOLUTION

A wave of food riots and strikes is already sweeping Latin America and north and south Africa. The development of these struggles offers the only hope for permanent solution to the problem of famine - revolution.

So, next time someone asks you for a pound for the victims of the latest famine, remember the 4 million tons of grain in EEC warehouses. Remember the \$20 billion drained from the underdeveloped world to help finance U.S. arms expenditure. Famine is not a 'natural disaster'. The blame lies with the men and women who - as bankers, industrialists, military leaders and politicians - own, administer and defend the insane capitalist economic system. A system where profit is all, and human well-being is, in the last analysis, unimportant. Let the guilty be punished!

Support Class Violence



One of the most significant developments during the miners' strike has been the formation of the 'hit squads': groups of workers willing to plan and carry out military-style attacks on the bosses' property.

Not surprisingly, the bosses see this type of action as a major threat. For instance, on 23 August The Times reported that

"Senior police officers last night admitted that they were deeply concerned at the emergence of a para-military style gang, apparently led by a woman, which spearheaded a day of unprecedented violence in Yorkshire pit villages".

The riots that have occurred in such places as Fitzwilliam, Grime-thorpe and Maltby have been joint actions involving the unemployed as well as miners. Police stations have been fire-bombed, police convoys ambushed, dozens of NCB buildings wrecked and barricades erected at pitheads.

It is neither possible to condemn nor support violence out of hand on moral grounds. It must be seen within the context of the class struggle, as sometimes productive, sometimes not, rather than on a basis of right and wrong. Workers must take whatever action is needed to further their struggles. If this means taking violent action, then so be it, and that violence must be both accepted and supported.

One point which must be made though: in general, violence in a strike is a defensive action. If the miners were receiving the support, and above all, the solidarity action they so desperately need, from other workers, then much of the violence witnessed over the past ten months need not have taken place.

The Labour Movement tends to condemn this violence because they cannot control it. On 24 November at a rally in Derby, Arthur Scargill condemned violence against scabs, saying "The miners' union would not have been involved in any way in attacking people's homes", and again on 30 November at the rally in Stoke with Kinnock, he condemned "all violence outside the picket lines".

The violence against scabs has had a great effect in slowing the drift back to work. However, it is outside the control of the unions, as is all the violence apart from the useless set-piece actions typified by Orgreave.

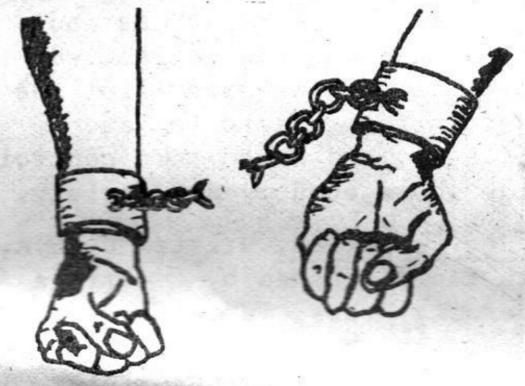
Neil Kinnock and the TUC leader Norman Willis are both obviously anti-working class as they continually condemn necessary class violence, but the NUM has proved just as bad. Jack Taylor of the Yorkshire NUM appeared on television repeatedly, condemning the Yorkshire riots. Malcolm Pitt, head of the Kent NUM, moans about the police "undermining respect for the law". And the NUM paper, The Miner, is full of complaints of police brutality, but has never once supported workers using violence to defend themselves.

A typical attitude expressed by the leaders of the labour movement is that workers should not carry out acts of violence on the grounds that they give the police the excuse to crack down on the miners. This viewpoint is ridiculous - the police don't need any excuse to clamp down on the strikers! At the beginning of the strike the police were the first to use violence and the miners had to take violent steps to protect themselves. The media failed to report the original police brutality at all, and later reported that it was the poor, innocent police who were being attacked by miners - a complete reversal of what actually occurred.

Capitalist society is based upon violence, the violent suppression of the working class by the ruling class using the state and all its instruments. The police, the government and the courts only exist to implement this. Workers must be encouraged

to take whatever steps are necessary to counter this continual attack.

Those who support or carry out working class violence had better not look to the NUM to organise the defence of working class political prisoners against the police and the courts. In fact, up and down the country the NUM is trying to prevent workers defending their imprisoned comrades arrested on unofficial actions. For example, when the trial of those arrested during the Fitzwilliam riot came up, the NUM circulated all branches in the area discouraging miners from going to the lobby of their hearing.



At the time of writing more than a hundred miners are still in prison. Just as the most effective actions in this strike have, by necessity, taken place outside the control of the union, so too must the defence of those involved in them. The release of these prisoners must become a central demand of the strike, but workers must organise it themselves as it is obvious that the NUM will not do so.

In Britain there has been little evidence of the violence against bosses that has been seen in other countries such as France or Belgium. The unions have sold workers the idea that it is possible to both serve their own interests and compromise with the bosses as well. The violence we have seen during this strike reflects the growing realisation on behalf of some of the more militant strikers that the supposed neutrality of the state and police is nothing but a sham. There can be no compromise with those who enslave us, nor with those who try to con us that we are not slaves.

RED PETROGRAD

In Russia in 1917 there was a working class revolution. Now Russia is state capitalist and represses workers in the name of socialism. There is no communist country in the world for capitalism is a worldwide system.

Many people think that the Russian revolution was simply a seizure of state power by a small minority, the Bolshevik Party, without workers' involvement. In reality there was a massive workers' movement of protests, strikes, and new collective organisations developing, which became radicalised and revolutionary between February and October 1917. Ordinary workers, men and women, young and old, organised themselves to take power from the bosses in their factories and workplaces, and so to take control of the whole economy and society.

Red Petrograd, written by S.A. Smith and published by Cambridge University Press, is really valuable in showing how this process happened, by describing the actions of factory workers in Petrograd at this time. Despite its academic appearance, it is well-presented and clearly written. Don't be put off by the mass of facts and figures in Chapter One - just read its conclusion. The book is important for providing facts from which you can argue. The ruling class wants us to believe that capitalism goes on for ever and that we can't do anything to change it, and so denies us access to information about workers struggling and succeeding - if only temporarily - to take power themselves. A book devoted to this is rare and worth reading. It is vital working class history, but unfortunately at £25 no member of the working class can afford to buy it! However it can be ordered from libraries, and is soon being published as a paperback.

Factory Committees

Following the overthrow of the Russian Tsar in February, workers organised to press for their own

demands. General meetings of all workers in the factories decided on factory committees with recallable delegates to be elected, each for a short time of often six months. Social upheaval leads to people's ideas changing quickly. Few miners in Britain a year ago thought they would today be fighting with armed police in the streets where they live. In Russia in 1917, workers began to organise factory production, because otherwise they would be unemployed and starving. What started as a practical measure to save jobs led to an awareness that socialism is about collectively controlling your work process and what is produced. This can only be achieved through the seizure of political power from the capitalist class. The speed of the transformation from a defensive into an offensive fight against the capitalist system gives hope to socialists today.

This radicalisation came in fits and starts, in some factories more than others, and sometimes resulted in contradictory actions. So that, despite factory committees' concern for working class solidarity, when having to decide who had to be thrown out of work due to lack of raw materials, at the big Putilov metal works they decided that all the women should go first. All revolutionary situations have real people involved, with all their past prejudices and preconceptions. We don't expect these to disappear overnight. However, Red Petrograd shows how prejudices such as these are overcome through the experience of struggle against capitalism, which develops class consciousness.

Red Petrograd describes this process in detail. It is what Lenin called "the vital creativity of the masses". Women workers at a shoe factory forced their boss into a wheelbarrow and tipped him towards the canal until he gave in to their demands. Workers organised themselves into groups to fetch food for their fellow workers, from the countryside. Armed militias were set up to protect local areas

from attack. Educational classes in literacy and politics were organised in the workplaces and involved many workers, as did the new factory theatres and music concerts. The Putilov Works Committee set up evening classes, saying: "We are now the masters of our own lives and so we must become masters of all the weapons of knowledge". The revolution depended on a vast wealth of working class activity which the book brings to light.

DEFEAT

However, it is important also for pointing to the reasons for the defeat of the Russian revolution, for this mass involvement in changing the structure of people's own lives, at work and in their communities, was very short-lived.

In 1917, the Bolsheviks undoubtedly represented the will of the most militant sections of the Russian working class. But after the revolution, they moved quickly to strengthen the power of their party over all of society, including the workers. The Bolsheviks soon showed their distrust of the creativity of the masses, which is, in fact, the only guarantee of the success of a revolution, both before and after the seizure of power.

After they took power in October 1917, the Bolsheviks introduced measures to destroy the independent factory committees. They integrated them into the official Trade Union movement, and so into the state. This was supported by the capitalists, with whom the Bolsheviks reached a compromise. The Bolsheviks became obsessed with the need to maintain production in the face of economic chaos, and this left no room for workers in the factories organising themselves. Like many nineteenth century socialists, they regarded socialism as simply state capitalism i.e. the nationalisation of production. The book describes the opposition to this idea at the

BASIC PRINCIPLES

time. It reveals that the factory committee leaders were in favour of centralised control of the economy. But they were well aware that "socialism would remain a mere formality unless the direct producers - and not just the state on their behalf - took over and radically restructured relations of production within the enterprise". Left Communist opposition groups within the Bolshevik Party pointed this contrast out to Lenin, but with no effect.

What Went Wrong

By 1918 the Petrograd working class was decimated. Some militant workers had joined the Red Army to fight in the civil war, others were unemployed, others had returned to the countryside. There was not the militancy or organisation left to struggle against an increasingly dictatorial Bolshevik government, who took control of the factories themselves. They went on to introduce capitalist policies, such as piece rates, strict labour discipline and one-man management, against the class they claimed to represent.

A full discussion of this is beyond the scope of this article. But two main failings must be kept in mind as vital lessons to be learnt by the future mass revolutionary movement. Firstly, there was the isolation of the Russian revolution, when workers' uprisings elsewhere - especially in Germany - were crushed by their ruling class. Only a revolutionary movement which breaks down national boundaries, and sweeps the whole world with its sheer strength, will be successful in heralding communism.

Secondly, a future revolution will fail if the working class allows a political party to take power on its behalf. As Red Petrograd shows, it is the experience of organising themselves in struggle that gives workers the confidence to challenge all aspects of their lives under capitalism. Only active control by all workers of their re-callable delegates in workplace organisations will ensure collective class power, and stop sabotage by any minority. "The emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself" (Marx). We learn from past struggles that this is not a pipedream but a real process to be built on today.

1. Opposition to capitalist society which exists in every country in the world; both in the form of "private capitalism" and the "mixed economy" as in the American bloc, and in the form of "state capitalism" as in the Russian bloc, China, and much of the "third world".

- 2. Commitment to the communist objective - abolition of nation states and the money/market/wages system, and its replacement by a classless society, common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources.
- 3. Rejection of nationalisation and other state capitalist economic measures as any solution to working class problems, or to the world crisis caused by capitalism.
- 4. Rejection of all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" organisations, such as the IRA, PLO, etc. For the internationalisation of class struggle.
- 5. Opposition to all capitalist and nationalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. Opposition to all joint work with these organisations, including participation in front organisations such as the CND.
- 6. Support and encouragement for independent working class struggle, outside the control of the trade unions (including shop stewards and "rank and file" movements), and all political parties.
- 7. Rejection of the use of parliament. For the active participation of the whole working class in its own emancipation through social revolution which overthrows all governments, bosses, and leaders.
- 8. Active opposition to all forms of sexism, racism, cultural and institutionalised barriers to working class solidarity.
- 9. Opposition to religion, pacifism and all other ideological mystifications.
- 10. Support for principled co-operation among revolutionaries, and opposition to sectarianism.

*** RUSSIAN REVOLUTION ***
*** DISCUSSION MEETING ***

The Wildcat group is organising a discussion meeting in Manchester on the weekend of 26-27 January 1985. The subject of Saturday's discussion will be The Nature of the Russian Revolution and the Role of the Revolutionary Groups.

The meeting is open to members, sympathisers and contacts of the Wildcat group. We will be circulating a text on the Russian Revolution in advance of the meeting, along with a suggested reading list (copies of some of the material on the list can be provided). Any readers who are interested in attending and participating in the discussion should contact us for further details as soon as possible.

We can also provide a creche - let us know beforehand how many children to expect, what age group and for how long.

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Labour Party and Union Leaders

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Why have Neil Kinnock, TUC General Secretary Norman Willis, and other 'leaders of the Labour movement' refused to back the miners' strike? Just whose side are they on?

The answer is simple. They are on the same side as Thatcher. They are on the same side as the police. They are on the same side as the courts. They are against the miners. Labour Party and Trade Union leaders side with the ruling class because they are part of the same ruling class.

Neil Kinnock has shown an unwavering commitment to using his influence to help smash the miners' strike. When the mass pickets were successfully drawing Notts miners out on strike, Kinnock called for a ballot. When miners confronted a tidal wave of police violence at Orgreave, Kinnock condemned violence ... by miners.

Miners know that they have to break the law to win the strike. When Kinnock tells them to 'respect the law', he is calling for the defeat of the strike. When he speaks out against violence by miners, he is calling on them to surrender to police violence.

It's worth remembering that Kinnock is on the left of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Shadow Home Secretary Kaufmann spoke for the entire Shadow Cabinet when he said that the Labour Party "strongly supports the police in the proper use of their powers to uphold law and order".

FALSE FRIENDS

The Tory strategy is now to starve the miners back to work. The cuts in social security payments, the heavy fines imposed on arrested miners, the harassment of street collections, are all part of this campaign. Why have GMBATU union leaders chosen this moment to withdraw their £1000 per day contribution to the miners?

The reason is simple. Basnett and other GMBATU leaders never supported the miners. But as long as they thought the miners might win they had to keep up appearances. Meanwhile they tried to sabotage the strike in other ways - by urging their members in power stations to accept extra oil deliveries, and by refusing to back the Austin Rover strike. But now they think that the strike is doomed, they have lost no time in putting the boot in, by withdrawing their cash just when it is needed most.

What miners need most of all is concerted strike action by workers in other industries. Union leaders - left and right - have done everything they can to prevent this happening. In April, and again in August, Bill Sirs and other steel union leaders opposed strikes in Scottish steelworks, while calling on their members to use scab coal. In May, rail union leaders Knapp and Buckton called off the rail strikes which could have led quickly to a miners' victory. In June, Post Office workers' union leaders clamped down on unofficial action in support of the postal workers' pay claim. NUR leader Knapp has recently intervened personally to prevent strike action by rail workers in support of colleagues suspended for refusing to move coal. AUEW and EEUPTU leaders, Duffy and Chapple, worked overtime to sabotage the recent Austin Rover strike...

All these union leaders are part of a concerted attempt by the entire ruling class to defeat the miners. There is no conspiracy involved here. Their class interest - as members of the ruling class - governs their actions. Their aim is to protect or develop their own lifestyles, their wealth and their power, rather than to benefit their respective memberships.

Their main aim is to defend

capitalism, and their own position within the capitalist system. Sometimes they are prepared to support strikes, in order to strengthen their own power and influence. But most union leaders have always thought that a miners' victory would be too risky. It might unleash a wave of militant class struggle which they could not control. They are already preparing to make a new deal with Thatcher on the assumption that the miners will be defeated. Union leaders will offer to make use of the new laws to control unofficial strikes - as several unions, notably NALGO, are already doing - if Thatcher promises not to use the new laws against them.

The problem presented by present union leaders cannot be solved by replacing them with supposedly more militant ones. The role of the union leader itself is anti-working class. Union leaders are in a position where their interests become the same as the bosses'. In many cases the powers of the unions are such that they virtually become bosses anyway - they can decide whether or not you work, how much compensation should be paid if you have an accident at work, and even in some cases whether or not you get promoted.

UNION LEADERS 'SOLIDARITY'? NO THANKS!

When union leaders give false promises of support to workers on strike, their aim is to prevent them going directly to other workers to seek solidarity. We should tell them we don't want their phoney support.

The only way to stop our struggles being sabotaged by our so-called leaders is for all workers to recognise these leaders for what they are - our enemies - and refuse to let them have anything to do with our struggles in the first place.