

The Worker



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1981 - YEAR OF REBELLION

King Charles caused a revolution because of his intransigence, but he finally lost his head because of his arrogance. Britain has 2½ million unemployed and the figure is rising. Thatcher seems not to care. She is not yet satisfied.

When political pundits openly ask the Prime Minister about the prospects of civil disorder in Britain, and a reply, however ill-natured and evasive, is given, then clearly the political situation has undergone a qualitative change. Indeed, when Mrs Thatcher finally came to answer the question her first comment was that it would do the country "great harm", before going on lamely to add, as though for the sake of form, that she thought it unlikely.

What then, has the Thatcher counter-revolution achieved?

Absolute decline

It is more than the enforced and accelerated destruction of British industry (quaintly called negative growth in the economic columns). It is more than the highest levels of unemployment and bankruptcies since the thirties (these after all had been achieved by this time last year). It is scarcely to be measured in quantitative terms at all, for she has, virtually single handedly, transformed the economic crises of the seventies into the full-blown social and political crisis that we face in the eighties. That is, the social nature of the conflict has emerged in its sharpest form as a crisis of authority for capitalism and above all for the Thatcher Government, which appears, much of the time, to represent only itself.

When in the seventies, the ruling class looked about them they saw everywhere the working class in revolt in defence

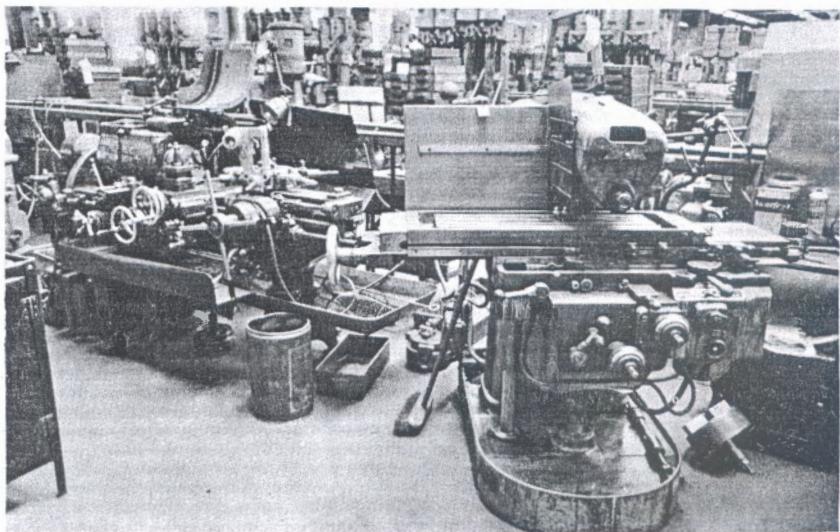
and furtherance of their hard won standard of life. There began then a crisis of confidence, a lack of belief among the bourgeoisie in their own future. There followed the pessimism and shallow, cynical manoeuvre which promoted corporal Thatcher and finally put the state into her hands. End product of bourgeois democracy - autocracy.

But the crisis presents itself in paradoxical form. Capitalism is essentially a system of production, the dynamic of which is expressed in the form of accumulation; the growth of technique, the development of industry and agriculture, in short of means of production. The enforced destruction we see about us now, however, is neither temporary nor partial.

The last of welfare

The welfare state, created and sustained by political pressure from the workers, the commitment to housing and higher standards in health and education are all to be seen as an error, a mental aberration on a national scale. This despite the fact that the majority of advanced capitalist countries have followed the same path and are continuing to follow it.

The so-called mixed economy, the essential and sustaining prop of a tumbledown capitalist economy is to be demolished. Socially owned industry is to be sold or liquidated regardless of social needs or costs. The state is to grow only in its role as the policeman at home and abroad; all other activities



Machines such as these are not wearing out but rusting out.

Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

are to be curtailed.

Privately-owned industry has also been subjected to the most intense pressure with the intention of removing, as rapidly as possible, the least competitive enterprises. Never has the fact emerged so clearly in so short a time that profitability is not a sufficient condition for the survival of any section of industry.

Striking at us

Thatcher's policy amounts then to this: the destruction of the organised working class through the destruction of industry and legislative restrictions on trade union activity together with the growth of repressive means to enforce them. She expresses this as the attack on inflation and the restoration of confidence!

The workers are under

attack because they had the dignity and humanity to resist oppression. Those that continue to resist are classified as rebels and outlaws. If they are so it was the Thatcher Government that made them so. But surely it is that same Government that should be labelled as wreckers and saboteurs?

The question before society once again is who rules? Either Thatcher must be allowed to continue to destroy all, and threaten those who have the courage to oppose her, or her authority must be smashed.

The working class

In its industrial form it can hardly be said that the working class has carried the struggle forward since Thatcher's election. It has been pushed backward but there have been

no calamitous defeats.

There are no longer any trivial battles to be fought. Successive industrial struggles now hinge on the question of power. Every employer now insists in blank terms upon the right to manage, i.e. to curtail the power of the workers and in effect to challenge the existence of trade unions. All confidently expect the working class to submit, indeed to support their plans to destroy jobs and living standards.

An end to it all

But for the workers what was always scarcely acceptable has become intolerable; the truth is re-establishing itself: it is right to rebel.

Let 1981 be the year of rebellion. Let us not lose another job. Let us defend and hold what we have. The workers have yet to reply.

The work of strikers have proved too much, even for the AUEW executive council. The threat that thousands of unemployed would gladly do your work' underlines why unemployment is of benefit to capitalism. The thousands of redundancies under the 'Edwards plan', agreed to by BL workers last year, is now a weapon against those still working at BL.

Management has threatened all with the sack if they do not return to work by January 5. Workers everywhere should support fellow workers at BL if they decide have had enough of dictated to by Edw Thatcher.

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they were judge and jury, was asked where his loyalties lay - with management or with the union.'

If there had been no such incident at Longbridge that day we can be sure there would have been a press 'exclusive' about workers at Leyland playing dominoes (in their lunch breaks) rather than producing motor cars.

In fact the workers involved in this strike help to

produce 3000 Metros a week, which emphasises the hard production work they put in. Yet minor disputes become the opportunity for management to denigrate the workforce and to threaten thousands of livelihoods.

The TGWU, at shop floor, district and national level, justifiably take offence at this management attitude. Management threats to conscript thousands of blacklegs to do

Historic Notes The Written Word in Miners' Struggle

It makes you wonder what a New Year Honours List is when British Olympic athletes of the calibre of Steve Ovett, Sebastian Coe, Daley Thompson and Alan Wells as well as swimmer Duncan Goodhew are deliberately excluded by Thatcher's dictat. How a wooden-spoon politician can declare, as she did, that Olympic Gold Medallists are unworthy defies belief. This government is that mean.

Remember the days when China was self-reliant, independent and was almost the only country in the world without inflation (none after 1952)? Well under the 'new leadership' the Chinese government may take \$10,000 million in investment from the US-dominated World Bank by 1986. Chinese workers and peasants will be squeezed to pay for it.

Why the Chinese government should want a headlong rush to capitalism cannot be because capitalism works better. The two dozen capitalist countries who belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) do not appear to be a model of how countries should conduct their affairs. In the OECD countries there are 23 million people deprived of work. Their combined current account deficit amounts to \$75,000 million and inflation runs at 10 per cent a year. The OECD forecast for Britain in 1981 does not make happy reading for they see another million unemployed by early 1982.

The first Lord Thomson of Fleet, owner of the *Times*, saw his investments in Scottish Television as 'a licence to print money'. It goes some way to explain the inordinate rush by various consortia to control regional TV programmes. Despite forecasts that advertising revenue will fall in 1981, revenue is more than enough to attract the bees to the honey. Presumably, it is the 'licence to print money' that its adherents see as the attraction in 'breakfast television'. Television, watched selectively, can be reasonably entertaining. Who needs it 24 hours round the clock? The odd thing is that Thatcher keeps saying 'we cannot keep printing money'. Tell that to the television companies.

President Carter jogs off into the sunset. The inevitable political memoir is surely near to publication. Reagan doesn't do any jogging because with so many scriptwriters working for him he needs the time to learn his lines.

PEOPLE in the vicinity of the Shaw Theatre during the Christmas holidays would have heard the sound of children laughing, cheering and boozing. For £1 per seat thousands of children were treated to a very entertaining and enjoyable performance of Aladdin.

This small theatre run by Camden Council with a grant from the Art's Council was packed for every performance. Unfortunately, the cut in the Art's Council's grant is threatening to close the theatre.

IN THE LAST issue we saw how the miners won their first struggle in 1831 and how their literature reflected and developed this struggle. However, in April 1832, following their recent success they struck again. The main issue in their strike was union recognition. But the miners went into battle with seriously depleted union funds.

The pit owners had learnt new tactics in the 1831 dispute, and now they had stockpiled coal. The owners were organized. Blacklegs and truncheons did their damage. The strike brought chaos and failure.

Hepburn, the union leader, was attacked by the miners, and lost his job. But even so he spoke confidently of a brighter future:

"If we have not been successful, at least we, as a body of miners, have been able to bring our grievances before the public and the time will come when the golden chain which binds the tyrants together, will be snapped, when men will have to sigh for the days gone by. It only needs time to bring this about."

The defeat of 1832 temporarily destroyed all efforts to form a miners' union in the North East. But by the late 1830's several followers of Hepburn were forming friendly societies. Owners blacklisted these men but they still sang:

"Never let it be said that we are afraid to join the union".

Conditions for miners deteriorated rapidly between 1837 and 1842, and many more risked

building the union. By late 1842 individual unions were strong enough to amalgamate and the first national miners union was formed. This union went into battle first in 1844. Again propagandist art was an important product of their struggle. 'Union is strength/Knowledge is power', was the motto of their campaign in 1842.

In their paper a miner wrote that if only the 'sons of toil' were true to their own interests, and felt confidence in each other and in themselves, 'no earthly power could prevent them from raising themselves to that position in society, to which by their industry and usefulness they so justly

deserve to be risen.'

Through their newspaper, 'The Miners Advance', edited by a Scots carpet weaver, William Daniels, (who had at one stage to print the paper from the Isle of Man because of prosecution), branches were able to communicate and were strengthened.

'The Miners Advocate' encouraged learning and the miners were asked to contribute their poems, songs, grievances and thoughts. But so great was the response that the editor found he was swamped with too much excellent material. This paper was a forthright educational tool, vigorously and clearly defending miners' rights. Everything was explained

clearly and often artistically. One editorial discussed the relationship between miner and boss in terms of a popular fable:

"The moral and physical consequences of a contentious warfare between capital and labour does appear to us to be fully illustrated by the fable of two noble animals combatting or fighting for a piece of prey, and while the combat is going on, another animal of diminutive size and strength came and carted off the prize; while neither of the two, such was their exhaustion, could prevent him".

Seasoned in struggle, by the mid-1840's the miners sent their delegates to Chartist and Working Mens' associations. Delegates who travelled all the way down to London published a tract calling for working class unity:

"And why have the sons of Labour not come more nobly forward, to support their own causes? See you not that the Miners' cause is your cause? If they are crushed, you must follow and that soon. Awake from your slumbers, rise and look to your own interests, ere it be too late. Capital is rampant and unless it is met in a spirit of determination by the sons of toil united, it will assuredly sink lower every class of labour's sons."

The language of this is significant. The cadence and prophetic urgency is like the Bible. But it is a thin line. In fact the language of religious battle had become, through the experience of association and struggle, the language of class war.

Sailors prepare for national strike as major employer cuts services

THE NATIONAL Union of Seamen has rejected the employers' 'final' 10.5 per cent pay offer and its members are calling for a ballot of all members to approve a national strike. So far 'guerrilla' action has been undertaken at Tilbury where a cruise liner was prevented from sailing by its crew and at Weymouth where a Sealink car ferry was delayed for six hours when more than 60 seamen held a lightning strike.

This dispute has taken a more sinister turn with P and O's decision to end sailings between Liverpool and Belfast with immediate effect, due, they say, to the effect of the depression. The decision was implemented so quickly that hundreds of people

who had booked for return sailings arrived at the ports to find that the service was no longer in existence.

The seamen involved in this service have immediately retaliated with 25 of them locking themselves on the ferry boat, Ulster Queen, at Liverpool. The police immediately cordoned off the docks.

The Government's reaction in this case has been swift since the abandonment of this service will seriously affect communications between Britain and Northern Ireland, and called for a meeting with P and O. Will the Government take the same interest in bringing the pay dispute to a satisfactory close?

GREECE BECAME part of the EEC on January 1st. This followed rejoining NATO last year. The negotiations lasted 5 years but the Greek people themselves have not been consulted on the issue. The EEC Commission sees the political aspect of the move as more important than the possible economic effects.

The workers of Greece now have common cause with those of the other nine member states in seeking the break up of the Community, openly acting as the economic arm of NATO in its desire to 'secure' Southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Preparation for the entry of Spain and Portugal is also now under way. They must divide the map of Europe into opposing camps in their

drive to war.

The partial withdrawal of Greece from NATO in 1975 following the fall of the colonel's regime was a temporary expedient. The reinstatement of the country to the military structure last October emphasised the attitude that the Greek government has had towards the Alliance over this period. Integration into the EEC was a logical consequence of this policy. The report to the EEC Commission on the entry negotiations saw the political considerations of having Greece in the Community as outweighing the undoubtedly economic effects.

The British ruling class has always viewed Greece as a counter to be used against Russia. It is therefore a short step from the British 'Balkan Policy' of the nineteenth century to the strengthening of NATO's southern flank today.

The economic consequences of Greece joining the Common Market have not been spelled out. Unlike the massive propaganda campaign waged by the British capitalists in the early 1970's, the Greek government has been most reticent about the issue. Greek industry, mainly food processing and consumer durables will suffer from the abolition of tariff barriers. Agriculture will become distorted through the operation of the CAP. Already the Olive Oil Sea is predicted.

Joining the EEC will be of no benefit to the Greek people. Nor was it ever meant to be so. As soon as Greece came back into NATO in November it was obvious that the logical next step would be for Greece to be brought into the EEC, the economic arm of NATO.

American imperialism rules in El Salvador

ON OCTOBER 15th 1980 the military-Christian Democrat regime in El Salvador celebrated the first anniversary of the coup that overthrew the previous dictator Carlos Humberto Romero. The regime, conceived by the United States as a means of preventing a 'second Nicaragua' in Central America rapidly lost the small support it had initially received, and in the past ten months, the workers of El Salvador have joined forces in a broad movement to overthrow this brutal regime. The army, the police and the other repressive forces of the Junta collaborate with the right-wing paramilitary squads in silencing any and all dissident voices. Thousands of people have been massacred since a state of emergency was declared in August, while the US has increased its aid to the country by

20 million dollars to 90 million. El Salvador is the most industrialised country in Central America, with mining, manufacturing, petroleum refining, food processing and clothing industries. Yet the people of El Salvador are poor and always have been. They have the lowest calorie intake per capita in Latin America. 73 per cent of children under five years old suffer from malnutrition. 45 per cent of all deaths are of children under five. 58 per cent of the population earn only about £5.00 per month. The goods they produce supply the North American market and the wealth they produce lines the pockets of North American capitalists. US corporations own or partially own 70 per cent of all Salvadorean industrial undertakings.

The country has been called 'The Latin American Vietnam'.

As in Vietnam, the United States is protecting its own economic interests, believing that having 'lost' Nicaragua it must contain the revolution in El Salvador before it spreads throughout Central America. The US is moving rapidly towards a stage of full-scale military intervention. As opposition grows more effective within El Salvador, so US military aid and advisers increase. The military members of the Junta, and most of the officers in the army and air force, have received their training either in US training establishments or through US officers in El Salvador.

The people of this strife-torn country want, above all, to live in peace. One cruel and reactionary regime has been replaced by another, just as cruel and reactionary. Their struggle for freedom will be long and hard.

Editorial.

1980 WAS THATCHER'S year. Let us make sure she never enjoys another twelve months of wanton destruction.

Last January began with the steel workers' strike against decimation of their industry, directly through massive redundancies and closures, and through an insulting offer which meant a wage cut in face of inflation. Their action challenged Prior's policy on Trade Unions and picketing before it even became law, and support from abroad put "a ring of non-steel" around Britain. The dreadful wastage of the steel industry since, does not belie the victory of the steel men, but shows that every patch of ground is repeatedly under attack and must be constantly defended.

"Thatcher Out. Occupy and Save," said The Worker at the end of January. St George's Hospital was occupied. Months later the occupation of St Benedict's Hospital was broken and patients died. Human tragedy strengthened the realisation that working class insistence on work, and occupation of places of work is crucial. Two great struggles late in 1980 were to prove this and to give courage to this new year.

By February, medical services faced wholesale attack on the London medical schools and the fight to save Westminster Hospital and Medical School (successful to date) began.

Meanwhile Leyland workers allowed a setback for the whole class and for their own industry by permitting Edwards to sack their convenor.

Superb demonstrations on March 9 and May 14 showed universal revulsion against Thatcher within a year of her führership. The class has not yet carried out the single-minded message of those two days: "Thatcher Out", the call of our Party, shouted throughout the country. The lines of opposition were clearly drawn but the war has yet to be declared.

From then on, Thatcher's walkabouts became sneakabouts, and the backdoor became her customary entrance to meetings of the ever-decreasing faithful.

'Tireless resistance against the breaking up of the ILEA.... people marched in their thousands to say no to Cruise missiles.... by September Consett was closed.'

By late spring, the warmonger was howling against the Olympics, but British athletes boycotted the boycott and set off for Moscow.

Summer saw a tireless resistance against Thatcher's most serious attempt yet to abolish education by breaking up the Inner London Education Authority. Teachers and Londoners won, and stand ready to oppose this year's atrocities. The Musicians' Union marched on Parliament, terrified the BBC and saved three orchestras and many jobs.

On June 22nd, undeterred by drenching rain, people marched through London in their thousands to say no to Cruise missiles. This was the highpoint of a growing rejection throughout Britain and the Labour movement of Thatcher's war policies.

In July, Alfred Herbert, once Britain's finest machine tool company, collapsed, one of many industrial giants brought to their knees. By now, only 9 companies in 100 in the West Midlands were working to full capacity. McGregor arrived from America to try to bury steel. Also from America, Thatcher promised us £5 billion worth of Trident Missiles.

By September Consett was closed.

October saw the Labour Party Conference stand up against the EEC and US missile bases, and concern was expressed for British industry. A groundswell of workers within the party forced the demand to fight Thatcher.

The following week at her conference, Thatcher poured scorn on the unemployed - another 9000 in that week alone.

While Heseltine banned any more council house building, those houses which do exist were endangered by Thatcher's preparations for a bitter assault on the firemen. However, their determination and their reputation earned in 1978 melted the courage of the Government even before the strike started.

'Brick walls can be broken down.... there were fine struggles, fine demonstrations.... our class says it, now we must do it.'

The end of the year saw two magnificent battles, one successfully concluded, the other not yet over, both occupations and both about saving industry, skill and jobs.

The workers at Gardner's diesel engine factory in Manchester occupied for 6 weeks. They saved 300 jobs and prevented any compulsory redundancies, proving that "brick walls can be broken down".

At BPC the editors, members of the National Union of Journalists, carry their fight against redundancy into the New Year. Christmas and the New Year were sacrificed as they spent their holiday in the building, occupying their place of work in the name, of skill, excellence and work.

The working class cannot afford to ignore these workers who have taken up a fight which belongs to all workers in Britain.

The "Thatcher Out" cry of this Party in May 1979 now issues from the lips of people throughout the country. 1980 saw her fascist policies bite deep into the arteries of Britain. There were fine struggles, fine demonstrations, but still too piecemeal. Our class says it, now we must do it. Let 1981 be the year of liberation from this Thatcher menace.



One of the high points of the year was the magnificent turnout on the demonstration called by the TUC on March 9th, 1980. The clarion call of 'Thatcher Out' rang loud and clear as the long line of demonstrators marched through London. 1981 must see that call transformed into action.

Photo The Worker

Black unions in S Africa win fight for recognition

THE SOUTH AFRICAN government is now being forced to admit that its attempt to prevent the formation of independent black trade unions has failed miserably.

Less than a year ago the Pretoria government introduced a new system of industrial relations whereby unions could be officially recognised only if they were legally registered. When this legislation was introduced the government excluded all migrant workers from the scheme and racially mixed unions were only eligible for registration if ministerial permission was given, and the conservative white unions were repeatedly told that the whole aim of the new law was to control the blacks better.

Not unnaturally the independent black unions refused to cooperate. Although in the past there had

been calls to boycott government's plans and laws, these were not followed up by action. The new black unions, well-organised and with increasing support, had the strength to carry out their threats.

During 1980 a battle of wills ensued as the government and the majority of employers tried to freeze out the unions that refused to register. They were denied access to factories and attempts were made to entice or force black workers into the tame 'black' unions run by whites.

The breakthrough came as several major employers and employer organisations broke away from the government, ignored the advice not to deal with unregistered unions and began negotiating with the new unions.

Firms such as Barlow Rand,

one of the major mining and industrial conglomerates, and the local subsidiary of the British battery manufacturer, Chloride, led the way as they saw production levels going down.

The government has been panicked into trying to retrieve a situation where it was losing control. Botha has now given in to union and employer demands that he amended the 1979 legislation to make registration more attractive to black unions. It is likely that other barriers will crumble too in the coming year.

As one top business executive commented, Pretoria is so obsessed with control that it has discredited its own system beyond repair. The persistent struggle by the black unions in South Africa has opened up a new development in the fight for freedom in South Africa.

Wounds of war are healed in the new Zimbabwe

THE TWELVE year long war the people of Zimbabwe waged to smash the Smith regime left a large number of guerrillas wounded and maimed. This, coupled with the indiscriminate attacks by the Smith government on villages and townships, left new Zimbabwe with the major task of caring for and rehabilitating the casualties.

A new National Rehabilitation

Centre has been set up by the government to deal with this major part of their schooling and education. A rehabilitation programme was set up with physiotherapy and medical treatment and sports and leisure activities to train the injured to adapt to a new life, pre-vocational help including educational work, and finally counselling together with efforts

to find new jobs in civilian life.

This programme is the beginning of a general scheme to fight physical disability.

Shortage of medical teams and personnel has meant that the rehabilitation programme will run for six months only, following which period the disabled will be found a place in sheltered work schemes.

TEACHERS NEGOTIATING MACHINERY UNDER ATTACK FROM GOVERNMENT

FURTHER MASSIVE cuts in education, to the tune of £139 million for the coming year, on top of a £200 million cut already promised have been announced by the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Mark Carlisle. Even the government are now conceding that enforced redundancies, larger class sizes, restricted range of lessons and lowering of standards are now inevitable. Every sector of education is hit, from nursery to university.

At the same time, it is announced

that the Professional Association of Teachers, a band of blacklegs pledged to undermining effective teacher organization, are to be given a place on the teachers' side of the Burnham Committee, where the pay for all teachers in England and Wales is negotiated. Although the National Union of Teachers represents over 250,000 members, more than 30,000 more than the combined membership of all other teacher organizations, it will, under these proposals, lose its overall majority status on the

teachers' side, with all that entails.

Further, Carlisle now talks of doing away with Burnham altogether as it stands, and replacing it with a body which will negotiate pay and conditions simultaneously; an ominous departure from usual practice.

Teachers everywhere have first hand experience of educational destruction. Under this government they now know that such destruction is intentional, and will continue to escalate until the principle of free state education is a forlorn memory.

