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Wildcat

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FREE
TO
STRIKERS

Don't wait for the unions ...

STRIKE NOW!

On 16 October, after days of secret talks with the NCB at ACAS, the pit deputies' union, NACODS, decided to call a strike to begin on the 25th October - weeks after a massive vote for strike action in a ballot of NACODS members.

The NACODS decision led to more intensified negotiations, as the government, Coal Board and union bosses put their heads together to work out a way of defeating the strike before it even began. On 24 October, only hours before the strike was due to start, the NACODS executive announced that the strike was off. What does this show?

union sectionalism

The miners' fight is everyone's fight. The interests of the miners fighting against the bosses' attacks

on their jobs and living standards, are the same as all other workers', who are increasingly coming under the same attack. Most workers are well aware of this already. But this is not the point of view of the union leaders.

The NACODS leaders, apparently satisfied with whatever deal they cooked up with the Coal Board, put their own interests before those of the working class as a whole. The steelworkers' and power workers' union leaders have behaved in the same way during the miners' strike. Their attitude is 'We're all right Jack, stuff the rest of you'. By defending the interests of 'their own' industry and their own position within the system, the unions show that they and the workers are on different sides of the class struggle.

stuff the ballot

When miners at Cortonwood heard that the pit was to be closed, did they hang about waiting for a ballot to be held, or for someone else to decide what action to take? Of course not! They came out on strike straight away, and immediately set about spreading the strike by taking their arguments directly to other workers and persuading them to come out too. They set an example which the pit deputies would have been well advised to follow.

The NACODS ballot has exposed the hypocrisy of the ruling class's bleatings about 'democracy'. Notts NUM leaders, who swear blind that they would respect the majority's wishes and join the strike if only

a national ballot was held, threw their efforts into persuading local pit deputies to disrespect the 82.5% majority in the NACODS ballot!

The fake democracy of the ruling class is only a weapon it uses to weaken the workers' power to fight. It is a million miles away from the real democracy which workers create in the course of their struggles, discussing, deciding, and acting collectively, by themselves and for themselves.

spread the struggle

When the dockworkers twice came out on strike, and when the NACODS ballot result was announced, the bosses began to panic. The last thing they want is for other workers to show their support for the miners by joining the strike. The lesson of this is obvious: what's bad news for the bosses is good news for the workers!

The chance of a pit deputies' strike was seen as a great boost to the miners. Coal production would have virtually halted - the same in effect as an all-out miners' strike. But even if no miners were working, the miners still could not have won a worthwhile victory on their own. The slogan 'The Miners United Will Never Be Defeated' belongs to the past. As the economic crisis worsens, the bosses are forced to fight tooth and nail to implement their austerity policies. These attacks can only be resisted by workers fighting back on a mass scale. Now more than ever, the struggles of one section of the working class must spread to all other workers. (cont. next page).

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worker to worker

The actions of NACODS, and, before that, the TUC and Labour Party conferences, showed that union leaders will quite happily talk all day long, but when it comes to doing anything, they have nothing to offer in help to the workers. If the struggle isto spread, as it must be, it won't be through one union leader talking to another. But one worker putting his or her arguments to another, face to face, is a different story. This is what all bosses fear.

When workers start to discuss and act together they can begin to unleash apotentially unstoppable power.

That's why, from the very beginning of the miners' strike, the state has mounted a massive police operation- to stop strikers going directly to other workers and persuading them, through the force of their arguments and the conviction of their beliefs, to join the struggle.

Despite the NACODS fiasco, striking miners must make fulluse of every opportunity to approach other workers directly - at their work-places, on marches and rallies, in shopping centres and social centres- to persuade them to join the strike with their own demands. Only if this is achieved can there be any realistic talk of 'victory'.

GENERAL STRIKE ROAD TO DEFEAT

The present miners strike is the longest and most bitter dispute in the coal industry since that of 1926. It is not surprising therefore that a number of leftists are drawing on the general strike, used in support of the miners in '26, as a tactic to be used in this dispute.

It is only by looking at the general strike in some detail that the fallacies of such ideas can be seen. Far from being a guide or model for similar action today, the general strike serves only as a salutary warning to those who expect the unions to be of any real benefit to the working class. The general strike of 1926 was remarkable in its total lack of revolutionary content, compared with the mass strikes in Europe prior to 1920. It served to dissipate working class militancy and did not even succeed in its conservative aims as a sympathetic strike on behalf of the miners.

There was nothing new in the idea of a general strike in Britain. In fact, as a tactic it had been discussed many times. At first it was thought of with respect to winning overtly political gains such as in 1916 when it was suggested as a means of preventing conscription, or, in 1919 as a means of preventing British intervention against the Bolsheviks in Russia. However, one was never carried out. Over the years the general strike came to be seen merely as a tool to be used in winning major industrial disputes.

Miners under attack

After the first world war the miners faced many attacks from their employers and were some of the worst paid and worst treated workers in

Britain. However, in order to win a strike they needed the help of workers in other industries to place embargos on the use of scab coal. By 1925 though, the miners had not recieved that much needed support having been sold out by their own, and other unions on a number of occasions, even though many people saw the general strike as the perfect means for getting the miners a better deal.

In 1925 once again the miners found themselves under attack, threatened with cuts in wages and increases in their hours. The miners called on the General Council of the TUC to provide back up for a coal strike and the General Council agreed to organise joint strike action.

The miners' union wanted the government to provide a subsidy to the coal industry so that the employers would not need to attack their living standards. The government refused and the mine-owners began posting lock-out notices. The General Council called for a general strike to begin with the lock-out. On the night before it did, the government turned about and offered a nine month subsidy whilst the miners' case was re-evaluated.

The union leaders were glad of the chance to stand down and the government had won a breathing space in which to finalise its plans, begun in 1923, to counter a general strike. The miners once again felt they had been betrayed and reluctantly returned to work.

The strike begins

By April 1926 Baldwin and his government were ready, the union leaders, however, were not ready for what happened. Right to the end they were sure they could talk their way out of calling a general strike. The mine-owners posted lock-out notices for May 1st. Hasty negotiations took place between the miners' union, the government, the mine-owners and the General Council of the TUC, but these came to an impasse as the government refused to grant another subsidy.

On May 2nd, printers at the Daily Mail refused to print an editorial which condemned the planned strike as a revolutionary act rather than an industrial dispute. Baldwin accused the union leaders of "gross interference with the freedom of the press" and refused to continue negotiating with them. The union leaders tried to resume the talks by denying all knowledge of the printers action, but Baldwin was unavailable having 'gone to bed'!

The union leaders were now stuck, they couldn't afford to openly betray the miners again, but neither could they talk their way out of calling a general strike if the government refused to negotiate. In the end they were forced to call a general strike to maintain their credibility.

Government plans

The government's plans for the general strike were put into action immediately. Hyde Park in London became the site of a village of wooden huts with its own telephone exchange. From here the supply & distribution of essential goods was co-ordinated. It included large storage areas for essentials such as milk and fuel.

The government was able to organise a huge force of volunteer strike breakers. These scabs came mainly from the middle class, eager for adventure working part time in a power station or driving a bus or train. Jobs which warkers were usually saddled with for life. Many thousands joined the police as volunteer specials.

The Emergency Powers Act was put into effect. This sought to prevent mass meetings, picketting and the sale of newspapers which would encourage workers to take more direct or violent action rather than just staying home as both unions & government wanted them to. The government had been planning for three years, and it took them just over two days to put their plans in to action.

(Continued next page).

The general strike lasted for 8 days, in that time about 1.8 million workers other than miners were involved out of a total union membership of (again excluding the miners) approximately 4.5 million. The central bodies of the trade unions were unable to develop the action to any great extent, and it was only the local strike committees that prevented the whole strike becoming a farce.

Joint local strike committees were first formed in 1921 for a general strike which did not materialise. They were founded under the auspices of the Trades Councils, and in 1926 they took over much of the day to day running of the strike, a task which the TUC couldn't handle. The TUC directives were often ambiguous or insubstantial and it was up to the local strike committees to organise picketing, issue permits for the transport of essential supplies and so on. In some areas Workers Defence Corps were formed, militias to protect strikers from attacks from the police, and especially those of the over-zealous specials.

The Sell Out

The General Council of the TUC withdrew from the general strike on May 12th. They subsequently stated that they had been misled by the government into believing that a satisfactory agreement had been made with the miners as a basis for negotiation. Supposedly the coal subsidy was to be renewed and lock-out notices withdrawn. The General Council had evidently not consulted the miners!

The real reason for the withdrawal of TUC support for the strike was that it was getting out of their control. The strike was being practically run by the local strike committees. This not only challenged the union leaders power base, but also began to break the division of workers by unions. This meant that union leaders found their positions as mediators, arbitrators, and controllers under threat. In order to preserve them, they were willing to sacrifice the miners to a further six months fruitless struggle.

The present day

So where does that leave us in 1984? It is unlikely that the unions would be willing to call a general strike in sympathy with the miners today. Their interests are the same today as in the inter-war period. Some leftists recognise this and so are calling for a '24 hour general strike', but this would only be a more widespread form of the 'days of action' we have already seen. A mere gesture which will get neither the miners nor the working class anywhere.

The battle which the miners are fighting at present was deliberately brought about by the government and has been in the pipeline for some time. The government's preparations for this dispute since 1979 have included contingency plans being made for the import of foreign coal; the build up of massive coal stocks at power stations; converting power stations to run on oil as well as coal. They have encouraged lorry drivers to become owner-drivers to break union control of road transport. The cutting of benefits to striking miners and the organisation of large mobile squads of police were planned long before the strike began.

All the actions above were described and recommended in a tory policy document written in 1978! We do not know what plans have been made in case of a general strike, but we can be sure they exist.

It is also highly unlikely that at present an indefinite general strike in sympathy with the miners would receive mass support as it would be seen as a purely altruistic act.

Towards a mass strike

As capitalism sinks deeper and deeper into the economic crisis, so workers will have to face greater and more direct attacks on their living and working conditions as the bosses fight to maintain their own wealth and power in a crumbling system. In order to fight against these attacks workers need to find new tactics with which to fight each new battle.

Workers will need to break union boundaries in combining their forces with those of other workers in other areas and industries, so defeating the ruling class policy of divide and rule. The unions themselves will have no part in these struggles, for by this stage there can be no room for negotiations or compromise with the bosses as the issues at stake will be so important. Compromise will only lead to defeat.

In these struggles workers will not only recognise their mutual enemies, but will find themselves relating to one another in different ways. The necessity at first to distribute food and other essentials on a basis of need rather than profit (as the miners are discovering at present) and later to take over production centres on the same basis, will show workers that a society run along those lines is not only possible, but positively desirable.

Revolution

Only the united force of the world working class will be able to stop the attacks made by the ruling class. The united working class has the power, not just to reform this society, but to overthrow and replace it with a society based on production and distribution for need, run by all for the mutual benefit of all.

Revolution is by no means inevitable, but the only alternative is an intensification of the attacks we are witnessing today: more oppression; more exploitation and more repression for the majority of the people of the world. Only world revolution can abolish starvation, poverty, alienation, and the drift towards global war once and for all!

It is the experience of collective class struggle, particularly mass struggle of the sort witnessed in Russia 1905 & '17, Germany 1919, France '68, and Poland '81, for instance, which shows the need for, the possibility of, and the means toward social revolution.

The unions act as a barrier to successful class actions, as do those who wish the working class to repeat the mistakes of half a century ago. We wish to see workers act in solidarity with, rather than in sympathy for, the miners. Successful working class action is based on its mutual benefit to all involved. Only by linking up our own struggles can we develop as a class without the shackles that have prevented us progressing in the past.

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WHY THE MINERS FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT.

Workers winning any dispute make costs higher and profits lower. Before the crisis this small reduction in the profits made from our exploitation was easy for the ruling class to accept, it still left them with enough profit for investment and a life of idle luxury.

But with the crisis upon us and getting worse there is less profit to be made. Far from affording wage rises and better services for the workers, the bosses are now desperate to take back what little we have. Hence the determination to close pits cut health services reduce wages, lower manning levels and force working class youth onto YTS slavery.

The plans for an all out attack on the Miners were being laid as far back as 1978 when a tory policy making group report on the nationalised industries said, 'There should be a large mobile squad of police equipped and prepared to uphold the law against violent picketing.' 'Good non-union lorry drivers should be recruited to cross picket lines with police protection.' This report saw breaking the spirit of the Miners as one step in the 'rationalisation' of the nationalised industries.

THE COURTS

Looking to the law courts for impartial justice will bring nothing but defeat. This can be seen from the way striking yorkshire Miners were treated during a recent high court ruling on bail conditions. What the high court said amounts to complete freedom for police and magistrates to do as they wish with striking Miners. Few people can not of heard of the unprecedented harsh sentences, fines and restrictive bail conditions imposed on strikers

We must all realise that although the Miners are in the front line now, the attacks on working class living standards are a response to the present state of the worlds economy. As the crisis deepens the bosses will become more desperate and the attacks will become more fierce.

The health services, public transport, the post and the schools are all under attack already. If

the Miners lose things will get a lot tougher for everyone.

The violence and intimidation meted out by the police backed up by the law courts and the government, is designed to weaken the strike by keeping the Miners isolated. The arrests, fines bail conditions and imprisonment are designed to remove militant Miners from the strike, and also to ensure the defeat of future strikes, in whatever industry, by scaring workers away from taking any effective action.

GRIMETHORPE

Workers in Grimethorpe, Yorkshire have shown the way to answer state violence. When 22 people were arrested for 'stealing' coal from an NCB tip, local people responded with a ferocious attack on the local police station and NCB offices. This incident sums up the real issues in this strike. All coal, indeed all wealth of any sort, is produced by the workers. Yet when workers who desperately need this wealth for their own use try to take any of it, the state steps in to defend the private property of the bosses.

The government are desperately trying to defeat the Miners. They see this as a crushing blow against the working class, clearing the way for more cuts and austerity, more belt tightening for us to ease the effects of the crisis for them.

The government, big business all those with money and power recognise their community of interest in attacking the working class. We must recognise our own shared interests, we must unite, across union or any other barriers, we must fight together in solidarity.

A BEGINNING

The workers of Liverpool have taken a step in this direction, with 9000 people on a one day protest strike in support of 37 workers arrested in the Cammell Laird dispute. Also in Manchester Hospital workers staged a two hour lightning strike in support of three of their colleagues arrested during a Miners support Demo.

This sort of action must be inten-

sified, if the police and the law courts are successful against the Miners they will be used, more forcefully, against us all in the future. Organise now for action in the workplace, in the community and on the picket lines. All workers have an immediate interest in the fate of striking Miners.

Wildcat Basic Principles

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

THE MIDDLE EAST

imperialist war and class war

The numerous and increasingly militant strikes and riots of the working class throughout the world point to revolution as one possible outcome of the economic crisis. Alternatively the simmering wars in Africa, Central America and the Middle East could lead to the Third World War.

Revolutionaries in tiny minority groups, took up a revolutionary position in the First World War before revolution was in sight. Today's revolutionaries must try to work out how if possible the working class can break out of the situation which confronts it in wars in what is known as the 'third world'. In this article we discuss the origins of the wars in the Lebanon and Iraq, and how the workers can stop them.

In general we take the view that although the best place for a revolution to start and succeed would be in Europe or North America, the world revolution may begin in a country like South Africa or Iran. It may even start as a reaction to a war, as the Russian Revolution of 1917 did.

Is it 'realistic' to call for an outright armed insurrection to topple the state in Iran or Iraq? No, but neither was it realistic to call for revolution in 1915, when the workers were volunteering for the war by the million. Revolutionaries at that time didn't call for a 24-hour general strike, they said,

"Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!"

This was the slogan of revolutionaries in World War 1. It is also ours today: anything less would be inadequate for a situation as desperate as that faced by the masses in the Gulf.

The workers in the Middle East face even greater difficulties in making revolution than workers in western Europe do, but there is a recent combative working class in the region. The basis for the class war in the Middle East is the change in the class composition of its inhabitants which it has undergone this century. Up until 1918, the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire from Morocco to Persia, were predominantly serfs tied to individual family plots, slaves, or nomadic tribesmen.

But capitalism has enormously developed the world's productive forces, especially since 1945. Part of this process has included the throwing of millions of peasants off the land, onto the job market. Obviously, most of them have no jobs to go to. But they can still wage class war, as the riots of the unemployed in Tunisia in January showed.

And around the Persian Gulf, two sectors of the working class are in a position to strike an effective blow against their capitalist rulers. These are the workers in oil and related industries, and the workers in uniform of the Iranian and Iraqi armies. Clearly, a mass strike throughout the oil wells of the Gulf States, most of whose employees are Middle Eastern working class, would have a major economic effect on imperialism: more than the British miners' strike for example. The masses of conscripts in the Iraqi and Iranian armies must, sooner or later, begin to doubt the wisdom of the Jihad in which a million of their fellow workers have died.

But what can they do about it? Historically, the suffering caused by war has been a major cause of revolution. The Iranian regime, which has suffered by far the largest casualties, is running out of really serious volunteer martyrs. Increasingly the Iranian army is made up of reluctant conscripts from the age of 13 upwards, armed to the teeth and sick of war. The possibility of mutinies breaking out on the Iranian front is a real one, indeed they already may have done. These could link up with the workers revolts to form armed Workers' and Soldiers' committees. This would be the perspective of council communists in the Gulf.

THE LEBANON

We will get back to concrete possibilities for an end to the carnage after dealing in turn with the causes of war in the Lebanon, and in Iran and Iraq.

The recent reverses for American strategy in the Lebanon are largely the result of major errors on the

just as is the unnecessary confrontation with Nicaragua in Central America.

In June 1982, the u.s. gave the Israelis the green light to batter Syria and the PLO. After 30 days, the Syrian airforce and its missile batteries were destroyed, and most of the PLO driven into the sea. This was the "stick" part of Reagan's approach. His idea is stick first, carrot later. Reagan's "diplomacy" involves battering Russia's allies, then offering meagre "carrots" to the survivors in return for political capitulation. In this case the plan involved beating the PLO into submission, then setting up a pro-Western puppet state for the Palestinians in the desert between Jordan and Israel. Arafat, the leader of the PLO, went along with this, though many of the Palestinians didn't.

WHAT IS THE P.L.O.?

Like other national liberation struggles, the PLO is a capitalist state in exile. It lives on the taxes from profits created by the exploitation of the employees of Palestinian businessmen all over the Middle East. It has an executive Committee, it has (or had) a loyal opposition of various parties. It takes part in negotiations with other states over the fate of its subjects, the dispossessed Palestinians. These people were driven into exile by the Zionists, who, incidentally, were themselves once a national liberation struggle supported by the Left as enthusiastically as the PLO is today.

Small forces from Italy, Britain, France and the u.s. were moved into a Lebanon increasingly fragmented by sectarian civil war at the end of 1982. It was a Humpty Dumpty situation. They were unable to pull it together. The puppet president they set up, Gemayel, only represents one of the capitalist groups in the Lebanon. Since most of the Lebanese associate the Gemayel clan with other Christian mass-murderers, his government never had any real national credibility. With typical lack of intelligence, Reagan committed himself to the one faction

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

which could antagonise all the others. The other groups allied themselves with Syria in return for the latest Russian arms, and a place in the future pro-Syrian government of the Lebanon.

Not only did Syria draw the Druze and Muslim militias under its wing, it also split the PLO. and crushed Arafat with his own previously loyal opposition. Russia's strategy - the use of discontented capitalist factions to mess up the West's plans - has succeeded. The use of Syrian imperialism has been Russia's one success story in recent years. It has even succeeded in bringing Gemayel under its wing, forcing him to abrogate the 1983 treaty with Israel. At the same time Syria has forced Israel to pull back and the U.S.A. and its allies to pull out altogether.

As the Syrian backed militias fought the Lebanese army, it split into sectarian fragments. Israel pulled back to the Awali river, as strikes, inflation and protest increased. In September 84, for the third time in 11 months, a suicide bomber blew up marines outside a Western Embassy - a tremendous blow to U.S. prestige.

Reagan's plan lies in ruins. The pro-Western Arafat faction of the PLO. has been ignominiously evicted from the Lebanon by the pro-Syrian wing. Israel was forced by its domestic crisis to retreat, and similarly, the French and most Americans wanted out, not wanting to become entangled in another Vietnam.

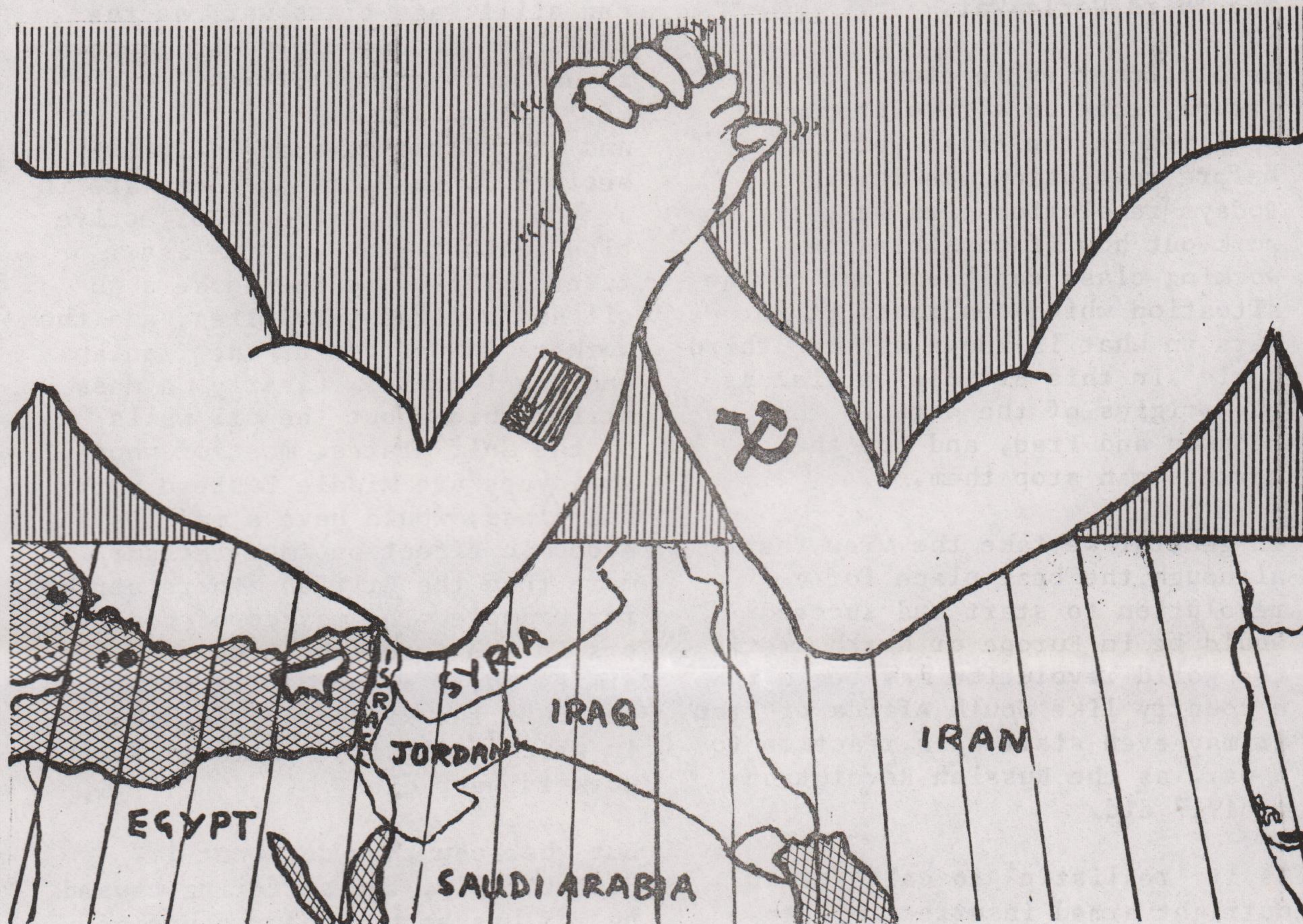
The stick of American policy has been broken. But it still has the carrot, the economic clout that Russia lacks. Increasingly though, the U.S. economy depends on taking from the rest of the world, rather than lending to it. The U.S. still hopes to draw Syria into its camp as it did Egypt in the mid-70's, but for the moment it looks certain that Syrian imperialism and its puppets will remain Russia's closest ally in the region.

World War III could certainly develop out of the situation in the Lebanon. It could begin by Israel attacking Syria in order to rally a striking working class behind the Israeli bosses, and could involve nuclear weapons. It could only be prevented by joint Arab / Israeli workers' strikes and mutinees. Given the sectarian divisions this is unlikely. So our general optimism about class struggle in the world should not lead us to believe that revolution is certain, and war impossible.

IRAN AND IRAQ

By 1980 both Iran and Iraq had experienced great drops in oil revenues, as a side effect of the world decline in production, and unemployment reached record levels and workers living standards were drastically cut. The working class of both countries have resisted. In Iran, the strike wave of 1979 has not been completely extinguished by the prayers of the mullahs. In Iraq, in response to wage cuts to pay for the war in 1982, there were strikes in Basra, Baghdad, Mosul and Suliamnia.

capitalist crisis. The imperialist powers are doing everything to prevent the Iran / Iraq war getting out of control, spreading to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This is one area where the major imperialist powers, Britain, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. are closely cooperating, and it will not involve them in conflict with each other, since neither side wants Iran to win. The much-publicised attacks on tankers are nothing more than a minor side-effect of the war. Its effect is to raise oil prices, and is therefore a minor factor in the deepening economic crisis.



Why did the Iraqi rulers start the war? Not as some think, in order to devalue capital. The economic equation doesn't add up. Reducing constant capital (machinery) and variable capital (workers) at the same time produces the same result. Neither can we explain the war as an attack on the consciousness of the working class. There was no sign of a resurgence of the class struggle before 1980, the Iranian working class having been diverted onto the terrain of constructing the Islamic republic before the war broke out. Nor was the Iraqi invasion of Iran part of an international conspiracy to destroy the Iranian revolution, as some Iranian Leninists have claimed. Any chance of a revolution in Iran had already been set back by these self same Leninists and the mullahs they critically supported at the time.

The cause of the war is the fact that the Iraqi ruling class needs to conquer more resources than it currently controls, in order to produce more profit to offset the

Neither Britain nor America wants to become directly involved on the side of Iraq. Instead, they rely on the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. These states seek to avoid military involvement, which might upset their Shiite majorities preferring to help Iraq hold back the Iranians militarily by supporting it with money.

Iraq has had little difficulty in holding back the Iranians. Given its greater support internationally from numerous states in both blocs, it is likely to win, and thus the greatest chance of working class revolt comes from the workers of Iran. (Revolution tends to break out in defeated powers). Though this is the worst war in the world since World War II, its significance is limited.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are armed to the teeth by Britain and the U.S.A.. The U.S.A. and France sell missiles and planes to Iraq. Neither West Germany nor Britain sell arms to either side officially - but they each sell Iraq half

the chemicals to make nerve gas. Iraq buys Soviet and N. Korean arms with Saudi money. The Iranians have less friends but buy Israeli arms (sold to Israel buy the U.S.A. and Britain) with their oil money. Israel wants to keep its enemies divided. Soviet allies Libya and Syria also arm Iran against Iraq, for various reasons.

Small countries are not simply puppets of the imperialist bloc leaders (As we have seen, Argentina is not a puppet of the U.S.). They have some room for manouvre, and can wait some years in a limbo before choosing sides in the competition between the imperialist blocs. Iran is the clearest example of this "relative autonomy" but the final alignment of Iraq is also uncertain.

Although Iraq is heavily in the West's debt, Iran is as anti-Soviet as it is anti-American. In this war, unlike in the Lebanon, both blocs are effectively on one side. Both of them are open to Iraq's offers to become policeman of the Gulf when she wins.

Large numbers of British and American warships are ready to protect the Gulf states against an Iranian attack, and the various sultans employ numerous seconded officers and military technicians from Britain and the U.S. to advise them and help them run their armies.

If the U.S. can arrange for the defeat of Iran, and a greater Iraq can be solidly welded into the Western bloc, the loss of Lebanon and Israel's first ever defeat can be minimised. In the same way, the diplomatic 'capture' of China more than made up for the loss of Vietnam.

But if Saddam Hussein can outwit the U.S. regime, and win the war whilst maintaining his current ability to choose which bloc he joins, the U.S.A. will have suffered its second major blow in the region. The Russian ruling class will be in a position to seriously contemplate a breach in the Western encirclement.

THE WORKING CLASS SOLUTION

What position should communists take on imperialist wars today? Certainly not to wash our hands of it, and say 'the working class is defeated, there's nothing we can do'.

The slogan of "revolutionary defeatism" is ambiguous. This is expressed by Lenin: "A revolutionary class in a reactionary war

cannot help wishing for the defeat of 'its own' government". This is not true. Revolutionaries do not wish for the defeat of either side in a war, though if one side is defeated, they take advantage of the disillusionment this produces to agitate for revolution. "Revolutionary defeatism" sounds as though we support any force which attacks 'our' government like the I.R.A., which we don't. An alternative to Lenin's position is to talk about the revolutionary defeat of 'our own' government. But revolution is not just aimed at overthrowing 'our own' government. It is aimed at immediately spreading to other countries, and overthrowing all governments. Revolutionaries are not fussy as to whether or not the revolution starts in their own country. The revolution would have to spread especially quickly in an area like the Gulf, not only because of the speed of imperialist intervention, but also because workers power in such a country would quickly become capitalist power otherwise.

A more accurate slogan for communists in wars today is to call for workers in uniform to fraternise with the troops of the opposing armies, forming joint Soldiers' Committees, and similarly for workers to organise joint Workers' Committees, and thus simultaneously defeat all the powers involved. We don't specifically talk about the defeat of 'our own' ruling class.

The key to the solution is the real activity of the working class. The working class of the Iran/Iraq area has a militant recent history. Apart from the mass strikes which shook Iran in 1979, there have been demonstrations and strikes specifically against the war in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1982, with the slogan "Neither Saddam nor Khomeini". These were physically crushed by the Iraqi secret service and ideologically derailed by the left wing of Kurdish nationalism.

On 5 June 1984 Iraqi jets attacked Baneh in Iran. The population of the poorer sections of the town went onto the streets shouting anti-war slogans against both sides. This represents a remarkable break with nationalism. Instead of blaming the Iraqis, the working class of Baneh blamed both sides. For this reason, the 'Revolutionary' Guards suppressed them. Hundreds were arrested, killed or wounded. Any identified as militants will be executed.

We think: A call for workers in uniform to turn their guns against their officers on both sides, and to fraternise with the soldiers on

the other side, forming joint Soldiers' Committees, is the first step towards revolution in such a situation. In parallel with this, workers in both countries should strike under the specific slogan- "Down with both governments- an end to the war- solidarity with workers in the opposing country".

MEETINGS...MEETINGS.....MEETINGS...

The 'Wildcat' Group is organising a new series of public meetings in Manchester starting in November, with a meeting on the 'Abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils and the effects of Privatisation' and continuing with:

'The Middle-East Crisis'

'The USA and the Debt Crisis in the Third World'

'The Unemployed and the Class Struggle'

Look out for local advertisements in 'Grass Roots' bookshop and elsewhere, or write to our contact address (see page 3).

NEW PAMPHLET COMING SOON.

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

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

WILDCAT NEEDS HELP

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

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

WILDCAT PAMPHLETS

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

*HOW SOCIALIST IS THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY.

*FRONT LINE NEWS FROM THE CLASS WAR..four articles about recent class struggle in Britain and Europe. 30p each (incl. p+p).

DEFEND JOBS

NOT COUNCILS

TORY ATTACKS

The government proposes to abolish the big metropolitan councils, like the Greater London and Greater Manchester Councils, in April 1986. In response to the present world economic crisis, they are seeking to further centralise state control over public spending and cut down what our bosses regard as 'un-productive expenditure' in favour of DIRECT profit making. More specifically they intend to make savings by drastically cutting the number of jobs in local authorities.

Workers for the metropolitan councils are rightly up in arms over these proposals. They don't want to add to the burgeoning dole queues or find themselves competing for a shrinking number of lower paid jobs. But they are not the only ones under threat. The Councils bosses, mostly Labour Party worthies and their hangers on are also threatened.

LABOUR DIFFERENCES?

Ironically the roles have been reversed, since it was the Tories who originally set up the metropolitan councils against Labour Party opposition and the Labour Party who are now shouting loudest in their defence.

The previous Labour government started the ball rolling with big public expenditure cuts and attacks on public service workers wages, so we can't take seriously their present claims to be our protectors.

Their argument with the Tory government really rests on the claim that the present local authority structures are actually a cheaper way of running the capitalist state than what the government proposes. This is a real difference of opinion between different groups of state bosses is wrapped up in the false ideology of 'defending local democracy'. But as we shall show this local democracy is local CAPITALIST democracy, and as much our enemy as the so called democracy of the central state so much in evidence during the current miners strike.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

To fight against the governments cut backs and attacks on jobs demands determined, INDEPENDENT class action and a clear understanding of who our friends and enemies are. The Labour Party bosses in the threatened Councils are desperately trying to convince their workers they are on the same

side as them - that life is better with Labour in charge. In this task they are ably assisted by their friends the Trade Unions, even by the non-affiliated NALGO.

Without burying into the murky ancient history of Labour Councils we have ample recent evidence of the need for council workers to fight just as hard against Labour Councils as Tory ones. In this fight their allies are other rank and file council workers, whether white collar or manual, irrespective of trade union membership, not Labour Party and trade union bosses.

OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE AGAINST AN ALLIANCE WITH LABOUR.

Here are just a few of the many examples of the inevitable conflict between council workers and their Labour Party bosses, many are avowedly left wing councils:

Sandwell, West Midlands. Nov 83.
School secretaries on strike for regrading. NALGO says its OK for teachers to carry out secretaries duties.

Monkdale Dec 83.
30 swimming bath workers strike against new contract imposed on them by Council.

Hackney. Feb 84.
Repair workers occupy administrative office and organise repair work themselves. They are angry over inefficiency and the amount of private contract work. NALGO tries to call a strike AGAINST the action. Four senior NALGO workers retake offices and lock out workers on instructions from 'radical socialist' Council.

South Tyneside. Feb 84.
One day stoppage against proposed redundancies.

Gateshead. Feb 84.
Council declares Gateshead a 'nuclear free zone' but sacks social worker after her arrest at Greenham Common.

Newcastle. Mar 84.
Mass meeting by NUPE and NUT workers calls for one day strike over threatened redundancies - cancelled after Labour Party pressure on Unions.

Southwark. Mar 84.
2,000 NALGO members strike against sacking of social worker for refusing to enter childrens home blacked after SPG action.

Islington. Apr 84.
Nursery nurses strike over pay and staff shortages. NALGO negotiates a compromise 3 months later and asks workers to support Council against rate capping.

Bolton. May 84 continuing.
Nursery nurses on long standing strike for regrading to improve abysmally low pay. NALGO officials obstruct solidarity action.

Tower Hamlets. Jun 84.
1600 NALGO members on strike against suspension of 50 library workers for just threatening to refuse to collect fines in action against closures. Deal cooked up between NALGO and Labour leaders Mikado and Kinnock.

South Yorkshire. Jun 84.
Bus drivers strike in pay dispute, against union stewards recommendation.

Camden. Aug 84.
NALGO members in 'homeless persons' unit strike against job losses and regrading proposed by Council.

Liverpool. Aug 84.
250 workers in housing department strike over suspension of two workers by celebrated left wing council. NALGO 'orders' strikers back to work but order is ignored.

Sheffield. Sept 84.
Housing department workers on strike against job losses and new technology. Leader of left council accuses white collar workers of enjoying good living off people of Sheffield, copying GLC leaders tactics against white collar strikers.

Lambeth. Oct 84.
Social workers on strike over lack of resources.

and so on and on.....

CONCLUSION

Left wing or right wing bosses - their still BOSSES running the same anti-working class system, as the strikers referred to before are well aware.

Yes, we must fight job losses and attacks on our social wage, BUT, as the examples of workers in conflict with Labour councils shows, that DOESN'T mean defending one bit of the state (local councils) against another bit (central government).

To Hell with the Bosses State
For INDEPENDENT class struggle.