
communist bulletin

50p

* **The Miners — After the
 Strike**

* **PERSPECTIVES
The Crisis & War Preparations**

* **Capitalist Barbarism
 in Africa**

* **CWO — Turning Marxism
 on its Head**

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The Communist Bulletin Group
can be contacted ONLY at the
following Group address.

box 85
43 candlemakers row
edinburgh
scotland
u.k.

After the Defeat of the Miners -

What Next for the Class War in Britain?

Introduction.

"The workers in this struggle have demonstrated to the working class that if they make a stand they can prevent attempts to butcher their industry." So spoke NUM President Arthur Scargill as he announced on March 3rd, with shouts of 'scab' ringing in his ears, a union-led return to work. What the struggle really demonstrated was that if workers continue to have faith in the likes of Scargill and the rest of the union bureaucracy we are all going to end up on the butcher's slab.

In the last issue of the Bulletin we published a detailed look at the thoroughly anti-working class role of the NUM and Labour Party in the lead up to and early months of the strike, and rather than repeat ourselves we refer new readers to that text. In this article we want to draw up a provisional balance sheet of the recent strike, and to examine what the defeat of the miners and the manner of their defeat will mean for the balance of class forces in Britain.



Miners Show Their Defiance

The Attack on Living Standards

The defeat of the miners' strike and the inevitable carve up of the industry to come is just one more step in Capitalism's drive to pauperize the working class. With the qualitative deepening of the economic crisis, the British ruling class - like the bosses in every other nation - is fast running out of tactics that can buy breathing space for it's economy. More and more the only option left to them is a full frontal assault on workers' living standards.

Since Thatcher came to power in 1979 this frontal assault has been mounted with zeal and a fair measure of success. 4½ million workers are languishing in penniless unemployment, traditionally large employers like Steel and Shipbuilding have chopped their workforce to bits, and everywhere workers are being terrorized into moderating wage demands and accepting speed-ups, efficiency measures etc.

While Government agencies can produce statistics to show that living standards have remained steady, few workers are taken in by this fraud - the figures take no account of the huge reduction in the social wage (local government services, public transport, health care etc). The Government has two objectives:

1) To increase the competitiveness of the British economy on the world market; ruthlessly pruning large sectors of the economy and pauperizing workers in order to raise the rate of exploitation.

2) An ideological attack on the working class. They want to ram home the lesson that struggle does not pay and that only by remaining quiescent can you hope to remain in work. They refuse to be 'held to ransom', and have shown themselves willing to close down whole industries that were previously deemed sacrosanct.

The bosses are resigned to large chunks of society never being integrated into the workforce. They foresee a threefold division of the working class: a

core of full-time workers; a second group chasing after poorly paid part-time and temporary jobs; and a third group who are consigned to permanent unemployment. The existence of a large pool of unemployed workers poses certain problems for the bosses, but it also has tangible advantages. Every worker knows that there is a score of unemployed waiting to take his job if he steps out of line. A good example is the way the Southampton Dockers have been crucified, while other ports gratefully lap up the work. Bouts of unemployment serve to dampen expectations, particularly in the case of young workers; and make people desperate to take any job or training scheme no matter how badly paid. Government departments are trying to make these jobs and schemes seem more attractive, mainly by cutting benefits and harassing claimants.

So here we see the bosses' dream of Britain in the late 1980s: fighting for diminishing world markets with a streamlined economy and a cowed workforce; a continuing steady rundown of traditional heavy industries; no real growth in the relatively profitable new-technology industries (employing a small number of highly paid skilled workers and a larger mass of poorly paid controlled by new management techniques); and a possible small growth in the horrendously paid unskilled and white collar jobs that the unemployed will have to fight over. The unemployed total will continue to rise, whole areas will be lumpenized and will have to be controlled by a greatly expanded repressive arm of the state. The bosses have made plans to cope with expected civil unrest, but their calculations are based on a repetition of the 1981 riots rather than a 1917-style upsurge by a class conscious proletariat.

The State's Plans for the Coal Industry

For a decade the British state carefully prepared for its year long battle with the miners. With demand and profitability slumping, the bosses were determined that production must be cut and the resistance of the miners broken. The stakes were too high for the Government to risk defeat, hence their tactical withdrawal in 1981. By 1984 they were ready, and a confrontation with the NUM (also angling for a fight in order to preserve a position of power within the industry) was provoked.

The full panoply of the state was mobilized against

the miners: a centrally organized police force that sought to impose martial law in mining communities, the Special Branch, the DHSS, the Press and TV companies, the sabotage of the NUM and TUC etc. The strike gave the state an opportunity to experiment with new tactics that will be used to corral civil unrest when the class war really heats up. The movement of pickets was curtailed, nearly 10,000 strikers were arrested, and there was an avalanche of police violence and intimidation.

To cope with the nation's energy demands the state utilized nuclear power and moth-balled oil-fuelled power stations, imported over £3 billion of foreign coal and fuel oil, and of course could rely on domestic coal from some of the working areas to supplement the NCB's huge stockpiles. The cost of the strike in purely financial terms was immense; £3½ billion is the lowest estimate of bourgeois economists, but in the words of Chancellor Nigel Lawson this sum was considered a 'good investment' if the miners could be smashed and all workers taught a salutary lesson. In a long war of attrition between the Capitalist state and a union controlled strike there could only be one winner - the miners were starved back to work.

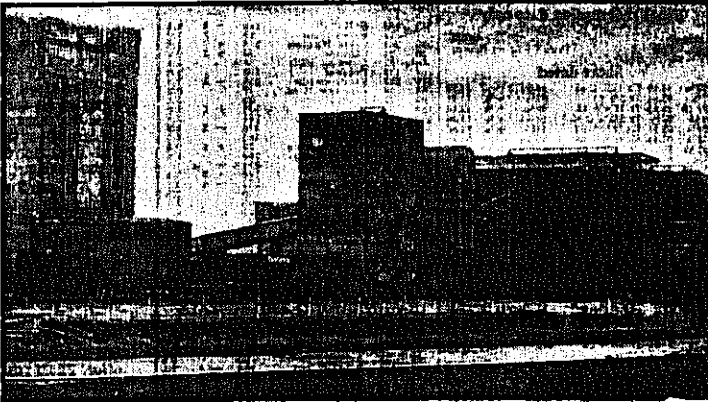
Having won the strike, the NCB will feel free to press ahead with its rationalization programme. Unprofitable areas like Wales, Scotland and Kent will be progressively abandoned while investment is concentrated in the Midlands and the Yorkshire super-pits. The NCB will not seek the destruction of the NUM, since the union plays a crucial role in the smooth running of the industry. But it is a 'realistic' NUM that the management will seek to work with, and the board can afford to ride roughshod over the union in areas that have already been marked down for closure (in these coalfields lower rank union officials were singled out for sacking during the course of the strike). The bosses will continue with their divide and rule tactics; setting area against area and holding negotiations at the regional level.

The Scottish coalfield, scene of some of the bitterest battles of the strike, is a good example of these tactics at work. Area director Albert Wheeler has refused to reinstate any of the strikers sacked during the dispute - more than a quarter of all those sacked come from the relatively small Scottish coalfield, including over 100 at Bilston Glenn. The NCB



The Organisation of State Violence Hits a New High

has made plans for drastic surgery in Scotland, an area that in the year before the strike lost £74 million on its deep-mining operations. They propose to close Barony, Killoch and Comrie within a year, and if demand for coal does not rise substantially (which it won't) Polmaise, Polkemmet and the Seafield/Francis complex will follow soon after. The Scottish coalfield will thus be reduced to a rump of Bilston Glen, Monktonhall and the Longannet complex. This means that many more miners' jobs will be lost. During the first four years of Wheeler's directorship the NCB's Scottish workforce was reduced from more than 20,000 to under 13,000. A further 2,100 accepted golden handshakes during the strike, and another 1,000 applications are currently being processed.



Written off: Killoch (above) will combine with Barony before closure.



Written off: Comrie faces closure within five years.

It remains to be seen what kind of resistance the miners can mount against the NCB's plans. They may be temporarily demoralized rather than broken, but the bourgeoisie must be confident that it can do to the miners exactly what it did to steel workers after it broke their strike.

A Balance Sheet of the Strike

An obvious weakness of the strike was that right from the start a sizeable section of miners (approximately 40,000) stayed at work. The action of these men not only reflected the general mood of timidity that prevails amongst British workers, but was a direct consequence of the productivity deal engineered by the last Labour government which set area against area, miner against miner. On the other hand, we must salute the incredible courage and combativity of the striking miners, who endured a year of terrible hardship and a ferocious onslaught by all arms of the state.

The strike laid to rest the myth that the police are merely a neutral third party in industrial disputes. No miner can have any illusions left about the boys in blue, every worker knows what to expect from them next time he or she goes on strike.

Faced by the naked brutality of the state, miners were forced to reply with their own collective class violence. The riots that drove the cops from Fitzwilliam and Maltby, the ambushing of police convoys, the raiding of NCB offices, the barricades and pitched battles - a new dimension has clearly been brought to the class war in Britain!

Another positive gain has been the involvement of whole communities in the struggle. Women have deserted the kitchen sink to join their menfolk on the picket lines and to organize the support groups that enabled the miners to last out for so long. Because of their geographic concentration and historical traditions it was perhaps not surprising that this should happen, but it is something that has rarely been seen in British strikes in the past, and never on this scale. Workers in other industries should be encouraged to copy this aspect of the miners' strike. When workers are on strike the fight should not be confined to those directly involved at the place of work - the whole community, the whole class should get involved pushing aside all sectional barriers.

The weaknesses of the strike are palpable, and from an early stage ensured the miners' defeat. Militant workers must draw lessons from the experience and avoid a repetition of the miners' mistakes.

Failure to generalize the struggle was perhaps the chief weakness of the strike, since by themselves the miners could never hope to beat the state. Only during the early days of the strike did we see any real attempt to spread the struggle, and this rapidly evaporated when the NUM HQ took control. A combination of union manoeuvres and workers' hesitancy prevented a link-up with the conflicts at the docks and car factories.

The TUC and unions in associated industries, such as steel and the power stations, played a quite blatant strike breaking role. But workers were also extremely reluctant to accept the risks involved in taking action to support and link-up with the strike, adopting an ostrich posture that played right into the bosses' hands. There were creditable exceptions: some railwaymen withstood tremendous intimidation from their employers and blocked the movement of coal; seamen at Jarrow and Blyth disobeyed union instructions and prevented ships moving coal to the power stations from their ports. The strike demonstrated the complete futility of sending union official to talk to union official rather than mass delegations of workers; the complete futility of asking other workers for charitable collections instead of solidarity action and linking up demands.

The NUM played a key role in diverting the strike into areas where the bosses held all the trump cards. The union bureaucrats were determined to keep control of all aspects of the strike, wanting to use the miners as a malleable club to achieve the NUM's own bourgeois objectives. The NUM controlled the movement of pickets (and left many thousands of strikers stuck at home doing nothing and with no idea of what was happening) channeling them into set piece battles with the police where their defeat was inevitable, or early morning rituals where the cops penned them in on the kerbside while the armoured buses carrying working miners whizzed past. Union officials made constant deals with the police, and issued scores of dispensations to move coal that seriously undermined the impact of the strike. The NUM worked hard to get its hands on all financial support for the strike, recognizing that this gave it a key weapon in controlling the strike (not to mention the millions of pounds it salted away in

foreign bank accounts, money that was desperately needed by strikers and their families). The union bureaucracy sought to stifle local initiatives if they were outside union control (eg preventing women and non-miners joining picket lines), and were particularly keen to elbow out 'non-accredited' groups.

Despite these tactics and the final sell out we saw little questioning of trade unionism by miners; summed up by strikers returning to work behind union banners and bands singing "Arthur Scargill, Arthur Scargill, we'll support you evermore." Miners might be disgusted by the TUC or individual NUM leaders like Bell or Vincent, they might complain that their branch wasn't doing enough, but they remained firmly wedded to the principles and practices of trade unionism and loyal to the NUM. Only in the last days of the strike did we see any real questioning and disillusionment with the antics of Scargill and co. Scargill acted very cunningly throughout the strike, and his standing as the honest leader of militant strikers seemed to go quite unchallen-



Leading Workers into
the Union Cul-de-Sac

ged (this was most noticeable amongst very militant young miners). To achieve this he worked hand in hand with other factions of the state - eg his countless appearances on TV, his carefully stage-managed arrest and injury etc. In the blinkered world of middle class suburbia Scargill was seen as the demonic public enemy number one, but this was never the constituency he was aiming at - his fiery oratory and masterly TV performances were all aimed at militant strikers, whom he sought to keep under his control. It is ironic that strikers would talk about insurrection, but were unwilling to hear a word said against "Arthur" and the NUM leadership. Attacks on the union were seen as damaging the unity of the strike, they felt the miners should be left to sort out any problems internally. The miners' greatest weaknesses were those things they had previously perceived as their greatest strengths: that they had the strongest union in the country, that they were the flower of the working class capable of winning victories on their own.

The bosses hope that their victory will have a drastic impact on the class struggle, proving to other workers that if the miners with all their industrial muscle cannot win, that no one can and so there is nothing to be gained from fighting back. In the short term this may well be the impact of the strike, but at the same time the long strike has 'politicized' the entire working class, and taught lessons that lay the basis for a positive development in the class struggle:

- * That the crisis won't go away, things can only get worse and the bosses seek to impoverish us all
- * That sectional union controlled strikes are doomed to defeat
- * That generalization is the only way forward.
- * That the TUC and Labour Party are against the working class.
- * That the mailed fist of the state must be met by mass collective class violence
- * That industrial struggles must be spread throughout the wider working class community.

The bosses have won an important victory over the miners, but the weapons they are using to win such victories are extremely brittle. If the miners did not take many steps forward, the strike at least demonstrated the redundancy of old methods of struggle. The question of where we go from has been clearly posed.

The Strike and the Labour Party

At first glance the miners strike saw a Labour Party so completely hamstrung by events as to be unable to play any role at all, typified by the pathetic vacillations of Neil Kinnock. The Labour Party has been caught on the hop by the qualitative development of the crisis. With the bosses' room for manoeuvre narrowing it is increasingly difficult for Labour to differentiate their programme from that of the Tories. If Labour were in power there would be more hesitations and minor policy changes, but the basic strategy would be the same. What is being done in Conservative Britain is mirrored by what is being done in so-called Socialist France or so-called Communist Poland or China. Like socialist parties in other European countries, the Labour Party has been steadily losing its mass working class membership and financial support. While millions of workers still troop through the polling booths to vote Labour, passive support has replaced active support and cynicism is widespread.

Thus it can be argued that classic Social Democracy is likely to be less of a weapon in the bosses' armoury than it was in the last

revolutionary wave. Then, particularly in Germany, it was a key factor in the defeat of the working class - "socialist" parties were able to say "don't revolt, if you do, the right will take power and make things really tough, instead stay calm and vote for us and we'll build socialism gradually from within the system." After 65 years these promises have been exposed as lies, so that the likes of Kinnock have no chance of becoming the Ebert of the 1980s.

However, it would be a serious mistake to conclude that the Labour Party will become a political irrelevance in the years ahead. While few miners are in any doubt about whose side Kinnock and co. were on during the strike, it is ironic that during this period Labour Party membership was actually rising in many pit communities. To explain this phenomenon we must turn to the Labour Left and the party's Trotskyist Fringe. Like the CP in France, these groupings are prepared to forego short-term electoral popularity in order to place themselves at the helm of burgeoning industrial unrest. They are dangerous because it is precisely the most militant and combative workers that they aim to recruit and thus divert into the cul-de-sac of reformist politics.

Does this mean the Bennite Left and Militant are bound to take power in the Labour Party, booting the centre-right into the arms of the SDP? The answer is probably no, given their continued inability to seize control of the Trade Union Movement (the bedrock of real power in the party). In many ways it is in the Labour Left's interest not to win power and chuck out the centre-right, since in a curious way both factions need each other. The Left needs a Labour Party that has the potential to be the next government, i.e. led by a moderate team, so that it can draw in militant workers and young people (working on the illusion that they can reform the party and make it into a "real" workers party. Two separate parties, as in France, would probably be a less effective arrangement. The Labour Left needs a treacherous centre-right leadership while at the same time avoiding being closely associated with it, and needs to remain within a mass party so as to dangle the carrot of power and "achieving something" in front of its new recruits. In the years ahead, the Left is going to be a major enemy in the fight for communism, and in the miners strike it has already demonstrated its ability to sidetrack militant workers.

The Role of Revolutionaries

It was natural that the most important outburst of class struggle in post-war Britain would have a major impact on the revolutionary movement; raising morale after the passivity of recent years, breathing life into old controversies as well as raising new issues, cruelly exposing just how weak we are at present. Before dealing with the wider questions, we would like to reply to a number of comments we received on our two articles in the last Bulletin on revolutionary intervention in the miners strike.

A common response to our article on the Dalkeith rally was that a hostile response is only to be expected when you "parachute" in on workers. We agree that strikers will be more responsive to communists who they know, who they have previously talked to on picket lines, who have regularly leafleted them over the years. However on a march of 6,000 strikers, drawn from many coalfields, it

is difficult to do other than "parachute" in - only a tiny fraction can be expected to have any familiarity with communist politics. At the time of the rally loyalty to the NUM and confidence in its leadership were their zenith - the same workers have a rather different attitude to the

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Miners Tell McGahey
What They Think Of Him

likes of Mick McGahey today. A secondary issue arising from this topic is how useful these marches are as an arena for a communist intervention? They are always well policed - by union stewards as well as the uniformed constabulary. In addition, there are always swarms of leftists peddling their noxious wares; these individuals frequently try to stir up violence against revolutionaries - they have done it to CGB militants during the recent strike, and other communist groups have reported similar experiences

some correspondents have questioned the accuracy of our comments on the lack of activity by Libertarian/Councilist groups in the miners strike. Our criticisms of the Intercom project stand - when the strike broke out the project was quite unable to make any collective response. Genuine militants inside it drew the correct conclusions, and the magazine folded. But we were wrong to give the impression that groups involved in Intercom were incapable of making individual interventions in the strike. We have been sent leaflets issued by, among others, Careless Talk and the London Workers Group (or rather some members of the LWG). We have also seen the "Counter Information" leaflets issued by Anarchists and Libertarians in Central Scotland. Apparently striking miners have joined with the distribution of Counter Information, welcoming them as a source of news, but against this it must be noted that these leaflets fail to make a full-blooded attack on Trade-Unionism and contain little political perspective.

In the midst of the strike the International Communist Current produced a bizarre analysis which stated that the Nottingham scabs were the most politically advanced section of the miners. This position is reminiscent of that adopted some years ago by the RST, a now defunct group

who split from the North American Section of the IOC. In World Revolution 77 the IOC wisely corrected their stance, although characteristically the internal debates that led to the correction were kept secret.

In the last Bulletin we published an article by Wildcat on their intervention in the Lancashire coalfield during the first months of the strike. Wildcat sustained this activity throughout the year and commenced publication of a monthly newspaper giving excellent coverage of the class struggle which we thoroughly recommend to our readers. In this issue we publish an article which appeared in a recent Wildcat on the activity of women during the miners strike.

(For a six issue subscription to Wildcat send £1, £2 if you live outside the UK to Wildcat, c/o Raven Press 8-10 Great Ancoats Street, Manchester U.K.)

The CBG and Wildcat have discovered a number of disagreements in our respective analyses of the militancy of miners and the role of revolutionaries and this is a subject we will return to in a future issue of the Bulletin.

The strike has demonstrated the twin dangers that face revolutionaries today. Firstly, sitting on our backsides waiting for "pure" class struggle to emerge free from any union ideology; secondly, dissolving ourselves into strikes, emasculating our politics and reducing our role to mere "water carriers" and providing merely technical assistance. Before rushing into phantom support groups etc. we need to soberly assess our own capabilities, the state of class-consciousness and how best we can push the struggle forward. We have to recognise that we are still a long way from the mass strikes that will eventually bury capitalism, that at present it is the crisis itself that is the motor force driving workers to an understanding of the need for generalisation, self-organisation etc. Our view has been criticised by others as "unduly pessimistic", but we affirm that the prospects for class struggle in the coming period are overwhelmingly positive.

What Next?

While no one can have failed to notice the bosses' assault on our living standards, it is less easy to see a comparable development in the class' consciousness. The period from the Polish upheavals to the start of the Miners' strike seems at first glance to be a long string of crushing defeats and - of workers tamely accepting what capitalism has in store for them.

But, as we discussed in issue three of the Bulletin the reality is more complex. Workers know that capitalism is attacking them and that things are going to get much worse, but they also realise that struggle, or rather the traditional union-led sectional strike has little hope of success. Workers have yet to see that the answer to this problem is not to keep your head down, as the steel men and power workers did during the miners' strike, but to break out of the union jail - to generalise strikes and say to hell with the national economy or your particular industry.

Few attempts have been made by revolutionaries to establish a solid theoretical framework that would demonstrate how such a process could take place. For the partyists it is simply a matter of the party putting forward clever tactics; for the libertarians it is a summation of individual discontent over a wide range of economic, cultural and other issues.

Some years ago the IOC held to a theory which predicted a long string of defensive battles by the Working class during the course of which the various ideological illusions fostered by the bourgeoisie would be progressively and sequentially destroyed. Once the bosses played their last card the road would be wide open to revolution. However this mechanical theory was discredited by real events and the IOC has now wandered off into weird conspiracy theories and strange notions such as the "subterranean maturation of consciousness".

In many ways the progressive destruction of illusions remains an attractive model. Workers realise that the Labour Party attacks workers, then that Unions cannot lead successful industrial strikes, then that non-striking does not guarantee a job or living standards....and so on until they realise that they have nothing to lose but their chains. However this model gives an inadequate explanation of class consciousness, and fails to explain why constant disappointments should not just lead to demoralisation and passivity as in the 1920's and 1930's. In reality there are several, often contradictory, tendencies at work.

An alternative approach is to abandon notions of incremental developments in consciousness and to argue that it can only develop in sudden bursts with great leaps being made while the struggle is going forward, preceded and followed by long periods of eddying consciousness. While there is clearly a germ of truth in this approach, it is utopian to anticipate self-organised strikes free from union control in the near future. We must return to the question of to what extent the struggle can go forward while the unions remain in control of strikes. This was an issue that was raised during the Steel Strike although the discussion bogged down. The danger for revolutionaries are that either they miss real developments while waiting for a "pure" strike to break out or alternatively that they start to see developments where there aren't any or worse still start supporting some form of rank and file unionism.

Trade unionism is undoubtedly the greatest barrier to communism. The Beer and Sandwiches at No. 10 Union - Government has been made obsolete by the crisis; the unions have still to adjust and find their feet, but when they do we can expect to see all manner of forms and structures by which Trade Unionism seeks to contain the twists and turns of the class struggle. The exact form these will take is not yet clear. "Base Unionism" is a term often used in the revolutionary press, but it is rarely defined. It is unlikely that we will see a return to the domination of shop stewards' committees as in the late 60's - they too have had their feet cut from under them by the crisis. The present government favours the American style management-unions typified by the Electricians Union, but it is difficult to see how unions of this kind will be able to contain vast upsurges in class struggle.

The militant leadership of the Scargill type may or may not be the pattern for the future, but one thing the miners strike has demonstrated is the extreme flexibility of unions. The NUM has been seen to condone violence and support generalisation, all with the aim of keeping control of the strike while behind the scenes it beavers to ensure that neither occur.

In the fight against Trade Unionism in the struggles to come, revolutionaries must urge practical measures to generalise conflicts and develop self-organisation: the two factors that put the greatest strain on Unionism. Both were largely missing during the miners strike, both will be essential in



POLICE scatter as pickets at Rossington turn on the hoses.

State Violence Must Be Countered By Class Violence

the battles ahead.

Having temporarily disposed of the miners, the bosses are preparing to take on new sectors of the working class. Conflict is looming with the railmen, teachers and post office workers amongst others. It remains to be seen what lessons these workers have

absorbed from the miners strike, but it is certain that British industrial relations have entered a new period.

Rowntree

WILDCAT on the Strike

Introduction.

Throughout the miners' strike revolutionaries have insisted that the only way forward was the generalisation of the struggle. However strong any single section of workers might be, if they remain isolated they can't resist the entire strength of the capitalist state. Proletarian strength can only lie in solidarity and self-organisation. Solidarity does not mean charity. It does not mean simply giving support to workers in struggle. IT MEANS MAKING THE STRUGGLE YOUR OWN. It means striking together for common demands, because all sections of the working class community face a common fate under a capitalism in its death throes - endless sacrifice. The miners fight failed because it failed to achieve the generalisation of solidarity throughout the working class. However in one crucial area the miners did succeed in this. The magnificent integration of the people of

mining communities and miners families, particularly the women, into the strike contains vital lessons for the whole working class in their future struggles. First of all it means that the organisation of the fight must be open to ALL those who make common cause with it. ALL meetings, all picketing, all activity, all strike committees and picketing committees etc. must be open to ALL. Secondly, this can only be achieved by going against the unions and smashing union control. The unions will NEVER allow this type of generalisation because it removes their power base. Therefore the vital lesson to understand is that generalisation of solidarity is inseparable from self-organisation. The excellent article from Wildcat which we are reprinting here demonstrates clearly these political lessons.



MINERS! LEARN FROM YOUR WIVES!

because we were nothing to do with the NUM". This shows which side the NUM is on!

Militant women want more than to be allowed on the picket line. They want a say in running the strike. But despite their support and involvement, the wives and families of miners are not allowed into meetings to discuss the strike strategy and tactics. It is vital that everyone who is actively supporting the strike is treated as equal in taking decisions about what to do and how to conduct it. Women from a Welsh pit village told why they were banned from strike committee meetings - they had criticised the running of the strike, whereas the men were afraid to criticise 'their own' leaders.

Thousands of women are playing a vital supporting role in mining areas. Without this involvement, initiated by the women themselves, miners would have been in a far weaker position to fight. As a woman canteen worker at Parkside pit said: "It mustn't be forgotten that this strike wouldn't have lasted more than three months without the self-sacrifice of miners' wives and the participation of thousands of women in support groups".

However, many NUM branches have refused to give money to the kitchens. Women from Fitzwilliam in Yorkshire say that they haven't had a penny from the union. Other branches have tried to impose strict conditions on the way money is used in the kitchens, to make sure the women know who's boss. Women from Upton Miners' Support Group refused NUM money. They said "They wanted to give a donation on condition that they had a say in the menu! But we're answerable to nobody". At Tower Lodge in Hirwaun, Wales, NUM officials insisted that £100 collected by the women had to go to them instead. A miners wife told how "its like working with the Mafia. Terry Thomas (Vice-President of South Wales NUM) came chasing after the money, and I wouldn't have been surprised if Neil Kinnock wasn't far behind".

When women want to go beyond the kitchen sink, and go picketing, they have had an even harder time of it. At Wistow colliery miners themselves organised a picket of a local power station, inviting all their supporters along. A miner described what happened: "The NUM officials came down and told us to leave because the pickets had not been organised by the NUM and not all the pickets were NUM members. They also told the female pickets to get back to the soup kitchens where they belonged! One official went over to the police lines inviting them to deal with us as they wished

Why are union officials so hostile to women becoming more actively involved in the strike? This demand challenges the very heart of trade unionism. For once you let miners' wives into the branch meetings, and elect them onto strike committees, a precedent is established. Once non-miners are allowed to fully participate in the strike, the way is open for more and more people to be drawn into the struggle - until what you have is no longer a trade union dispute, but a mass strike. In this situation, union leaders would lose any special claim to authority. They recognise this threat to their power. They are afraid of women activists who bluntly refuse to do what they tell them. No wonder they tell the women to 'get back to the kitchens'.

Women Pickets

Women who want to go picketing have met other problems. If they are the wives of militant miners who have already been arrested, they are reluctant to risk arrest as well, especially with children to look after. There is no reason why this should be organised by women. Men on strike should take their share of caring for children and let the women go picketing. Not just because everyone should be involved. But also, women make very good pickets. For many, it is their first experience of a picket line, but they know what to do.

A women's picket of Sutton Manor pit in Lancashire where I was present, stood out in contrast to the usual picket line ritual of a few shouts and people generally not knowing what's going on. We discussed beforehand what we wanted to do, and despite being heavily outnumbered by the police, we did give them a run for their money. And they hated it. They just couldn't think of enough sexist insults to fling at us. There was a feeling of solidarity and collectivity that comes from struggling together. Without the union leaders and union traditions to tell them how to behave, which the men have, women are able to simply do what they decide needs to be done.

Wildcat does not support the aims of the Greenham movement, but pickets can learn from their organisation. The women at Greenham Common in 1982 and 1983 had no officials to say what they could do. They organised several hundred people round an eleven-mile perimeter fence at night, keeping one step ahead of the police by using walkie-talkie radios, organising actions through group delegates to a small central planning meeting, making sure that all participants knew what was going on and everyone was playing their part, however small. What people involved in the miners' strike have learnt, that the Greenham women never did, is the need to respond to state violence with our own violence. As one miner's wife put it: "I've always respected the police, but I'll tell you what, I'll watch a bobby being kicked to death in the street in the future and I'll walk across to the other side. They've shown their true colours now".

Far from being the weakest section of the working class, unable to fight back against the bosses' onslaught because they are unorganised, women have shown time and again that it is their very lack of involvement in the organisations that hold men back, that enables them to organise themselves and carry out their own decisions and actions. This puts them at the forefront of the working class's struggle. If miners are to win, they must learn from their wives and mothers, girlfriends and daughters.

POLAND - Five Years After The Mass Strike

Five years ago the fact that the economic crisis of capitalism wasn't just a failure of this or that national economy to compete, or wasn't just a western phenomenon was made blindingly obvious by events in Eastern Europe, in Poland especially.

The bourgeoisie there, facing the same economic catastrophe as the west, but, by and large, without the depth of responses available to their western counterparts, parliament, democracy, unions etc., and with decades of dealing with their proletariat by means of clubs, police guns and concentration camps, launched an offensive against the existing meagre living standards of the Polish proletariat by instituting a huge increase in the price of already scarce basic foodstuffs. The response of the Polish workers was immediate and dramatic. Beginning in the shipyards at Gdynia workers downed tools, occupied their yards and factories and called on all other workers throughout the country to join them. The strike spread to Gdansk, to Warsaw and to the mines of Silesia until practically a nationwide general strike was in existence, paralysing the country and the capitalist economy.

The existing unions, mouthpieces for the government, were swept aside and mass assemblies built.

Negotiations were publically broadcast to the workers through loudspeakers and the strikers sought to spread the struggle to every section of the proletariat, knowing full well that isolation in one yard, one city or one industry would mean defeat. Their struggle against the ravages of a dying capitalist system shone out as a beacon to workers everywhere demonstrating that the working class can halt the slide to pauperisation, and can fight back against the attacks of capital. The bully boys of not merely the Polish bourgeoisie but also their masters in the Kremlin quaked in their boots at this awesome demonstration of proletarian might.

But bourgeois order survived in Poland. The government recinded the price rises when they realised they could not brutalise the entire workforce into submission and their collapsing economy was bailed out by western bankers eager to exploit Polish weakness by making profit out of their lending. And the workers themselves were unable to see the need that their generalisation of the struggle should not stop at the Polish border rather, if it was to be successful, it had to spread beyond to involve the proletariat of the rest of the East capitalist bloc where there were stirrings of



Empty Shelves in Poland Spark Class Response

support from workers already. However, the real reason for their failure lay elsewhere.

Trotsky, in his history of the revolution in Russia, in writing about the mass action of workers in February 1917 tried to come to terms with the fact that no sooner had the workers subverted the soldiers, shot up the police and stormed the government buildings than they proceeded to hand over the power they had taken to the bourgeois Duma and their provisional committee which all the while had been quaking with fear in a back room at what the Petrograd proletariat had been doing. Echoing Marx, Trotsky noted how the proletariat seemed to rise to the heights only, at the last moment, to abandon what they have achieved, allowing their class enemies to recoup the situation. And so it was in Poland also.

Having gone further, much further, than any section of the world proletariat since the great upheavals of the revolutionary period after WWI, the Polish workers, after an offensive against the bourgeois state where they ousted the police and took control of their factories, and indeed whole towns, and tried to spread their struggle as widely as they knew how, proceeded to hand their power over to such as Walesa and the bourgeois theorists Kuron et alia. The sole idea of these bourgeois apologists was to negotiate WITHIN the terms of the Polish capitalist state for the creation of a new union to take its 'rightful' place WITHIN the Polish State machine, just like its Western counterparts, in order to direct the state's policies in a different, but not that different, more specifically 'polish' direction. Aided by a catholic church which similarly sought a long denied place in the Polish capitalist sun they succeeded in directing the antagonism of the polish proletariat AWAY from the cause of their problem, capitalism itself, and into the quagmire of refashioning Polish capital into new and different methods of controlling the workers and thus of maintaining the existence of the Polish capitalist state. Like unions everywhere it sought influence in the determination of capitalist policy.

However, since the problems of Polish capitalism, like capitalism everywhere, are not unique, merely being specific problems that EVERY capitalist nation state faces in the worldwide economic downturn, it was obvious that the situation wasn't just going to go away. No matter how much money the bankers poured in, it would get worse precisely because the state, in order to survive a little while longer, was now even deeper in debt. At best there could be a temporary halt in the inexorable slide to bankruptcy. The bourgeoisie might manage to delay its attack on the living standards of its workers but sooner or later they would be forced to attack again. And so it has turned out.

The beginning of 1985 saw headlines in western papers telling us that the Polish Government intended massively increasing the cost of basic foodstuffs. Rather more cunning than in 1980 this initial announcement was followed by a backdown 'caused' (if it can be so termed) by the opposition to the announcement of the 'official' tame poodle unions the Polish bourgeoisie set up after the struggle of 1980. While in no way rejecting their intention to raise prices the government decided that increases would be staggered and so avoided indicating just how great they would be. As a government spokesman said:

"The concern for market equilibrium...does not make it possible to spread these price rises over more stages or to introduce them over a longer period than the first half of 1985"

(see accompanying newspaper clipping)

Warsaw to raise prices by June

WARSAW, Thursday. — The Polish Government said today that it would impose food price increases before the end of June in three stages but did not indicate how big they would be.

The Deputy Minister for Prices, Mr Antoni Gryniewicz, told PAP, the official news agency, that details would be made public this week and that the first round of increases would affect bread and sugar.

Commentaries in the official Press claimed that the authorities had not backed down over the unpopular increases, although the Government had agreed not to impose across-the-board increases in March in response to trade union pressure.

Zycie Warszawy, the country's biggest daily, said: "Some people wrongly read (the Government's decision) as a complete abandonment of price rises. There should be no illusions in this respect."

The banned Solidarity free trade union cancelled a call for a 15-minute general strike, due to have been held today in protest against the increases, after the Government had announced it would reconsider its original proposals.

The plans which the authorities withdrew would have raised the cost of living by up to 4.2 per cent. The officially recognised unions rejected them as inflationary and damaging to workers' living standards.

Mr Gryniewicz said: "The first stage is planned to include price rises of products which aroused the fewest reservations during consultations... flour and grain products."

"Such a growth will be accompanied by the lifting of their rationing, but the increase in the price of flour must be followed by price rises for bread and other grain products."

He did not indicate when rises would be introduced for more sensitive items, including meat which is tightly rationed, but added: "The concern for market equilibrium... does not make it possible to spread out these price rises over more stages or to introduce them over a longer period than the first half of 1985." — Reuter.

How touching the concern of the Polish bosses for equilibrium in the capitalist market.

And what of the Polish workers who in 1980 responded to similar price rises with mass strikes, occupations and extension of the struggle to all sections of the Polish economy and a blanket refusal to negotiate IN ANY WAY about the rises which they flatly rejected?

A fifteen minute general strike to protest against the rises, called during the workers lunch hour on one day. The difference between 1980 and 1985 is glaring - and appalling.

What then is the key difference between then and now? The Polish state is still capitalist, still reeling from economic crisis to economic crisis. The difference lies in one word **SOLIDARNOSC**.

Five years ago workers organised autonomously, en masse. Today the Solidarity union has conned the workers into accepting its leadership and their own emasculation. For the union, like unions everywhere negotiate not to better the conditions of the workers, let alone to destroy capitalism, but to get the union, as representatives of the workers, a place in the sun, a position within the Polish capitalist state. The union is fighting for the continued existence of Polish capitalism, at present prevented from effectively doing so by the blinkered pro Russian faction now in power. The union, like its counterparts in the west knows that a blunt assault on capital by the proletariat will bring the whole house of cards down crashing to the ground. It cannot allow this and like unions everywhere seeks to divert the legitimate anger of

workers into support for its specific capitalist programmes for the saving of capitalism, plans which in NO WAY assault the logic of capitalist barbarism.

The pathetic spectacle of a 15 minute strike during dinnertime clearly demonstrates the real intentions of Solidarity and the extent to which workers in the past five years have been diverted from their own class terrain into support for this bourgeois cross.

Is this then the end of the story for the Polish proletariat? - we think not.

Trotsky, in his history mentioned above, shows that since the crisis of 1917 did not disappear, the handing over of power to the bourgeois in February solved nothing. Indeed it merely exacerbated the crisis of Russian capital since the crisis, without a solution, merely deepened allowing workers more and more to see clearly the mistake they had made by handing over power to those whose sole 'raison d'etre' was the continuation of capitalism. So too in Poland; so too in the world at large. Since the crisis in Poland isn't going to go away the position of Solidarity in the defence of Polish capitalism must get clearer and clearer, just as the role of unions everywhere as the defenders of the capitalist system, sooner or later, must get clearer and clearer. And when that happens the Polish proletariat of 1980 will be reborn, only this time, much stronger, and much, much angrier.

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Capitalist Barbarism in Africa

An incredible human tragedy has descended on the continent of Africa. Two belts of drought have devastated entire national populations. It is the worst famine in African history: 30 countries are officially listed as hungry - 300,000 have already died in Ethiopia, 200,000 in Mozambique, and another million may perish before the toll is over. Added to the starvation death-count are the associated diseases of influenza, measles, tuberculosis, smallpox and typhus. The refugee camps have no medicine in quantity to treat these maladies. Beyond those who succumb - mostly children - thousands more will suffer permanent disability - blindness, bone and mental deformities.

African nations of every political hue have been hit by gigantic food shortages. The most severe cases are those which are embroiled in domestic civil wars like Chad, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. On an average, African governments spend four times as much on armaments as they do on agricultural development. Why? Because every ruling class in the modern world of wage slavery can only remain in power by force of arms (against rival bourgeois factions internally or regionally).

Africa is a blighted land not merely because of the drought, but primarily because it is at the behest of the imperialist system of the two superpower blocs. The global crisis of world capitalism, its economic crisis which is being shunted onto the weakest components, it is this dilemma of market production and distribution which is solely responsible for the present human disaster in Africa.

Historically an underdeveloped-in-capital area, Africa has become more impoverished over the past decade. As these countries tried to "modernize", ie. convert to light industry and cash-crop exports, per capita food production steadily decreased since the late sixties, coinciding with the onset of permanent crisis in the metropolises. Food imports have doubled, 20% of African grain is now supplied by import, and \$3 billion a year is being paid out to major powers for bread alone. And still, over 100 million human beings, one quarter of the sub-Saharan African population, are hungry!

"Take off" is now a forgotten relic of American liberalism. During the 1980's the gross national product in Africa has stagnated, per capita income has declined, and the total foreign debt has skyrocketed from \$6 billion in 1970 to \$51 billion in 1982. The overwhelming poverty of Africa is the main condition leading to the current mass famine.

And what was the enlightened response of all the Western governments? Like all governing parties of the bourgeoisie, they hoped it would all go away, especially if no one knew about it:

At the World Bank meeting last September, France proposed a special aid program for Africa. "The Americans weren't interested, to say the least," recalls Dominique Brustel, an official of the French Ministry for Co-operation. "They blocked the funds." Critics of the Reagan administration charge that Ethiopia's status as a Soviet ally inhibited US relief. "The hungry kids are seen by some downtown as 'little commies', so the grain just sits there"...

(Newsweek, 26/11/84)

Then as global news of the famine gained publicity, the US saw room for political gamesmanship: the Agency for International Development earmarked 137,000 tons of grain for Ethiopia, Mauritania, Chad and Mozambique.

The political overtones, however, are loud and clear. "The word is out that the West delivers the food," boasts AID administrator M. Peter McPherson, who recently returned from Ethiopia. Other American officials still hope that US relief may represent "a threat to Soviet hegemony over Ethiopia" as one of them put it.

(Newsweek, ibid)

Simply put, the entire population of Africa is merely a human chessboard for the manoeuvres of the US and Russian imperialist blocs.

Let's examine some of the regimes of these African countries.

ETHIOPIA

It was during the last big famine ten years ago that Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed and replaced by a "marxist state" under Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. As the economic crisis began to affect the Ethiopian food supply, Mengistu ignored advice from pragmatic western economists for food rationing and rural development. 46% of the country's GNP was sunk into military hardware coming from Russia. When the famine hit full force, Mengistu and his "marxist-leninist" party tried to cover it up, and now 6 million Ethiopians are facing a terrible food shortage.

KENYA

This is a typical African regime claiming a "mixed economy" which is nothing but a modified state-capitalism in a "progressive" disguise. The system originated by black national shyster Jomo Kenyatta inaugurated government controls over food production and value-exchange through state bureaucracies - the parastatals. Prices for all farming produce are fixed and purchased by the state, and then subsidized for the regime's urban population to insure that the ruling politicians are kept in power. Or as AID chief Peter McPherson puts it:

What you've had, in effect, is a tax on food growers by governments who are providing

artificially cheap food to relatively better off people living in the cities.

(Quoted from Glenn Frankel, Washington Post)

Kenya's small farmers then started cutting back on food crops, whose price had been devalued, in lieu of the supposedly more lucrative cash crops such as coffee and tea. Domestic food shortages have now reached crisis proportions, and the sad irony for the peasant food growers is that, with the saturation of the international markets for their cash crops, the bottom has also fallen out of pricing here. For the labouring classes of Africa, to bet on any sort of capitalist production is already to lose.

It should also be noted that the state capitalism of Kenyatta is the very same brand of "socialism" being peddled by Joe Waller (also known as Omali Yeshitela) and his "African People's Socialist Party" here in the US.

TANZANIA

Once the centrepiece of Africa's "great social experiment" led by the "progressive" Julius Nyerere, Tanzania, which received \$2 billion in loans from the World Bank since 1970, has lapsed into chronic dependency on emergency food shipments. As part of the New Frontier ideological banner of "take off", Western donors emphasized industrial development (Marx's Department II) at the expense of the farming sector (Department I), in a way that would bring a smile to the corpse of Joseph Stalin. Now the landscape of this East African country resembles a ghost-town - scattered remains of half-completed or abandoned factories, big farming machines, roadways and water-pumping stations are seen everywhere.

Tanzania's per capita food production has fallen 12% in the last decade. The production of cash crops - coffee, cotton and cashews - has fallen even more with the decline in world-market value of these commodities.

The Nyerere state held itself up as "a peaceful, voluntary transition to socialism" without forced collectivization along Soviet-bloc lines. As Western money flowed in - from \$51 million in 1970 to \$625 million in 1980 - this funding constituted two-thirds of Tanzania's entire development budget, a social-democratic house of cards. All of the advanced tech schemes for Tanzania collapsed during the seventies - the world crisis of capitalism erased any illusions about "progress".

Nyerere next launched a campaign for "basic human needs", the most important of which was "villagization" - nearly 90% of the rural population was relocated in 8,300 consolidated "self-help communities". This, too, proved to be a farming disaster. In 1976, the regime abolished the country's 2,500 co-operative unions and established state controlled corporations (the parastatals) with legal monopolies to supply peasants all farming credit, tools, fertilizers and seed. Again, this project failed as the parastatals ran up huge deficits due to the declining value of crops. The bureaucracies ate up most of Tanzania's surplus capital and by 1982 eleven crop-marketing boards had run up a \$200 million loss. So much for Nyerere's "peaceful socialism". As the World Bank, which had provided most of the easy-credit loans to Tanzania

concluded:

The lending experience shows that, due to overwhelming problems both internal and external to the parastatals (read the global decay of Capital), this assistance has had little if any positive impact.

ZIMBABWE

Another "marxist" country whose food supply has plummeted. With all of his "socialist" rhetoric, "national liberationist" Robert Mugabe was determined not to make the tinkering mistakes of his "progressive" African counterparts. Direct market farming was to remain in place.

The old Rhodesia contained a dual agricultural system - the big white-owned commercial estates and the tiny subsistence black peasant sites. Before "independence" in 1978, the white farms supplied more than 90% of market food and employed a quarter of a million black farm-labourers, 90% of whom earned less than \$30 a month! Dr. Mugabe's plan to fortify his hold on state-power was simple: the white farmers would continue with their private spreads and their wage-slaves, corn prices were increased by 40% to placate these landowners, and one of their own, Denis Norman, was appointed as Minister of Agriculture.

As John Laurie, president of the Commercial Farmers Union reports:

Obviously, we all have our complaints, but on the whole the government has been extremely responsive to our needs. The attention they have paid to agriculture has been first class.

The panacea for black peasants was a "land-reform" project: Mugabe gave access to credit, and built grain depots and tool distribution centres for small farmers. Ten acre parcels of unused land was doled out to landless peasants. But according to Washington Post writer Glenn Frankel:

The program, however, has fallen far short of projections due to lack of funds and, critics contend, lack of commitment on the part of the bureaucrats responsible for it. The goal of resettling 160,000 families by 1985 has long been abandoned - at best 30,000 families will have been aided. The budget for land acquisition, slashed from \$25 million to \$6 million last year, has been further reduced to \$2 million in the 1985 budget. Nearly all of the resettled plots have gone to individual families rather than to the communal or cooperative schemes the government originally had advocated.

A recent study by Edgar Lockwood, representative of the American Friends Service Committee here, concludes that government efforts in agriculture, while well-meaning, naturally favour those who are better off and those who have land and property, not the poor and landless classes. Citing what he sees as the government's reluctance to push for collectivization and resettlement, Lockwood argues that Zimbabwe is on the road to a kind of state-led capitalism with socialist experimentation of the fringes. (No shit!)

Zimbabwe also remains vulnerable to the vagaries of the international market place. The huge corn surplus of 1981 revealed another harsh fact of Zimbabwe's relationship to the West - its lack of competitiveness. Given its relatively high

production costs, its landlocked position and the high costs and risks of African transport, Zimbabwe's grain often is not competitive. Agriculture Minister Norman estimates his country sold much of its 1981 surplus at a loss of \$10 or more per ton, a loss it cannot afford to repeat.

Finally, how about this for "socialist solidarity":

Zimbabwe, where crop and cattle losses are heavy, has been swamped by 50,000 refugees from neighbouring (and "marxist") Mozambique. Now the government has ordered its border patrols to turn back starving Mozambicans, "ruthlessly if necessary." Dr. Simbi Mubako, Zimbabwe's minister of home affairs, maintains: "We cannot improve the living standards of our own citizens if foreigners keep adding to the numbers."

(*Newsweek, ibid*)

And to all of this misery on the African continent - starvation, poverty, disease - must be added the atrocities of tribalist and nationalist-faction warfare going on in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Chad.

The barbarism of the capitalist mode of production cannot be undone by any modifications in the manner of commodity-exchange or circulation

(marketing). The present horrors of mass famine and disease are no "senseless tragedies" (as are neither the "accidents" at Pemex in San Juanico, Mexico, or at Union Carbide in Bhopal, India), but are the central features of the social system founded on wage labour and profit (Capital), and are, moreover, harbingers of even worse events if capitalist domination over human life continues with its unchecked melt-down course toward nuclear conflagration - imperialist bloc war. Under genuine socialism, or libertarian communism, such capitalist calamities would be forever eliminated because all the means of life - food, shelter, clothing, medicine, self-enhancement, humanized technology - would be provided by an international association of Workers' Councils on the basis of material human needs, and not the dictates of market-value.

In Africa as elsewhere, it is only the urban proletariat when it rebels at the conditions of the economic crisis - the food riots in Tunisia and Egypt this year, and most recently the miners' strikes and shanty-town riots in Sharpeville and Soweto, South Africa - who can challenge the death-lock capitalism has on all humanity.

Tampa Workers' Affinity Group
December 1984

Expelled jobless face famine

From Joseph Hanlon
in Maputo

The expulsion of unemployed people from Mozambique's cities is to be resumed according to the Mayor of Maputo, Mr. Alberto Massavanhane, even though serious problems remain with the 12,000 jobless transported last year to Niassa province.

Under "operation production" tens of thousands of unemployed were rounded up and flown 1,000 miles north of Maputo to Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces. The remote area is underpopulated and has good land and rains, promoting hopes that the unemployed would grow their own food.

However, the daily newspaper, Noticias, last week admitted that many people in Niassa still had not been given work, and that people stayed in transit camps for more than three months instead of the

one week that was intended. Many were to be labourers on state farms, but the state-owned banks refused to authorise credit for the over-staffed farms to pay more people.

Noticias also said that there was not enough food or medical care for the new arrivals. It quoted a provincial health supervisor, Mr. Amos Salde, as saying that malnutrition and tuberculosis were serious problems.

Crime in the provincial capital, Lichinga, has risen - particularly housebreaking and the theft of food from gardens, according to the newspaper.

Independent reports from Niassa indicate that the problem is serious. Many people were taken from their homes in Maputo at night, and arrived in Niassa with only the clothes they were wearing. This was during the cold season in Niassa and there was

inadequate shelter. The food shortage has become worse recently and in the past two months people have been allowed out of transit camps to beg for food. Some of those transported to Niassa claim that people have died of starvation or disease exacerbated by malnutrition.

Confusion has been compounded by poor record-keeping. "Many families have come to this province looking for a father, mother, or brother and taken a long time to find them - or else failed," Noticias said. At a fairground in Lichinga, many women and children have set up a camp, hoping to find relatives.

Reports from Niassa indicate that the process has been particularly hard on women sent without their husbands. Some have been forced to marry, even if they left husbands or boyfriends behind in Maputo.

How Capitalism deals with the Unemployed
In the Third World.

Perspectives on the Political Situation in the U.S.A.

A continued downward flight of capital and its accumulation process is the chief characteristic of the social situation of North America. This crisis of political economy most dramatically expresses itself in the massive indebtedness of the State.

For 1984 the federal deficit was a record \$175 billion, and Office of Management Budget head David Stockman now predicts a \$210 billion short-fall for 1985 rather than the pre-election figure of \$168 billion. Without new revenues (taxes) or spending cuts, the OMB calculates a total \$846 billion red-line for Reagan's second term raising the total national debt to \$2.2 trillion! Interest payments on the national debt alone for 1984 came to \$134 billion.

The Gross National Product has dropped from 8.6% growth during the first half of 1984 to 2.7% in the third quarter. During October the "leading economic indicators" went down again - the third such reading in the last five months - and economic "experts" are calling this state of affairs a "growth recession". The by-word at the Chamber of Commerce is currently "Can Santa Save the Economy?" But consumer buying for the holiday period would have to jump 20% over third quarter purchases to clear out the huge inventories which are now built up, and such a commodity grab is just not in the business tarot cards.

Official unemployment, listed at 7.4%, is about to rise again as applications for lay-off claims went up in November. Because of the high value/price of the dollar against other foreign currencies/commodities, the US has posted a record \$125 billion trade deficit. Another gripping statistic is the incredible growth of the poor in the US - 35.2 million people, or 15.2% of the population, were officially cited as under the poverty line (\$10,178 yearly income) for 1983.

The Reagan Administration's new budget proposal calls for spending cuts totalling \$4.2 billion in 1985, the enactment of which would serve as a further impoverishment of society as a whole. Besides billion dollar cuts in the main social-wage programmes - Medicare and Medicaid - Stockman wants a 5% pay reduction for all federal workers, plus a huge write-down for federal workers' and railroad pensions, veterans' health and housing funds, child nutrition and school lunch programmes, black lung and food stamp funds, and electric power subsidies. As for the federal programmes scheduled to be eliminated, they number the gamut of New Deal/Great Society inventions: farm-ownership loans, dairy and rural housing subsidies, the Rural Electrification Administration, community development grants, federal revenue-sharing grants, the postal system subsidies, the Small Business Administration, the Export-Import Bank, the Job Corps, Head Start, the Legal Services Corporation, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, urban mass-transit aid, federal water and sewer grants, and federal library funds.

And although the defence of some of these state-capitalist programmes will be grist for the

mills of the liberal/left politicians on the outs, passage of portions of the "freeze-plus" package will signal a real lowering of the standard of life of the the entire American population and especially its working-class. Moreover, what the liberals can salvage from "The Great State-Capitalist Society" will be counter-balanced with new taxes outright or through new indirect sales taxes (the "value-added tax") which again will hit at the meagre incomes of US workers. Obviously, a new round of austerity is actually what Reagan meant by: "You ain't seen nothing, yet!" And, oh yes, Stockman wants an \$8 billion paring of the military budget leaving the Pentagon to toy around with a \$317 billion sum so as to "protect the US"!

Reagan will make the pitch for the new "Nothing, Yet!" with his January Inaugural Address: "You know, things aren't quite as rosy as we had hoped, there", but "Remember da Duke" and "Let's all pull together for the Gipper now". In the meantime, as the "supply-side" illusion finally peters out and the "economic recovery" is shown to be a total farce, the American bourgeoisie will also backtrack on its "peace and disarmament" at Geneva, and pursue its very real course toward World War Three. As former "Cap the Knife" Weinberger maintains, the military budget, America's death machine, is the fattest and most sacrosanct piece of the State apparatus. The Washington Post disclosure about the military intent of the next space shuttle-shot, and the recent naval and aircraft "incident" in the Sea of Japan near Vladivostok are warnings to humanity that the contention between the US and Soviet blocs is real and mounting, and will spell annihilation for all life on earth if these mutual systems of exploitation are not removed by workers' revolution.

Along with the military build-up a new "anti-terrorist" campaign has been launched by the Reagan Administration with Shultz and Weinberger, each reflecting the ideological prejudices of his own bureaucratic bailiwick, debating the finer points of "the military option". But the real aim of this campaign is an ability to maximise the defence of the State in the event of social explosions by the proletariat:

Washington's policy makers still are debating the uses and limits of American military power - not only in the realm of nuclear weapons ... but in much greyer areas. The question: how and when should US military might be used to combat global terrorism, revolution and other crises that fall short of total war but still challenge American interests?

(Newsweek, 10/12/84)

The federal government has its main international "counter-terrorist" commando unit at Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, N.C. - the Delta Force directed by Major General Richard Scholtes. The Delta Force and their adjunct naval units (the Seals) are trained to perform more than 30 "special military operations", and are equipped with the most

sophisticated of weaponry - night-vision devices, stun and silencer guns, and it has just been leaked, back-pack nuclear launchers! Expenditures for these units came to \$100 million last year, and Congress has allocated more than \$500 million in 1985 for "special operations programmes".

The national command post for "terrorist attack" is in Washington, D.C. located on the sixth floor of the FBI building - the "Emergency Operations Center". Its head is FBI assistant director Oliver Revell who has at his finger-tips a state-of-the-art communications network tying in phone links to the White House, the Defence and State Departments plus all of the country's FBI offices. Besides all of the enormous data of the FBI's own computer banks, the command centre also possesses the "Surrogate Traveller", a video display machine which can beam out laser pictures of all the major buildings of America's big cities in the event of seizures.

With the Right fully entrenched in power here in the US, we have witnessed the immediate mobilization of the Left in Opposition. Can the confluence of publicity about poverty in America, the end of the so-called "economic recovery", starvation in the "Third World", the new "anti-Apartheid" campaigns led by the old liberal coalition of civil rights, union and Democratic Party officials be merely coincidental? We think not. And why weren't these media features aired during the Presidential campaign? Because these spectacles would have helped Mondale, and the re-election of Reagan was the number one priority of the American bourgeoisie. As the budget cuts and tax hikes are enacted, we will again see the US Left - led by Jackson, Kennedy and Cuomo - try to pre-empt social anger and frustration, and channel this class discontent into civil disobedience and electoralism in an attempt to inoculate American workers from British Miners' Fever.

Of course the biggest ideological diversion of 1984 was the Presidential Campaign where a conscious coordination of the main factions of the US bourgeoisie ensured a second term for "Bombing-in-Five-Minutes" Reagan. It cannot be stressed often enough how the mass communications media - and especially the television set - all converge at a visual/ideological vortex when certain results are required. In this sense television "coverage" of the 1984 campaign resembled nothing more than TV wrestling bouts - simple and controlled morality, politics and "action" all neatly tailored for the eye of the camera, and the ready identification of the passive spectator (and the beta brain-waves of fatigue) and with the "commentators" going along with the act.

The politics of image making and entertainment reached their zenith in 1984 where form and appearance - the essence of bourgeois society - are everything. Which two transient and hollow personae when not programmed with the right coding messages do not describe Ronald Reagan and Gary Hart? Each of these mannequins was adeptly controlled by a team of bright politicians - one around the White House's Richard Darman and the other by Democratic Party free-lancer Pat Caddell. In fact, Caddell's scenario was actually a computer program in search of the correct automaton on which to play it. These image-makers are all too aware of the reality that they are marketing lies:

"A stifling mugginess overhangs the current political environment," Caddell said; the Capital had become a "circus", the government a "medieval bazaar" and politics a spectator sport "managed by mercenaries and illusionists". "Like myself," Caddell lamented - with no larger purpose than winning. The only solution, in his eyes, was a new Democratic candidacy of the "radical center" (?) with the youth, the vision (sic) and the daring to redeem "the fading promise of the American future" while there was still time.
(*Newsweek Election Edition, Nov/Dec 84*)

Or this from a campaign memo of Dick Darman:

"Paint Mondale as ... soft in his defence of freedom, patriotic values, American interests," Darman wrote in June. "... Paint RR as the personification of all that is right with or heroised by, America. Leave Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America's idealized image of itself - where a vote against Reagan is, in some subliminal sense, a vote against a mythic 'AMERICA'."

(*Newsweek, ibid*)

And according to a Yale Professor Robert Abelson: "Feelings are three or four times as important as issues or party identification."

Abelson believes there are four crucial emotions: if a candidate can push the hope and pride buttons and avoid touching the anger and fear buttons, he will probably win. "Politics is theater," he says. "We just didn't know yet exactly where the public gets its impressions - from facial expressions, style of delivery, incidents that signify decisiveness." Indeed, some researchers have found that voters develop strong opinions about candidates simply by watching them on television without hearing what they are saying.

(*Time, 12/11/84*)

Darman and Richard Wirthlin, another Reagan handler pushed these buttons: REAGAN - nice guy, grandad, strong, "economic recovery", Grenada, remember D-Day; MONDALE - Carter, wimp, Khomeini, inflation, "malaise", abortion. The TV networks went right along with it, claiming this was the "national mood" heralding a major "political realignment". This same kind of "circus" or political "theater" is employed by Jesse Jackson and will be used more forcefully in the coming period by leftist politicians.

One encouraging statistic in the Presidential election is that the percentage of those eligible who actually voted fell to 51.4% from 52.6% in 1980 meaning that more people than ever are turned off completely by the electoral charade.

The defeat of Mondale has put the Democratic Party into a very interesting quandary. The party is now split into two distinct wings - the Old Guard Liberals comprised of aging New Dealers, union bureaucrats and black and Hispanic politicians, and the Neo-Liberals made up of Yuppies, Yumpies and preppies, with the feminists sprinkled into both camps. These two social strata are just not ideologically compatible, and in all likelihood will not remain in the same political organization. A purge seems inevitable, but which way?

The old school Democrats and union hacks show no

signs of a willingness to relinquish their structural authority and welfare-state policies - they would have to be driven out by the Neo-Liberals who would then take over the Democratic Party allowing Gary Hart, Bill Bradley and Bruce Babbitt to come to the fore. Such an event would then permit space for the realization of the Leftist wet-dream of the building of a "Labor Party" led by the likes of Lane Kirkland, William Winnispinger and Michael Harrington, and with an army of leftists (Social Democrats, ex-Maoists and Trotskyists, etc) more than ready for electoral shit-work. Jesse Jackson and friends might even want to chime in here as well.

A more probable scenario though is an arrogant exit by the Neo-Liberal faction and their gravitation towards a "new" third party candidate like John Anderson, a Yuppie senior. This would leave the Old Guard Democrats in place and cue Mario Cuomo and Jesse to veer toward a more "populist" line. Again, the US Left would follow behind here, and America would then have a genuine political realignment of Left: the Democrats, Centre: Anderson, and Right: the Republicans. Both of these possibilities would provide gobs of TV time and expanded political options for the US bourgeoisie.

One more note on the 1984 election - if Anderson had run and taken say 13-15% of the vote, since almost all of this Yuppie vote Anderson might have received went to Reagan, then Mondale would be President! Anderson, perplexed at why his 1980 financial sources rebuffed him in 1984, simply didn't understand what the wiser heads of the ruling class had determined for this election: the Right in power, the Left outside!

In the meantime, the situation of the American working class is that, while the new impending turn of misery is certain to accelerate class combativeness, their consciousness is still lagging behind the more advanced struggles in Western Europe, just as there is a temporal gap between West Germany and the more radical workers' resistance in Great Britain, Italy and Spain. Although one can gauge a partial readiness within the US workers for class battle in the violence at the AP auto parts plant in Toledo and at the Phelps Dodge copper mines in Arizona, the capitalist agency of the trade union is still using its charms of "realism", protectionism, and "job security" to harness in the proletarian steed. The slick handling of the General Motors deal by the UAW and the easy settlement with "no concessions" by the UMW shows that the union bureaucrats have persuaded the workers that siesta time in the face of the economic crisis is in the offing.

And now we finally come to the pathetic condition of the North American "revolutionary milieu". The paramount statement about revolutionary political forces in the US is to recognize that they hardly exist at all. While most of the former-Maoist groups slide steadily into social democracy and the Trotskyists do likewise (where they don't obversely support Russian-bloc imperialism), the so-called "anarchist" and "anti-authoritarian" elements have also been drawn by such liberal tides and should be thereby labelled as what they are: de facto Leftist sects, and as such, supplemental and marginal components of capitalism. The rottenness of these fake anarchist formations has been vividly illustrated in the "Processed World/Bob Black Affair" where the overwhelming majority of North American

- "anarchists", in their Hegelian/Kautskyist anxiety to defend that which are - bourgeois progressives - have sided with a modernist literary machine whose essences are State Power, Deceit, Hierarchy, Manipulation, Artism and Repression against a lone revolutionary critic. The sooner such Leftist groups disappear - not only Poison World, but Kick it Over, Anti-Authoritarian News Network, Circle A, Strike! and Ideas and Action (sic) - the better.

Other legitimate revolutionary tendencies such as Internationalism, The New Socialist, and The Alarm have undergone internal traumas and demoralization



to a certain degree. There is one hopeful sign in the activity of the DeLeonist circle around The Discussion Bulletin, but the participants here, although real proletarian voices, are still debating rudimentary issues such as unionism (the "socialist industrial unions") whose class nature has been resolved by the revolutionary movement 70 years ago.

The scattered individuals of authentic communism across North America cry out for a revolutionary organization of the KAPD-type. But most of those with the consciousness and ability to participate in such a project are still mired in the fear of Leninist substitutionism, and prefer the silent, fatalistic comfort of Dostoevskian Man - the alienated radical intellectual. Not only the self-emancipation of the proletariat and the solution to the riddle of human estrangement, but the very existence of homo sapiens and all planetary life, now in jeopardy because of imperialist contradictions, must now compel this revolutionary minority to act and to act quickly.

Tampa Workers Affinity Group
December, 1984

CAPITALIST CRISIS -

NO RECOVERY

Introduction

"The performance in 1984 of the economy as a whole has been the best for some years. Output growth at 4½% has been the most rapid since 1976. The growth of world trade volume at 9% has been the fastest since 1976. Inflation at 5% is the lowest since 1972. Employment has risen by 5 million, the largest increase since 1979. Further, the prospects are that expansion will continue over the next 18 months, without creating inflation, and creating a further 4-5 million NET new jobs."
(OECD Economic Outlook December 1984.)

This rosy assessment of the current state of world capitalism isn't an aberration on the part of the OECD economists. Every other major source - from the National Institute's Economic Review to the UN's Economic Survey - arrives at similar conclusions. From the absolute decline of the world economy in 1982 (only the second such decline in the post-war period - 1974 being the first) capitalism has staged a two year recovery which is still continuing. True, it took all of the 1983 upswing just to regain the previous peak of 1979, but by the end of 1984 that had been considerably surpassed.

Last year, again according to the latest edition of the OECD Economic Outlook, capitalism's total product was the greatest in its history, world trade, by volume and value, was the greatest it has ever been, millions more people were working than the year before, and inflation looked to be under control. If we look at the world's strongest economy - America - the performance is even more impressive. The OECD report described it as ".... more reminiscent of the 50's and 60's than the period since 1973." The GNP grew by 6½% which is the biggest jump since before 1963. 6.6 million new jobs were created and the unemployment rate fell from 9.7% to 7.7%. A performance described as "unprecedented in the post-war period."

However, far from undermining the Marxist contention that capitalism is in its death throes, a closer examination of this miracle "recovery" - of its form, content and material basis - dramatically confirms a revolutionary analysis. For Marxists, capitalist crises are NOT synonymous with capitalist collapse. A crisis is a crisis for capitalism, not simply for its immediate and outward manifestations - the breakdown of its accepted system of prices and values, monetary dislocations, the decline (relative and absolute) of production, and the increasingly obvious inability to provide the world population with work and the necessities of life - fundamentally, a crisis is a crisis because it is the embryo of future collapse; it points to the collapse; it reveals the mechanism for collapse.

"The tendency towards collapse which is expressed through crises is nevertheless slowed down and temporarily halted by these very crises though they be the embryonic form of the final collapse; but the countertendencies are essentially of a temporary character. They can postpone the collapse of the system. If the crisis is only an embryonic collapse, the

final collapse of the capitalist system is nothing else but a crisis fully developed and unhindered by any countertendencies."
(Paul Mattick: "The Permanent Crisis" - This is the best exposition known to us of the Marxist theory of crisis. Photocopies can be obtained on request from the group address.)

Therefore, for Marxists, there is nothing surprising or dismaying about this apparent recovery. On the contrary, as we will show in the rest of this article, far from representing a return to health, this momentary upturn has irrevocably laid the basis for a qualitative deepening of capitalism's death throes. It demonstrates -

"....the expanded reproduction of the crisis itself on a higher plane." (Ibid)

Financial Jiggery-Pokery

First of all, this "recovery" is almost exclusively located in America. European GNP grew only by 2½% in 1984 compared to America's near 7%. In addition, the American job creation was not matched in Europe. On the contrary, unemployment went up from 9½% in 1982 to 11½% in 1984. That is almost 20million people in Europe alone. There are now 3½million less people working than in 1979.

GNP (Annual percentage change.)

	1972/82	1981	1982	1983	1984
USA	2.2	2.5	-2.1	3.7	6½
Germany	2.0	-0.2	-1.1	1.3	2½
UK	6.4	-1.5	2.5	3.2	2
Total OECD	2.5	1.7	-0.3	2.6	4½

Unemployment. (Percentage of workforce.)

	1981	1982	1983	1984
USA	7.6	9.7	9.6	7½
Germany	4.6	6.7	8.2	8½
UK	9.5	11.0	11.5	11½
OECD Europe	8.2	9.5	10.5	11
Total OECD	6.9	8.4	9.0	8½

Unemployment in millions.

	1981	1982	1983	1984
US	9.2	12.0	12.1	10.0
OECD Europe	13.7	16.0	17.9	19.0
Total OECD	24.6	30.0	32.4	31%

Source: OECD Economic Outlook Dec. 1984.

When we look more closely at the American boom, it is impossible to see anything healthy about it. Firstly, it is the product of a financial manipulation. It has been achieved quite simply by an astronomical increase in monetary expansion - 14% in 1983 - and a correspondingly gigantic increase in state debt. The US 1984 budget deficit approached 200 billion dollars and the Balance of Payments deficit went from 11,000 million in 1982 to 82,000 million in 1984. If the apparent recovery in America is "better than usual" the price is a dramatically worsened current account balance as a percentage of G.N.P. In the past it varied from approx. 1 to 0: this time it has dropped off the scale, going from -0.5 to -3.5.

It's a scaling up of the old familiar reflationary policies which the rest of the world had to abandon in the 1970's because of the resulting uncontrollable inflation. This has been temporarily avoided so far in the US by the simple expedient of making the rest of the world finance the debt. The increasingly tight grip imposed on the World Bank and the IMF by the Reagan regime has been accompanied by a catastrophic cessation of American lending to the rest of the world, particularly the poorer sections of it.

LENDING TO NON-OIL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (OECD figures).

1979 - 21 billion dollars.
 1980 - 39 billion dollars.
 1981 - 40 billion dollars.
 1982 - 20 billion dollars.
 1983 - 12 billion dollars.

However, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The massive US budget deficit has transformed America for the first time in almost one hundred years into a debtor nation.

"Since the late nineteenth century, and until very recently, it was exporting savings ... to the rest of the world But in three short years, America has run down these accumulated assets and by the end of this year, it will have become the world's biggest debtor nation. If the dollar were to stay at its present level America would be a debtor to the tune of more than 1,000 billion dollars by 1990."
 (Sunday Times Business News 10/2/85.)

The accompanying high interest rates and a gigantically bolstered dollar has meant the US economy has acted like a sponge, sucking in every spare piece of investment cash, savings and capital. The result has been a net flow of funds into the US in 1983-84 of 250 billion dollars, with a corresponding depletion of the resources available for productive investment in the rest of the world. To quote the Economist - "When America keeps scooping up scarce savings, it

pulls up interest rates in other countries, discourages their investment, and so leaves them stuck with old-fangled plant." Thus, the fillip given to world trade and production by the US import boom produced by the high dollar, has NOT been transformed into investment for the future, but has starved the US's competitors of investment capital. US "recovery" has therefore meant stagnation (at best) for the rest of the world. It has meant a barrier to the future healthy expansion of productive capacity. In addition, the price paid for the stimulus of the dollar-led export boom has been the depressing effect on industry of high interest rates and a dislocation and destabilisation of world currencies with the re-introduction of inflationary pressures. The apparently unstoppable collapse of the pound is merely the most spectacular example of this. The net result, according to the Sunday Times Business News has been:

"The massive inflow of foreign savings has financed three fifths of the increase in investment which has been the sustaining force of the US recovery, and pushed the dollar up by enough to cut inflation by 1.5% a year for the last four years." (December 1984).

TRADE BALANCE IN BILLION DOLLARS.
OECD Economic Outlook December 1984.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
US	0.4	4.6	-11.2	-42½	-81½
Germany	-15.7	-6.5	3.5	5.25	5.5
U.K	6.8	13.2	9.5	1.5	2.75

Even the most optimistic of bourgeois economists are wondering how long the whole house of cards can be sustained.

"If the budget is not reduced, the most common scenario is a loss of confidence in the dollar, sharp depreciation and a resurgence of inflation in the US. And with 70% of OECD growth originating in the US, the sustainability of the US recovery continues to have wide significance for the world economy as a whole."
 (OECD Ec. Survey. Dec.84.)

But even if the Reagan administration manage to force their current proposals for spending cuts through Congress it would (according to the May 1984 edition of the National Institute Economic Review) only reduce the budget deficit to 150 billion dollars, and then only if the projected growth rates of 4% p/a materialise. At the most optimistic assumption, the US budget deficit in 1988 would still be equivalent to 3-4% of US GNP. In other words, if the American economy is to avoid runaway inflation and the dramatic collapse of the dollar it must continue to extract surplus capital from the rest of the world at the same rate as in 1983/84. Given the stagnant performance of the rest of the world's economy and the fact that the US has already used up in the last two years the spare capital that existed, this is clearly impossible without significant liquidisation of foreign capital.

The Working Class and the Recovery

If the financial jiggery-pokery at the root of the US upturn indicates the fragility of the whole affair,

the other major element in the upturn - the fate of the working class - demonstrates the deepening of capitalism's terminal decline and not its recovery. We are not seeing the foundations laid for a further healthy expansion; on the contrary, what we are seeing is a form of cannibalism - capitalism feeding off itself to survive and laying the basis for a deeper collapse next time. The second fundamental key to the upturn has been a massive increase in the exploitation of the working class - both relative and absolute.

"The improvement can be traced to strong productivity performance and greater preparedness of labour to accept less than full indexation of wages to prices..... As a result of real labour costs growing more slowly than productivity the share of labour cost in total value added is now below that of 1973."
(OECD Ec. Outlook. Dec.84).

Productivity has increased across the board while real wages have been held steady (at best), or in most cases, actually cut. In the USA for example, real wages have declined by 9% since 1967. The average American worker now earns the same, in real terms, as in 1962. One in six US workers are now officially below the poverty line compared with one in ten at the start of Reagan's administration. This decline shows no sign of stopping. Between June and August 1984, wages rose by an annual rate of 2.6% while prices rose by an annual rate of 4.2%. And, as in every other country, the simple comparison between the rate of inflation and the rise in negotiated wage rates conceals a growing gap between the two. As a result of falling hours worked, declining overtime, less generous bonus rates, the increasing elimination of fringe benefits, and much tighter industrial discipline resulting in less absenteeism etc, the actual rise in earnings is often much less than the negotiated rise in base rates would suggest. The result is what the bourgeois economists of the

Productivity. Total OECD.

	1981	1982	1983	1984
GNP	1.7	-0.3	2.6	4%
Employment	0.4	-0.5	0.4	1½
GNP/Employment (ie Productivity)	1.4	0.2	2.2	3%

Source: OECD Economic Outlook Dec. 1984.

National Institute Economic Review coyly call "widespread negative wage drift". In addition to the attacks on direct wages, workers throughout the world have also had to endure even more stringent cuts in their "social wage" - ie. that part of their earnings which they receive in the form of social services - health care, education, public housing programmes, public transport etc. In the US under Reagan, cuts in food stamps have hit one million of the poorest families; ½ million women have lost Medicaid benefits; 900,000 children have lost free school breakfasts; and three million have lost low-cost hot lunches.

Taken in conjunction with the massively increased unemployment in the rest of the world, the reality of this "recovery", is that the growth and expanded

accumulation which has apparently taken place actually means relatively less people doing more. It represents a decline in capacity, a diminution of the productive apparatus of capitalism.

"The pattern of investment in the major countries would appear to support suggestions from business surveys, that much of current investment is being devoted to rationalisation and labour-saving rather than the expansion of capacity." (UN Economic Survey.)

This "pattern of investment" is in reality a process of disinvestment, ie. of the destruction of the less productive plant and machinery. The ensuing maintenance of output can then only be achieved by brutal and unrelenting increases in work rates and the levels of exploitation.

	<u>Output.</u>	<u>Investment.</u>	
Average 1967-73	+4.9%		
Average 1973-80	+2.5%	+1.9%	(OECD Countries)
81	+1.5%	-16.2%	
82	-0.2%	-4.9%	
83	+1.5%	-4.0%	

And, of course, the more the actual base of productive capacity declines, the less effect each hike in productivity can have. In Europe as a whole, productivity in 1979-83 rose by 4.6% which was more than TWICE the ensuing rise in total GDP. In Britain it was even more marked - despite productivity rising by more than 6% in that period the actual level of output remained below the figure of 1979. The accelerating crisis is forcing capitalism to strip the disguise from the social relations which lie at the heart of the process of accumulation.

"The countertendencies" (to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall) "are eventually all used up leaving only one means for the continued existence of capitalism - the permanent, absolute and general pauperisation of the proletariat."
(Mattick - The Permanent Crisis.)

The clearest proof we have that this "recovery" represents a tightening of the noose round capitalism's neck comes when we look at what American capitalism has actually done with the surplus capital which has been scavenged from all over the world and with the largest state debt in the history of mankind. Certainly, as we have already seen, total output has risen dramatically and millions of new jobs have been created, but a closer look at the content of this growth shows how utterly sterile it has been for capitalism. The how and guts of a capitalist economy - the industrial infrastructure - the only possible basis for healthy, continuing expansion in the future, has NOT benefitted. On the contrary, the "recovery" has continued its dismantling.

"Among the sectors most affected by the recession - metals, textiles, machinery, - employment has been slow to recover and remains below pre-recession levels."
(OECD Ec. Outlook. Dec 84.)

If we look at the FUTURE 500, (which is the name given to a basket of the top American industrial companies) they now have 10% LESS workers than 10 years ago. The particular shape this "recovery" has taken has accelerated this process. American farmers who borrowed heavily in the years when the interest rate was much lower have been devastated by debt charges

and are going bankrupt on a scale not seen since the Dustbowl years before the war. Industry likewise, is suffering from the unexpected scale of interest repayments they have incurred. Net interest Payments now cost US companies one third of pre-tax profits compared with $\frac{1}{4}$ in more normal times. In addition, the high dollar has made American industry massively uncompetitive resulting in the explosive rise in the US trade deficit we have already detailed.

Where has the growth taken place then? Firstly, it has gone to sustain the massively increased expenditures incurred by Reagan's defence plans. Armaments spending has been bolstered across the board - from conventional weapons, to nuclear missiles, to the much-trumpeted Star Wars. The projected cost of this latter scheme alone has been estimated at 1,000 billion dollars. (Which just happens to be the estimated total of US debt in 1990). The only other growth sector in the American economy and the one which has accounted for the largest proportion of new jobs created is the service industry. And, almost unbelievably, the most important element within this has been the growth of the fast-food industry! (Where real wages have dropped most dramatically - 17% since 1967.) So we can see, far from laying the basis for future growth, for healthy expanding accumulation, this "recovery" has actually destroyed the material basis for it. It has accelerated the decay of the industrial infrastructure at the heart of the capitalist economy - unless, of course, we can imagine capitalism plowing forward into future health on the basis of ever-increasing Taco Joints, Aerobic Dance centres and bombs!

Wall Street. 1980's

So far, we have seen that the major elements of the upturn - the financial jiggery-pokery, the increasing pauperisation of the working class and the industrial cannibalism to provide for a massive expansion of waste production - are a guarantee of future crisis. However, there is a fourth element present which threatens that the next downturn will be catastrophic for capitalism. In the euphoria of the American economic "miracle", it has been forgotten that only a year ago, the collapse of the Continental Illinois Bank threatened a chain reaction in the entire global banking system. Nor was that collapse an isolated one. The figures for bank failures are extremely ominous for capitalism.

1946-50	5.0 per year
1976-80	9.8 per year
1981	10
1982	42
1983	48

And the reason for that is the uncontrollable debt burden of the third world. In 1982 it was 626 billion dollars. Argentina owes 43.6 billion dollars; Brazil 93 billion dollars; Mexico 89 billion dollars. Just to service the interest on Brazil's debts costs 12 billion dollars. All the above countries pay MORE to service their debts than they earn from the export of their goods and services. The ever-growing Possibility of a default has led to a constant re-scheduling of repayments and the issuing of new loans simply to allow the major debtors to service the interest payments. As a result of this, the profits of the major US banks which are heavily dependant on their income from the third world, have slumped dramatically - down over 10% in the second half of 1984 alone, leading to the collapses we have detailed above.

Once again, the upturn, far from relieving the pressure, has actually turned the long term

screws on. Every extra point on the interest rate adds 4 billion dollars to the servicing costs of the third world's debt burdens. and, of course, it is all paid in dollars. The stronger the dollar, the more it costs in real terms for repayment. Thus, the long term debt burden has been increased by the upturn. In the short term, successful rescheduling and the US import boom has averted the immediate danger of a default. (Though, once again, we can see that the temporary fillip given to third world economies by rising exports to the US, can have no long term benefit for capital there. The extra income generated is immediately repatriated to the US to service the debts, where, as we have seen, it is sterilised by being diverted to the unproductive arms and waste sector.)

The inevitable collapse of the American import boom will revive in an even more severe form, the threat of a major default. The consequence would be a collapse of the global banking system and a dislocation of world currencies on a scale never seen before. The world economy simply does not have sufficient slack left to deal with such a contingency. In September, 1983 the IMF itself had to be refinanced after being forced to suspend its operations for two months. The austerity measures imposed on the debtor nations by the IMF have already had catastrophic effects. In Chile, living standards have dropped by 20%; in Bolivia by 25%; in Brazil by 30%; and in Nicaragua by 40%. In places like the Dominican Republic, Morocco and Tunisia, basic foodstuffs have doubled in price. In these areas, the bourgeoisie are finally being forced to contemplate their last card - the absolute pauperisation of the working class - and the rash of food riots and mass civil unrest that we have seen there as a result have left them with burnt fingers. For the ruling class of these areas, a default (and the ensuing collapse of the world monetary system) might well be preferable to facing their own proletariat in revolutionary insurrection. The current "recovery" has actually only succeeded in presenting the bourgeoisie with all the original problems in a dramatically worsened and more dangerous level.

"If the US revival turns out to be founded on swampy ground, a second world depression could lie just around the corner and this time with the international financial system having already soaked up so much, a new slump could have catastrophic effects."
(Guardian Dec. 84.)

Even if world capitalism can somehow avoid a catastrophic dimension to the next downturn, as we have seen in this article, the very "solutions" which were applied to the last downturn to produce the "recovery" we have been examining, GUARANTEE that a further downturn is inevitable. We can already see that the recovery is clearly tapering off. US GNP rose by 8½% in the first half of 1984 but only by 4% in the second half. The OECD forecast for 1985 is only 3%. When we look more closely at the optimistic statement from the OECD which introduced this article we can see that this recovery was weaker than the recovery from the 1974 crisis - output growth, was less vigorous, the trade revival was smaller and unemployment globally was not dented. An examination of capacity utilisation rates points to the same conclusion - each crisis is deeper than the one before and each recovery is weaker.

Capacity Utilisation Rates in the USA.

Boom Years.	1973 - 94%	Recession Years.	1975 - 78%
	1979 - 85%		1982 - 66%
	1983 - 79%		

(UN Economic Survey.)

= And finally, the fundamental point emerging from a close examination of the upturn is that capitalism is now nakedly confronting the only "economic" solution it has to its crisis - the pauperisation of the working class.

"Only when the proletariat must necessarily be absolutely pauperised are objective conditions ripe for a real revolutionary movement."

Clearly, we stand on the brink of that now.

Major sources used - OECD Economic Outlook
- National Institute Economic Review
- UN Economic Survey.

Additional material was found in "Notes on the World Economy since W.W.II." an as yet unpublished article by R.Weyden of the Wildcat group.

Cormack

* Communist Bulletin Group Our Platform

published in Bulletin 4 copies of which are still available
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Issue 7 of the Communist Bulletin came out in October 1984 in the middle of the Miners Strike and a major part of that issue was devoted to an in-depth analysis of the strike.

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CAPITAL'S DRIVE TO WAR

23.

The round of imperialist slaughter which began in 1914 and ended only in 1946 and which marked the first phase of the decay of the capitalist system, saw the two present major world powers, Russia and America, emerge, bloody but victorious, from a worldwide struggle which had laid low ALL the other capitalist empires of the world. Germany lay beaten and dismembered: Japan, especially after Hiroshima and Nagasaki lay at America's feet and the powers of France and Britain had been forced to exchange their hitherto independent imperialist roles for lesser ones, subservient to U.S. imperialism, in return for aid in the destruction of Germany. The United States therefore stood either directly or indirectly, overlord of the capitalist infrastructure of the larger part of the developed world. Russia had managed to retain its own hinterland and had gobbled up half of its former adversary, Germany as well as most of the rest of Eastern Europe, though it had high hopes of adding a colonial empire to its spoils through the rash of 'anti-imperialist' struggles on the verge of breaking out (or already breaking out) in Korea, Greece, Vietnam, Iran, Syria and especially, China.

It was however incomparably weaker than the new American colossus and it certainly looked an uneven fight between the two, somewhat evened out by the Russians' rapid acquisition of nuclear technology which forced the Americans to halt their demobilisation and dampened down US General's dreams of a rapid advance on Moscow. Nuclear parity allowed the Russians to go on the offensive throughout the Fifties not merely in areas it hoped to become the dominant power in but also in areas like the Middle East where the level of exploitation (used to fuel the post war reconstruction) was especially intense and where anti-western feeling was very strong.

For most of the Fifties the US relied mainly on its new junior partners to respond to the Soviet offensive in Europe and Asia while it retained direct control in areas such as South America with its continued policy of supporting brutal dictatorships, and in Japan, rapidly being integrated into the US system of exploitation. However it soon became clear that the shamolic administration of Britain and France of their former empires was merely creating an increasingly more visible western presence among an increasingly anti-colonial population who were, not unnaturally, the ideal audience for the anti-imperialist propaganda of the Russian bloc. The farce of Suez and the French catastrophe in Vietnam showed that unless their role was revamped, the attempts by both to play a more independent role would continue to be a liability for the Western bloc. The near loss of Iran, the turn of almost all the Arab states towards alliance with Russia and the continued advance of Russian proxies in South East Asia forced the US to play more of a direct role in the organisation of its western satellites and their empires. This meant direct confrontation with Russia.

Thus the Fifties saw the Americans come more and more into play in the Middle East while the Sixties saw them out front in support of Israel and taking the directing role in the carnage of Indo China. At the same time the wayward and backward powers

of Western Europe were moulded into a more suitable perspective (though not without opposition from such as De Gaulle) with more strictly defined roles to play in those areas where they still had influence: France and Britain in their respective spheres in Africa, Britain in Arabia etc.

By the late Sixties this multilayered masking of US dominance had extended to the incorporation of elements of the 'colonial' bourgeoisie into the system of dominance so as to confuse the local populations (eg. Saudi funding of US interests in the Middle East so as to prevent US control becoming too obvious). Against this reorganisation the Russians continued to play the anti-imperialist card. But an almost straight run of failures and defeats throughout the period and the cost of the financial commitment necessary even in those areas where they were successful soon forced the Russians to amend their policy in peripheral areas. Instead of attempting to oust Western influence from entire geographical areas to create Soviet enclaves the Russians now preferred to maintain only small, specific proxy states in key strategic locations to be a source of discontent and trouble for all the western satellites surrounding and to force higher spending by the west there to shape up to the threat: so Cuba in South and Central America (though Chile was to have acted as such too), Ethiopia in East Africa, Libya in North Africa and Angola and Mozambique in South Africa, Vietnam in South East Asia and Afghanistan in Central Asia.

The late Sixties, however, saw a fundamental change in the perceived balance of power between the competing imperialist blocs. With the return to the political scene of that harbinger of capitalist doom, the proletariat towards the end of the decade as workers once more took up their cudgels in defence of their living standards, the blocs were forced to reevaluate their situation in a situation of deepening crisis.

If the proletariat, worldwide, in facing up to the onset, once more, of capitalist crisis, with the end of the post war reconstruction, fought back against capitalist attacks on their living standards and thus took a first step in their solution to the crisis: class war and proletarian revolution then so too elements of the bourgeoisie, as a result of the same events, began to see more clearly capital's answer to the crisis, the same answer it had sought when it first entered its decadent phase at the turn of the century - World War and the elimination of rivals.

Yet ten years ago it would have been still possible to argue that the bourgeoisie, as a class, had no real idea that their situation was going to deteriorate indefinitely. Bouyed up by the dynamism of the post war reconstruction and entrapped, like the proletariat, in their false consciousness, the economic difficulties of the onset of the economic crisis of capitalism was regarded merely as a specific problem of the dynamic of capital with a specific solution. As the crisis, instead of going away or being resolved, has deepened it has become clearer to key sections of the bourgeoisie that the crisis requires not merely the massive and continuing attack on workers' living standards which, since the early Seventies has attempted to restore profitability to the

World capitalist economy, but the extension of imperialist competition to encompass the destruction of the competing capitalist bloc itself. By this elimination of a competitor and the incorporation of their infrastructures the capitalists hope to fund an entire new cycle of accumulation.

It is hard to say when specifically, and to whom within the factions of capital, this realisation came first, for there have always been sections of the bourgeoisie, East and West, especially the military, who have been convinced that, sooner or later, World War Three would be on the agenda, and others who considered the escalation of bushfire and proxy wars as necessary developments of capitalist competition. But we can say that by the mid-Seventies it was clear that the leading echelons of the bourgeoisie, East and West, had come to realise that as the crisis deepened the competition between the West and Russia would ultimately lead to war.

Much of the argument in the West about the ability of the strong western economies to price the East out of existence, or to pull the Russian satellites into the western orbit died, and in the East the lingering exponents of detente were replaced by front men whose approach to detente masked an aggressive assault on the public opinion of the population of the west.



The development of the crisis had already, of course, hotted up not only the wars being fought for areas controlled by the opposing bloc but also the bushfire wars between proxies for control of whole regions contested by the blocs. Looming larger and larger however, was the buildup for a direct confrontation between the major powers. Along with developing strategies to directly support their underlings such as the Rapid Deployment Force et alia. in the West, the increasing use of Cubans as Russian stormtroopers in Africa, both East and West proceeded to commence a build-up for a direct confrontation between themselves primarily on the European battlefield. The changeover in tempo was

clearly indicated five years ago with the invasion of Afghanistan and the development of new strategies.

At that time, in an attempt to assess the significance of the war in Afghanistan one of our comrades wrote, in a publication of the IOC:

"...the events in Afghanistan represent a significant development in the bourgeoisie's course towards war. This qualitative lurch in capital's progress to its final solution can be seen clearly in two areas:

1) Practical/strategic preparations: on the one hand, the Russian bloc has tightened irrevocably its grip on an area of vital strategic importance to it and has placed its armour and infantry within easy striking distance of Iran and the Middle East. And on the other hand, the American bloc has set in motion a multiplicity of counter-responses - attempts to repair the links with Pakistan and India, a search for new bases in the Middle East besides Iran, the creation of a 100,000 strong special 'strike force', plans for a new carrier fleet for the Indian Ocean.

2) Ideological Campaign: In the West we've seen the implementation of a massive campaign to condition the population to the possibility of war - an unceasing barrage about Russian aggression linked to calls to beef up the military; a plethora of articles about civil defence in the event of a nuclear war; talk of conscription etc. Its true that anti-Russian campaigns are nothing new - 'Carter's Human Rights' campaigns, the furore over the invasion of Czechoslovakia etc - but the cynical attempt to whip up war hysteria is on a qualitatively different scale this time round. We can see a growing consciousness within the bourgeoisie of the need to prepare for war and a growing realisation that the war which is coming wont just be a question of pressing buttons and exchanging missiles, but will be preceded by a conventional war involving the mobilisation of the entire economy and population. (Something which the military wing of the bourgeoisie has been trying to get across to politicians for some time now.)

What we're seeing, for virtually the first time in this cycle of accumulation is the clear link between the need to attack the class and the need to prepare for war. At the same time that the bourgeoisie is attempting to implement austerity policies and is stepping up attacks on the working class in a very significant way, it's faced with the need to not just maintain military spending, but qualitatively beef it up. Thus, in Britain, we see the government embarked upon its campaign of cuts, with a target of £3,000 million for this year, committing itself to spending double that just to update Polaris. Up until now the need to attack the working class, to cut living standards, step up exploitation etc., has been more or less tied, objectively, and to a large extent subjectively, to the need to defend profit rates and to maintain competitiveness on the world market; a process which in the era of decadence inevitably involved strengthening state capitalism and the maintenance of the war economy. But with the deepening of the crisis, this process - is inexorably transformed - the strengthening

of state capitalism becomes the militarisation of the entire economy; competition on the World market becomes military confrontation and the attacks on the working class become necessary not so much to bolster profit rates but to build arms....the Afghanistan events represent a significant step in this process.

...the target of the campaign wasn't so much the working class but the population in general. There was never an attempt to use the campaign specifically against workers' struggles. Thatcher made no attempt, for example, to link up the campaign with the steel strike; there was never any attempt to tell steelworkers that they were attacking national security. The "guns or butter" syndrome may have once again appeared in concrete terms, but the bourgeoisie don't yet have the confidence (or even the conviction) to present it on those terms to the working class. The talk of conscription, for example, was very tentative, to say the least. As the necessity for war becomes greater, obviously we can expect to see this transformed, and the war hysteria will be used as a tool to break workers' combativity and struggles, but we have NOT yet reached that stage. In addition Carter's 'hard line' response isn't entirely unconnected to the proximity of the American elections.

As much as anything, this campaign was aimed at the more recalcitrant and short-sighted sections of the bourgeoisie both internally and internationally, than it was at the working class. The bourgeoisie haven't yet convinced themselves and are still struggling for the "closing of ranks" which will be necessary in the future. And we can see this very clearly in the muted response the campaign received in the rest of Europe. Carter's had a very hard time orchestrating some sort of united response from the rest of the allies outside Britain.

....The one thing that stands out very clearly is that the US bloc was completely unprepared for conventional defence of the Middle East. To quote from an article in the Sunday Times - the deployment of 1000 troops would have taken 2 days and 25000 troops would have taken 16 days. Hence the scramble to build a new carrier force and to rush ahead with the completion of the Rapid Deployment Force. But these are measures which will take years to complete - 5 years in the case of the strike force. And to quote again from the Sunday Times, until then:

"...credible resistance to Soviet forces would be negligible"

And in the long term, the capacity to deploy a credible counter force AFTER a Russian invasion is underway is really insufficient for the US; what is required is a permanent force deployed in the Middle East to act as a deterrent to any Russian moves.

"The alternative to a tripwire strategy" (ie. as above) "as a deterrent to a much wider conflict is the more gradual, flexible response policy which the US has already adopted in Europe. But this would require more

formidable forces than exist at present. It would take nothing less than a Korean-style array of bases and depots to contain the conflict" (Sunday Times)

The invasion has clearly added impetus to the US's attempt to create such a network of bases, but again, it's a process which will take years to complete.

In terms of the level of armaments: despite maintenance of large defence budgets after 1945, no major imperialism today is totally mobilised for war in the way that Germany and Italy were in the 1930's. As we've said above, the Afghanistan events are strong evidence for the LACK of preparation in military terms. Up until now, a very large proportion of military spending in the dominant imperialisms has been devoted to nuclear hardware, and it's only now that the bourgeoisie has become more sharply aware that the coming war will have to be fought in conventional terms (initially at least). Thus, over the past year or two we've seen the swing away from nuclear spending in military budgets - this has been a large component of the recent SALT talks - but even here there hasn't been total clarity and unanimity within the ranks of the bourgeoisie, with Belgium, for example, talking about defence cuts.

To suggest that capitalism is already sufficiently tooled up for war as significant sections of the bourgeoisie were in 1939, really flies in the face of our analysis that the working class are still undefeated. The mobilisation of the German and Italian economies in preparation for war in the 30's took place AFTER the class had been defeated. Today we're in a period when the bourgeoisie can see the need to begin to mobilise on that level, but it's impossible for them to do so until they confront and defeat the class. The hysteria whipped up in the wake of Afghanistan is the opening salvo in this attempt, but we must be clear that a long period of deepening struggle and confrontation awaits before this can be completed. And until it's completed, we can't talk about war being on the immediate agenda."

Even the most cursory examination of the five years since this was written is sufficient to demonstrate the extent to which the analysis in this article have been proven correct, and the extent to which the bourgeoisie, East and West, has developed along precisely the lines indicated.

Both blocs have attempted to tighten their grip on those regions of the world they dominate, raising the temperature as their competition, expressed in brushfire wars, grows fiercer and as the economic viability of the regions themselves disintegrates. The most obvious example for the Russians is Afghanistan itself where, five years later they are still engaged in a bitter guerrilla war with western backed rebels. Through their Cuban surrogates they have poured men, money and arms into their client states of Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia who have been coming under increasing pressure from western backed opposition forces and, in the South, from the South Africans. In the Sahara the Libyans have made enormous efforts to destabilise the entire region, backing all manner of guerrilla forces, trying to take over the Saharan hinterland and

attempting to assassinate practically everyone who opposes them. Most strikingly the Vietnamese invasions of Cambodia have been strongly backed by the Russians dragging in an increasing burden of finance from the west, unwilling to let the whole of Indo China fall. In similar, and even stronger fashion the US and its acolytes have made enormous strides in its attempts to regain its former position in the Middle East, hold off the Russians in Indo China, strengthen its brutal compradore regimes in South America in the face of a class response to the austerity programmes it has demanded there and in Africa has mobilised its Boer stormtroopers in similar fashion to the Israelis in a bid to destroy the pro-Soviet Regimes there. Most importantly it has made great strides in its attempts to integrate Red China into the Western bloc realising not only economic potential there but also the immense strategic value of the country, once the regime has executed everyone likely to cause any trouble.

to coordinate the restructuring of all the national economies into one organic whole, riding roughshod over the peculiarly nationalist priorities of each nation state. In this way they hope to weather the economic storm and coordinate the development of the war economy. In the specific province of military strategy the whole western alliance has been remoulded into a more willing partner in the military order with the setting up of new responsibilities and multi-national organs such as the Rapid Deployment Units with a new network of bases worldwide and the integration of NATO forces (still in progress) into newer strategic planning. One only has to see how the Reagan administration dominates the strategic thinking of the western bloc and the general lack of alternative strategies raised in Europe to see the change which has taken place.

Both blocs thus reflect the difference in level of preparedness for future conflict we can see in



Russia's Military Strength on Show

Among the industrialised core of the world both sides have continued along the path of reorganising their economic and political empires. The Russians, given their dire economic weakness have tended to express this policy in the form of an even heavier military hand, as events in Poland have shown, but in the west Reagan, with such loyal acolytes as Thatcher browntonguing his every move, has attempted

the past five years. On one level this has meant, just as in the past thirty years a continued development of nuclear weaponry up to and including the simply colossal sums intended to be spent on such as Star Wars, systems which have not even proven to be at all viable and which many scientists claim to be impossible. More importantly the conventional weapons systems of both sides, once considered merely

the tripwire for further nuclear exchanges have undergone a complete transformation - and continue to do so. The Russians are systematically re-equipping themselves with conventional weaponry far in advance of their previous systems (and shedding their old systems to client states for their brush fire wars). More information, however, is available about developments in the West with the development of 'smart' bombs and missiles, devices using TV camera guidance for attack and surveillance, recisions guided munitions (so called) as were used in the Falklands. As Dr. Perry the former US Under-Secretary of Defence for Research and Engineering told a NATO audience: "if you can see the target, you can expect to kill it."

If the weaponry is new then so too are the strategic and tactical concepts regarding the battlefield they are going to be used on. Fluid battle lines eliminating the previous almost WW1 trench line attrition combats of the NATO wargames will be aimed at with constant and destructive force assaulting the enemy from all sides with the emphasis on 'kill ratio'. While the front line troops attack the forward elements of the enemy these sophisticated weapons systems will smash the rear areas and command structures of the enemy armies. To pay for all this the Reagan administration has undertaken a \$1,600 BILLION programme to modernise America's military capabilities and every other section of the western bourgeoisie is being urged to add commensurate expenditure to the programme.

While the bourgeoisie cannot yet mobilise the proletariat into the war economy en masse it is desperately developing the technical capabilities so that when it has defeated the class it can swiftly, and without needing to develop new systems, institute a fully updated militarised set up geared for war.

Within the blocs and the national capitals themselves the ideological preparation for class defeat and war has been further tested in the development of more conscious ideological campaigns against the proletariat in the capitalist heartlands. The Russian emphasis on American aggression and unwillingness to discuss arms limitation is linked with the brutality of US dominated regimes throughout the world and the ongoing war in Afghanistan is used as a stick to beat the west in the same way that Vietnam was attempted to be used by the US vis a vis the domino theory. In the west Reagan has tried to utilise Nicaragua in a similar fashion while expeditions such as Grenada are intended to show that America will face up to 'subversion' with force thus threatening the Russians and warning them to keep out, attacking the consciousness of western workers with nationalism and warning western peripheral countries with the same fate if they step out of line.

In the capitalist heartlands themselves we are now seeing, as a concomitant to the economic attack on the proletariat, the development of coherent, bloc wide strategies of internal control with the reorganisation of internal security forces into brutal weapons of the state, patterned on the police/death squads of Latin America and most recently demonstrated by the police in Britain during the Miners strike. All over the world the bourgeoisie, as well as preparing for war with each other sometime in the future, are actively and urgently preparing for class war INSIDE each national capital. Tied into this we have seen in recent years the specific linking by the bourgeoisie of the need to prepare for war with the need to attack the class. Reagans specific linking of events

in Nicaragua with the US's 'founding fathers', the invasion of Grenada with the defence of democracy and Thatchers linking of the miners strike with the 'enemy within' of democracy are clear examples of the ideological rearming of the western bourgeoisie in preparation for the struggle with the class.

In the East too the linking of class struggle such as in Poland with reactionary organisations such as the Church and Solidarnosc, portrayed as tools of the CIA (and not without justification) and thus as part of the onslaught of Reaganite warmongering is merely a mirror image of the western campaign.

Five years on the bourgeoisie have definitely "found the confidence" to argue "guns or butter". If five years ago it was seen that a key aim of the capitalist blocs was to convince recalcitrant fractions to fall in line we can definitely say that now, in 1985, the task has been accomplished. All factions of the bourgeoisie are convinced of the need to face up to the opposing bloc, disputes now merely concern the speed of war preparations, or how best to cope with the social effects of the imposition of austerity, not the imposition itself, or the logic behind it. The proletariat, East and West, now face a class united against them in a way not seen since before WW2.: a class now committed to war on the back of pauperisation as the solution to their crisis.

But what kind of war are the bourgeoisie preparing by this shifting of priorities?

Both sides realise that the next round will be all or nothing. Though this does not mean that there will be all out war 'to the knife' from the start both are convinced that the war will end only with the elimination of one side. Before either side is prepared to get into this kind of stramash they intend to alter the balance of terror in their own favour as much as possible, both in terms of their own internal situation, vis a vis their junior partners and their own proletariat and also vis a vis each others capability to sustain the war that is coming. As yet, neither side has been pushed to the point where war is immediately on the agenda, ready for it or not. Both sides have still a long way to go before they will be forced into war - for forced they must be. War is a gigantic risk necessitating enormous investment and the bourgeois entrepreneur doesn't take unnecessary risks unless he has no option.

For the war the bourgeoisie are planning is essentially a conventional fight for territory, commodities and populations so as to give them world hegemony - but WITHOUT causing their own destruction, or the destruction of the areas they intend taking over. This is essentially a conventional combat - laced potentially with nuclear weaponry, at specific times in specific locations for specific reasons, but a far cry from the four minute holocaust of the Fifties. Moreover, there are interim positions which each side sees potentially as breathing spaces within a sequence of wars which may constitute WW3. Russia, as a first step wants to capture Western Europe and THEN seek a temporary halt while it integrates this huge capitalist heartland into its empire so as to be better prepared for round two. Even the US has considered this possibility as recent thunderings about 'Fortress America' shows, so long as the damage caused to the area in losing it renders it

at best, a Phyrrie victory for the East. They would leave behind a western Europe reduced to nuclear rubble and the remains of a Russian army whose reconstruction would take far longer than a commensurate US one. Similarly the interim position of the western bloc is the repulse of the Russian offensive and the pursuit of Russian forces through Eastern Europe thus 'liberating' it for use as a 'springboard' for the invasion of Russia itself. Russian response to this would undoubtedly be to reduce W. Europe to rubble so as to create a cordon sanitaire behind which to reconstruct without this US springboard right next to them.

This then is, crudely, the kind of war that both sides are currently anticipating.

Now neither side is ready for such a war in 1985. While the Russians already have a considerable degree of militarisation within their economy they do not have the necessary capacity to militarise and pauperise further to create the technical weaponry they require. In the west, as we have said above, although huge amounts of finance are currently being made available it is the militarisation and pauperisation of the population that is lacking. For truly gargantuan quantities of weaponry and manpower will be required for such a war. Modern weaponry is not merely very expensive, it is extremely lethal. The old joke about one tank being left in Europe being pursued by one plane after the first few days of WW3 is strikingly accurate as the level of destruction in each

On the Central German Plain means that any extended war will require massive amounts of replacements of both materiel and men. An enormous quantitative (and qualitative) leap in the production of the military hardware will be necessary and in the creation of the necessary infrastructure before either side is ready to fight the kind of war it is looking forward to. (this of course begs the question of whether this assumption of the bourgeoisie is correct and whether this war is really on the cards)

The key to being able to fight the war they are looking forward to is therefore the defeat of the working class. As the capitalist crisis develops the need for war becomes clearer but the surplus able to be extracted to pay for it declines unless the rate of exploitation can be raised so as to produce pauperisation and the militarisation of the economy. Thus the bourgeoisies need for and preparations for war go hand in hand with the development of the crisis AND the increasing attacks on the proletariat for without the defeat of the proletariat the bourgeoisie cannot reach their final buildup and speedup so necessary to be able to launch World War Three.

Thus the present attacks on the living standards of workers all over the world are the precursors of a heightened generalised attack we must face AND DEFEAT if we are to stop capitalism imposing its solution to the crisis - world war and the destruction of humanity.

destruction in each recent Middle East War has shown. The destruction both sides now admit (see above) will be an essential feature of combat

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This issue of the Communist Bulletin is the fifth to be printed rather than duplicated, a process we have been able to use since our purchase of an offset litho machine. Recently we have also been able to augment our stock of golfball typewriters. (If any reader has access to spare golfballs we would be more than grateful.)

This issue also marks both the rise in the number of issues printed to cater for our increased subscription list and the increasing availability of bookshop outlets both in Britain Europe and North America.

All this has meant, however that we can no longer keep the price of the Bulletin at 30p. Thus this issue costs 50p as will all subsequent issues. Existing subscriptions will be honoured but all new subscriptions will be at the rate of £4.00 or foreign equivalent post paid in cash or blank postal orders. (we have no account in the name either of the CBG or Bulletin. Contact us at our group address.

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CWO - Turning Marxism

on its Head

This text is based upon a series of three letters that I wrote to the CWO dated 9.1.84, 18.1.84 and 21.1.84, concerning their abandonment of the Marxist method in their dive towards Milan to be reborn. The CWO together with Battaglia Comunista (BC) has given me a reply on some of the questions raised, and have informed me that they have published my letters in their Internal Bulletin, which I must say shows a degree of openness, in this respect, ahead of the ICC. Originally I intended to publish the relevant parts of their reply together with the present text. However since the CWO have refused even to mention the CBG in their press, I find that to do so not justified considering that I am publishing this text in the CBG's press. Readers wishing to obtain a copy of their, and BC's replies to my letters can do so either directly from me (from PO Box 44007. Shaukeiwan Post Office. Hong Kong) or through the CBG.

This text is divided into two sections. The first one is a substantially rewritten and corrected version of the relevant parts of my letters whereas the second is largely as it was written then, except for a few additions/corrections/deletions.

Section One. The CWO's "New Method".

Before anything it probably helps to inform the reader of my position regarding the degeneration of the Russian revolution and the Communist International (CI). Concerning the former, I reject both the ICC's and the old CWO's analysis as idealistic. (at the moment I'm not sure what the CBG's view is, but they seem to endorse the ICC's). The Russian state and the Bolsheviks became completely bourgeois, after a process of rapid degeneration right from the morrow of October, by 1921 with the imposition of a state of seige in Petrograd and the contemporaneous crushing of the Kronstadt uprising. (There is an outline of this analysis in International Correspondence 2 (English Supplement), a theoretical journal published by me in Hong Kong, distributed in the UK and some other countries; readers can obtain copies either from me or the CBG.) Concerning the CI, its process of degeneration was completed by its 4th Congress (December 1922).

According to the old CWO the Russian Revolution's and the Comintern's degeneration began and ended in 1921. The CWO admit this themselves in so many words:

"In other words...the counter revolution began and ended in 1921 (the old CWO view)."
(Revolutionary Perspectives 20 p.14)

According to the 'new series' CWO (referred hereafter to as the CWO unqualified), the counter-revolution began in 1921 ("the process of decline, the counter-revolution began in Russia in 1921" - RP 20 p.16), and ended...we are not exactly sure when, since the CWO have either not cared to tell us yet or have given us contradictory dates (as will be seen later the CWO hold three different positions as to when the CI became a bourgeois organisation.)

The CWO have made the above transition because they now regard their old position as undialectical, ie. it fails to analyse the Russian Revolution's and the

CI's degeneration as a process. While the old CWO method is certainly unMarxian, ie. idealist, so is their new 'method'.

The CWO agree that the united front and parliamentarianism are class lines in decadent capitalism. Yet, despite having crossed these class lines, the CI, the CWO tell us, was still a revolutionary organisation until...we are not exactly sure when. Concerning the CI's degeneration, based upon their 'dialectical' 'new method', the CWO firstly tell us:

"it is necessary that we deal with the permanent cry from London, for... 'dates'...it should now be clear that if we understand history as a 'complex of processes' the idea of placing a single date on a multifaceted experience like the Russian Revolution is simply seeking a child's explanation of history... Even in nature...it is not always possible to say when the precise moment of (qualitative) transformation takes place...It is the same with the events surrounding the gradual growth of counter-revolution after the Russian Revolution."
(RP 20,p.5)

and,

"The Londoners offer us nothing but a mass of (...) contradictions. We are told that the correct time to split (...) was 1922,...1923...Whenever it was it must have been sometime."

(ibid., p.17)

ie. the CWO here argue for a no date position regarding when the Russian Revolution's and the CI's degeneration were completed.

Yet for reasons unknown, the CWO find it necessary elsewhere to admit that every process does have a completion time:

"When an International can no longer tolerate a principled proletarian opposition it is 'correct' to leave it."

(ibid., p.16)

Note that the word 'correct' is put within quotes, a dialectical gilding perhaps. But on other occasions, this 'dialectical' gilding is withdrawn:

"the demonstration of the completion of the process was when the CI was no longer able to tolerate any opposition and expelled the Italian Left in 1927."

(ibid., p.14)

ie on these occasions, the CWO argues, sometimes 'dialectically', ie hesitantly, for a 1927 Thermidor.

Yet, with 'dialectical' ingenuity the CWO are able to tell us on yet another occasion:

"In Spain (1936) the CP actively policed the repression. This is a much closer parallel with 1914 than the united front, which is definitely a stage in the CI's decline, but much more analogous to the capitulations of the Second International before 1914 (joining of bourgeois governments in France, electoral pacts with bourgeois parties in Germany, etc."

(ibid., p.15. - these analogies, unlike whatever analogy drawn by the 'Londoners' presumably are not 'formalistic' By comparing the United Front with the 2nd Int.'s

pre-1914 tactics, are the CWO telling us that they are abandoning the distinction between capitalism's progressive and decadent phases, ie. the very basis of their own platform?.)

Ie. here thermidor is said to have occurred in 1936. It is interesting to note that it is the very same text which ridicules the 'Londoners' for arguing for the necessity of defining a date ("Whatever it was, it must have been some time" - see above), argues 'dialectically'; ie. hesitantly, for a 1927 watershed (putting 'correct' in quotes) and for a 1936 watershed, all at the same time! Certainly some 'dialectical' ingenuity.

The CWO's 'dialectical' self-contradictions however do not provide the basis on which to judge the validity of their 'new method'. To do so we must return to their maintenance that despite having crossed the class lines of the United Front and parliamentarianism etc., the CI was still a revolutionary organisation.

Anyone having the slightest acquaintance with the Marxist method knows that this method "does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself" (Preface) ie. the marxist method judges things, including the class nature of organisations, objectively, ie. materialistically. Now, as we said, the CWO themselves agree that since 1914 the united front and parliamentarianism are class lines. They argued that these class lines were, in the "novel situation" of the 1920's ("1922 was an entirely novel situation", ibid. p.15), "new issues". Granted they were. But whether class lines are "new issues" or have been "debated for fifteen years" and however "novel" the situation revolutionaries find themselves in, they still exist objectively as class lines. Yes, we are talking about the 20's with hindsight, but that alters not one iota the validity of the materialistic method. Which means that since the CI had crossed the above-mentioned class lines, it could only be a counter-revolutionary organisation, for its class nature must be judged materialistically by the objective role it was playing.

In other words by maintaining that the CI was still a revolutionary organisation despite having crossed all the class lines defined in their own platform, the CWO have abandoned the Marxist method altogether. Their 'dialectical' genius in ridiculing the "Londoners" 'formalism', for eg. does not, except for one single solitary moment (to be discussed later) address the materialistic method, which applies with or without having to draw historical analogies. This slide into idealism knows no bounds. In RP20, the CWO say:

"One really has to be a master 'dialectician' to argue that the united front policy in China and Germany which led to the crushing of the proletariat was designed to do so." (p15)

and then goes on to brand the CI's policies of the Popular Fronts and in Spain as bourgeois because they were....so 'designed'! (the obverse of the ICC's infamous conspiracy theory?) While Marxists follow the only scientific method, namely, the dialectical method, the CWO abandon materialism in order to be 'dialectical'.

The CWO have offered three reasons to 'explain' why the CI could still be a revolutionary organisation despite having crossed the above-mentioned class lines.

1. Because the materialist method is 'undialectical', 'wooden' trash. They don't say so in so many words of course but this is their position.

"We reject the wooden logic (note that according to the CWO logic and dialectics are antithetical to one another) of: an organisation does X,

X aids the bourgeoisie, ergo that organisation is bourgeois." (ibid., p.15)

Why? Because:

"revolutionaries can make mistakes without becoming part of the bourgeoisie, even though these mistakes objectively aid the class enemy" (ibid.)

To 'prove' the point the cases of the united front in China, Germany etc. just mentioned are given. Except by means of cross-temporal and cross-lingual telepathy I can't see how the CWO can say for certain that Deng Xiaoping is consciously exploiting/oppressing the workers and not only making mistakes which objectively aid the bourgeoisie, or that Stalin was consciously crushing the Spanish workers. It is certainly true that revolutionaries can make tactical mistakes which aid the bourgeoisie objectively without becoming part of the bourgeoisie. We all do sometimes. But it is not true, as the CWO attempt to imply (they haven't got the courage to argue it at length) that the same applies to crossing class lines. When revolutionaries cross a class line then, whatever their subjective intentions, however correct their positions are on other class lines, they are objectively on the side of the bourgeoisie on that particular issue. When we consider the CI in the 20's, by its 4th Congress, it had crossed every class line defined in the CWO's own platform, and since then, its general direction has never been reversed. On what materialistic basis can we say it was still a revolutionary organisation?

Furthermore on the CWO's own admission:

"the weight of the Russian party did carry undue influence in the Communist International!" (ibid., p.5)

If this means anything at all it is that the CI's policies must at least partly be understood in connection with the Russian state. By 1921 the Russian state and the RCP had been completely conquered by the capitalist infrastructure of the Russian economy, the capitalist nature of which had never been touched since October. Whatever the subjective intentions of the bolsheviks, their policies, both internal and external, were dictated by the needs of Russian capital. Externally, this required, as far as the RCP was concerned, a return to the policies of the 2nd Int'l. Since at the same time, the CI's majority had never been able subjectively to break from these policies, the process of reversion occurred rapidly. In other words the CI's degeneration was not only a matter of subjective mistakes being objective class lines, it was fuelled to a considerable extent (there's no need to haggle with the CWO over the magnitude of this extent - (see ibid p.5) for it is not a central question), by an underlying dynamic, namely the needs of Russian Capital.

2. The second reason offered by the CWO is: because the above-mentioned class lines were 'new issues' in the 20s. The idealist basis of this piece of garbage has already been dealt with. It will be discussed in another context below.

3. Because an organisation is 'by definition' a revolutionary organisation until it expels a "principled opposition". Note that the CWO, as we've seen, adopt this position only sometimes. This so-called "principled opposition", ie. the Italian Left (IL) of the 20s actually did not oppose the CI on the question of unionism, while on the question of parliamentarianism, according to the CWO themselves (as well as BC - see section 2), its opposition was tactical in nature: Bordiga "criticized (the KAPD's) tendency to raise tactics to a point of principle...as in the case of the KAPD's views on parliamentarianism and unions, and argued: "as a marxist I am first of all a

centralist, and only then an abstentionist". (RP 21,p30) It escapes me how the IL of the 20's could be called a "principled opposition" under such circumstances. In any case what the CWO are saying here is that the expulsion of a "principled opposition" is not merely a class line, it is THE class line. Ignoring whether the IL was a "principled opposition" at all, forgive my ignorance, but what materialist basis is there to regard expulsion of a faction as THE class line? Perhaps the CWO would like to share their 'dialectical' secret knowledge?

Though the above discussion on method is enough to prove what the CWO's 'dialectical', 'new method' really is, let's go on to a subsidiary point as a further illustration of the bankruptcy of the CWO's position. This is their thesis concerning the 'novel situation' of the 20's etc. which I summarise as follows: 1. In a period of (or of impending) revolutionary upsurge, if a formerly revolutionary organisation betrays an 'established principle' revolutionaries should break from it to form a new organisation, eg. the breaking from the 2nd International by the CI's forerunners over the issue of internationalism which was an 'established principle' after having been debated for 15 years.

2. In a period of revolutionary reflux, revolutionaries should remain in an organisation even if they judge that organisation to have crossed what they regard as class lines but which are 'new principles' in order to establish these 'new principles', until expulsion.
3. In other words, although these revolutionaries regard the organisation as having become a bourgeois organisation, they should not split until expulsion; any other course would betray a lack of understanding of the party, while the fact of expulsion will confirm the time of the completion and irreversibility of the organisation's degeneration.

Lest I be accused of making a caricature of the CWO's position I'll let them speak for themselves.

1. "4) We will split an International if it betrays an established principle (eg. United Front, imperialist war) but if it's a new issue we must fight within it to establish the principle." (RP.20, p.14)
2. "...the 1920's was a period of counter-revolution not revolution. The argument here is thus about how to face a) a downturn, and b) a defeated revolution." (ibid., p.13)
3. "...the period...in which the decay of the 2nd International took place is profoundly different from that of reflux and decline of a revolutionary wave in which that of the CI occurred. In the latter case mass struggle and the formation of a new party is not immediately practical. In that situation what was needed was a principled fight in an organisation grouping millions of revolutionary proletarians even though it was degenerating. All sorts of questions had to be answered before a split was possible. Is decay irreversible? Has the fight against it clarified the issues at stake? Is survival outside possible? (what kind of survival)...A resolute defence of proletarian positions is essential, and this will eventually lead to expulsion. When an International can no longer tolerate a principled proletarian opposition it is 'correct' to leave it" (ibid. p.16)

Thus the entire German Left (GL) is accused of councilism or even anarchism because it split on 'new issues', while the IL is represented as a shaft of pure gold because it "fought an exemplary fight" until expulsion within the CI on the question of parliamentarianism as a...tactical issue! (As to the question of unionism, only God knows how it has mysteriously disappeared in the CWO's discussion of the 'exemplary fight' on 'principled opposition' fought in the 20's.)

It is not necessary to discuss whether the CWO's accusations against the German Left are valid. Nor is it necessary to discuss whether the questions "Is decay irreversible?" etc. were actually the questions the IL had in mind in the 20's (the answer to this is obvious to everyone except perhaps the CWO), or are simply conjured out of thin air by the CWO as questions it was considering. Let's for the sake of argument, accept the CWO's fairy tale

argument accept the CWO's fairy tale. (we shall see in section 2 how the IL has actually 'clarified' the issues of unionism etc.) The CWO's thesis, however still leaves one question untouched. What does a 'correct' understanding of the party have to say in this situation: if in a period when revolutionaries believe that though a revolutionary wave has ebbed temporarily, renewed revolutionary outbreaks are expected, and they find themselves in a organisation which has crossed the class barricade on "new issues", what should they do? The period of 1921-1922/3 was such a period, as the CWO argue themselves on some occasions, (yes, the reader has guessed right, we are about to witness another masterly display by the CWO of their 'dialectics'):

"In 1922 revolutionaries recognised a reflux but they could not have diagnosed 'defeat' until events themselves had confirmed this. The 3rd International was the international proletarian vanguard and it was no easy matter to leave it, no matter how opportunist it had become, especially since revolutionary outbreaks were expected which might have led to a complete reversal of the opportunistic tactics of the CI. The fact that the attempts to reverse the political course of the CI failed does not mean we can condemn the efforts of revolutionaries to do this"

(ibid., p.36)

Yet, on other occasions, we are told that in the period concerned, revolutionaries, ie. the IL, had already diagnosed defeat:

"In Italy the communists accepted that from 1922 onwards the situation was no longer objectively revolutionary".

(ibid., p.38)

(Note that these two 'dialectically' self-contradictory remarks are made in the same text.) Which means we are taken to situation 2 described above. Obviously the CWO's self contradictory, 'dialectical' comments on how revolutionaries assessed the situation they found themselves in during the period concerned are made, purely and simply, to apologise for the IL's every action in the 20's as the context requires. The reader can confirm this by referring to the contexts from which the above quotations are taken. As a further illustration we've seen that just because revolutionaries, ie. the IL, could not have diagnosed defeat in 1922, that their "attempts to reverse the political course of the CI failed does not mean that we can condemn the (ir) efforts..to do this." One would presume our 'General Staff' of the

working class would apply the same criteria when judging the German Left. Not so, presumably because that would have been 'undialectical'. The GL is firstly accused of, along with countless other crimes, never seeking a "serious unification of the left currents within the CI." (ibid., p.35). (The reader may wonder in perplexity: did the IL? The answer is, of course, that it did not, because, for one thing, its opposition was anything but 'principled') Yet, realising that the Essen group founded the KAI which unified the Bulgarian, English and Russian Left, the GL was, in this context, accused of pure voluntarism because today we can see that the revolutionary had already been defeated by 1921:

"The Essen group did not appreciate the depth of the defeat that had been inflicted on the European working class...they failed to realise that an international cannot simply be 'proclaimed'..." (RP 18, p.13)

What evidence there is suggests that for the CWO, dialectics = self-contradictions.

As the CWO do say, on some occasions, when so required by the context in order to apologise for the IL's every action in the 1920's, that 1921-22/3 was a period during which revolutionaries expected renewed revolutionary outbreaks, let's return to the question with which we started; viz. in such a period, if revolutionaries find themselves in an organisation which has consistently and cumulatively betrayed class lines on 'new issues', what should they do? The CWO's minority (CP/EM) "affirm that it is irresponsible to blindly remain within an organisation during the revolutionary period because it was once revolutionary." (RP.20, p.12) The CWO reply that this is a "truism" (ibid. p.14), probably thinking of 1914, and continue characteristically to say, "but does not describe the situation of the IL in 1926." But the situation in 1921-22/3?

As the CWO have not given us an answer (have they even suspected the question?) let me hazard a guess, applying as best I can, their 'new method'. Remain inside the organisation and try to reverse its degeneration (? as from the 4th Congress, the CI was not degenerating, its degeneration had already been completed) by fighting for the 'new issues' within it, (the word 'within' has two senses: a. it means not in a new organisation, b. it means the class must be kept ignorant of the fight unless the organisation's majority through the central organs decide otherwise - the CWO, just like the ICC, believe that a group's majority through the central organs have the 'divine right' to keep the minority view(s) from the class, for fear of 'contaminating' it), because:

"Like the KAPD, CP/EM overlook the fact that there were no masses to follow a split, since they followed the CI." (ibid., p.13)

Thus on the one hand we are told not to politically tail-end the masses:

"The belief that every defeat of the revolutionary masses must be followed by an equal capitulation of communists led the CI into tail-ending the downward spiral of the class struggle. Instead of providing a clear ideological banner for workers to rally round when the class revived, they sowed confusion everywhere." (RP. 19. p.38)

On the other hand we are told we must, and why? None other than because 'new issues' are involved, which still have to be established (see quotation from RP 20, p.14 above). Whatever vanguardism our 'General Staff' of the working class claim for revolutionaries, which is all the more necessary and

indispensable in the situation under consideration, they must, according to the CWO, follow, (let me brave likely accusations of 'formalism'), Hegel's dictum: "The Owl of Minerva spreads its wings when the dusk falls", meaning that history (the class lines here) can be understood (drawn) only after the event, from the point of view of which, we might as well abandon Marxism as the revolutionary theory of the class struggle altogether. In the meantime, revolutionaries will have to suffer from schizophrenia, on the one hand knowing that one is objectively playing a bourgeois role and betraying the workers, but on the other hand, is shackled by ones 'correct' understanding of the party. Why have our 'General Staff' of the proletariat suddenly become humble philosophers? I guess it must be a 'dialectical' requirement.

I'm not trying to condemn the IL of the 20's to hell or to trace my 'origin' to an exemplary, glorious and heroic GL. That the IL from 1922 to 1927 (restricting ourselves to this period) played an objectively bourgeois role does not detract from the fact that it subsequently made important contributions to the definition of today's communist programme. But the CWO are telling us that communists must identify "with the entire IL (whatever its errors)" (RP.20, p.36), because to think that we can take up different contributions made by the GL and the IL, and substantiate, modify or correct them into a synthesis is 'eclecticism': "nature abhors disequilibrium. There can be no eclectic fusion of dissimilar political traditions." (RP 21. p.30) If "the history of all hitherto existing societies" (surely part of nature? or do the CWO want to show that man is super-natural?) has failed to achieve equilibrium (its stricken with contradictions), the CWO certainly have, by identifying with the entire IL." There is however a price to reach this blissful paradise: the replacement of marxism by an (eclectic?) equilibrium between idealism, 'dialectics' and self-contradiction.

Before ending this section let me re-emphasize one point. The above discussion concerning the CWO's thesis as to how revolutionaries act is such and such a situation, and relatedly their "basic defence" (RP 20, p.6) of the IL's actions in the 20's (not to mention ever since) is subsidiary. Whatever considerations revolutionaries have in mind which guide their actions, and however commendable these considerations are on other criteria, their actions will have to be judged materialistically. One may, on certain criteria, commend the IL of the 20's for having fought "an exemplary fight", but that doesn't alter one iota the fact that they played an objective bourgeois role. The key question that the CWO have to answer, and from which they have hidden away so far, is, therefore, the question of the materialist method discussed in the first half of this section.

One final point, the CWO were, in a certain way, trapped by their erroneous 'old view' that the counterrevolution began in Russia only in 1921 with the introduction of NEP (and the crushing of Kronstadt) which allegedly restored the capitalist economy after it had been suppressed for a while during the period of War Communism. (As I said at the beginning, this view is based upon the idealist method, a total incomprehension of Marxist political economy, of the programme for the transitional period, and therefore of the capitalist nature of the programme of War Communism). As it is obviously true that degeneration is a process, the CWO were therefore put into a self-contradictory cul-de-sac. Their dive towards Milan to be reborn provided them with a way out. But the way out was into the cesspool.

Section Two.

(this section retains the original letter form)
This is the follow-up to my previous letter of 9.1.84
This letter tries to clarify your positions on trade unionism, parliamentarianism, the united front and decadence.

Trade Unionism

In decadent capitalism trade unions, whatever the subjective intentions of their members, are counter-revolutionary, because objectively no real lasting reforms can be gained any more.* This has for a long time been your position and is, in fact, still your position in the first part of your RP 20 text on the question. I regard this as the correct Marxist position. Though it is not exactly the GL's position in the 20's it is similar to it. Yet you now say that it is the IL's tradition on the union question that is 'truly marxist'.

"it was from the..(IL)..that the revolutionary Marxist tradition was kept alive." (RP 20,p.24)

You claim that the GL's position was anarchist:

"Opposition to 'leaders' in general reflects the fatal tendency towards anarchism which marred the whole of the GL's thinking..." (p.23)

Yet your own quote from Gorter several paragraphs earlier says:

"(the unions) counter-revolutionary strength cannot be destroyed or diminished by a change in personnel, by the replacement of reactionary leaders with a left-wing or revolutionary people."

While the KAPD "Programme" has this to say about why the unions are reactionary:

"The revolutionising of the trade unions is not a question of persons; the counterrevolutionary character of the organisation comes from its structure and its specific function."
(my emphasis)

I'm at a loss as to how this correct remark can square with your claim that it was from the IL that "the revolutionary Marxist tradition was kept alive" on the union question. But this is not all. Additionally do you or do you not say that unions as unions (which is the only way they can be 'conquered') cannot be 'conquered' for whatever purpose by revolutionaries in decadent capitalism?

You say Gorter chose to ignore the 'red' trade unions, that for revolutionaries who did not "the question of the reactionary nature of the trade unions could not have been so clear cut in 1920" (ibid. p.23) and "only slowly was the class nature of the unions clarified", naturally by the IL (p.24). Do you mean to say 1. the 'red' unions were not objectively counterrevolutionary because subjectively they were pro the CI? and 2. the objective nature of the unions was different because the IL did not realise it?

* The category of capitalist decadence is the keystone of today's communist platform. It must therefore be supported by a sound theory. The old CWO's theory of decadence is generally correct. The ICC's "theory" on the other hand is an ideology through and through, which has done, and continues to do immense disservice to the development of the revolutionary milieu.

The GL you say had "no policy of linking up the mass of the working class" (p.25). It escapes me how, when the KAPD went about setting up factory organisations (which, as I pointed out to you in London were in some ways similar to your factory groups (idea) they could have been guilty of your charge.

Yes, there are, we all know and acknowledge, elements tending, to various degrees, towards anarchism within the KAPD. But in its early stages its position on the unions clearly recognizes, among other things, that unions are reactionary because of their function in decadent capitalism. If the KAPD's position was only anti-leader, why didn't they go about creating 'leaderless' unions, but instead went about setting up factory organisations which were, as you point out on numerous occasions, political?

More worrying is your current endorsement of the CI's position on the union question. You quote approvingly the CI:

"But support for revolutionary trade unions must not lead communists to leave opportunist trade unions which are in a state of ferment and moving towards the class struggle."

ie. you endorse working in both the 'red' trade unions and the 'opportunist trade unions' in the 20's. This is the IL's position even today:

"The International's instruction to work inside those mass organisations which, like the unions, where they are present, can influence the majority of the class, was extremely correct."

(BC's article; The IL, the GL and the CI.)

Further on in the same text BC say:

"the conquest (which was possible (my emphasis) at the time) of the workers' unions..."

And thus despite your claim, it is the IL, even up to today, who equate the reactionary nature of the unions (at least those of the 20's) with the 'opportunistic' leaders. In fact you have said this yourselves in so many words:

"At first (the IL) thought that the reactionary policies pursued by the unions were merely a consequence of their social democratic and stalinist leadership...Even the newly founded PCInt did not at first have a clear vision."
(RP 20, p.24)

BC's letter of 7.12.82 to you says:

"Today we say that the unions are what they are because of the fact that they were born, and still exist, on the basis of the objective necessity for the working class - within the capitalist framework - to negotiate the sale of labour power (price and conditions). That said we haven't discovered anything. Engels said it in 1871-2 in the Labour Standard..."

In short decadence is the basis of the Marxist (and your former) position on unionism. It does not come from the IL (that part of the IL which formed Internationalisme, which is not included in the term 'the IL' when I use it unqualified, did come to a similar conclusion in the 40's: see IR 25 p.14). As you admit yourselves, even up to the 40's the IL did not understand the union question, whereas 1. even today they defend the CI's union policy at least in the 20's and 2. their understanding even today is unMarxist, as is seen below.

If I may say so this sounds extremely close to the libertarian position such as FOCUS' and we might as well throw away Marx's Wages Price and Profit. Never in BC's formulation is the distinction between capitalism's progressive and decadent eras made. (more of this later). In fact BC went so far as to tell me that its only experience which has shown that 'conquering' the unions is impossible. One cannot fail to recognise the idealist basis of this argument. Either one of two cases: a) the IL were correct in the 20's to try to 'conquer' the unions because experience had not yet shown to them the futility/impossibility, in which case the objective nature of unions can be changed, as it were, by the CI's and IL's subjective understanding. b) If experience has now shown that 'conquering' the unions is impossible how could it be possible in the 20's (see quotation from BC's "The IL, the GL and the CI" supra)? Furthermore what materialist basis does such experience argument have? Perhaps, experience has not really passed its final verdict yet?

Lastly lest you mistake me as a 'purist' paying no attention to tactics, let me confirm my agreement with you that where the closed shop exists, if communist workers have to join the union in order to get a job or gain access to mass meetings, etc. they shouldn't refrain from doing so, so long as they don't participate in the daily administration of the unions, ie. get co-opted into their official structure.

Parliamentarianism

Here you've not said whether you now favour the IL's position or your former. The latter rejects parliamentarianism in decadent capitalism 'on principle', ie. as a class line. BC's position today, and I believe in the past as well, (for it did not participate in at least one election in the late 40's as far as I know), regards parliamentarianism as a 'tactical' question. In "The IL, the GL and the CI", BC subtitled the section on parliamentarianism "Rejection on Principle or Tactical Abstentionism", deride the GL's "rejection on principle" stand as 'infantile' ie. totally endorses "Left Wing Communism" and asserts that even Bordiga treated the whole question as "tactical" and not "strategic", ie. not programmatic. In other words, BC defends, as they told me, 'revolutionary parliamentarianism', ie. using it where and when 'tactically' expedient; as a revolutionary tribune to denounce bourgeois democracy itself ("to demystify the role of the temple of bourgeois democracy"; "this is without counting the advantages which the electoral period can offer a revolutionary party on the plane of propaganda and agitation..") Do you agree with this position of BC's.

The United Front

Formerly you were crystal clear on this question. But in defending the IL it makes me wonder whether you are just trying to forget its past mistakes or are, in fact, endorsing these, thereby signifying a change in position, crossing a class line.

You claim that the ICC's allegation that the PCInt flirted with the partisans at the end of WW2 was a falsification. If we are to judge by the facts, it is your claim that is false. Let's quote BC's letter to the ICC of some years back:

"The comrades (of the PCInt)..were the first and only ones to act inside the workers' struggles and even in the ranks of the

Partisans...The comrades...were revolutionary militants who engaged in the task of penetrating the ranks of the Partisans..." (IR 8, p.34-35)

Is it not clear that the PCInt's very own text confirms that it did participate in the Partisans? I am not defending the ICC. But if you are prepared to 'overlook' the above, while at the same time claiming that "the lessons on the United Front have since (ie since the CI's expulsion of the IL), and not accidentally by the legates of the IL, become incorporated into the proletarian programme"(RP20 pl6) does it mean your 'new method' now justifies every crossing of the class lines in order to be where the masses are politically and not merely physically? When strike committees or similar bodies, following the ebb of the struggle, ossify into permanent negotiating bodies such as the unions, then the time has come for revolutionaries to resign from them. It may be asked whether for example the Partisans were workers' organisations thrown up by workers' struggles. They were not because the struggles were not on the class terrain - for struggles to be on the class terrain they must be directed versus the bourgeoisie of one's own country, amongst other things which might also be involved.

Decadence

The crux of the whole matter is really in the understanding of decadence. Your former understanding that during capitalism's progressive era political participation in parliaments, unions etc. were possible because real reforms could be made, while during capitalism's decadent era, because no real reforms could be made, such participation must, whatever the subjective intentions and understanding of the participants, inevitably be counterrevolutionary is both theoretically sound and, generally speaking, phenomenologically a proven fact. This understanding is rejected by BC, who understand decadence in the terms of Lenin's imperialism thesis. A clear illustration of their faulty conception of decadence is provided by their Platform adopted at their 5th Congress:

"The essential characteristic of capitalism is the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production." (point one of the section "General Problems")

This is in clear contradiction to Marx's formulation in the 'Preface' which says that the relations of production become from forces fostering the development of the forces of production in a mode of production's progressive phase, to 'fettters' of such a development in the mode of production's declining phase. The consequences of such a faulty

*BC hotly deny this in their letter to me but I'm not convinced that none of the PCInt's comrades were in the Partisans while they were members of the Party.

(You surely must be aware of what the PCInt's first Political Platform says about the Partisans as covered in IR 8?)

* This distinction was first made by comrade EM. To be where the masses are physically means intervening on the shop floor, in strike committees etc. To be where the masses are politically means to become union officials etc. The distinction has its merits but requires refinement. For example revolutionaries should accept delegation or seek incorporation into strike committees thrown up by workers' struggles even though they have a limited political mandate restricted, eg. to making wage demands.

understanding of decadence, as shown, are clear:
unions cannot be 'conquered' only because experience
has demonstrated its impossibility; revolutionary
parliamentarianism etc. In view of these questions

I wonder whether you still hold your former view
of decadence.

35.

L.L.M.

國際通訊

no. 2

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