

More Worker revolts in E. Europe

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The following is reprinted from a section of "Mass Strikes in Capitalist Poland," which appeared in the August/September, 1980 issue of *World Revolution* magazine available from BM Box 869, London WC1V 6XX, Great Britain. It is authored by C D Ward.

As the whole eastern bloc, under Russian hegemony, gears up its war economy in response to increasing inter-imperialist tensions, workers will be asked to make even greater sacrifices. More capital will be invested in heavy industry and arms production, less in the consumer sector. Production norms will be increased, wage levels held down. Thus for the workers of the eastern bloc, the rallying cry of Stalinism and Trotskyism—"defend the USSR against imperialism"—has a very concrete meaning: work harder, eat less, prepare to die for the fatherland.

The problem for the bourgeoisie in the east as well as the west is that the workers don't seem to accept this logic. * They are putting their own class interests before the interests of the nation or the bloc. This is true not only in Poland and other east European countries, but in Russia itself. Thus in May there were reports of wide-scale strikes in Russian industry. Various sources have referred to big strikes in the USSR's "motor cities" of Togliattigrad and Gorky. In Togliattigrad 170,000 car workers are said to have been involved in strike action in solidarity with striking bus drivers. In Gorky, 200,000 car workers came out in protest against inadequate supplies of milk and meat. The strike was preceded by the distribution of 2,000 handwritten leaflets, which would seem to indicate a certain level of politicization among groups of Russian workers.

Other conflicts have been reported at the huge Kama river plant that makes trucks for the army in Afghanistan, and at a tractor plant in Chelyabinsk in the Urals. A "dissident" spokesman interviewed in *Le Monde* claimed that such strikes and disturbances are becoming more and more commonplace in Russia today. Add this to the reports of soldiers deserting from the Afghan front and of angry scenes over the number of dead bodies being flown back from Afghanistan, and we can get an idea of the difficulties confronting the Russian war drive.

The more the workers refuse to be patriotic and responsible, the more they fight for their own class demands, the harder it will be for the bourgeoisie in the Russian bloc to step up its war plans, and the nearer we will get to a head-on confrontation between the workers and the state.

* Members of the Fifth Estate staff do not share the belief with *World Revolution* magazine that an actual class of bourgeoisie exists in the Eastern bloc countries, but we can press that argument some other time.



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