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Iran - Iraq war:

The war of Capitalists Against the workers

The war between Iran and Iraq is the war of capitalists. The regimes involved in this war, the aims and policies governing the war, the direct and indirect effects and outcomes of it, the very continuation of this war are all and all serving the most reactionary and inhuman interests of the bourgeoisie. The maintenance of these fundamental interests of the capitalists, has in the framework of the policies of the bourgeoisie and world imperialism, given a certain desirability to this disgusting war and is the cause of its continuation.

A look at the course of the war discloses the objectives pursued by it and its benefits for the entire bourgeoisie until now. War started at a time when the Islamic Republic was engaged in an extensive and practical confrontation with the Feb. 1979 revolution. The state terrorism and Black-hundred type intimidation of the people, which were initiated by Khomeini's decree on Aug 19, 1979, had been pushed back. The next political attack by the I.R. on the people, which was organised in and based on the atmosphere created by the occupation of the American embassy, was fading away together with its confusing effects on the people and the political forces which for a while had tail-ended the regime. Workers were continuing to exercise direct authority in the factories. The unemployed workers were demonstrating and protesting in the streets. The toiling people were seizing unoccupied residential buildings. The revolutionary forces in Kurdistan were on the offensive against the Islamic regime

and all those democratic demands, which after every retreat, once again emerged in the places of work and social activity, were manifestations of a living and continuing revolution in Iran. The conflict between the people and Islamic regime was continuing over the democratic gains of the Feb. uprising. Under pressure from this lively course of the revolution, the Islamic regime still had to tolerate its liberal partners in the government, and bring their family squabbings into the open.

In such conditions, Iraq's attack on Iran was welcomed by the Islamic regime as a "God's blessing". This "blessing" enabled the counter-revolution in power to organise a new and all-sided attack on the revolution which was still alive and once again on the rise. By instigating nationalist feelings among vast masses of the people for the "defence of the fatherland", the war overshadowed the democratic and economic demands of the toilers and once again allowed the Islamic regime to confuse the people and make them follow it. The atmosphere created by war enabled the Islamic regime to confront the continuing revolutionary stir in the factories and other places of work and social activity, to wrest back the remaining gains of the Feb. uprising from the people and to consolidate its position against the revolution and toiling masses.

Hence, the war in its initial phase was directly used against the revolution in Iran and consolidated the position of the Islamic Republic regime as well as

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE !

the entire Iranian bourgeoisie and other bourgeois governments of the region, which were frightened of the prospect of the extension of the Iranian revolution. This was the first and most immediate benefit of the war for the bourgeois class and regime in Iran as well as for all the bourgeois-imperialist governments of the region.

The conditions under which the war had started came to an end with the Pan-Islamic current's accession to ruling. The whole government under its grips - after the June 1968 turmoil - and establishing an overt rule of terror in Iran. A new phase in the course of war started. After driving the Iraqi forces out of Khorasanshahr* Pan-Islamic policies were nonfeared in Iranian regime's war slogans, and the army of Islamic Revolutionary Guards** was put in charge of the military command. From a military point of view these measures mark the beginning of the second phase of the war.

In this period although the Islamic regime by exploiting the "benefits" of the war, had almost totally suppressed the Iranian revolution and regarded its domestic position as consolidated, it could not content itself with these gains. In the long term the dependent rule of the Islamic regime in Iran was guaranteed upon the consolidation of its position before the imperialist powers and in the international bourgeois-imperialist politics. Thus, war wongering under the banner of Pan-Islamism was opted by the Islamic rulers as the best means of realizing this objective. And today, after nearly seven years, the attempts to reach this objective still form the reason for the continuation of the war and the policies directing it.

Therefore a war which was set up to quell the revolution in Iran and to suppress its revolutionary approval and supported by all factions and political forces of the Iranian bourgeoisie inside and outside the government as well as the entire camp of reaction in the region, in its continuation became an arena for bloody rivalries between Pan-Islamism - i.e., a particular governmental alternative and policy - and other governmental factions of the bourgeoisie. By now the Iraqi regime and its Arab state allies, alongside a number of imperialist powers and some factions of the Iranian bourgeoisie in opposition, did not consider the continuation of the war in accord with their junctural interests. But generally speaking the bourgeoisie in Iran and the region, together with the most farsighted imperialist governments and factions, still found their long-term and strategic interests in the

* A southern city in Iran which was captured by the Iraqi forces in the initial stages of the war-IM

** An Islamic military organisation which was formed by the Islamic regime, after the Feb. 1979 uprising, to suppress the revolution. The regular army received shattering blows by the revolutionary masses in the uprising. IRG has now developed into a fully-fledged army operating alongside the regular army-IM

continuation of the war. At any rate, they preferred that the Pan-Islamist regime, in the context of the situation which was provided by the war, carries on acting as the centre of gravity of reaction in Iran and the region.

The scandal of the sale of American weapons to Iran, which the most reactionary factions of the American bourgeoisie, the state of Israel and the Nicaragua Contra mercenaries were interested in, clearly showed that the Islamic republic regime is by no means alone in its policy of continuing the war, and that it enjoys the support of the most reactionary bourgeois-imperialist governments and forces of the world. With reference to these realities one must say that the Iran-Iraq war not only because of its advantages for the bourgeoisie so far, but also because of the objectives and policies governing it, is serving the fundamental and strategic interests of the western bourgeoisie and imperialism in Iran and the region. The question as to how much this or that bourgeois-imperialist faction and regime finds the continuation of the war in accord with these objectives does not change this reality at all.

It must also be said that the reactionary and bourgeois character of this war cannot be limited only to the objectives and policies pursued by it. One of the important by-products of the Iran-Iraq war has been the consolidation of the basis and the requisites for the rule of the bourgeoisie in Iran and other countries of the region. The consolidation and extension of the army and other suppressive bourgeois institutions, militarization of the society, imposition of unbridled dictatorship, propagation of nationalism and Pan-Arabism justification of people's misery and destitution under the pretext of war, suppression of mass protests, workers' revolutionary movements, etc. are all the indirect and at the same time fundamental benefits of the war for bourgeois class as a whole. The different forces of the bourgeois opposition of the Iranian regime have time and again expressed their gratitude for these achievements of the war; of course along with their criticism of the mismanagements by the Lunatic Ayatollahs.

Finally, the very continuation of the war, the savage and criminal tactics and methods used by the two sides are another indication of the capitalist character of this war. Mass killings in the fronts, bombardment of the cities, factories, schools, hospitals and residential areas, the imposition of the war expenses on the workers and toilers, unemployment, destitution, homelessness and all other miseries that this bloody war has brought along for the masses, demonstrate the dimensions of the savagery of the capitalism of our epoch and the rabid and reactionary governments which serve capitalism through war.

The Iran-Iraq war, because of the reactionary policies which continue to fuel it, with its direct and indirect benefits for the bourgeoisie, with its unprecedented ruin, with the massacre and homelessness of

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The Great Miners' Strike and the Crisis of Trade-Unionism in Britain (Part 1)

(Following is the translation of the first part of an article originally published in the 2nd issue - Dec 1986 - of the Theoretical organ of the CPI, Bessoyev-Soyalsizm. The second and final part will be published in the next issue of the BM.)

1-BOURGEOISIE AND PROLETARIAT BEFORE THE STRIKE

IN THE CAMP OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Before the elections of 3rd March 1979 - which led to the victory of the Conservatives - the effect of capitalist crisis in Britain was more obvious than any other metropol country. Inflation, running at over 10% rising unemployment, the ever-increasing lagging behind of British imperialism in global rivalries, numerous workers' strikes, ... required serious and radical approach from different parties and representatives of the bourgeoisie. The Labour Party, which had come to power after the collapse of the Conservative government of Edward Heath through the miners' strike in 1974, in the last one to two years in office proved incapable of solving the crisis in favour of the bourgeoisie and hence showed clearly its immediate unfitness for the bourgeoisie. The British bourgeoisie during this period had to place its representation and state in the hands of a party which with different means and programme than that of the Labour Party was prepared for direct, planned and violent confrontation with the escalating workers' movement and had the ability to shift the burden of the ever increasing economic crisis on the shoulders of the workers.

The task of the party which was to represent and safeguard the future interests of the entire bourgeoisie class in Britain was described briefly as preventing the falling trend of the rate of profit. Creation of a favourable condition for the internal plunging of the various strata of capital in favour of finance and banking capitals and the multi-national companies; Development of new technology in order to modernize industry in Britain, making it more profitable and increasing its competitiveness in the world market and more importantly wresting back the gains of the workers, weakening their democratic and syndicalist fights, suppression of workers' struggles and strikes, imposition of unemployment and destitution on the working class and finally introduction and establishment of a new relation between labour and capital and a more stringent condition of exploitation of the working class had to be the main and decisive components of the policy and practice of the future agent of the bourgeoisie in charge of the state.

Amongst the existing parties only the Conservatives under the leadership of its far right wing had the required characteristic and experience to undertake this duty; and it had been preparing to play such a role a year or two before the elections. It had even

LONG LIVE PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

compiled the strategy and programme of the next government in its details.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY TO COMBAT THE CRISIS

An expressive document on the future programme of the Tory Party was published in "The Economist" of 27th May 1978. The Economist in an article under the title of "Apponattox or Civil War?" wrote:

"A copy of the final report of the Conservative party's policy group on the nationalised industries has reached the Economist. It has been drafted by the radical right-wing MP, Nicholas Ridley, and is likely to cause a humdrum of a row. Its main points:

(1) The Conservatives intend to demand that each nationalised industry achieve a set rate of return (on variously defined "capital employed"). This rate of return, once laid down, would be "totally inflexible". If managers did not achieve it they would be replaced. They would, however, be supported in whatever action they had to take to achieve it even if this "might mean that men would be laid off, or uneconomic plants would be closed down or whole businesses sold off or liquidated". The report sees no other way to restore financial responsibility. "Nevertheless", it adds, "there is no point in undertaking it if we are not prepared to go through with it."

(2) After issuing this call to battle, the document then prepares the way for what could be constant surrenders at Apponattox. Uneconomic activities would be costed and separately paid for by subsidy on the vote of minister who felt they had to continue.

(3) Investment control by government would continue through five-year rolling corporate plans with a government commitment to a decreasing proportion of the investment, as follows: year one, 100%; year two, 90%; year three, 75%; and year four, 50% ...

(4) No direct government control of prices or wages in nationalised industries. The only control would be by insisting on the rate of return on capital being met, even if this involved the industry concerned raising prices, or selling off surplus land or assets or closing uneconomic activities. The concept of wage comparability is rejected: the criteria for wage payments should be the manpower situation in the industry and the vulnerability of the nation to a strike.

(5) In choosing which strikes not to fight, the team has classified industries into three categories of vulnerability with: (a) sewage, water, electricity, gas and the health service in the most vulnerable group; (b) railways, docks, coal and dustmen in an intermediate group; and (c) other public transport, education, ports and telephones, air transport and steel in the least vulnerable group. It rejects the proposal to make strikes illegal in

industries where they are not illegal already, and also any idea of having a strikebreaking corps of volunteers to run mines, trains or power stations where industries "have the option by the legal way the only feasible option is to pay up".

(6) Managers should be better paid than at present, and ministers should no longer usurp the day-to-day responsibilities of management by replying to parliamentary questions on such matters. (7) ... Pay of successful top managers would be supplemented by public honours.

(8) ... (9) The group considered the scope for denationalisation. It believed that it would be easier, and more permanent, to fragment the industries rather than try to sell off whole corporations. It concluded there was least opportunity for this in the "true utilities" (gas, electricity, railways, water, ports and telephones). The greatest opportunities are in coal, shipbuilding, docks, airports, motor car manufacturing, buses and freight. ...

So far this report has not been to the shadow cabinet. But it has been discussed by the powerful economic reconstruction group under Sir Geoffrey Howe and is now before a group under Sir Keith Joseph, the Tory industry spokesman and general policy overlord. Its general thinking seems to be accepted, but its detailed proposals are likely to be modified. They will be reflected in the Tory manifesto only in the most general terms.

In an annex to this report, Mr. Ridley and some of his co-authors have been pondering how to counter any "political threat" from those they regard as "the enemies of the next Tory government". They believe that in the first or second year after the Tories' election, there might be a major challenge from a trade union either over a wage claim or over redundancies. They fear it may occur in a "vulnerable industry" such as coal, shipbuilding, docks and have the support of "the full force of communist disrupters". Behind the scenes, they would like a five-part strategy for countering this threat:

- * Return on capital figures should be rigged so that an above-average wage claim can be paid to the "vulnerable" industries.
- * The eventual battle should be on ground chosen by the Tories, in a field they think could be won (railways, British Leyland, the civil service or steel).

- * Every precaution should be taken against a challenge in electricity or gas. Anyway, redundancies in these industries are unlikely to be required. The group believes that the most likely battleground will be the coal industry. They would like a Thatcher government to: (a) build up maximum coal stocks, particularly at the power stations; (b) make contingency plans for the import of coal; (c) encourage the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers by haulage companies to help move coal where necessary; (d) introduce coal/coal firing in all power

stations as quickly as possible.

"The group believes that the greatest deterrent to any strike would be "to cut off the money supply to the strikers, and make the union finance them"... * There should be a large, mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against violent picketing. "Good non-union drivers" should be recruited to cross picket lines with police protection."

(Our emphasis)

In the election of March 1979, despite the support of most of the left organisations in particular the Trotskyites and the Socialist Workers Party - SWP - for the Labour Party, the Tories under the leadership of Mrs Thatcher won the elections.

THE PRACTICE OF THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

From the moment the Tories gained power until the start of the miners' strike, they step by step and with a careful consistency carried out their declared strategy and policies.

The government's attitudes to the nationalized industries were drastically reduced. The profitable sectors of industry such as the ship building were sold to the private sector. Wage rises in most sectors of industry were fixed at below the inflation rate. At the same time the salaries of the Armed Forces and in particular the Police were raised by more than 20% in the first year of Conservative government. The rule of law and the respect for the slogan and general policy of the Thatcher government in the political and social fields.

The hunger strike by the Irish political prisoners to win political status from the British state was ignored and suppressed by the Thatcher government. Despite extensive protests throughout the world, and even by the European Court, in the absence of an effective solidarity from the workers and people in Britain, the government announced that it considers the Irish prisoners as murderers and terrorists, and that even if they all died of hunger, it would not concede to their demands. The death of 10 Irish militants resulting from long hunger strike had no effect on the governments policies. The death of Bobby Sands, the tireless Irish militant, who in the course of his hunger strike, in a by-election, was elected Member of Parliament by thousands of Irish people, showed to everyone that this government was determined to carry out its reactionary policies. The hunger strike by the Irish political prisoners was defeated.

At the international level, the Thatcher government brought home two noisily victories for the British bourgeoisie. First was bringing the anti-racist armed movement in Zimbabwe to a compromise. Despite years of bloody armed struggle against the racist regime of Rhodesia, the class nature of the leaders of this movement on the one hand and the pressures and active diplomacy of the Thatcher government, on the other hand, brought Robert Mugabe and Joshua Momo (the leaders of the armed movement) to the negotiating table and imposed a historic compromise on this movement.★

Secondly, it was the outbreak of the Falkland war against the Argentinian forces in a battle field 1000 miles away from the mainland Britain. We do not want, here, to enter into the discussion of the background to and the causes of the occupation of the Falkland Island by the Argentine forces. Reference to the Falkland war is merely to show an incident in the chain of internal and external measures which established Mrs Thatcher and her government as the staunch and consistent defender of the bourgeois-imperialist interests of Britain in the eyes of people of Britain and the world. The day after the invasion of the Falklands by the Argentinian government forces, the British government began a massive chauvinistic propaganda campaign. From the very early stages, immediate military mobilization measures were openly taken by the government to attack the Argentinian forces and recapture the Falkland Islands. The British imperialist chauvinism (the empire in which the sun never set and blood never dried) was fanned by the government and mass media. The Liberals, Social-Democrats and the Labour Party all became the unconditional defenders of government's war efforts. The dock workers' strike in the south of England and the stoppage of the construction, patriotic and national interests and mobilizing and launching the operation of the British warships. The leaders of the unions overtly or practically supported the policies of the Thatcher government. The government and mass media ridiculed an anti-war demonstration of a few thousand, by small left groups in London. And finally, despite the objection of the American government, the British warships sailed towards the Falklands and in a brutal war (for instance the sinking of the Argentinian warship, Belgrano, with the loss of 1200 personnel on board, which, as later investigation revealed, was militarily unnecessary) defeated the Argentine forces and recaptured the Falklands. This was another stage in the show of baptism of the Conserva-

★ According to the "Lancaster House" agreement, it was resolved that a parliamentary republic be established, and 20% of the parliament's seats be allocated to the white minority. Properties and wealth of the white minority be spared from appropriation. The guerrilla forces be integrated into the racist regime's armed forces and the head of Ian Smith's armed forces, whose hands were stained with the blood of black freedom-fighters, regain its previous post in the new army which was to be trained and organised by British officers. The organization of the new government be effected with the aid of the British government and under the direct supervision of Lord Soames of England. The independence celebrations of Zimbabwe and the rule of the black majority - which was officially inaugurated by Prince Charles, the crown prince of Britain - was coupled with the oath of Robert Mugabe in the name of God to safeguard the interests and integrity of the newly established state of Zimbabwe; it was thus also a victory celebration for the imperialist diplomacy of Mrs Thatcher's government in imposing a compromise on the long and bitter struggle of the toilers of Zimbabwe.

ive government under the leadership of Mrs Thatcher towards paying the way for the suppression of the most powerful section of the workers' movement inside Britain.

In the scene of suppression of the workers and the undermining of democratic and union rights in Britain two incidents are worth mentioning. A few months after coming to power, the Conservative government appointed Sir Michael Edwards as the most aggressive industrial manager in Britain - to the head of the board of directors of the state-owned Leyland car manufacturing company. From the start of his appointment, Michael Edwards began the "rationalization" of the Leyland plants. The truck section was closed down because of non-profitability and thousands of workers were laid off. Discipline at the work place was tightened and workers' protests were met with harsh and harsher punishments. The peak of "rationalization" was the sacking of a worker propagating anti-capitalism.

Derek Robinson was a member of the "Communist" Party of Great Britain - CPGB -*, an experienced worker and a union official in a Leyland factory. He was fired for writing a pamphlet in which some criticism had been made against the capitalist system. It was the first time in contemporary history of Britain that a worker was being sacked for expressing his views. A big publicity broke out in connection with this incident. Robinson questioned the dismissal and the matter went to court.

The bourgeois judicial apparatus voted in favour of the Leyland management decision and with this, the expulsion of workers in Britain for expressing their views took a legal form. The reaction of public opinion, unions and the left parties to this issue would show to the government how far it would be able to advance in its next offensive. The problem now was not confined to the expulsion of one worker, but the effort of the government to establish the policy of suppression of views and terrorization of workers in order to bring about the bourgeoisie's desired order and discipline in the work-place. The unions did nothing to support Derek Robinson. A strike was organised in the factory in which he was working, but after a while the workers returned to work in the face of threats by the employers. The Labour Party offered no support for Robinson and the few local protests and demonstrations which were organised by the leftist organizations lacked the necessary strength and consistency to inspire public opinion, and in particular the workers, and confront this violent offensive of the bourgeoisie on the democratic rights of the workers. The expulsion of Robinson was final. Witnessing the indifference and the inability of the workers' movement and the public opinion towards this case, the Conservative government found itself in a more comfortable position in attacking the workers' movement and the democratic rights of the workers.

The workers in the Steel industry were the next big target for the Conservatives. To make the steel industry

"rational" and profitable - the Ridley report in 1978 had considered this branch of industry as less sensitive - the government was finding it necessary to shut down a few factories and make many workers redundant. The carrying out of this task in the steel industry was entrusted to Mr Ian Mc Gregor who had showed his talent in such areas in the U.S. The dispute between the government and the steel workers started in 1980 on the issue of pay increase. The management announced that at the present situation the steel industry is not profitable and cannot afford the pay rise. The steel workers went on strike and some time after the strike had started, the "Iron and Steel Trades Confederation" - I.S.T.C. - under pressure from the workers, declared the strike official. Steel workers in the private sector did not join the strike. The workers' morale, particularly in the Sheffield and Yorkshire areas, was high. The workers had set up groups of flying pickets and picketed the factories which had not joined the strike and prevented the trucks of coal and iron ore from entering the factories. Confrontation with the police during this strike which lasted a few months was a daily routine. Families of the steel workers organised support committees, fund-raising groups, etc, in support of the strikers. Tens of thousands of workers and their families were involved in this dispute. The lack of effective and extensive support from the other trade unions - apart from some sections of miners and train drivers who for a short period expressed solidarity with the steel workers and even in some cases joined the picket lines - pressure from the police, financial pressure, rapid import of large quantities of steel from abroad, and finally the compromise of the leadership of the steel workers' union - who are amongst the right wing of the unions - caused the strike to fail. The strike ended after 16 weeks, despite the satisfaction of the workers, with the signing of an agreement between the management and the leadership of the unions. The result of this agreement was the closure of a considerable number of steel factories in Britain and the expulsion of up to half the workforce in this sector. In this battle, which took place in a key industry, the bourgeoisie succeeded in striking a heavy blow on the British working class, and thus winning an important position for itself.

THE ECONOMIC BALANCE-SHEET OF THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Following these victories, the bourgeoisie under the leadership of the Conservative government, launched a fierce and increasing offensive against the working class. The education budget was cut year by year. The national insurance, social services, National Health and so on, were reduced constantly and under various excuses. Indirect taxes, especially the Value Added Tax - VAT - doubled and income tax was reduced. The unemployment benefit was taxed, for the first time since the Second World War.

* This party with its Euro-communist and pro-Russian wings is one of the most right-wing revisionist currents in Britain.

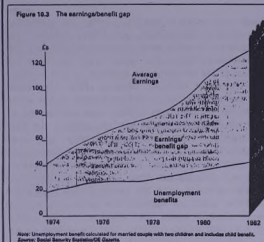


table no. 1

The above table shows that the difference between the earnings of the unemployed and the average earning of the employed workers has increased from approximately £60 per week in 1979 to £85 per week in 1982.

The official number of unemployed when the Conservative Party took office was around 1.3 million. In 1982 this figure reached 3.2 million. Considering the tens of thousands of women workers who because of their husband's occupations were not listed as receivers of unemployment benefit, the real number of the unemployed in Britain would have been well over 4 million in 1983. Following the rise in the number of unemployed and the reduction in the real value of wages, the intensity of workers' exploitation increased.

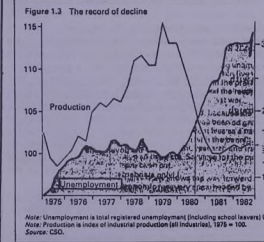


table no. 2

The above table shows the rate of increase in the number of unemployed from 1975 to 1982. With reference to this table and by comparing the production curve and the number of unemployed from 1981 to the end of 1982, it becomes clear that while the number of unemployed has risen by around 700,000 (fall in the work-

force) the volume of production in Britain compared with the previous year has increased. This data shows the intensity of exploitation of the employed workers between these years.

In the same years the policies of the Conservative government led to the expulsion of more women workers and drove them to the corner of the house. The women workers were subjected to more intensive exploitation, and a greater percentage of them, compared with male workers, were driven into the low-paid category and those living under the poverty line.

Figure 10.1 Women dominate the low paid

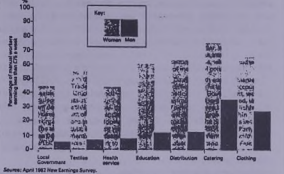


table no. 3

The above table shows the comparative number of low-paid male and female workers who earn less than £75 p.w. in various branches of industry and services. In all of the above sectors, the number of low-paid women workers is relatively much more than that of their male colleagues.

As shown by other statistical tables published in an annual report by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in 1983, the policies of the British government has until then caused a higher rate of unemployment in comparison with most of the other European countries, the U.S.A. and Japan; and the defence received a relatively higher proportion of the budget, relatively more than any other metropolitan country after the U.S. Between Oct 81 and Oct 82 alone, more than 145,000 workers were made redundant in British industries.

Figure 10.2 The worst hit industries in 1982



table no. 4

The above table illustrates that within this period there had been redundancies of 70,000 in building, 50,000 in mechanical, 50,000 in car, and 25,000 in steel industries.

Theoretically, all of the Conservative government's attempts and policies were pursued in accordance with the theories of Milton Friedman - an American bourgeois economist and economic strategist of the biggest finance and banking capital and multi-national companies. Some of the most important points of Friedman's economic strategy are policies such as decreasing the money supplied to the market, increasing indirect taxes on consumer goods, decreasing the income tax, using modern technology (computers and robots), and the creation of millions of technological, lifting of control over currency exchange, movement of capital, and imports and exports, and finally lowering workers' wages. This strategy was proposed to solve the present crisis of world capitalism in favour of finance, military, and multi-national capitals by placing the burden of crisis on the shoulders of the working class. This economic policy was carried out by the Conservative party in light of the domination of trade unions, reformism and revisionism over the working-class movement in Britain.

Margaret Thatcher was given the title of the "Iron Lady", by the bourgeois press in gratitude to her services and consistency in carrying out the most reactionary and anti-worker policies. In 1983 the Conservative government of the Iron Lady had established itself as the sole source of power in the society and as the symbol of a determination which, according to the capitalists, had turned the "worn-out and lazy wheels" of the British industries and under discipline and order to the workers' movement.

The general election of July 1983, which was another victory for the Conservatives, by a relatively large lead over the Labour Party, was the reward that the conservative British society awarded to this "radical", reactionary and imperialist party.

In the threshold of the miners' strike, in March 1984, the four-year record of the Conservative government bore attacks on the workers' movement, imposition of poverty, destitution, and unemployment upon workers, victory in bringing the armed movement in Zimbabwe to a compromise, attacks on democratic rights in the society, and finally electoral victory and the support of the general opinion in Britain.

IN THE WORKERS' CAMP

On the eve of the 1979 general election, the Labour Party was involved with its own internal strife and

★ We do not consider the bourgeois-imperialist Labour Party, as a workers' party. But considering the determining role and influence that this party has over the British working class and the trade unions in this country, as well as the situation of the British working class in this period, should be accompanied with the actions of this party, and its dealing and wheelings with the trade unions.

conflicts. The right of the Party under the leadership of Roy Jenkins, David Owen, and Shirley Williams was about to split from the main organisation and form the Social Democrat Party. The majority of the Party had concentrated its energy on the question of the presence of the Trotskyist militant tendency within the Labour Party; the tendency which had influence in the youth organisation of the Party. There were differences of opinion, which often became public, amongst the main Party leaders, Michael Foot, Denis Healy, and James Callaghan. In such circumstances, the Conservatives won the electors' votes and formed the next government, despite all the support that the left organisations and trade unions gave to the Labour Party. During the first three years of Conservative rule, the working class in Britain under the influence of the Labour Party and trade unions suffered from one defeat to another. The latter practically adopted a supportive stand towards the government during the hunger strike of the Irish prisoners. At the time of the Falkland war, the Labour Party totally approved of the war-mongering policies of Thatcher's government, especially when the attack on the Argentinian forces was to begin. In this period the leaders of most unions did not take any action or struggle against Thatcher's war-mongering activities; they even put a halt to some of the workers' strikes under the excuse that in war time there was need for national unity against the enemy. The workers' movement in this process to a large extent submitted to the nationalist and imperialist propaganda and actions of Thatcher, by way of approvals which the Labour Party and trade unions expressed for the government.

When Derek Robinson, the experienced Leyland worker, was accused the British workers' movement did not take any effective action or intervention, nor did they when steel workers went on strike for four months. The steel workers were almost left on their own within the frame of their own industry. They were deprived of any practical and effective solidarity from other sections of the workers' movement, and suffered a great defeat. It can be stated that in the first 3 years of the Conservative rule, the workers' movement and unions could not even bring a single, workers' or trade-struggle to victory. Tens of strikes that took place in different sections of the workers' movement during this period did not link at all, and each one, in isolation from the others and faced with the all-round and pre-planned assault of bourgeoisie, ended in defeat.

The following example is clear enough to explain the role the unions played in aborting the workers' struggles of the recent period:

The train drivers and other employees, of the British Rail are mainly members of either the ASLEF or the NUR. A strike, led by the ASLEF, began over wage-increases and working conditions. The majority of the NUR Executive Committee voted against support for the strike. Despite practical support given by some of NUR train drivers to the strikers (on one day stopping almost all the trains in Britain), the union did not back the strike, with the result that after a short

while the strike ended without the workers reaching their demands. A few days after this event, another strike started over similar demands, but this time it was led by the MR. ASLEF practically showed no solidarity. This strike too was defeated.

In such a situation, it is obvious that no one would be thinking of the organisation of the four main unions. Two minor demonstrations were organised by the Labour Party and the TUC for the right to work, which did not get the practical support of employed workers. It lacked consistency in the struggle and could not solve the slightest problems of the unemployed workers. To date, the 4 million unemployed workers in Britain and without any organisation and their life is getting more impoverished every day.

The smaller left groups, organisations and parties in Britain were mostly tailing the Labour Party and unions during this period. Some of them who took a critical position towards the policies of the Labour Party and TUC, merely criticised the manner of execution and the practical tactics of those policies. At the moment, there is as yet no serious left current in Britain which with a deep-rooted criticism of the nature of the programme and policies of the Labour Party and unions, would highlight the need for forming a real Communist Party, deal with the question of unemployment and the threat of general destitution in the British workers' movement, as well as organise the workers of various sections, including the unemployed, towards a general confrontation with the continuous and growing attacks of the bourgeoisie.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE UNIONS

In the run-up to the second general election, the Labour Party and TUC published a joint plan, entitled: "Partners in Rebuilding Britain". This document which was adopted by the General Council of the TUC and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in March 1983, was the basis of the propaganda of the above-mentioned currents in the British workers' movement, for the 1983 general election, and the pivot of their propaganda against the policies of the Conservative Party, after the general election. The main points of this joint plan are as follows:

"Partners in Rebuilding Britain"

Foreword: The main goal of the next Labour Government is to put Britain's economy on a path for full employment, industrial revival and social justice. A new partnership: This Government's policies have produced economic collapse and mass unemployment. The destruction of industry, emasculation of public services and, above all, the cruel waste of the skills, livelihood and commitment of the four million jobless have divided and polarised our society. ... Our primary objective is to offer work ... to all our people. Our approach is based on a partnership between a Labour Government and the trade union movement, harnessing into common cause the

skills of managers and all those who can help in the drive for full employment and better social provision.

Jobs and industrial change: ... By cutting public spending, by increasing taxes for all but the rich and by pricing our exports out of world markets, the Government has caused a catastrophic collapse in output. And as output has plummeted so unemployment has soared.

- Repairing the damage will involve concerted action and agreement on how to bring about growth in production and competitiveness.

- The next Labour Government will make an immediate start by introducing a "Budget for Jobs", to get the economy moving again. ... The Budget will be worked out in close consultation with the trade unions and employers ...

Planning for recovery: ... We will have to overcome the backlog of British industry's long-term poor competitive performance ...

- Our proposals are set out in detail in the Joint Statement "Economic Planning and Industrial Decision Making" which will establish a "framework for full employment".

- (Planning) a tripartite "National Planning Council" with sectoral committees consulting management and unions about company plans and developing strategies for whole sectors of industry.

- "Agreed Development Plans" negotiated with leading companies to put the national plan into effect, covering such issues as purchasing policy, import penetration, investment plans, pricing strategy and training policy.

Building industrial democracy: For democratic planning to work we must build on the commitment to the future on the part of working people and management.

The next Labour Government will therefore give workers new rights to influence and participate in key company decisions. Workers will be able to decide for themselves how to use these rights through their Joint Union Committees and so take up the responsibilities that go with them.

- A right to be consulted in advance on actions and decisions affecting workers' interests would put trade unions in a stronger position to make use of information and play a more creative and responsible role in the decisions that shape industry's future.

- A right for workers to be represented through their trade union machinery, up to and including boards of management, would allow them to develop a permanent and continuous influence over all aspects of enterprise planning.

- In turn, unions with TUC's help will have the responsibility with employers to ensure that industrial relations arrangements contribute to economic reconstruction ... This industrial relations programme will place new demands on all those who hold union office and unions will need to ensure that their training and education services are adequate to prepare union representatives for their new tasks. The Labour Government will examine how it can help in the provision of facilities and support.

The National Economic Assessment: - A National Economic Assessment reached on the basis of collective bargaining will be sustained by mutual self-interests. Both the Government and the Trade Union Movement will be anxious to maintain the momentum on jobs and steady progress, or living standards, and yet both will also be concerned that their policies do not result in disruptive inflation or balance of payments crises. Employers in turn will know that this will provide a framework for the steady development of competitive and profitable activities. All we can know the part they have to play in achieving the agreed objectives, and the consequences of failure.

Trade and the world economy: - Improving the competitive position of British industry will help increase output significantly and will go some way to protecting the balance of payments. Nonetheless, a rapidly growing economy is bound to suck in imports. We must therefore have policies to prevent imports from disrupting our financial position, regardless of any constraints imposed by the treaty of Rome ... The Labour Government will also need to be ready to act quickly on imports through Agreed Development Plans with companies, through public purchasing policy and, if necessary, through import controls. This approach does not mean that we shall be exporting our unemployment to other countries ...

- Our plans for reconstruction will have to improve the way in which we deal with the activities of multinational companies. In addition, we must ensure that multinational companies which are responsible directly or indirectly for a large proportion of our production recognise that producing in Britain has a future."

Throughout this programme there is not a word that unemployment and destitution are due to capitalism. All these problems are referred to as consequences of the Conservatives' actions and policies. In the argumentation part of the joint-plan, efforts are made, firstly to define the interests of the capitalists, and factory managers, the same as the workers'. A lot of emphasis is put on the fact that if the Labour Party comes to power, it would be able, with the co-operation of the capitalists, the factory management, and the workers, to do away with the effects of crises and abolish unemployment. As if it wasn't this same Labour Party who handed Britain with 1.3 million unemployed and 13% inflation over to the Conservatives after six years in office.

Secondly, the role and function of unions in this cooperation of workers and capitalists is highlighted. Since, according to this plan, the trade unions are not seen as the channel for workers to take part in managerial decision-making, as well as being the means of control of workers, the plan places a great emphasis on the education of union officers towards accepting these responsibilities in the service of British Capitalism.

Thirdly, as the programme's emphasis is on government investing and raising of production (and hence Job creation), it offers a completely bourgeois-national-

istic policy in relation to the sale of the produced commodities and realization of their value (in the market). The programme's solution to the problem of selling the commodities is controlling or stopping imports and increasing exports.

The Joint plan takes an oath that the implementation of the plan would not lead to the export of the crisis and unemployment to other countries, and also that it would certainly secure the profitability of the investment of the multi-nationals in Britain. Throughout the plan there is no mention of organising the struggles of employed and unemployed workers against the poverty and lack of rights resulting from the crisis. "Buy British, save jobs", was the slogan of one of the TUC annual congresses, and as its implementation. Despite such a programme and the support expressed by the unions and most of the left currents, the Labour Party was heavily defeated in the second general election. The Conservatives once again won the election with a considerable lead. The most important reasons taken by the Conservative Party from the time it came to power until the beginning of the strike, were mentioned previously.

THE START OF THE STRIKE

Preparations by the Conservative government: The Thatcher government took up the fight with the miners, with confidence and total readiness. The proposed strategy of the Ridley research group of 1978, had been executed step by step, and consistently. In addition to the above-mentioned actions which the government had taken prior to the strike, it had also arranged for the maintenance of generating plants to run on a dual oil/coal fuel system. A special national anti-riot and anti-rally police force had been organised. It had become hardened through the 1980 steel-workers' strike and the 1981 street riots. The scab lobby drivers had shown their effectiveness during the steel-workers' strike. Large quantities of coal had been stockpiled and international contracts had been concluded, for the import of further coal, in case it was needed. Mr. Mc Gregor, having "rationalised" the steel industry and made it more profitable, and having made redundant over 25 000 steel workers in Sep 1983, was appointed to the management of the coal industry. Finally, the 1983 general election victory had given assurance to the Conservative government that at least a considerable section of the public opinion in Britain would support the aggressive policies of the government against the miners.

Miners situation: The degree of readiness of the miners was not comparable with that of the government for such a struggle. The defeat of the strikes in the steel, railways, and car-manufacturing industries had given rise to a mood of despair and disappointment in a large section of the workers' movement. In addition, these same strikes had shown that unions did not have any desire for practically supporting the miners' strike and would not enter larger strike. Unlike the 1972 and 74 strikes (then the left of the Conservative Party under the leadership of Edward Heath was in

power), the Labour Party was not ready, and lacked the necessary tendency, to form the government in case of the situation leading to and leading to the fall of the Conservative government. It had declared so clearly several times and on various occasions. Furthermore, in the spring of 1983 the majority of the miners had given a no-vote in the secret ballot that was held by the NM leadership for starting the national strike. The only steps that the miners' union took to prepare for the strike in the spring of 84, was the banning of overtime in the mines and the transfer of some of the financial assets of the union to banks abroad. To oppose the government policy of unusual storage of coal and increase of imports, the NM leadership banned overtime as from 31st of Oct. 83 in order to lower production. This action was positively supported by the majority of miners, who refused to do overtime. It also came out during the strike, that months before the start of the strike, the union had transferred part of its funds to South Island, Switzerland and Luxemburg, in order to prevent their blockade by the British state.

Several months before the strike, the management of the coal mines (NCB) had declared that it was intending to bring about changes in the "Plan for Coal" (the agreement between the Labour Party and the NM after the fall of the Conservatives in 1974), and also close the unprofitable mines - i.e., those mines in which the production of every tonne of coal cost more than £60. In practice this meant the closure of 70 out of 179 coal mines and the redundancy of 70 000 miners until 1988. Thus, in early March 1984, the NCB announced that the Cortonwood mine in Yorkshire would be closed. Five days later, it announced the plan to cut production by a million tonnes next year. This meant immediate closure of several other mines.

With the announcement of the closure of the Cortonwood mine, the miners in Yorkshire went on strike. According to the NM rules, to make the strike official and national up to 55% yes-votes were needed in a secret ballot. The ballot of spring 1983, however, had shown that there was not a definite possibility of success in such a ballot, for whatever reason. The leadership of the union, therefore, adopted another tactic for making the strike national. Miners in each area were called to the strike separately, when miners in Scotland, Kent and South Wales, replied by a positive vote, the strike was declared official and national, as from the middle of March. The Nottinghamshire miners, on the other hand, refused the call to join the strike, protesting against the absence of a secret ballot. The majority of them never joined the strike.

THE NUM PLAN FOR THE COAL INDUSTRY

In response to the NCB's unilateral breach of the 1974 agreement, the NM leadership published a pamphlet entitled, "Coal not done", in which its protests and demands were stated.

In its introduction, the pamphlet states that the NCB and the government by shutting 70 mines and making 70,000 miners redundant, want to privatise the coal industry. It warns against the destitution that such

actions would bring to the miners, their families, and their towns and villages, and states that there is another option open to the coal industry. This is followed by a list of its own demands and programme. The following is a summary of the NM demands:

- Instead of starving the industry of funds, Government should pay subsidies per tonne at least at the level of other European coal industries. The money that goes into redundancies and closures should go into production.
- The nuclear programme should be halted, instead of being used to crush the mining industry.
- Imports should be stopped. Where coals, such as anthracite, are not presently available in great enough quantities, investment should be undertaken to produce them.
- Exports should be increased. Europe is supposed to be self-sufficient in energy. Yet it imports over 70 million tonnes of coal, including large quantities from South Africa!
- The Government must support new ways of using coal. ...

(The NM demands that:)

- Pits must stay open to provide the coal we need. And they must remain publicly owned.
- Management must negotiate sensibly with the Union, not try to undermine and ignore it. ...
- ... basic pay ... must be increased. Bonus must be consolidated into basic pay.
- There must be orderly progress towards a four-day week and a proper early retirement scheme.
- Unsocial hours pay, nearly the lowest for any group of shiftworkers, must be increased.
- Miners' health, safety and working conditions must be radically improved.
- Investment in computerised mining techniques must benefit miners. The micro-revolution must not work-time not jobs.
- The situation where a man starts on a lad's wage and ends on a lad's wage must end. Earnings must be protected."



Drawing by Tony Hall, originally published in Labour Herald.

The NLM leadership's attitude towards unemployment, destitution and the policies of the Conservative government, as well as their corresponding demands, are outlined based on the essence and main points of the joint-plan of the Labour Party and TUC "Partners in Rebuilding Britain", 1963.

In the NLM pamphlet, too, the tendencies of the Conservative government, and the management (here the National Coal Board), and not capitalism, are introduced as the cause of the existing unemployment and destitution. In Britain, NLM's alternative plan is based on three main points:

Governmental investment in the coal industry, stopping imports and increasing exports. The totality of that criticism and those demands stem from a narrow trade throughout the NLM's demands there is no mention of increasing social benefits and unemployment benefits (which is the problem of four million British workers, whose ranks, at least some of the miners will be joining). Instead of proposing a specific demand for reducing the number of working-hours to say 35 hours a week without any loss of pay, the NLM acts as an advertiser to its "own" bourgeoisie. It calls for stopping imports and increasing export as the solution to finding market for selling the commodities, and proposes this to the bourgeois government. A policy which, once carried out, would lead to the impoverishment of the miners of other countries. The welfare section of the demands neither calls for a specific increase in pay, nor a specific reduction in the number of working-hours and the retirement age, as a concrete demand, nor a specific increase in wages, in proportion to the number of years of service. All these demands were written so vaguely that none could be taken up as a slogan, and a concrete demand of the strike. According to these general demands, it is not clear for example how much pay-increase, how many fewer working-hours

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tried, for the third time, to make workers participate in elections, through threats and intimidation. The Islamic Council had warned that if the time-card of any worker did not bear the stamp of the Council elections, he or she would be sacked. It had also threatened that the implementation of the job classification scheme would be delayed by 2 years for those workers who did not take part in the elections. But despite all these threats the majority of the workers refused to take part in the elections. It is interesting to know that 12 out of 13 candidates for the Islamic Council were Islamic Society members, Islamic politico-ideological officers, and some factory superintendents. The candidacy of the last one who had been nominated by the workers was cancelled because the Islamic Society did not approve of him.

The workers in Darroopkash factory (a state-owned pharmaceutical factory) ignoring the Islamic Council (one of whose tasks according to law is to maintain the contact between the workers and management), held

per week, how much of a reduction in the age of retirement, etc. The miners should be immediately disarmed from the bourgeoisie, as the demand of this particular strike, and fighting for it.

It was not accidental that the slogan of "Don't close the pits", and nothing more nothing less, remained the only slogan throughout the whole year.

In any case, the 120,000 miners began their historic strike on 12th March 1984 under the leadership of the NLM. In such conditions of unequal balance of class forces, and with such demands and slogans,

Farhad Besharat
Nov. 1985

To be continued



Drawing by Tony Hall.

their general assembly and directly elected 3 representatives to contact the management.

Our party, through its publications and radio programmes, encourages the workers to set up their real councils as opposed to the Islamic Councils. All the workers of each production unit and factory will be members of the workers' councils and will regularly come together in the general assemblies to discuss and decide about their problems. The workers in these councils will elect representatives from among themselves for a certain period for purposes of carrying out particular policies and actions. These representatives of the workers must answer any question regarding their conduct of affairs, before all the workers. The only legitimate body to approve of their suitability as workers' representatives is that of the workers themselves.

(Translated from *Komunist* no. 30, Feb. 87, central organ of the CP)

Notes on Socialism and the Analysis of Soviet Union

A Critique of OMLWP's *Article 'To Get to Socialism We Need a Marxist - Leninist Analysis of "Soviet Union"'

*NOTE: This article first appeared in the "Bulletin of Views and Debates on the Question of Soviet Union" no.2, supplement to Besoyev-Nasoyim, the Theoretical Journal of the CP, the Party's theoretical journal. It is slightly revised. OMLWP's article which is referred to in the article by the author is in the first part of the "Bulletin of Views and Debates on the Question of Soviet Union". A further two instalments of this work have so far been published. The instalment of the first two parts of the OMLWP work has been published in the same issue of "Bulletin of Views and Debates on the Question of Soviet Union". OMLWP's articles can be found in *Bolshevik Truth* (Bulletin of OMLWP) no.3, Oct/85 and no.4, Jan/86.*

The title of other articles published so far in the "Bulletin of Views and Debates on the Question of Soviet Union", "Notes on Socialism and the analysis of Soviet Union" formally represents the views of its author.

... OMLWP's article holds many positive points. Firstly in their analysis of the Soviet Union, the OMLWP concedes rightly part company with the current critical school (i.e. Trotskyism, Maoism, etc.) and sees a possibility that we may witness the workers' revolution in Russia which helps to reconstitute the scientific theory of socialism, and in the meantime, paves the way for the elaboration of a strategy of the socialist revolution applicable to the current world situation. That was what OMLWP's article succeeds to achieve its goals (bearing in mind that the translated text in the Bulletin only contains the first two preliminary sections of OMLWP's ongoing analysis of the Soviet Union) by means of a bluntly the revolutionary and the non-academic orientation of the OMLWP comrades. The other positive point about this article is that it correctly concentrates on the economic obstacles of the '20s in the Bolshevik Party, and seeks to prove that the failure of the detente, and the finality of the defeat of the Russian Revolution were the process in which the Russian proletariat became unable to establish a socialist economy and yielded to the consolidation of capitalism in Russia. In this respect the article concludes that the five-year plan of Stalin was indeed not the right road to socialist production on firm grounds. In other words, capitalism was never abolished in Russia, and it was state-capitalism which was created in the Russian workers and led to the present situation. Furthermore, comrades reject - and in my view correctly so - the economic alternative which the Left Opposition proposed as being capitalist alternatives and point out the common grounds shared between these programmes and the plan finally adopted by the dominant Stalin faction. Comrades believe that all these alternatives represented a falsification perception of socialism and that they all put forward a fatalistic course of development for the Russian society in the '20s.

The methodological remark made by the comrades is also thoroughly correct when they state that a fundamental cause of the Russian Revolution cannot and must not be a fatalistic one - one which takes the victory of capitalism there as having been inevitable. This is the case with the current school of critique must also be able to present a socialist alternative for the future in Russian history. But the article fails when OMLWP itself attempts to present such a positive socialist alternative.

OMLWP'S ALTERNATIVE

The proletarian alternative for the economic organisation of the capitalist society cannot be anything other than socialism. The theory of capitalist relations and the reestablishment of socialist relations were the very economic aim in pursuit of which the Russian proletariat resorted to the October socialist revolution and there established its own rule (it is interesting that during the course of debates within the Bolshevik Party in the economic programme of the revolution, all the contending factions presented their alternatives as plans for arriving at socialism where OMLWP alone has the explicit content of alternatives of different fictions, it also implicitly accepts that, at that juncture, the economic alternative of the proletariat could and must have been an alternative for forcing

socialism. But when OMLWP presents its own alternative, it is unfortunately yet another programme for capitalist development in Russia. Having examined the matter, OMLWP concludes that the socialist alternative for the economic organisation of the Soviet Union provided that either a) Russia were an advanced industrial country (which it was not) or b) it could have preserved technical and economic assistance from more sophisticated countries. In other words, such an option was open to the Russian proletariat and the workers' revolution in Russia would have been possible in industrialised countries of Europe. As a matter of fact, the single assumption that underlies these two alternatives is now other than this: the 20s, the degree of development of the productive forces in Russia rendered it impossible for a socialist transformation of the country to take place.

But the solution proposed by the OMLWP is merely an alternative (alternatives a) and b); that is, it amounts to the industrialisation of Russia at a slower rate, plus the production of the proletarian revolution in Europe (in fact it is a misguided conclusion of the economic part of the programme of the Bolshevik Opposition and the international policy of the programme of the Trotskyist-Involutionist Opposition). Comrades have frustrated their own economic alternative in the way that they proceed with their aerial work in five points. For the moment we put aside the reasons for this and concentrate on the first point: the world revolution (albeit comrades believe that "the aid from the world proletariat should have been a central part of any plan of moving towards socialism" and stand for a "through change" in its structure (democratization of the state and the greater participation of workers in the state). I shall deal with both of these comments separately below. Apart from these points, the economic remarks made by the OMLWP in its proposed alternative, boil down to how Russia could have been collectivized or industrialized at different rates and

OMLWP recommends voluntary collectivization (in place of forced collectivization which was ultimately adopted by the Stalin's ruling faction) and agrarian collectivization (in place of the kulaks and peasants must have been maintained. Furthermore, while it accepts the priority of the development of industry to agriculture, it proposes a slow rate of growth of the latter - i.e. it rejects the super-exploitation of the working class in place of what was indeed the case in the industrialisation programme of Stalin's faction. Here, it is not necessary for us to enter into a discussion about the ins and outs of such remarks; what matters is that such a policy would have meant that in the first five-year plan would not alter its capitalist character by any means. Comrades OMLWP are not prepared to accept that the state had even to continue in the above mode to its continue capitalism.

So what is it in OMLWP's alternative that separates a socialist character to such modifications? To this end, OMLWP firstly emphasizes "social ownership and control" in their continuous "plan" and states that such direction would have been to reconnect workers to control of industry through the trade unions and so forth. But it must be noted that even if such an extensive system of control cannot, on its own, make any change in the character of economic relations, it can contribute to the establishment of socialist relations of the intervention of unions and/or factory committees and/or workers' councils, etc. in the production process. It is only by providing for the working class the opportunity to transform the economic substructure of the society concerned. The decisive factor, again, is not the content of the structure and the institutions of such a control; all these are the necessary preconditions for the working class to bring about certain economic changes in the society. The key to the production which enable it to resort to such measures that will lead to the essential abolition of the capitalist relations of production and the establishment of socialist relations of production. The decisive question concerning us must be: can the OMLWP's alternative make such a transformation possible. Although, it is vital that the all-embracing workers' councils have a certain authoritative role in the running of the economy, this, taken on its own, is absolutely inadequate to meet the requirements for a socialist transformation. The OMLWP's alternative is not a socialist alternative, it is a capitalist alternative under workers' control".

The OMLWP is not categorical or unequivocal enough on this state, but the comrades do make it clear that the realization of socialism necessitates the implementation of economic measures

* Organisation for a Marxist-Leninist Workers Party, in the USA.

which go far deeper than any form of workers' control. That is why they continue to be, at the same time, to really have social ownership and control of the means of production, commodity production need to be attacked, an even more difficult task. Obviously here lies the real issue. The level of economic development of the proletariat is not its different rate of industrialization or its alienation from the means of production, but is the adoption of those fundamental economic measures which will result in the abolition of commodity-production and the formation of socialist relations of production. In fact, different versions of socialism part company.

As to the Trotskyists and the Russian revisionists it is that the abolition of commodity-production and the building of socialism require the determining economic plan of forces existing in a society have gone through a very high level of development. Such an understanding of socialism was pivotal to the fact that all the Trotskyist and revisionist programmes emerging in Russia in the 1920s concentrated on the rate and the acceleration of industrialization. When the OMLP, too, makes such categories the basis of its alternative economic programme, it shows that it was, implicitly, proposing a similar version of socialism. But that perception of socialism which considers the development of the productive forces as the sole way of advancing towards socialism, will undoubtedly go no further than to propose plans for how the industry and agriculture could be developed. Presently, this is still development on a capitalist line, and the comrades of OMLP who do not want to accept the inevitable dead-end inherent in the view considering "the development of productive forces" as the prima motu of history are obliged to present, alongside their alternatives for a different rate of industrialization and a different form of collectivization, alternative ways for the abolition of commodity-production and the building of socialism. But the comrades of OMLP regard these efforts very successful! "There only way that we can see of developing socialist production without swatching over the entire industry at once, would be to take a 'slice' of industry and run it on a socialist basis [with a plan, direct distribution, worker remuneration on work, etc.] and in competition with the rest." Leaving aside for the moment how valid it is to talk about socialization of "a slice" of industry, this means that the comrades of OMLP regard their alternative as in the end a different variety of capitalist development. To say that "we are not ultra-leftists" and to be calling for an immediate introduction of socialism in a country like Russia," by no means alleviates the contradiction between the comrades' own admission that they are aware that exists between the necessity of presenting a socialist alternative, declared at the beginning of their article, and their capitalist alternative with which they conclude the same article.

THEORY OF SOCIALISM

The contradiction that has befallen the OMLP originates from the fact that on the one hand it does not want (correctly so) to be socialist in its outlook, but on the other hand it attempts to present a socialist alternative for the economy of Soviet Union in the 1920s, and on the other hand, it does not want to see the transformation of the economy to a high level of development in the productive forces—something which did not exist in Russia at the time. There is a contradiction here, and it lies in the conception of socialism.

In the very beginning in the article, the OMLP demarcates itself from the correct conception of socialism shared by the revisionist camp and the Trotskyists alike. The conception which it demarcates itself from is that which leads to the abolition of capitalism. OMLP also considers the emphasis made in Russia (there was no control, to be insufficient for building socialism. It goes on to say that this emphasis is wrong and identifies socialism with the unending of commodity-production and the abolition of money. But if such a concept suffices to differentiate one from the waning trends, it is still insufficient to present a socialist alternative. The theory of socialism (and consequently money) is abolished. In the Trotskyist version, it is basically believed that by the establishment of socialization and the abolition of control, the system of exchange the latter loses its commodity character. Many other outlooks recognize the absence of the commodity character and the abolition of the existence of the category of "commodity" in the state economy. Nearly all currently prevailing versions of socialism consider socialized plans.

abolition of commodity-production, and thus conclude that a very high development of productive forces is the precondition for the abolition of commodity relations. Hence, OMLP's own programme is an implicit admission that the economic theory it means refers to its own conception of socialism, any distinctive feature. Similarly, I can neither agree with the comrades about their assertion that the 1918 programme of the Bolsheviks (which contained emphasis on the abolition of commodity-production and money) is not correct, nor do I believe in the necessity for the building of socialism. The essence of the matter lies precisely what measures are necessary to abolish commodity production and the necessary economic development of Russia since did not simply infringe the 1918 programme, but the theoretical basis of the OMLP alternative of socialism, prevalent at the time, which considered the ever greater and the most extensive development of the productive forces as the determining and the determining of commodity relations, and thereby could even claim that they were thoroughly faithful to the 1918 programme.

In relation to the comrades, what we point out, however briefly, these measures that in our view are necessary to abolish commodity production, in nearly all derivational concepts of socialism, the necessity of transforming the relations of production is ignored. The most basic characteristic of the capitalist mode of production is the relation between labour and capital, i.e., system of wage-labour (capitalist exploitation). The abolition of the commodity relation is necessary to abolish money and is abolished. More fundamentally, the abolition of commodity-production must be understood in the sense that the most basic characteristic in capitalism, i.e., labour-power loses its commodity character. Marx's phrase from the critique of the Gotha programme which is quoted in the article clearly states that the most basic is abolished. But the OMLP unfortunately does not follow this course. As Marx's concise statement demarcates, the abolition of wage-labour is the meaning of capitalist relations of production necessitates the setting-up of a new social organisation of labour in the society in such a manner that the labour of producers is directly defined as social labour and that there exists no longer any possibility for the capitalist exploitation to operate (no doubt this needs social ownership as a precondition). In fact, it is by the abolition of the system of wage-labour that the products of labour lose their commodity character and simply turn into products of social production (however, these matters whose details expounding is not possible here).

As to the comrades' view, expressed there that "in Marx's scientific socialism—the same socialism whose realization Marx and Engels saw possible not only in England, but also in Russia," we must say that the comrades are correct. It is, however, the transformation of production relations into social ownership of the means of production. It is conceivable that for wherever the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the main existing social classes.

In order to present a socialist alternative by the inconsistent critics of Russia does not come about of their fatalism in methodology, but originates from their own theory. It is only a very high development of productive forces. Such a view is completely wrong. It is not correct to say that the rate of development in a capitalist country until the time when such a need arises for social ownership. It is only in Marx's theory of scientific socialism, the level of development of the productive forces in a society which has given birth to the commodity organisation of production, the transformation of capitalist relations, that has called its revolution socialist, and that has called the abolition of commodity-production and the abolition of money sufficient to bring in an end and the capitalist relations of production (of course the realization of the economic development of the society, and the development of socialism opens the revolutionary activity of the victorious working class).

THE WORLD REVOLUTION

As was pointed out earlier, the article takes the aid of the victorious proletariat of advanced industrial countries as certain. The socialist economic alternative for the year of 1920's, and thus takes the cardinal point of its alternative the economic development of the society, and the development of the logical conclusion for that outlook which sees the level of development of the productive forces in Russia at that time as the determining basis of socialism. It is also possible to point, such an interpretation of the place of world revolution in relation to the building of socialism. The OMLP also differs from several fundamental shortcomings.

Firstly, such interpretation of the world revolution conceals internationalism as a realistic task of the proletariat only on account of the role it plays in the realization of the objective of the revolution. It is not the proletarian internationalism and efforts to promote the world revolution are by themselves matters of concern for the proletariat. Internationalism is not a means to an end. Internationalism were explained to the Russian workers in terms of the actual aid they would receive for the world revolution. In Russia, would this not mean that the task of promoting revolution in China, India, etc., have been lifted from the proletariat. If the comrades who present an internationalist necessary task for the proletariat of advanced industrial countries—whilst according to their own logic the proletariat of backward countries (Comrades are a thousand times more correct than we are) was the "main task of the revolution in one country" that Stalin hid his recalcitration of proletarian internationalism; but to explain the necessity of remaining faithful to the 1918 programme of internationalism, and the desirability for the building of socialism in one's country, is far from sufficient to accepting the short-sightedness and the illogical logic of the outlook of Stalin's faction.

The second point that logically derives from the view that see it impossible to build the economic foundations of socialism in countries with a low level of development of the productive forces (like Russia of 1917), is the need to revise the theoretical basis for the formation of national parties, at least in those countries where the productive forces have not developed fully to the required necessary level—and, by the comrades' own logic, these views has as yet objectively defined this "necessary" level. To hold such a view is no aim, but to be justifying it as a means to an end. It is a direct and bitter critique of the defeat of socialism in Russia only to the 1920's.

As to the comrades' view, expressed there that "in Marx's scientific socialism—the same socialism whose realization Marx and Engels saw possible not only in England, but also in Russia," we must say that the comrades are correct. It is, however, the transformation of production relations into social ownership of the means of production. It is conceivable that for wherever the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the main existing social classes.

In order to present a socialist alternative by the inconsistent critics of Russia does not come about of their fatalism in methodology, but originates from their own theory. It is only a very high development of productive forces. Such a view is completely wrong. It is not correct to say that the rate of development in a capitalist country until the time when such a need arises for social ownership. It is only in Marx's theory of scientific socialism, the level of development of the productive forces in a society which has given birth to the commodity organisation of production, the transformation of capitalist relations, that has called its revolution socialist, and that has called the abolition of commodity-production and the abolition of money sufficient to bring in an end and the capitalist relations of production (of course the realization of the economic development of the society, and the development of socialism opens the revolutionary activity of the victorious working class).

As was pointed out earlier, the article takes the aid of the victorious proletariat of advanced industrial countries as certain. The socialist economic alternative for the year of 1920's, and thus takes the cardinal point of its alternative the economic development of the society, and the development of the logical conclusion for that outlook which sees the level of development of the productive forces in Russia at that time as the determining basis of socialism. It is also possible to point, such an interpretation of the place of world revolution in relation to the building of socialism. The OMLP also differs from several fundamental shortcomings.

PROLETARIAN STATE

Another determinant which occupies a prominent place in the proposed alternative of the OMLP is the question of restructuring the Soviet state according to the requirements of the abolition of the privileges for officials, the revitalization of workers' soviets and so on. There is no doubt that proletarian state must demand the establishment of a

most advanced workers' democracy and the fundamental democratization of the state. But the whole point is that to realize such a demand one must go beyond resorting to general principles, turn out the material basis of such a transformation in the society and put the building of these bases on the agenda. The justified and proletarian demand for the democratization of the state, the revitalization of workers' soviets and the formation of an ideal workers' state could have had any hope of success only if it had been coupled by the socialist transformation of Russian economy in the 1920's ... But when the economic side of the proposed alternative by the comrades does not go beyond idealism, the justified demand for a change in the state structure becomes void of any material basis for its realization.

Interestingly enough, the comrades themselves refer to the same point when examining the programme of the Left and United Opposition. Having revised their task that the programme of the Left Opposition had certain correct criticisms of the bureaucracy, they immediately add "but its economic solution called for steps which would have resulted in more economic control by the bureaucracy and not any development away from capitalist production." And they also make this brilliant remark about the United Opposition: "But most importantly, in the United Opposition platform (1921) there was absolutely no link made between the political situation and the economic situation. There was no understanding of the fact that the basis for the political demise of the working class would be the growth of a capitalist economy." Indeed, in the case of the comrades' own alternative the capitalist development of economy could have been the basis for the political demise of the working class. The above quotations taken from comrades' own articles leave no room for one to suppose that they have forgotten the economic basis for the consolidation of proletarian state. But in my view, one must conclude that just as in the case of world revolution—that it is the OMLP's "belief" in the impossibility of economically building socialism due to the lack of sufficient development of the productive forces that has driven the comrades to this eclecticism—something which they have already criticized. This point I only emphasize, the necessity and importance of presenting a socialist economic alternative.

Other questions such as the assessment of the KP, the process of development of bureaucracy in the state, and the underlying reasons for the emergence of a revisionist current in the party can also be matters for debate. But as the "Analysis of the Soviet Union" puts it, half-splitting is not the intention. The major issue, to my opinion, is the question of redefining a correct concept of socialism (and of categorically breaking with other non-Marxist prevalent) perceptions of socialism. As mentioned, the comrades' weakness in the conception of socialism prevents their efforts to succeed in presenting a socialist alternative, as opposed to Stalin's first five-year plan. Furthermore, such a weakness leads to a lack of coherence in some of its remarks and is especially put forward in their article. But we can hope that by revitalizing the economic side of their programme, and by showing consistency will be achieved towards a proletarian analysis of the Soviet Union—something which we badly need to get to socialism.

Iraj Afsarian

Dec. 1986



Dec. 1986

Workers and the Islamic Councils in Factories

This year, the Islamic Republic is trying to set up Islamic Councils in the factories and production units. It is trying to recruit workers into these Councils in order to create a base for its influence within the working class. At the moment, the setting-up of Islamic Councils in production units has an important place in the overall anti-worker policies of the regime. The Islamic Councils, which the regime is actively trying to pose as workers' organisations, are supposed to lead to peace and consensus between the workers and the regime and its representatives in the factories (i.e., the management and Islamic Societies). The aim of these Councils is to implement the policies of the Islamic regime and conduct propaganda in its favour among the workers. The Islamic Republic is spending a lot of money for forming and consolidating the Islamic Councils. According to Salamati, the parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Labour, the government has set up 500 Islamic Councils up till now. But the regime faces many obstacles in this process. The most important obstacle is that the workers do not accept the Islamic Councils. Almost in every production unit, in which the regime has tried to set up Islamic Councils, it has faced workers' resistance, indifference and rejection. Another problem of the regime has been to find "competent" individuals, or better to say, sold-out elements, for membership in these councils. In an interview with "Kor-o-Kargar", Salamati referred to this problem as follows: "...The problem of the shortage of faithful and believing human resources ... has to some extent decreased the speed of our work."

The members of the Islamic Councils are not elected by the workers, rather, they are appointed by the

Ministry of Labour. The credentials of the candidates for membership in the Islamic Councils must be approved, at first, by the factory's Islamic Council, and then by a board composed of one representative elected by the general assembly of the workers **, one representative from the Ministry of Labour and one representative from the ministry which covers and controls that production unit***. After the approval of the candidates by the above-mentioned bodies, the workers are asked to vote for them. The object of this formal voting is, in fact, to gain some legitimacy for the Islamic Councils as workers' organisations. But, up till now, these votings have always been marked by tension and in some cases clashes between the workers and the regime's organs and officers. The candidates for Islamic Councils and Islamic Societies**** always try, either by intimidation or by offering bribes, to drag workers to the polls. These attempts mostly end up in failure.

For example in Chit-e-Say factory (a large state-owned textile factory) the workers forced the Islamic Council to resign. Later when the Council, under pressure from the Ministry of Labour, tried to collect petition in order to get the approval of the workers, once again, it failed. It was not able to gain the consent of the workers and legitimise its existence in the factory.

The Islamic Council in Iran factory (a large state-owned tile factory) which up till now has had its elections twice boycotted by the workers, recently continued on p.12

* A newspaper published by the regime for the workers-BM

- ** General assembly, as the most democratic, basic, and mass representative body and organisation of the workers has been accepted and is regularly formed by the workers in many factories in Iran despite and against the intentions and attempts of the regime to prevent their formation and to suppress them. This form of organisation also is, for the time being, the only open and possible organisation of the workers, because, independent union and industrial organisation of the workers is forbidden in Iran. Our Party, for many years now, has been trying, with some success, to initiate and propagate the general assembly movement among the workers in all the major cities and factories in Iran. Initially this form of mass organisation was rejected by leftist organisations, like the Tudeh Party and Rah-e-Kargar, as being anarchistic; but now the workers' struggles has forced the Islamic Republic regime as well as the reformist and syndicalist currents to accept it as a reality-BM
- *** In Iran all heavy industries and services like oil and petrochemistry, mining, railways and posts, electricity, steel, copper and aluminium, as well as most of the light and consumer industries such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, food, agriculture and fishery, auto, tractor and electronics are owned and controlled by the state. All the banks and insurance companies are also state owned-BM
- **** Islamic Societies are the politico-ideological organs of the regime and the Islamic Republic Party in the factories, universities, schools, public services, etc. Their members are mercenary thugs who try to say on people in their place of work and residence. The Islamic Societies are hated almost by every body in Iran-BM

Down with the Islamic Republic regime !

PUBLICATIONS OF THE CPI



"KOMONIST" is the central organ of the CPI published in Farsi. Issue no.31 (April 1987) contains the following articles:

Interview with comrade Mohtady on the draft of the new Party Constitution adopted by the Central Committee Plenum.

Let us rise against the Iran-Iraq war!

Children, partners in the poverty and struggle of the workers. F. Beharati

Social and governmental crisis in China.

F. Beharati

Tudeh Party and the 40-hour working week.

A. Mohtady

"Rah-e-Kargar" and the rehabilitation of the Tudehite trend.

A. Mohtady

4 Toman (about 5 Cents) increase in the workers basic wage is a call for struggle.

Child labour in Iran. M. Sabar

Protest by the people of Zanjan against the war and the Islamic Republic

* Draft of the new Party Constitution adopted by the Central Committee Plenum of the CPI has been published as a supplement to issue no.31 of Komonist.

Other Recent Publications

The following two pamphlets were recently published by the Kurdistan Organisation of the CPI - Komala:

A look at the workers' movement in the metropolises in the last decade.

Working women in Kurdistan and maternity rights.

BOLSHEVIK MESSAGE is the English-language paper of the Communist Party of Iran - the Committee Abroad.

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from p.2

millions, and the impoverishment that has been created under its pretext, is a war against the working class. This is a war which the class enemies of the workers - the capitalists who at the time of peace also offer nothing but poverty and exploitation for their wage-slaves - have set up in order to intensify this poverty and exploitation. The Iran-Iraq war is a war which sacrifices millions of workers and toilers in order to impose even more exploitation and reactionary policies over their lives.

The Iran-Iraq war is the war of the capitalists against the workers. The working class in Iran, in the struggle against this war, not only has aimed at rooting out all the miseries resulting from it, but is also determined to put an end to Pan-Islamic reaction and the Islamic rule of capital and to facilitate its struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation.

(Translated from Komonist, central organ of the CPI, No. 31, April 1987)

ADDRESSES OF THE CPI - THE COMMITTEE ABROAD

BM BOX 3004,
LONDON WC1N 3XX
ENGLAND

OIS, BOX 50040,
104 05 STOCKHOLM
SWEDEN

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IN IRAN

COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN

REPORT 32

(1-15 MAY 81)

The bi-weekly Newsletter of the
COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN - THE COMMITTEE ABROAD

NEWS FROM IRAN

AFTER 10 DAYS OF PROTEST THE WORKERS SURVIVED THEIR STRIKE!

As reported in Report No.30, the workers in Shahrosh-like cotton making factory have been protesting and demanding the implementation of job classification plan. The management had promised the workers to deal with the matter in two weeks' time and to give them the result on 15th February. Two days before that date, a strike was put up on the matter which worried the workers that if they protested and demanded anything, including the implementation of job classification plan, they would be considered as trouble-makers. Following this announcement, all the protesting workers were suspended. Many of them were prevented from entering the factory for 30 days under different pretexts such as "striking facilities", "infectious" or "serious pain".

After 10 days of protest, under the pressure of becoming unemployed, the workers resumed their demand and the 13 workers returned to work.

WAGE CONDITIONS OF THE WORKERS IN SAFALABAD

Over 300 workers work in two factories in the suburbs of the city of Safalabad (Western Iran) under severe conditions. They work low wages, lack of medical and hygiene facilities, work unsanitary, and have no social services. They work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, and lack of transport services force them to walk or ride all the way to the work. The workers are divided in groups of 4, each having 10 beds of wood and straw and sharing their own toilet. The work is done with primitive instruments and takes the whole day, normally 10-12 hours, to be finished. For all this every worker gets only 13 Tomans (1000 Tomans) per day. Job insecurity and rising unemployment in the area, have forced many of the workers to sell their houses outside the town. It is called in the work and to agree to even lower payments. Some workers have even been laid off. The workers' health is in serious danger since they have no way to prevent or cure their various illnesses. Due to the temporary nature of this job, there has been no real protests, apart from some dispersed protests.

A REPORT FROM SOHROOD CEMENT FACTORY

The city of Sohrud is situated in Western Iran and has three large cement producing factories. Sohrud Cement Factory, being the fifth largest producer of cement in the Middle East, not only

regularly, has a total workforce of 4000. Like other factories in Iran, here too, the workers suffer from difficult working conditions. Since the opening of the factory, the workers have had some share in the factory, but for four years now, the workers have received no share neither. Production level has fallen enormously and products are offered for sale without paying (due to shortage of packing material). Last summer a plan was introduced concerning the redundancy of all workers with less than 10 years' work experience. The workers actively went against the plan and by protesting and holding meetings forced their opposition. The management, being unable to convince the workers, resorted to pressure and to dismissing some others. The dismissal of a number of the workers under different pretexts resulted in strikes for 13 days. Some release, those with long work experience were transferred to other plants and the rest were expelled.

Besides the formal workers, a number of workers are employed illegally and for a period of 30 days. These workers are re-employed after this period as new workers and therefore they do not enjoy benefits and bonuses.

STRUCKS OF THE WORKERS OVER RECEIVING BONUSES

In the last few years the workers in Pars Electric Factory have been receiving their annual bonuses. This has been causing a number of protests in this factory. The year when the workers got their bonuses and noticed the being lowered further, they gathered in front of the General Council of the workers and demanded an increase in their bonuses as possible as the workers are of great use to the country. The General Council of the workers did not accept the workers' demand for an increase in their bonuses. The workers protested and called a general strike. In the middle of the workers of the country were prevented to give clear message to the workers, the workers were protesting every day. They lack facilities but have to work all day 9 months. The members of the Council requested and told the workers that they would take up the matter, and asked for two weeks' time. The workers agreed but worried that if the consequence of not responding to their demand at the end of the two weeks, there is no chance of the payment at hand.

As a result of previous years' strikes and protests in the Parsa Cement Factory, over an increase in bonuses, the workers managed to have their bonuses increased from a total of 18 million to 25,000,000 million Tomans (1000 Tomans) last year. Now the workers are facing another problem, and that is to pay their bonuses. The workers are not getting their bonuses and some have the factory pay the recruitment department and the workers pay the recruitment department and the factory pay the recruitment department. Dispersed protests have been going on in this factory. Also, the workers have been told that in case of continuous production throughout the year, they will get some 2 million Tomans at home.

In the North, in Philips Electric Radio company the workers protested to get their bonuses to be together with their and while calculating they had been prohibited. In a gathering outside the workers' office, the workers were offered to have