

# The LENINIST

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## Tories - down but not out. Labour - up but not in. Communists - only just beginning

**D**EFEAT in the Ribble Valley by-election on March 7 meant that Tory hopes of a clear run to a victorious June election evaporated overnight. The loss was on a scale which knocked much of their post-Thatcher confidence out of them. It showed that John Major's honeymoon period with public opinion has come to an end.

The fact that he had any sort of honeymoon can at least partially be put down to the revolutionary petty bourgeois left and the reformist left. These forces obsessively focused on Margaret Thatcher, blaming her *personally* for everything from the state of the economy to litter in the streets. This gave the Tories an easy escape route. In order to give themselves a new lease of life they simply had to go along with her political assassination.

Of course this could not last. Political reality had to reassert itself, and in Ribble Valley it did. The winning Liberal Democrat candidate overthrew a 20,000 Tory majority in a constituency that was their fourteenth safest. We can safely discount talk from Paddy Ashdown - and his fans in the Euro *Marxism Today* and its leftist alter egos, epitomised by the RCP - that there has been a "return to three party politics", especially since the Liberal Democrats' miserable showing in Neath. We have seen countless Liberal "revivals" since the 1950s. They all ended in disappointment, and so will this one. Nevertheless, Ribble *reflects* important changes in British political life that the Iron Lady's replacement by Jumper Man temporarily obscured.

In spite of only coming third in Ribble, in spite of seeing its majority more than halved in Neath, the revival of the Labour Party is the *main feature* of the present period.

Being the *preferred* party of the still powerful labour bureaucracy, the Labour Party has been extraordinarily dynamic since the late 1980s. Seeing itself rudely ejected from the corridors of power with the Thatcher general election victory in 1979, seeing its politics of protest abysmally fail in the early 1980s, the labour bureaucracy has been the force behind Neil Kinnock's fast moving project of turning the Labour Party back into an *alternative* party of government.

Today the Labour Party is no longer unelectable, as it was throughout the 1980s. As a result, ideas about the Tory Party - the *preferred* party of the bourgeoisie - becoming the *dominant* party can no longer be entertained. As neck-and-neck opinion polls and by-elections show, and no doubt the May 2 local elections will confirm, the *two party system* is back. Labour has returned to the Labourite ideology of the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s; ie, it is again a thoroughly respectable, half conservative, half modernist *alternative* party of government.

The reasons for this are, at the risk of oversimplification, threefold. Firstly, as we've said, it is a result of the collective decision by the labour bureaucracy to turn from the politics of protest to the politics of parliament. Secondly,

### To the working class of Great Britain. Statement of the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB. Issued April 7 1991

it is due to the retreat, under the hammer blows of the Tory government, of working class militancy from the heady days of the late 1960s and early 70s. These two interrelated factors have given Neil Kinnock and his 'new realist' team a more or less free hand, ironically resulting in a slimming down of the weight of union block votes.

That for a decade the Conservative Party became the dominant party in British politics had nothing to do with what *Marxism Today* and its ilk called Thatcher's hegemonic politics, nor any numerical decline in the working class (in fact through the process of proletarianisation, our class is growing ever bigger). It had everything to do with the shift in Britain's ruling circles from the politics of class collaboration to the politics of class war.

Developments in the Labour Party were, of course, intimately associated with this.

Because of the debacle that was the Wilson/Callaghan government (not least its vicious and, in this century, unprecedentedly successful attacks on working class living standards), the official labour movement swung to the left through pressure from below. It was either that or suffer a mass defection by the then very influential militant section of the working class.

In a society where bourgeois ideas remain dominant there was a price to pay. Labour suffered a devastating schism. The gang of four set up the SDP - a party which, in alliance with the Liberals, instantaneously robbed Labour of a whole swathe of supporters and voters, and fatally punctured its pretensions of being the *natural* party of government.

Now in the name of electability, in an attempt to bring the party back into line with mainstream bourgeois thought, Kinnock and Co have ruthlessly reined in the Labour left, witch hunting the entryist left, domesticating the municipal socialists. The utopian Bennite dogma - unilateralism, nationalisation and import controls - which became official policy in the early 1980s, is now for most Labour Party activists a distant embarrassing memory. It has been replaced with the Labourite version of Thatcherism we have dubbed Thatchnockism.

All this has taken place within the realm of bourgeois politics.

But there is, as stated above, a third factor behind the revival of the Labour Party. That is the increasing problems experienced by the Tory government. Here we see a complex molecular interaction between economics, ambition at the top of the Tory Party and the growing discontent outside parliament, which has found particular expression in resistance to the poll tax.

Let us start with economics. Few now pay homage to the Thatcherite economic miracle. Life has shown it a

sham. Britain's relative decline has relentlessly continued. Today our country languishes in stagnation, one bankruptcy follows another and mass unemployment is back with a vengeance.

Economic failure has narrowed the Tories' room for manoeuvre and ability to bribe. Consequently, its electoral base has undergone a dramatic shrinkage. Government measures to dampen down inflation have in particular hit the middle classes and the upper section of the working class who borrowed up to the hilt and voted Tory in the 1980s, grateful for their paltry though increasing living standards and drawn by the El Dorado lure of the property and share owning democracy.

Now with the present downward economic oscillation, now with sky high interest rates, now that Labour is perceived as being 'sensible', skilled workers - whom pollsters said had been irredeemably won to Liberal or Tory *conservatism* - have, it seems, returned to the mould which their defection was meant to have broken.

There are those who think that politics only exist in the hallowed environs of Westminster and middle class lobbying. We know different. There is more to the Tories' problems than parliamentary debates and the shifting sands of voting patterns.

Blindly defended a year ago, today the poll tax cannot be got rid of soon enough. Thatcher's flagship was made an electoral liability because it had been made unworkable. Mass demonstrations on the streets, above all the brave decision not to pay or to go deep into arrears, by 14 million working class people - combined with Thatcher's dithering over Europe - meant that the captain had to go down with her ship. Thus, in the last analysis, the masses brought down Thatcher and plunged the government into disarray - not a speech by Geoffrey Howe and the ambitions and machinations of Tory politicians.

Of course, it is not a straightforward matter. Divisions, infighting and lack of government direction have their own reality and logic. In spite of this, we communists know that they have their *origins* in what is going on in the base of society, not least successful resistance to the poll tax.

The importance of the anti-poll tax movement cannot be exaggerated. For 12 years the masses have suffered one defeat after another. Now they have scored a victory. And what a victory! As the *Financial Times* of March 15 noted, scrapping the poll tax is "the government's biggest political reversal since coming to power in 1979 and one of the most spectacular U-turns for any government this century."

The chaos that is now the poll tax is not only a victory over the Tory government. It is a victory against Labour

Party opposition to and attacks on non-payment, a victory of illegality over legality, a victory for mass politics over the politics of parliament. Yes, we must emphasise again and again that it is victory only in a battle. It is not the end of the war. Even in terms of this particular battle we have before us the prospect of "son of poll tax" and the even more expensive reality of 2.5% on everything - covered by VAT (and Lamont's #140 across the board reduction still leaves Lambeth residents still paying over #400).

We must emphasise that the victory against the poll tax would have been all the greater, and would have placed us in an excellent position to carry on the class war, if instead of Militant in the leadership of the anti-poll tax movement there had been a genuine Communist Party vanguard. Nevertheless, a victory it is.

Comrades, those who play down the significance of the anti-poll tax movement, posed opposition to the Gulf War as an alternative to it, or even dismiss the government's retreat as merely the result of middle class discontent, are obviously hopelessly trapped in an academic pit of sectarianism and objectively therefore play into the hands of the class enemy. Such people, who refuse to recognise a *real* step forward for the working class, will never lead a *real* working class fightback, let alone build a *real* revolutionary working class party.

As things stand it is clear that the Tories are in trouble. The economy continues to deteriorate and Major cannot tell parliament what he wants to put in place of the poll tax. He also faces the certainty that opposition to it from *below* will continue. From *above* too he faces opposition, not least from those Tory MPs intent on canonising Thatcher and religiously defending her remaining 'achievements'.

The question now for partisans of the working class is whether the government's difficulties will be resolved positively or negatively: *for us* or *against us*. The key is *self organisation* and *class consciousness*.

Here we must honestly admit the limitations of what exists, while fearlessly stating what is necessary. Although the poll tax is now in ruins, there exists no *solid* organisational heritage from the struggle. In part this is in itself organisational: in essence, though, it is ideological.

Organisationally the 'fortresses' of Militant are in the Labour Party. Its basic units are not in the workplaces but in the wards and constituencies of bourgeois democracy. This flows from Militant's politics, centrally its denial of the *necessity* for violent revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Militant would have the working class believe that socialism will come via a vote in parliament for an "enabling

act", with the mass movement outside parliament loyally playing a secondary, supportive role.

For the Militant leaders of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation everything must be subordinated to getting Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party into government (first him, next us, they imagine). The Federation was run bureaucratically, and everything was done by Militant to channel working class anger into the dead end of Labourism. After the Trafalgar Square police riot efforts towards this end were treacherously redoubled: those who fought back were denounced; Militant's Tommy Sheridan even promised to "name names". Following this, organisation on the ground underwent a process of disintegration.

The way Militant misled the anti-poll tax movement was a *direct result* of its reformist perspective. So, therefore, is the virtual lack of any solid organisational heritage from the poll tax struggle.

Comrades, those who believe that a general election victory for Labour will produce a wave of socialist legislation, or anything progressive for that matter, are fooling themselves and the working class. In itself, a Labour victory would represent nothing positive. Labour has promised the ruling class that capitalism will be safe in its well tried hands. If we rip away the ideological facade, what this means is attacks on the working class. We workers must fight whoever wins the next general election.

It is with this certainty in mind that the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain says there is no basis at present for supporting the capitalist party of the working class (Labour) against the capitalist party of the capitalist class (Conservative). Both will attack our class, neither will do anything for it.

As theory for us demands practice, we have taken the decision to field a small number of communist candidates in the next general election. And where we have no candidate we call upon workers to write 'communist' across their ballot papers. We will in this way use parliament to propagandise for the smashing of parliament through working class revolution.

Our tactics will pose in the sharpest way the necessity of reorganising the Communist Party of Great Britain as the only proletarian alternative to the Labour Party and Labourism. Only with its Communist Party can our working class smash capitalism and open up the road to communism. Without it we remain a slave class.

We know all members of the CPGB will do their duty in the next general election. They will give their all to reforge their Party and defend their class. But we need the largest number of supporters and helpers. Sympathisers of the PCC, non-party communists, all partisans of the working class, you are urged by the PCC to help us build the communist alternative to Labourism. Vote, work, for communism in the general election.

The struggle might have only just begun, but there can be no delay in joining it.



Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

THE Executive Committee of the Euro organisation has decided to make the final adjustments necessary to fit it for life on the margins of bourgeois politics. With only two dissenting votes (from the ridiculous Straight Leftist faction) the Euro EC will recommend to its November congress that they drop the pretence of having anything to do with communism and adopt the name Democratic Left.

Out will go the "trappings of Bolshevism": Marxism-Leninism, democratic centralism and the red flag. In will come "transformation": feminism and ecology, an open federal structure, and purple and green.

This marks a new qualitative stage in the growth of opportunism (directly paralleling the general process of social democratisation of what was the 'official' world communist movement). Indeed, as it takes the Euros formally outside working class politics, it takes them beyond opportunism.

The formal liquidation we see today has a long history - from which we must learn in order to avoid repetition. There were many important stages in the growth of opportunism in the CPGB. But it is quite clear that if we want to understand what led a once proud, revolutionary party to the Democratic Left farce, one has to go back to the very origins of our CPGB.

It is to cast no aspersions on the courage and dedication of those who founded our Party to say that they tended to be over reliant on the communists in the Soviet Union. There was no fundamental problem with this while the comrades in the Soviet Union were under the leadership of Lenin; and it has to be said without taking on board the lessons of Bolshevism there would never have been a CPGB. However, after the death of Lenin the Communist Party of the Soviet Union began to drift slowly but steadily towards centrism and then beyond; it took the CPGB and the whole Communist International with it.

What started off as being a tiny centrist scratch inevitably led to the liquidationist grave. Opportunism started small, but by the mid-1930s the CPGB was operating as an arm of Soviet foreign policy, not an arm of the world party of communism. It was the interests of Soviet foreign policy that led to the class collaborationism and 'national roads to socialism' voted for at the 7th and final Congress of Comintern in 1935, a vote that led directly to the reformist *British Road to Socialism* programme and Eurocommunism. The fact of the matter is that today's Democratic Left is the wayward offspring of Stalin.

Of course, there is every reason to suppose the Euros will continue their evolution. Basically there are two possibilities.

Firstly, there is the course further and further to the right. The 'socialism' they profess is of a thoroughly bourgeois type. The Democratic Left is not out to overthrow existing society, it is out to act as a well meaning pressure group on the powers that be. Thus, in spite of all their protestations about democracy and pluralism, they can arrive at very anti-democratic and authoritarian conclusions. Already, for these sorts, revolutionaries are more of a problem than capitalism itself; after all, revolutionaries openly declare their intention of smashing the very state machine they look to as the vehicle to bring about their utopian project. It is only one step from here to the slippery slope that led the likes of Mussolini and Mosely from the politics of the reformist left to the politics of fascism.

Secondly, they can decline to the point where they resemble something like the ILP, which was the influential Independent Labour Party and is now Independent Labour Publications. Looking at the Euros' present state of organisation and support, this seems to be the more likely scenario.

Everywhere the Euro organisation is in an advanced state of decomposition. Its branches and districts hardly function. Income is rapidly drying up and 1991 paper membership is little more than 2,000 (down from 6,000 in 1990). There are deep political divisions too.

Besides the possibility that the Scottish organisation will go for UDI and *Marxism Today* will end up in the Murdoch stable, silly squabbling factions and groupings abound.

But however and wherever the Euros end up, it is clear that genuine communists have no place in their organisation. Genuine communists should rally to the banner raised by our organisation, the banner of Marxism-Leninism, democratic centralism and proletarian internationalism; ie, the principles our Party was founded upon in July 1920. Break with the traitors. The place for all communists is with the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB.

The Editor

## LETTERS Ageism

I do think comrade Douglass has a point in his criticism on ageism (Letters, *The Leninist* No100). But one thing which struck me at the last *Morning Star* AGM I attended, was that the vast majority of those in the hall had at some time in their various statements in the past emphasised how the movement was one of youth.

Among them I felt I was the most youthful of the lot and I am now in my mid-seventies. When a movement becomes old and cannot replenish itself I think it is fair to comment on its collective age.

Len Banks  
Sunderland

## Polemic

We welcome your 'review' of the first edition of *Open Polemic* despite its thoroughly negative and hostile approach in both tone and content. We welcome it because it gives us another opportunity to clarify yet again to all comrades the nature and purpose of the *Open Polemic* project.

*The Leninist* has mistakenly reacted to the first issue of *Open Polemic* with arrogant mockery. But in fact, Sean Quinn's schoolboy ridicule is particularly unfunny considering the desperate state that the British revolutionary movement (both 'official' and otherwise) finds itself in at this historical juncture. Let us survey Quinn's comments.

Firstly Quinn attempts to pour scorn on *Open Polemic's* strategy for breaking the deadlock of revolutionary impotence that currently exists. But rather than address this impotence, Quinn instead smugly attempts to ridicule *Open Polemic's* strategy of 'not intervening' in day to day political activity. What Quinn fails to appreciate, is that for *Open Polemic* to intervene directly in this or that particular issue, taking this or that particular line, would be tantamount to creating yet another organisation. This is precisely what *Open Polemic* has sought to avoid. Yes, direct intervention in the class struggle is vital for communists, but that intervention can only yield dividends when we have achieved ideological clarity. That is the purpose of *Open polemic*.

What Quinn as yet does not appreciate, is that *Open Polemic* is intervening in the revolutionary movement in a way far more profound than simply getting on to the streets with yet another banner and another weekly paper. Our intervention is aimed at establishing a sharp polemic across what is left of the revolutionary movement of this country, be it 'Stalinist', 'Trotskyist', or 'Maoist' or any of the numerous shades between. But we are not simply a 'vessel for your thoughts'. We have a specific goal of facilitating the integration of the revolutionary movement which we believe must be the prerequisite for a single communist party in this country. You yourself profess to have that very same goal. It is only our strategic approach that differs. As such, objectively we are allies and not adversaries of yourselves and the other 30 vanguards.

Quinn's second attempt to pour scorn on *Open Polemic* revolves around a supposed rejection by our editorial board of an article submitted by your central committee. This assertion is mistaken. We have not rejected the article, in fact we welcomed it as an important contribution. What Quinn describes as a 'rejection' was simply our request that the more overtly promotional aspects of your article (no doubt appropriate in its original published form) be left out so as to allow the readers of *Open Polemic* to focus directly on the political position of your organisation. We adhere to this editorial guideline for all contributions - it was not directed specifically at *The Leninist*.

Lastly and perhaps most revealingly, Quinn makes the assertion that the political debate that *Open Polemic* seeks to develop has already taken place "over the past nine years in the pages of *The Leninist*". A debate, we are told, "we conclusively won in theory and in practice". It may not have occurred to comrade Quinn that it takes more than one organisation to create a debate. In reality, and possibly through no fault of *The Leninist*, no other organisation has chosen to seriously engage in debate with your faction. Unfortunately, just because you say you have won a debate does not make it so! As for winning the debate against official communism 'in practice', we must tell you that this is not achieved by your simple announcement that you are now the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB. If only the integration of the revolutionary movement was that easy.

Quinn says that the debate *Open Polemic* hopes to engender is abortive. He will only be proved right if *The Leninist* and the other 30 would-be 'vanguards' remain entrenched in their respective bunkers and refuse to participate in open polemic.

NB: As for Quinn's comments on the three contributed articles found in the first issue of *Open Polemic*, it is for the respective authors of these articles to respond if they so wish. The editorial board has no intention of commenting on the merits or otherwise of contributed material.

*Open Polemic*  
PO Box 1169, London W3 9PF

Sean Quinn replies:

I shall be brief, as *OP* fails to take up the key points raised in my review in *The Leninist* No101, not least the critique of articles written, not by disinterested contributors, but by adherents of *OP*. How one can contribute to ideological clarification while being so blatantly evasive defeats me. The only written explanation given for the rejection of our article was that it did not fulfil *OP's* criteria, after verbally being told that any article would be printed.

It is sad that *Open Polemic* fails to understand the pivotal role of practice in the resolution of ideological struggle, expressed in its horror of establishing an independent organisation. Our practical struggle has been taken from our paper, into the meetings and ranks of the 'official communists', and to advanced workers through the results of Leninist ideological struggle: the UWC and HOI, for instance. And let's not forget the rigorous critique of history, felt in practice by the 'official communists' in the disintegration of their organisations; something the comrades of *OP* know all about at first hand, but have failed to learn from.

While the majority of *OP* adherents were ruminating at the failed appearance of *Proletarian* No3 and deriding Leninists as "neo-Trotskyite" some years back, our pages were continuously open to political opponents, as they are today. The difference is that we polemicise, like *Iskra*, from a definite political line, and seek to give that debate, that line, a material existence within the working class. That is the only real open polemic.

## Election

Firstly let me congratulate your decision to field candidates in the forthcoming general election, it marks a sign of political maturity and the development of your party.

The only caveat I would make to the above is that;

- The candidates are strategically placed to run against the particularly backward, rightwing and anti-working class labour MPs.
- Your candidates run to win and not simply as a protest or as a gesture. A Communist MP will have his/her work

cut out in defence of the working class of his/her constituency and in general. c) I am not against the Labour Party as such, or all Labour MPs, and would make the point that potential Labour MPs must be judged in their record vis-a-vis the working class struggle as to whether they merit support or not. Certainly we should give no support to the odiously right wing creatures which have gathered around Mr Kinnoek's backside.

d) Finally, I must say I would be against your standing in Glasgow Central as I would support the Scottish Nationalist in that seat, for a million reasons we have already argued and disagreed about in previous editions of the paper, and personally.

David Douglass

Delegate, Hatfield Main Branch NUM, Doncaster (in a personal capacity only)

## Support

May I as an ex-CPGB member, expelled in the anti-revisionist fight in 1967-68, express my satisfaction when I read in *The Leninist* that the sham communists of the CPGB EC had finally and fully relinquished all claims to Marxism and closed shop. It fully vindicated the stand that those of us who were expelled (and others) took.

It is good news that a provisional committee is now in existence with the aim of refounding and relaunching the CPGB under its original Marxist banner. The fact that you have bitten on the bullet means that there is still hope that the British working class will liberate itself from the yoke of capitalism.

I trust your conference went successfully and, much as I would have liked to attend, this was not possible partly financially but mainly because I am still barred from England, being still under a PTA order, one of the first in 1975, I am still proud to say.

You were kind enough to put me on your mailing list at the request of a colleague of mine in Portlaoise, I have not been able to take out a subscription due to unemployment for most of the 16 years I have been back in Ireland and will be an OAP in 18 months, so I hope you will keep sending the paper. Recently I got a few pounds so I am enclosing an order for £50 sterling as a donation to the party from myself and the boys in Portlaoise.

Tommy Cleary  
Ireland

## Iraq

In attempting to substantiate *The Leninist's* Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB position on the Gulf war and Iraq, Jack Conrad states, "Nevertheless, Iraq's per capita production went from being on a par with Bangladesh and India to the level of Greece and Spain, ie medium developed countries." (*The Leninist* No100)

*The Statesman's* Year Book for 1990-91 gives the following GNP per capita figures: Iraq \$2,140, Spain \$7,740, Greece \$5,213. Similar proportions obtain throughout the 1980s.

It is hard to understand how Jack Conrad can make this mistake when such figures are readily available, and it reflects badly on the rest of his analysis.

Trevor Rayne

Revolutionary Communist Group, London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

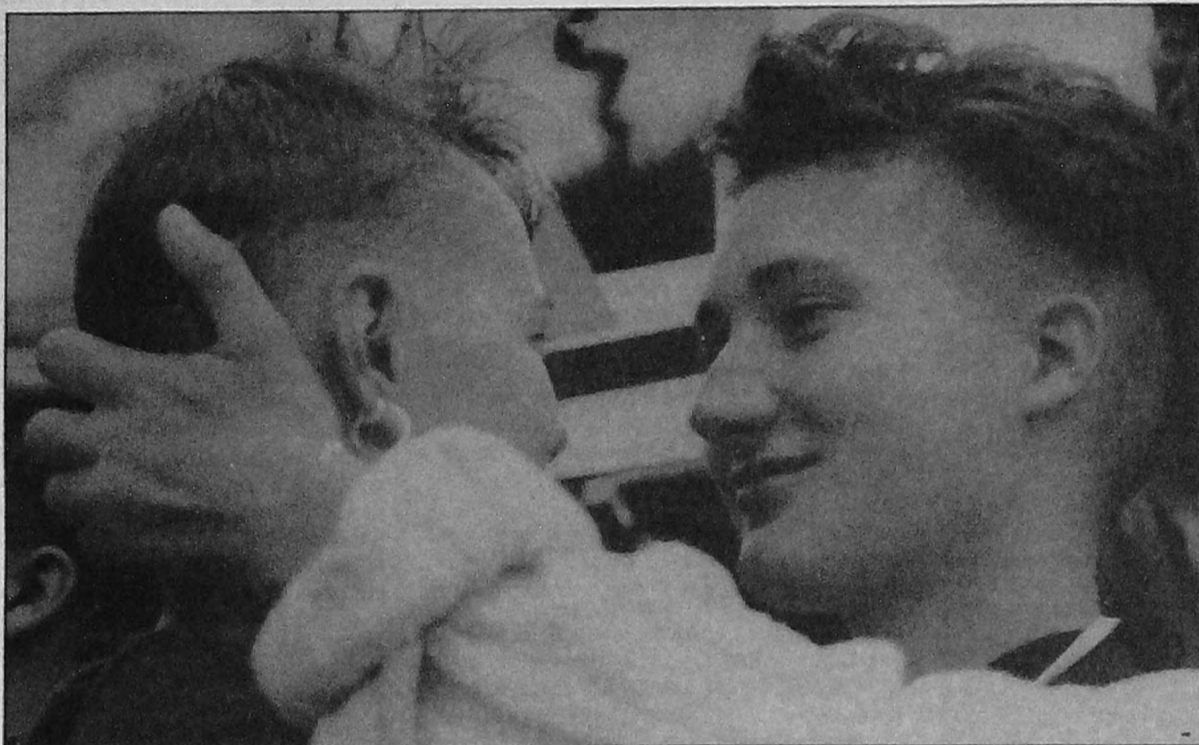
## WRITE OR RING

If you wish to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*, please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 071-431 3135.

## CLAUSE 25

# Class action against the bigots!

Clause 25 (1) is currently before parliament. There are few who doubt that it will become law later this month. When it does, lesbians and gays will face another attack on their rights and individual freedoms



Soon you'll be able to get five years for this

**C**LAUSE 25 (1) of the Justice Bill is designed to "protect the public from serious harm" as it enables courts to hand out "deterrent" prison sentences on 11 listed sexual offences. It has come as no surprise to the gay community that five out of the 11 offences involve homosexual activities.

Ever since the Aids hysteria of the mid 1980s, homosexuals have faced an increase in assaults, not only throughout the courts of the land, but also physically, on the streets, by 'queer-bashing'.

The infamous Clause 28 added fuel to this hysteria in 1988 when it made illegal the 'promotion' of homosexuality. Any library containing books portraying 'positive' images of lesbian or gay couples, any schools promoting homosexual education, could be taken to court and charged with "threatening community morality". In effect, the legislation reinforced the hatred and prejudice that already existed towards the lesbian and gay population and has strengthened and legitimised anti-gay violence.

Seen in this light, the self-assurance of many lesbian and gay activists that the law would prove unworkable has proven unfounded.

Throughout 1990, attacks on gay men became increasingly hideous. In April, one victim was so badly beaten that his left foot was half severed. In August, another vicious assault left a man with his head swollen to three times its normal size. Galop, the Gay London Police Monitoring Group, reports that 25% of all its calls are about 'queer-bashing'. A spokesperson for the organisation stated that "gangs using baseball bats and other weapons have been searching out gay venues and cruising places to attack people ... To judge by the phone calls we receive, and the brutality of the attacks, it is getting worse" (*The Independent*, December 18 1990).

The Judiciary has also had its fair share of attacks on lesbians and gays. In December of last year, Judge James Rant (not only by name ...) handed out to eight gay men prison sentences which totalled more than 25 years in the well documented 'Old Bailey SM

trial'. Others involved received suspended sentences which added up to 10 years.

The defendants were accused of causing actual bodily harm through sado-masochistic sex sessions, despite the fact that all the men involved freely consented. Now that this is illegal, where will the line be drawn? If a person's sexual activities fall outside 'normal sexuality', they face being imprisoned. In other words, the state can decide the type of sex an individual 'ought' to have.

With the introduction of Clause 25, the lesbian and gay community faces the worst attack on its individual freedoms since the witch hunts of the 1950s. In an effort to 'protect' society from 'harm', two out of the five listed gay sex activities have been highlighted as being the ones which will bring the harshest prison sentences: "Indecency between men" and "solicitation by men".

Of course, 'indecent' between men can be interpreted to mean as little as slapping one another on the back, sleeping together in each others' homes, let alone consenting to indulge in sado-masochistic sex! Similarly, 'soliciting' can refer to picking up somebody, whether it be through winking, smiling or simply exchanging 'knowing' looks.

The draconian sentiment of the Clause is also echoed in Paragraph 16, which refers to the Children's Act. Lesbians and gay couples will effectively be barred from fostering children in order to 'preserve' the 'sanctity' of the family. "No one has a 'right' to be a foster parent. 'Equal rights' and 'gay rights' have no place in fostering services", cried Junior Health Minister Virginia Bottomly. As if a person's sexuality determines their ability to bring up a child!

The response by the homosexual community has been encouraging. Various demonstrations have been organised by lesbian and gay groups in order to protest at the Clause. The march on February 16 in London was the biggest so far, and represented an angry expression of resistance, with well over 10,000 demonstrators.

Leaders of the various groups,

however, must not repeat the errors made when fighting Clause 28. This was politically sanitised as the campaign focused on 'big names' such as 'Colin' (Michael Cashman) from 'Eastenders', and on the wrangles of Parliamentary procedure, ultimately remaining outside the working class, both gay and straight. This was illustrated by the restriction of the Clause 28 campaign to lesbians and gays, excluding not only heterosexuals but bisexuals, on the grounds that they had an 'option'.

It is vitally important that the working class is won to support 'gay' issues. The class composition of the lesbian and gay rights movement is being altered at its base, with many working class homosexuals now taking up the fight. Their strategy, however, has to go beyond the limited resistance that the lesbian and gay movement can offer by itself, and must be based on a campaign aiming to mobilise all workers, regardless of their sexual orientation.

This campaign, of course, must not rely on the 'big names' of the 'official labour movement', let alone Labour Party tops. Trying to pressurise Kinnock to take up gay demands will end in disappointment. Indeed, to say that he and his party have voiced little opposition to the Clause would be an understatement. With a general election looming up in October, her majesty's loyal opposition wants to look as respectable as possible to the electorate - something which cannot be done by supporting even the basic demands of homosexuals.

The latest attempts to censor sexual activities which fall outside 'civilized society' are a direct attack on lesbian and gay rights and individual freedoms in general. This must be fought and stopped. The state has no right to interfere in the private lives of consenting people.

Lesbian and gay activists cannot win alone. The battle must be fought in the workplaces and in the working class movement. A mass working class led movement from below can smash not only Clause 25, but all anti-lesbian and gay legislation.

Gareth Phillips

## IN STRUGGLE

May 1, International Workers' Day, is an expression of the workers' international struggle for socialism. May Day tests the strength of the workers' movement and its communist forces. The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB is calling upon all working class militants and fighters for communism across the country to make our contingent on the London demonstration into a vigorous manifestation of communist determination. This year's May Day is also marked by a development in the regroupment of communist forces internationally. Following the London May Day march all CPGB sympathisers and supporters are invited to attend the launch meeting of the *International Information Bulletin*, a quarterly journal for the exchange of information within the communist movement internationally. The initial participating organisations are the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB, Communist Party of Turkey, Communist Labour Party of the United States of North America and the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*). The *Bulletin* will raise the revolutionary banner of communism and help us take a first step in giving our proletarian internationalism organisational form on an international scale. The London May Day march assembles 12 noon, Highbury Fields, London (Highbury and Islington tube). The *Information Bulletin* launch meeting will follow (approximately 3pm to 7pm) at the premises of the Union of Turkish Workers, 84, Balls Pond Road, London N1. MB

As well as the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising, 1991 marks the tenth anniversary of the hunger strike. The heroic protest to the death of ten young Irishmen against Britain's attempts to criminalise Irish POWs put the name of Bobby Sands on the lips of the world. The event which focused the world's attention on the struggle for Irish national liberation was his election as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone on April 9. This rocked the British parliament and put paid to the lie that the IRA lacked mass support. What is less well known was his prolific output of poetry and prose, mostly written in the H Blocks and smuggled out. It is great poetry of the oppressed which lacks a wide audience in this country, due mainly to the ability of the British establishment to maintain the allegiance of the working class in its war in Ireland. The Workers Theatre Movement has committed itself to taking Bobby Sands' poetry and his cause into the working class movement with a production of his epic *Trilogy*, which focuses on the prisoners' struggles in the Castlereagh Interrogation Centre, Diplock court and H Block. *Trilogy* is being performed as a one man show with live fiddle accompaniment and projected slide images and WTM is in the process of organising an extensive tour of the production. April 17 brings *Trilogy* to the Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, London NW1 as a benefit for HOI!, starting 7.45pm. £4, £2 concessions. To book *Trilogy*, or for further details, write or ring WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel 071-431 3135. GK



Bobby Sands' *Trilogy*: power from the prisons

Delegates to the NUT conference voted by a small majority to support teachers who refuse to carry out the Standard Assessment Tasks test. Teachers conducting the tests have a massive workload if the tests are to be completed. SATs is only a further attack on the education working class children receive. The boycott will mean teachers breaking the law. NUT general secretary Doug McAvooy has announced that a national ballot will have to be held first. This ballot will only involve those teachers directly involved in SATs, in an attempt to isolate them. Ballot papers will be mailed to home addresses, excluding many teachers, particularly in areas where turnover is high. Further indication of Executive rigging is that enclosed with the papers will be an Executive statement opposing the boycott, but no copy of the conference decision in favour. The two left groups in the union, the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union, were surprised by the conference vote, and made no attempt to organise an unofficial campaign. In the London borough of Tower Hamlets, where a number of schools last term voted to boycott SATs, the local STA leadership, with assistance from union full timers, killed off a boycott campaign. NUT militants must make sure that the Executive does not undermine the boycott of SATs. School NUT groups should vote not to start the SATs test, and prepare to fight for unofficial action free from the bureaucracy's sabotage. TC

## Deserved



Crisis stalks across the spectrum of the 'official communist' press. The *Morning Star*, *New Worker*, *Marxism Today* and *Changes* all face severe problems. Some of them talk about being forced to close because of "developments in Eastern Europe" - counterrevolutionary developments which they either took a head-in-the-sand attitude towards or actively encouraged. Their problems are therefore richly deserved. These journals are an insult to communism. In contrast, our paper, because of its politics, still goes from strength to strength. Last month's £600 fighting fund ended with a small, £35, surplus. We would like to thank in particular comrades AS, TR, TC, SW, NM, GT and DH. Let us do even better this month and celebrate May Day with a massive surplus.

# Real and false anti-imperialism

Throughout the Gulf War we said that the masses of Iraq should not support Saddam Hussein. We said they should prepare for revolution. In contrast many leftists urged the masses to enter into a "united front" with the Ba'athists

served to exhaust their apparent anti-imperialist nature and, by so doing, eliminated the political basis for nationalism. Once the national bourgeoisie had obtained independent state power and the foreign military and political forces had been expelled, the working masses of that particular country had to contend with the bayonets and police batons of their 'own' bourgeoisie; no longer could the national bourgeoisie garner nationalistic support on the basis of anti-imperialist posturing.

The second purpose was to weaken the dominating imperialist nation, through depriving it of the untold wealth and manpower at its disposal through its direct control of colonies, so hastening the revolutionary process at home by depriving it of the wherewithal to bribe its own workers with the fruits of colonial exploitation. At this stage, both in the colonies and at home, there was a common bond and objective between a colonial people's struggle, the national bourgeoisie, and that of the workers in the oppressing country in their anti-imperialist - political independence from the imperialist country.

However, Lenin and the Communist International gave no *carte blanche* to their support for nationalist movements. This is what underpinned the debate at the Second Congress of Comintern in 1920, where the formulation of conditional support for "bourgeois democratic" movements was further qualified as "national revolutionary". As Lenin explained: "The point about this is that as communists we will only support the bourgeois freedom movements in the colonial countries if

sations have not taken into account; they continue to live in the pre-independence days, before the national bourgeoisie had taken direct political power into their own hands.

In place of direct military and political rule by the imperialist nations over the former colonies, we have a situation where the national bourgeoisie rules, and with the aid and assistance of the former rulers they maintain, through their own sovereign state machine, the oppression and subjugation of the working masses to the capitalist system. The imperialist nations through their financial investments and control of the economies of the former colonies, continue the exploitation of the masses of workers, with the national bourgeoisie acting as junior partners, both economically as joint exploiters, and as the protectors of the system, militarily and politically.

Some countries have, partially, been able to break from this by the development of their own independent economic sectors under the control of native finance capital; eg, Turkey, South Korea, Iran and Iraq. But even these remain subordinate to the world economy, divided in the interests of the major imperialist powers, and heavily dependent on international finance.

In other words, without the burden and stigma as colonial oppressors, imperialism continues to dominate these countries economically. The common partnership between the national bourgeoisie and the imperialists is in a sense complementary; each serves to strengthen the other in their respective roles of oppressing the world's working class, for the continuance and maintenance of world capitalism.

## 'Democratic' imperialism

The critical factor regarding neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism is that the imperialist countries of the world continue to dominate and control the former colonies' economies, but in a more subtle and, for world capitalism, a more democratic way: they are not excluded by colonial rulers from investing and exploiting the masses and the nation's wealth. It was for this 'democracy' that US imperialism fought after World War II, with its call for colonial independence.

In alliance with the national bourgeoisie, imperialism, in the form of 'democratic' world imperialism, continues to dominate the former colonial countries; economically directly, politically indirectly, militarily, whenever the national bourgeoisie is unable to contain the masses revolt or when they themselves seek a larger share of the super profits extracted by the imperialist exploiters, and seek minor imperialist aspirations themselves.

Just as one imperialist nation will go to war with another imperialist nation to avoid being squeezed out of the world markets, particularly the lucrative markets of the former colonies, so a national capitalist nation will rebel against the pressure exerted on it by its imperialist masters.

In such an event, in order to obtain the support of its own working masses, the national bourgeoisie will recall the old anti-imperialist fervour, and condemn the rapacious exploitation and oppression of imperialism.

Examining the calls and slogans of anti-imperialism by many on the left against the historical background of the above analysis, we find that their conception of struggle against imperialism is still fixed in the era of the colonial independence struggles. This has recently been exemplified by the support given to the Iraqi bourgeoisie in its military conflict with the world imperialist forces, and previously by the support given to the Iranian bourgeoisie in its war with Iraqi capitalism, which was supported by the imperialist forces (though neither was "bourgeois democratic", let alone "national revolutionary" in any way).

Numerous other examples could be given, such as support for the Argentinian bourgeoisie in their conflict with British imperialism, and struggles between the various Latin American national bourgeoisies, who have economically conflicted with imperialism through nationalising their business interests.

All of the slogans and the tactics of a temporary united front - military, political or otherwise - with the forces under the influence and control of the national bourgeoisie were appropriate to the era of direct colonial rule, when the objective was to oust the imperialist military and political control from the colony; it was in the interests, both of the working masses and the national bourgeoisie to realise this goal. However there was no illusion by Marx-

ist-Leninists in this period that, by ousting imperialism militarily and politically, this would mean the end of imperialist economic domination, or the end of capitalism and the introduction of socialism. Rather, this was the preliminary and necessary first step toward freeing the masses from foreign domination and their illusions in bourgeois nationalism and so clearing the decks for the direct struggle for socialism.

In calling on the likes of Saddam Hussein today to fight imperialism, the so-called lefts strengthen the illusions fostered by the national bourgeoisie that they are genuinely anti-imperialist, and that the imperialists are the sole cause for the poverty and misery of the masses. Is it any wonder that the nationalism of the bourgeoisie maintains a hold over the masses, and that there is a 'crisis of leadership' in the ranks of the revolutionary forces?

## Fighting imperialism

In the struggles of an independent, sovereign, national bourgeois state with its imperialist master, it is a historical falsehood and a deception of the masses, to raise the slogan and consider the feasibility of that state's bourgeoisie "smashing imperialism". Such slogans cannot be realised by any section of the bourgeoisie, as it involves the overthrow of the capitalist system and a break with the market economy. As such, the national bourgeoisie cannot really fight imperialism, for to do so means to fight for the overthrow of the advanced capitalist system, from which imperialism arises and upon which the national bourgeoisie depends.

No capitalist system can exist independently of world imperialism. Imperialism, as the expression of monopoly finance capital, is not a system which can be isolated and defeated as a thing in itself; it is the universal imposition of the economic needs of the advanced capitalist powers upon the other nations of the world, the bourgeoisies of which must suffer its domination for the sake of their own existence.

When we declare that only the working class can smash imperialism, we mean that freedom and independence from imperialism is a question of breaking the economic stranglehold that the advanced capitalist nations of the world have over other weaker nations, and can only be realised through socialist revolution.

Many so-called Marxists do not comprehend the basic concept of Marxist philosophy, whereby a change in historical conditions demands a change in strategy and tactics. They fail to understand, as Marx, Engels and Lenin pointed out, that with the smashing of feudalism and the development of the bourgeois forces as an independent sovereign nation, the bourgeoisie ceases to play a progressive role in the development of society, and becomes a reactionary fetter on that society.

It is at this stage that the interests of the bourgeoisie and that of the working class are diametrically opposed, both economically and politically; that there is not a shred of common interest between the two classes. As such it is to the detriment of the independence of the working class to render support to, or to depend upon, the reactionary capitalist forces in the struggles to solve the workers' problems. This applies both to the imperialist and the non-imperialist capitalist states.

Supporters of the theory of united action with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism - a theory which has become an article of faith for the Trotskyites - fail to recognise that the historical triumph of capitalism over feudalism, and that of the national bourgeoisie as an independent sovereign state, is a qualitative change in the nature and role of these bodies. The previous oppressing force becomes an ally, while the former ally becomes an enemy. To deny this simple fact is to deny historical development, which is clear for all, except those who refuse to see, as history refuses to confirm their eclectic theories and the holy word of Leon Trotsky.

## Trotsky writes

Trotsky, writing on the question of the Sino-Japanese war in a letter to Diego Rivera, printed in *Leon Trotsky on China* (quoted by the *Workers Press*, February 28 1991, in an article entitled "Why Trotsky supported China's war" - in defence of its support for Iraq in the Gulf war), advanced the tactic of support for China, under the bitter anti-communist leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, in



Spot the real anti-imperialist

IT IS of primary importance for those living in an imperialist country such as Britain to fight at home against our 'own' capitalist rulers for the freedom of those peoples oppressed and exploited by 'our' capitalist rulers. In Britain, prior to the breakup of the empire, home rule for India and freedom for the colonies was the foremost demand of socialist organisations.

Today, the fight to smash the occupation of Ireland is still a central question of the British revolution.

The first purpose of this struggle for freedom of those oppressed by the imperialist forces, as elaborated by Marx, Engels and Lenin, was that the burden of direct military and political oppression by the advanced powerful countries of the world be lifted from the people of the colonies, so making the practical task of achieving their socialist revolution much easier.

In the semi-feudal colonies it created the conditions for the freest and speediest development of capitalism, and therefore its gravedigger, the working class. In the countries where this class already existed as a political force, there was the possibility of it taking the lead in the anti-colonial revolution, and of carrying the struggle through to proletarian power.

Politically, where the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie dominated the anti-colonial resistance, it

these movements are really revolutionary and if their representatives are not opposed to us training and organising the peasantry in a revolutionary way" (*The Second Congress of the Communist International*, Vol 1, p111). Note that no proviso is made for 'military not political support' - a later invention of the Trotskyites.

If we look at Lenin's support for revolt in the colonies and semi-colonies, these states today bear no resemblance to what various leftist groups choose to term "semi-colonial" Iraq. For instance, at the time Lenin was writing on these states, such as Morocco, despite their formally independent status, all were directly militarily and politically oppressed by imperialism. Their rulers were feudal and absolutist stooges and mere figureheads. As such, these countries were by no means independent sovereign bourgeois states, such as Iraq, Iran or Argentina today. It was to allow for the emergence of an independent capitalism that Lenin supported a war by these countries, for in the ensuing struggle, these feudal forces would be swept aside by the growing forces of indigenous capitalism, allowing the proletariat to rise as an independent force.

Once these common objectives had been realised, a significant change took place in the anti-imperialist struggle, which the majority of self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' and 'Marxist' organi-

its war against imperialist Japan. In his letter justifying such support, he makes an analogy between supporting a workers' strike which is under the leadership of reformists and supporting capitalist China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek against imperialist Japan.

Here is a glaring example of a lack of class understanding of the question, and why the present Trotskyite movement can so readily accept the question of a common interest between the national bourgeoisie of Iraq and its working class. How can anyone calling themselves a Marxist make a comparison between members of the working class, organised within a working class organisation such as a trade union, striking against the capitalist class, and a capitalist class fighting for the preservation of its own class interest, organised within a capitalist army? A Menshevik, yes, but never a Marxist-Leninist.

### False analogy

Trotsky, in his usual subtle style, is not in this instance making a direct comparison between classes, but a comparison between leaders. It would be too glaring a fault to openly compare classes, and make what would be a correct analogy, by suggesting that the workers of a small capitalist business should support their own weak capitalist against being taken over by a strong monopoly.

After arguing the acceptable and indisputable fact that at times workers must struggle under a non-revolutionary reformist leadership; after beguiling the innocent reader into recognising and accepting a fact of life, with a sleight of the hand Trotsky transforms this fact of life into the fiction of a unity of classes.

After the analogy of fighting a strike under a reformist leadership with that of fighting under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, he declares, therefore, it is correct to support capitalist China against Japanese imperialism. This is tantamount to saying, 'yes we are forced at times to fight under a reformist leadership, but we must also support the reformist leadership's defence of capitalism!'

Although Trotsky, like his epigones today, gave lip-service to the independent struggle of the working class, against both one's 'own' capitalist class and that of the imperialist aggressor, his actions belie his words. This was most glaringly obvious when one considers the fact that in China at that time, under the leadership of the Communist Party, there did exist a revolutionary workers and peasant movement that was fighting Japanese imperialism.

It was the duty of revolutionists to join with this movement and fight against feudal-capitalist China and the Japanese imperialists, for an uninterrupted revolution through to socialism.

Instead, Trotsky urged unity with Chiang Kai-shek, who was more concerned with an offensive against the revolutionary workers and peasants' movement, while fighting Japanese imperialism as a secondary war, under compulsion of defence when attacked. Official policy declarations aside, the Communist Party of China was put into a position where it was confronted not by an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek against the Japanese, but by the hostility of them both.

It is a tribute to the Party's tactical skill that it managed to win over large sections of the Guomindang, in effect neutralising Chiang.

### Iraq's Ho Chi Minh?

In line with Trotsky's community of class interest theory, we have the comparison that the Trotskyite movement makes between the struggle of the Iraqi capitalists and the genuine anti-imperialist struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants. The class significance of the fact that the Iraqi capitalist struggle was one for their own selfish class interest, and the Vietnamese war was fought against first French then US imperialism and for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist system completely eludes these so-called Marxists.

On the one hand we had a capitalist army, strictly controlled and directed by Saddam Hussein on behalf of the Iraqi bourgeoisie, and on the other hand armed peasants and workers fighting a genuine anti-imperialist war: a struggle to not only rid Vietnam of its oppressors, but to transform Vietnam from a capitalist to a socialist society. How can anyone but a blind fool - or one guided by Trotsky's Menshevik theories - make such an anti-Marxist comparison?

The conclusion of both wars speaks volumes for their different natures. On the one hand, despite the superior technological military material and the utmost brutality inflicted by the US imperialists on the relatively poorly equipped masses of Vietnamese peasants and workers, these workers and peasants, due to their ideological strength and their commitment to a just social cause, beat both their

'own' national bourgeoisie and the most powerful and wealthiest imperialist nation in the world.

What of the Iraqi bourgeois army? The masses forced into a brutally disciplined army against their will with incompetent and cowardly leaders at their head. This was a war waged by Iraqi capitalism for self aggrandisement, for aspiring imperialist interests, completely alien to the interests of the masses at home. It was a modern, well equipped army shattered and crushed not only by the imperialist forces and the incompetence of its own cowardly leaders, but due to the complete unconcern for the welfare and good of the workers and peasants of that army, who were wilfully sacrificed in their thousands as cannon fodder; an army whose rank and file had no interest in fighting a war for the imperialistic ambitions of the wealthy elite of Iraq, their brutal oppressors and exploiters.

In the face of these facts, many 'revolutionaries' dare to make a comparison between the Iraqi capitalist war and the heroic Vietnamese war for social justice and advancement! One classic example has to be the state capitalist Socialist Workers Party, who kicked off in the 1960s (as the grossly mis-named International Socialists) by

refusing to take sides in the Vietnamese war against the French, then jumping on the bandwagon of pro-NLF sentiment against the US, and latterly claiming their section of the anti-war movement was responsible for the defeat of the US! Well, if you're going to tell a porky, may as well make it a big one...

### Saddam

Today, the Iraqi bourgeoisie, to whose leadership the supporters of Saddam Hussein's war urged the Arab masses to commit themselves in a so-called anti-imperialist peoples' struggle, now seeks to massacre its disaffected army. Instead of exposing Saddam Hussein's anti-working class leadership to those who were fooled by his opportunist concern for the Palestinians and anti-imperialist masses, instead of calling upon the Arab masses to reject Hussein's deceitful appeal to them to support his war for "liberation of the Arab masses from imperialism and Zionism", instead of exposing his deceit, his left wing supporters committed

# Revolt on the Clyde

**B**EFORE August 1914 the organised working class movement in Europe was theoretically opposed to militarism and war, on a supposed Marxist basis.

However, as soon as world war went from threat to reality, this opposition collapsed and sank into the stinking mire of social chauvinism. Everywhere the official workers' parties and trade unions rushed to support their 'own' imperialist government and urged workers to join the ranks of cannon fodder. Resolutions calling for a war between the capitalist rulers to be used for revolution were dumped in embarrassment and replaced by resolutions justifying national hatred.

True, some claimed to remain true Marxists. But most did not dare unite word with deed. In order not to upset the powers that be they adopted a resigned Olympian detachment. For those whose Marxism did not go beyond writing worthy editorials and making fiery parliamentary speeches, the mud, stench and slaughter of the trenches seemed another world. In justification these centrists took up the stance of Jean Jaures, the great but flawed French socialist, who said just before hostilities started: "once the war has broken out we can take no further action".

Almost alone there stood the Bolsheviks in Russia. Because of years spent in fighting all forms of opportunism, the Bolsheviks were theoretically steely and politically equipped to withstand the chauvinist wave. In the name of socialism they fearlessly called for the defeat of their own country, a slogan they insisted applied to all powers in World War I. We all know the splendid results this line achieved in Russia.

But in their own, often hesitant, theoretically naive, yet admirable way, a small number of proto-communists in Britain tried to achieve the same results. In the forefront of this struggle stood the industrial heartland of Scotland, the Clyde.

The Clyde was said to be the one part of the British Empire where anti-war sentiments and activities could and were expressed without restraint. Whoever said it was forgetting India, Ireland and other colonies, but it pointed to an important truth about the advanced nature of the class struggle in that part of Scotland relative to the rest of the country.

World War I had been preceded in Britain by a tremendous upsurge of class struggle, with bitter defensive strikes of miners, railwaymen, dockers, and engineers. In spite of this the Labour Party, TUC and union general secretaries greeted the outbreak of war with an industrial truce and hurried to get their feet under the table of class collaboration. In the absence of leadership from the top, leadership emerged from below - a strong rank and file movement, shop stewards and workshop representation developed in the form of the workers' committees. In the Clyde, this won a particularly strong position and following.

These committees originated in the workers' resistance to attempts to undermine trade union defences of conditions and pay. But from these narrow beginnings the logic of the class struggle itself led to outright anti-militarism and anti-war activity - activity which had revolutionaries in the leadership.

Willie Gallacher, the chair of the Clyde Workers' Committee, then best described as a left centrist, but later to be a leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain, described the situation that developed in his autobiography, *Revolt on the Clyde*: "there had been carried on for a number of years an intense anti-war and anti-militarist

propaganda which continually exposed the war intrigues of the British government". The British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party both played a part in this, but the intellectual nerve centre of it all was one of our country's greatest revolutionaries, John MacLean.

Even in September 1914, a few weeks after the outbreak of war, MacLean was writing in the BSP's weekly *Justice*: "Our first business is to hate the British capitalist system that with 'business as usual' means the capitalist robbery of the workers ... it is our business as socialists to develop 'class patriotism', refusing to murder one another for a sordid world capitalism".

Gallacher tells how MacLean "went about the streets rousing the workers to a fury of anger against the war and the warmongers". MacLean and his comrades continually agitated in the workshops, meal hour discussion circles, with a big sale of revolutionary books, pamphlets and periodicals, had for a long time been a common feature in key workplaces on the Clyde, but following the outbreak of the war these increased vastly in range and importance.

There is a Labourite myth that the social pacifist ILP, which was the largest socialist organisation numerically in Scotland and the Clyde area, played a leading role in the fight against war. Nothing could be further from the truth. While the rank and file of the ILP played their part in the struggle that developed, the party itself was incapable of playing any decisive role in the fight against the war. The reason was its social pacifist politics and lack of any organisation in the workplaces.

It was the BSP and SLP comrades, with MacLean at their head who successfully linked their campaign against war to the movement of the workers around wages and conditions. After only eight months of war the Clyde was gripped by a series of massive strikes. They had a profound effect. Gallacher wrote: "Any hope the warmakers might have had of spreading the war fever throughout the Clyde was now gone forever. The workers knew their enemies and that they were not across the North Sea. Revolutionary agitators under MacLean's tuition were increasing in number day by day, and were warmly cheered in mass meetings. Wherever they went it became increasingly difficult for the 'patriots' to get a hearing".

The focus of struggle then shifted to rents. Taking advantage of the war, private landlords hiked up rents. As in those days the private sector accounted for the vast bulk of housing, the rent strikes that developed involved the mass of the Clyde's working class. With proletarian women at their head, city wide demonstrations brought out thousands, tens of thousands. So menacing were these protests, the government hurriedly passed legislation to curb rent increases. This anti-free market panic measure was decided upon when factory workers began to strike and join the rent protests on the streets.

By this time ex-servicemen were coming into action too. Wounded and sick men were coming home, and being discharged into the thick of the class war. Ex-servicemen's organisations cooperated with the shop stewards' movement, and actions against the war.

All this added to the government's already pressing problems in Scotland (the government now included a bevy of Labour MPs to give it left credentials). It desperately wanted - for obvious reasons - to persuade engineering workers to relax

the heinous crime of confirming them in their illusions, by making such false comparisons between his capitalist war and the revolutionary war of the Vietnamese by calling for "another Vietnam" in the Gulf.

By doing so, they assisted Saddam Hussein to don the cloak of a progressive fighter for the interests of the oppressed and poverty stricken masses; in this way they stabbed the Iraqi masses in the back and helped to weaken the popular uprising that shook the Ba'athist regime after its defeat in the Gulf War.

Now that the Iraqi revolution is in (temporary) retreat, surely it is the duty of any honest revolutionaries within these Trotskyite organisations to ponder and learn the lessons of the fateful policy initiated by Trotsky and applied today. It is their duty as honest revolutionaries to study Leninism, unadulterated by the falsehoods of Trotsky, and to learn that the cardinal principle of Marxism-Leninism is international class loyalty and the struggle for world socialist revolution, unencumbered by the reactionary baggage of the national bourgeoisie.

Paul Conlon

trade union restrictions and thus enable women and unskilled workers to replace skilled workers in the factories. As the mountain would not budge, the government's Mohammed came to it. On Christmas Day 1916 Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, met the Clyde Workers' Committee, under the chairmanship of Arthur McManus (later the chairman of our CPGB). But as the comrade said: "We knew it was a war for trade and territory, a war carried on for the purpose of imperialism. We were not supporting such a war, we opposed it." The stewards stood out for workers' representatives to control any dilution.

As a result of such unpatriotic stubbornness, rank and file leaders suffered arrest, including MacLean. Others were deported from the Clyde, shadowing the exclusion orders placed on Irish republicans today.

MacLean made a brave and defiant speech from the dock. But he showed he was nowhere as clear a Marxist as the Bolsheviks, or even as advanced as the Irish revolutionary workers and republicans were at the time: "I believe that this war is a war of capitalist aggression and defence" he said, but "I have always been against the use of arms for the purpose of securing redress. I have pointed out again and again that that type of thing might be good enough for men in Dublin, but that it was no good whatsoever for the Clyde workers who even if they had the inclination to use guns, have not got them". In spite of this MacLean was given a stiff prison sentence with harsh conditions; conditions which were to cause his premature death.

Clyde workers were greatly inspired by the February Revolution in Russia. But it was obviously the October Revolution that had the greatest impact. Throughout the last year of the war the tide of unrest grew. The May Day demonstration closed down the Clyde and aroused its people to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

After the war was over, in 1919, the class struggle continued to intensify. The Clyde engineering workers organised for a strike for the 40 hour week which lasted from January 27 to February 11. There was a vast demonstration in George Square, during which the Red Flag was hoisted on the municipal flagpole. The battle of George's Square showed the mood of the workers. The police attacked the demonstration and mercilessly beat its leaders - Willie Gallacher, David Kirkwood and others. But the crowd did not disperse. They fought back and showed that they could more than hold their own.

The next day the government sent in fresh troops with machine guns and tanks. No reliance was placed on the existing garrison in Glasgow. Even though the leaders of the Clyde Workers' Committee made no effort to contact them, these veterans were not considered trustworthy and they were rigorously confined to barracks.

Willie Gallacher later said of himself and other committee members, "we were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution." Imbued with the syndicalistic idea that industrial organisation was all that was needed, in the words of Gallacher, they failed to "realise the need for continuous and consistent leadership embracing all phases of activity", i.e. a Communist Party. This "represented a fatal weakness that was to lead to our complete eclipse." History is there so we can learn ... there must be no repetition of this "fatal weakness".

Harry Eastman



## OUR HISTORY

# Communist Unity Convention: parliament debate

### The formation of the CPGB and its early years: articles, documents and manifestos

Workers Power issued a leaflet dated March 2, urging people to "join an organisation which supported Iraq but simultaneously stood for the revolutionary overthrow of Saddam throughout this war". Now, let us remember what WP said in the not so distant past; in No135 of its paper: "insurrection or uprising against Saddam ... be judged against the need to defend Iraq from imperialism and to the objective of winning the war". Far from calling for the overthrow of Saddam, WP called for the suspension of any insurrection. So what was WP's position on the insurrection in the south and the Kurdish uprising in the north? If it was honest, it ought to condemn them. After all, the US, through the UN, has imposed humiliating peace terms and still occupies part of Iraq. Most likely though WP, as with other Trotskyite groups, will suffer a sudden attack of very convenient amnesia in a desperate attempt to bury its past line.

Another organisation whose revolutionary pretensions were exposed by the Gulf War was the Revolutionary Communist Group. Last year it explicitly rejected a call for the revolutionary defeat of both sides: the RCG's paper, Fight Racism Fight Imperialism (December/January) stated that the RCG "did not call for the defeat (revolutionary or otherwise) of Iraq. At the moment the biggest danger to the working class of the Middle East is not Saddam Hussein but imperialism". It went on to reject the call for insurrection there. Yet, now the war is over, what do we find? The RCG writes against the "call for a victory for Iraq, because the war aims of Iraq were also reactionary ... it could only mean a political victory for Saddam, with the continued enslavement of the Kurdish people and the Iraqi working class as its consequence" (FRFI, April/May).

Again on Workers Power - or rather their German 'section', Arbeitermacht. Recently they issued a leaflet urging German workers to "Get hold of the Treuehand"; a state trust that exists to privatise industry in the no-longer-GDR (further fruits of our Trotskyite friends' 'political revolution'). It looks like WP and its 'League for a Revolutionary Communist International' believe that in 'getting hold of the Treuehand' - rather than smashing it - the workers can lay hold of the existing state machine. Oh dear, WP, bottom of the class in 'Basic Marxism for the under fives'. Again.



Bob Stewart: 'Brains before guns'

AS WE saw in the last edition of *The Leninist*, the resolution on parliamentary action at the 1st Congress of the CPGB (the Communist Unity Convention) was moved for the Joint Provisional Central Committee by comrade Tom Bell. After the resolution was seconded, it was agreed that there should be a debate for and against parliamentary action. That meant leaving the amending the resolution till afterwards.

Although the question was one of the least controversial at the congress, there was some opposition. The essence of the argument was not whether or not parliament could be used to legislate in socialism. Almost all agreed that parliament had to be smashed. But where the majority recognised that it was necessary to use parliamentary elections to achieve that aim, a minority thought that any such attempt would lead to corruption and reinforce existing illusions.

The chair called six speakers against and 13 for the resolution. We will give edited excerpts from all speeches, as reported in the official account of the congress.

C Abbott (Southwark Herald League). It seemed to him that most of those in the unofficial section of the SLP and the BSP wanted this question of parliamentary action pushed, and when they had done they would go on with the old game of coming in with the Labour Party. A man sent to parliament would not be recalled, but would sit there as long as he liked. In the factory, where you talked to the workmen, was the point where organisation should take place.

Harold Macmillan (Glasgow Gamgand Independent Labour Party). The class war must be conducted in every country very much as any other kind of war - we must take into consideration the geographical situation of the country, its economic position, and the temperament of the people. Taking all these points into consideration, he had come to the conclusion that it would be a great mistake to cut ourselves adrift from bodies who undertook to run the masses by electoral methods.

TJ Watkins (Trethomas Communist

Unity Group). If he had not been an anti-parliamentarian before coming to the Convention, the mover of the resolution would have made him one. We should not be such fools as to face guns armless, and we knew that so long as we used a weapon as obsolete as parliament we were not going to bring satisfaction to the working class.

JR Stead (St Helens Socialist Society) said he had always understood that it was the economic power outside parliament that controlled the inevitable development of working class conditions.

Robert Williams (BSP National Branch). Supported the general principle of the resolution. To be a revolutionary did not imply either that one was a utopian or an impossibilist. We must have some regard in contemplating revolutionary possibilities to revolutionary occurrences elsewhere. The Convention had already agreed to affiliation with the Third International and affiliation with that revolutionary organisation would impose duties and obligations upon us as well as entitle us to claim rights and privileges ... Would anyone tell him our movement would not be considerably stronger if we had a man like Karl Liebknecht in the House of Commons? It would be a considerable accession of strength if we had only one man in the House of Commons today who, every time a Cabinet Minister got up to make a statement, would repeat "You're a liar!" That in itself would be sufficient to intensify our propaganda. If half a dozen men were championing the cause of the proletariat in the House of Commons, we could make it possible to use the pages of *Hansard* as revolutionary propaganda.

W Hill (Oldham Communist Unity Group). We should be prepared to take every instrument of capitalism and use it to smash the capitalist system, and parliament could be used to good effect if we got the right man ... We did not want men who would go there to ameliorate the conditions of the workers, but men whose object was to smash the machine.

J Hamilton (Liverpool Communist Unity Group). Political activity and agitation could be carried on in other directions than by putting up candidates for Parliament ... Undoubtedly it was the industrial machine that would have to function if revolution took place, and

not the parliamentary machine, which would be on one side.

H Webb (Ashton-under-Lyne Communist Unity Group). If we are eventually to have some form of parliamentary activity along obstructionist lines, we should see to it that the men who had to move along these lines were real revolutionary fighters; and a vote against parliamentary action now would enable us to get this.

W Mellor (Guild Communists). Said he took it that no delegate at the Conference regarded this question as a matter of principle; it was one of expediency and tactics. However much we might fear the contamination of the capitalist machine, we had to work inside that machine if we were going to smash it. We must look at the matter not from the high peak of Marxian dogma, but from the low ground of Marxian analysis. Marx showed that we had to use the instruments that were at our disposal at the moment. These included on the one hand industrial organisation, and on the other hand, the power that came to the workers in local and national assemblies.

Mrs DB Montifiorre (Glasgow College BSP). Reminded the Convention that one of the messages read that morning was from Clara Zetkin. There was no doubt about Clara Zetkin being a revolutionary ... Yet on the first chance of getting to the Reichstag Clara Zetkin had presented herself and had been elected ... Important as the industrial method was, at the same time we must go into parliament and work there. EW Cant (BSP Paisley). It had been asked, how were we to justify ourselves participating in parliament and at the same time arguing that parliament was no use as a means of emancipation? But the man in the street was not so critical as the average member of a Socialist Party, and was not so hidebound theoretically as all that ... Circumstances had so worked it that a crisis would be forced upon us, and as to whether we should take full advantage of that crisis, would not depend upon the measure of perfection of our organisation, but it would depend on the amount of propaganda we had done. That propaganda could be done at the workshop gate, inside the factory, inside the public house, at general elections, and at all times; and he was prepared to advocate the use of the parliamentary weapon so as to get at the workers' minds.

Bob Stewart (Socialist Prohibition Group). There would be elections whether we participated in them or not, and the chances were that we should spend more time telling the other fellow that it was not worth while, than it would take to do the job and be sure that it was not worth while. We should not keep out of Parliamentary elections however much we wanted to do so; people congregated to hear what the candidates had to say at election times, and the opportunity for propaganda ought not to be missed. Beyond this, it was our business to go where laws were made, so as to annul all the laws that sanctioned theft and to substitute a law by which theft would be sanctioned no longer ... A great many people talked about guns who would run away when they saw one. He was more interested in folks having brains in their heads.

L Manoin (BSP Sheffield). Supported the resolution.

E Marsh (BSP Central Hackney). It was necessary to use every weapon at

our command to fight the master class. Anyone who supported industrial action but not parliamentary action, or vice versa, was like a man going into a boxing match with one arm behind him.

FL Kerran (BSP Central London). Delegates were in too much of a hurry. They talked as if they had the whole of the masses of the people at their disposal; but, as a matter of fact, they only represented a very small fraction of the workers of this country. We could not make bricks without straw, and we could not bring about a revolution without having a certain number of the masses to support us.

G Roberts (BSP Saltlybridge). It was the duty of a member of the Communist Party not only to attack the capitalist system, but to defend the working class politically as well as industrially; he was aware that we could never hope to bring in the revolution by the parliamentary machine, but he recognised also that the strength of the socialist movement did not depend on the numerical state of the vote, but rather on the tenacity with which we defended the working class all the time. He believed in defending the working class, not because he wanted to standardise their slavery, but because in defending them he was attacking capitalism, and because they were the class that would bring about the revolution.

A Siffleet (BSP, Tooting). In favouring parliamentary action because we simply could not afford to omit its use, he did not imply that he attached undue importance to it. He was of opinion that there was no time for us to convert the electorate to any extent and get our men on the floor of the House of Commons in any number. He believed the revolution was too near for that. Answering comrade Stewart's reference to guns, we did not want guns if we could avoid them; but force would not be withheld so far as the master class were concerned. The workers must consider the question of armed force if necessary, to meet what would be brought against them. It was not enough to say, "Wait until the time", because we should find the other man armed and ourselves with nothing but ideals. We must avail ourselves of the parliamentary weapon, but not overrate it. Its only utility was for the education of the masses to bring about the social revolution.

Tom Bell replied to the discussion. He said there had been nothing substantial advocated against participation in parliamentary elections; the main point was that such participation was not vital. Not vital to what? Not vital, he presumed, to the communist movement. But all spheres of life where the working class mind was to be influenced were vital to the communist movement. We had got beyond the frame of mind that looked to conditions at some future date to determine what we were going to do. The Communist Party in the near future was going to be above all an active, decisive, and consciously working organism in the labour movement. We were not going to leave things to chance or time, but would seek to direct them in the direction we thought they ought to go so far as our communist purposes were concerned.

He appealed to all present, whatever decision might be made in this matter, to subordinate these minor and secondary aspects of the movement to the fundamental principles of an active Communist Party.

The chair, comrade Arthur MacManus, said the resolution would now be put for and against. In the event of its being carried it would be subject to amendments such as did not touch its integral character.

The resolution was put to a card vote. Cards to the number of 186, and representing 4,650 votes, were shown in its favour, while 19 cards, representing 475 votes, were against it.

## REVIEWS

### Funny old world...

Sam Marcy, *Perestroika, A Marxist Critique*, Workers World Publishers, New York, pbk, pp409, \$12.95

THIS book claims to provide a "critique of perestroika ... written from the vantage point of the world struggle for socialism" (pix) and to catalogue the "wholesale retreat from socialist goals in the area of social and economic relations" (px).

Worthy aims. But when the author claims that an "analysis of reforms has required us to examine them not as legal abstractions, as pronouncements on economic policy by officials and government bodies, but as specific developments of a social and political as well as economic character" (pxi), he is making unjustified claims for the book. Despite many correct superficial criticisms he is unable to incorporate these observations into an overall perspective which tells us why these things are happening, and why they are happening now.

Having surveyed some of the practical effects of this 'policy of openness', the substantial decline of the proletariat's relative political weight in the state machine in favour of "bourgeois intellectuals and administrators in the Supreme Soviet" (pxv), Marcy concludes that "the expectation that glasnost will open the way for greater socialist democracy in the true sense, that is, the participation of the masses in running the affairs of society, has yet to be realised (but will happen, as we show later)" (pxv).

So, glasnost's liberating effects are not felt by the Soviet proletariat ... yet. In fact, glasnost never deserved the critical support of communists. This initial position of support, then "critical support", for perestroika was held by the New Communist Party in Britain, a group which has taken to ardently peddling this book.

Glasnost was the political complement of perestroika. By granting circumscribed liberties to the bourgeois oppositionist intelligentsia, Gorbachev hoped to enlist its support for market orientated reforms against the conservative wing of the bureaucracy.

Unable to systemise his many empirically correct observations into a cogent analysis and programme of action from the point of view of the Soviet proletariat, Marcy simply comes across as a stern but indulgent critic of the bureaucracy. Despite his many disappointments, he still holds out some hope of self reform.

Thus, one of the last essays in the book, a reprint from the *Workers World* paper of August 17, 1989 concludes a survey of the miner's strike of the summer with the idea that "the issue for the leadership now is whether to serve the interests of the working class or to dissipate and erode the achievements of the socialist revolution in the interests of petit-bourgeois schemes to change the property relations in the Soviet Union. This could only provoke civil conflict and ultimately a struggle of the working class against the government as such" (p364).

In fact, the only way to preserve the gains of October is precisely through this struggle of the working class against this moribund bureaucracy and it is the duty of communists to make this clear.

The book is full of such hopeful calls to the leadership of the USSR to "pause and reconsider" (p242): as if this historically moribund caste now had any options left. Despite the precise nature of many of the individual criticisms Marcy raises, the overall effect is to strengthen illusions in the potential of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union to resolve the crisis in the interests of the workers.

As pointed out above, Marcy's

book and other writings from the Workers World Party he leads have found their way into the lexicon of 'kosher' literature of Britain's New Communist Party.

Cosy, but a little odd. After all, the Marcyites were formerly a Trotskyite organisation; the NCP are from the stable of erstwhile Stalin worshippers. How come they end up in bed?

The WWP is one the many tiny sects dotted around the US left. Historically, Marxist organisations in the US, even the most healthy like the early Communist Party, have been characterised by their general isolation from the working class, a feature exacerbated in the post-World War II period. This remoteness from the stabilising influence of the class has accounted for the tendency of the US left towards eccentricity.

Marcy's WWP is a case in point: an organisation which broke from the mainstream of Trotskyism when it supported the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 (hailed by the other Trotskyites as a "political revolution"). Today, its political evolution has produced a sect with no teeth. Pious hopes and calls for 'reconsideration' rain down on the heads of the Soviet leadership from the WWP. Meanwhile, the ineluctable internal logic of Gorbachev's counterrevolution runs its course, crushing in its path the good intentions and qualms of odd sects like the WWP and NCP.

What attracts the congenitally 'mealy mouthed' NCP to the Marcyites is precisely their weakest point as an organisation - their inability to present their criticisms of the Soviet leadership as having a revolutionary working class logic.

Ian Mahoney

## Travel light

John Rees, *Socialism and War*, Socialist Workers Party, pp16, 50p

*SOCIALISM and War* is the Socialist Workers Party's general outlook with regard to war; its 'update', if you like, of Lenin and Zinoviev's pamphlet of the same name.

However, unlike Lenin and Zinoviev, the SWP's approach does not seem to be consistent. For instance, in the Iran/Iraq War the SWP moved from a revolutionary defeatist position to support for Iran once the US backed Iraq.

In the run up to the Gulf War the SWP, in a rather mealy mouthed way, urged support for Iraq, which it had, only three years previously, called for the defeat of in its war with Iran.

Lately *Socialist Worker* seems to have discovered that such support for Iraq is inadmissible, Saddam being no Ho Chi Minh - and not one word of self criticism. How very convenient.

Yet, back in the 1960s, the SWP's forbears refused to support Ho's National Liberation Front, because it was just 'Russian imperialist stooges'. That, of course, changed when the Vietnamese solidarity bandwagon started to roll, and there were recruits to be made by shouting 'victory to the NLF'. The same populist response can be seen in the SWP's playing down its call for victory to Iraq, in order to curry favour with the pacifists.

The pamphlet kicks off by first looking at capitalism's relationship towards war. Here we have a rather skimpy analysis of how war arises from imperialist rivalries. Skimpy because, while looking at the development of the imperialist powers such as Britain, Germany or the US, it fails to look at the development of monopoly capitalism in non-imperialist countries.

As we know, these countries can develop their own expansionist desires, in an attempt to relieve the danger of revolution. In a world that is already carved up this is an important aspect of capitalism today, which turns an area

such as the Middle East into a cockpit of war and revolution. Such a lack of analysis, and therefore ideological commitment, has allowed this organisation to chop and change its allegiance throughout the various conflicts in the region. Opportunists always did travel light.

The pamphlet once again drags forth the SWP's un-Marxist 'theory' of state capitalism: "The Russian state, under Stalin and his heirs just as under the Tsar, has been a major imperialist power" (p6).

Rees' definition of imperialism - as being one of "a host of competing great powers" (*Ibid*) - is meaningless because it is bereft of any social or economic content - the only way in which the bureaucratic and relatively backward Soviet Union could be mistaken for a capitalist state which reproduces itself by the parasitic export of finance capital. Needless to say, Rees' and Lenin's definitions of imperialism have as little in common as do their pamphlets of the same title.

The next chapter deals with the Labour Party's position towards war. As it points out, Labour has always supported Britain's war efforts: "When clashes arise between other national blocks of capital, then Labour inevitably backs 'our' property and 'our' state. Equally inevitably, nation comes before class" (p10). But it is not the nation that comes before Labour's class interest: Labour has, and always will have, bourgeois interests. For it, nation and class go together.

The pamphlet talks about how workers of belligerent countries should be for the defeat of their own bourgeoisie and turn its difficulties in war into our opportunities for revolution.

Yet this is all in theory: Rees hides behind the (true) formula that "not every war creates the conditions for turning a war into a revolution" (p13). In the hands of the SWP, this becomes a 'tomorrow never comes' approach: the conditions are not there, therefore you do not fight for it. Hence, in practice, its tailing of the pro-imperialist Campaign to Stop War in the Gulf throughout the conflict. One must, after all, be 'realistic'. And there are few better ways of being 'realistic' than tailing the soft pro-imperialists of CND and the Labour left.

Many SWP members may feel this is outrageously unfair. Yet where in its paper, throughout the course of the war, did the SWP criticise the pro-sanctions, pro-UN position of the CSWG? Where did it attack the Campaign's cowardice in retreating before imperialist pressure and dumping its weekly demonstration? Search in vain.

Even the basic slogan of 'No to the War', which the SWP argued could be rallied round by all anti-imperialists was, in effect, pro-imperialist. Lenin opposed such a slogan when it was put forward by the pacifists and centrists in World War I, because "most people are definitely in favour of peace in general, including even Kitchener, Joffre, Hindenburg, and Nicholas the Bloodstained, for each of them wants an end to the war. The trouble is that every one of them advances peace terms that are imperialist (ie predatory and oppressive, towards other peoples) and the advantage of his 'own nation'" (*CW*, Vol 21, p290). And what was the CSWG's backing of the imperialist dominated UN and its calls for sanctions, if not predatory and oppressive against other peoples? Yet, instead of coming out against this abstract 'peace' that was so deceptive in the hands of the CSWG leaders, the SWP was the slogan's most resolute defender.

What is even more revealing about the SWP is their practice - or lack of it. Rather than use the SWP's relatively large resources to initiate working class action against the Gulf war, it tailed the CSWG, without even challenging it politically.

The SWP seems incapable of putting into practice the tasks which flow from calling for the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie.

Josh Leaversuch

## ACTION

### Communist Party

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135.

Collective discussion towards the Draft Programme of the CPGB (plus weekly discussion on current affairs):

April 21: Freedom of information. Openness in state affairs. Beyond a freedom of information act. No secret treaties.

April 28: Prisoners. Votes for prisoners. Prisoners rights. Training and education. Against the death penalty.

May 5: No seminar.

May 12: No seminar.

May 19: Religion. Separation of state and church. Freedom of religious people to worship. Freedom for atheistic propaganda.

May Day London march and rally - Wednesday May 1

March! Join the banner of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee on the London May Day march, organised by the London Joint May Day Committee. Assemble 12 noon Highbury Fields (Highbury and Islington tube) and march to Clissold Park, Stoke Newington.

Rally! Immediately following the march, all sympathisers and supporters of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee are urged to join comrades from Iran, Turkey and the United States at the launch rally of the communist *Information Bulletin*. Venue: Union of Turkish Workers, 84, Balls Pond Road, N1 (approx. 3pm to 7pm).

Leninism Lives! posters (A2) and stickers, advertising our organisation and paper. Ring 071-431 3135, or send donation with order to our box number.

### Hands Off Ireland!

March! 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising: assemble 1pm, Saturday April 20 at Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1. Nearest tube, Highbury and Islington.

HOI! T-Shirts: Be the sharpest anti-imperialist on your street. T-shirts, all extra large, £6 each (including p&p) from our box number.

London: activist meetings and actions. Details 071-431 3135.

### Workers Theatre Movement

Trilogy: Bobby Sands' epic poem, performed by WTM with live fiddle accompaniment and projected slide images. Extensive tour planned.

Bookings: WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX (071-431 3135).

Wednesday April 17: WTM presents *Trilogy* in a Benefit for Hands off Ireland. Venue: Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1 (Camden Town tube). Admission £4, unwaged £2. Doors open 7.45pm. ! (See p3 *In Struggle*)

Performers for WTM Club *The Internationale* please contact Tam on 071-431 3135.

Rehearsals: Every Sunday in London. Phone Tam on 071-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

### Unemployed Workers Charter

No TUC support for Tory cheap labour schemes! Fight British militarism! Organise the Unemployed!

UWC lobby of the TUC, Glasgow, September 2 1991:

Send SAE for sponsorship circular and UWC petition to the TUC.

London: activist meetings and actions. Details 071-431 3135.

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## After Birmingham Six...

# Free all political prisoners!

It is a right to resist oppression; it is a right to make revolution - by any means necessary

**O**N MARCH 14 a collective symbol of British oppression, immortalised for us all in the two dimensional brutality of 16 year old police mugshots, stepped into three dimensions, out of the doors of the Old Bailey to a jubilant welcome. The Birmingham Six, after 16 years of the state's dehumanising imprisonment, became again Hugh Callaghan, Paddy Hill, Gerry Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power and Johnny Walker, undertaking the welcome task of resuming and rebuilding their lives.

At their trial in 1975, the six men were told by Mr Justice (now Lord) Bridge that they were being sent down "on the clearest and most overwhelming evidence" he had ever seen, and dismissed allegations of assault on the men by police as "grotesque and bizarre". Three months later Lord Widgery saw no reason to accept their appeal.

Five years later the then Master of the Rolls, the geriatric vulture Denning, blocked an action against the West Midlands Police Serious Crime Squad because it opened up, for him and his class, "such an appalling vista". Most recently, in 1988, Lord Lane dismissed the last appeal, professing that he had become more convinced than ever of the men's guilt as the case had progressed.

Now, forced to eat their words, they are grouping together for support; Denning shedding crocodile tears for poor old Lane. It is good to see this vile crew squirm, but no amount of discomfiture can make up for all the years of imprisonment of the six brought about, justified and sustained by the cream - or scum, as it occupies the same position - of Britain's legal profession.

Nor are establishment calls for Lane to throw in his wig, or proposals for the new Royal Commission any answer, gratifying though it may well be to see the mighty fall. This, and the now inevitable action against various West Midlands coppers, are only establishment engineered damage limitation - a shallow cosmetic exercise.

However, even such actions as this have a contradictory effect. For instance, the release of the Guildford Four not only made ripples which undoubtedly created the climate for the release not only of the six, but of the Winchester Three and, hopefully in the future, the Tottenham Three. On his release, Billy Power immediately demanded the release of the latter, as Gerry Conlon of the Guildford Four had demanded the Six be released when he was freed in October 1989.

Attempts at papering over the cracks in the system have been imperfect, and have enabled such cases to come to the fore, and developed a healthy cynicism about British 'justice' in some areas.

But, where it develops, such cynicism has been directed at technical criticism - the scapegoating of individual judges and policemen and the tinkering of the Royal Commission. It is personified, at its best, by Chris Mullin's title for his excellent book on the case, *Error of Judgement*; at its worst by Roy Hattersley's smug comment on their release, that the British legal sys-

tem (the finest in the world, remember) puts itself right eventually.

Such an attitude is strengthened by the way in which the Six, and other Irish war hostages, have been released. It has not been the result of a movement from below, with masses of

overview of the tabloids' approach, which affects and reflects the consciousness of the majority of the people in this country, the day after the six men were released. To call it 'begrudging' is to give the media hacks too much credit. 'What about

For these jackals it is enough that the six men were on their way to the funeral of IRA volunteer James McDade, killed while priming a bomb in Coventry. To be Irish and republican is to be guilty.

In this sense, the establishment as a whole still comes out on top. It can hold

action. As long as Britain's war in Ireland continues, the PTA or an equivalent will be used against supporters of Irish liberation and there will be more Guildford Fours, more Birmingham Sixes. Workers in Britain must be won to side with the Irish and for the freeing of all Irish political prisoners" (*The Leninist*, October 25 1989).

The failure of socialists and communists to have done this leaves the door open to more of the same. And this affects struggles in Britain. The failure to defend Irish prisoners leaves the British working class to be criminalised as the 'enemy within' every time it fights for its own rights.

It is clear that we do not see an 'error of judgement' or the malicious effects of 'a few bad apples'. This is the ugly, necessary product of British imperialism, particularly its war in Ireland. To prevent any more frame-ups we must fight to build the movement that, had it been present in 1974, would have prevented the six men ever being jailed; a working class

movement in Britain fighting for the defeat of 'our' ruling class in its war in Ireland.

Today, we are very little nearer that goal. The release of the Birmingham Six demands such a movement be built. It can be, and the fight starts here. Free all political prisoners! Smash the PTA!

Alan Merrick



Six free at last; but there's hundreds more where they came from

working class people fighting against their imprisonment, but from above, with an alliance of establishment politicians, cardinals and media personalities. The masses have remained passive and uninterested, and the illusion is retained that it is 'great men' who make history.

The problem is that this leaves the institutions and political climate that enforced 16 years of jail untouched and unchallenged. This can be seen by an

justice for the victims?", demanded the *Evening Standard*, urging a renewed hunt for the IRA volunteers who carried out the bombings.

This was a common theme in all the bourgeois dailies: even the release of six framed Irishmen can be turned round to legitimise the criminalisation of the fight for Irish self determination.

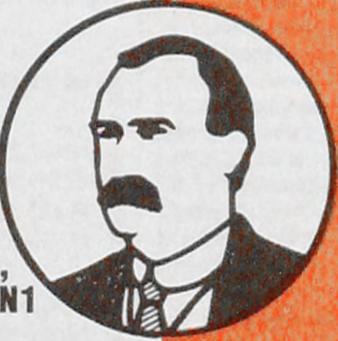
Even more sick is the line peddled by the likes of the *Sun* and *Daily Star*,

up the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six as a warning to all Irish people and supporters of Irish freedom: step out of line and this will happen to you. 'Innocence' or 'guilt' is no criterion for British justice.

That is why, after the release of the Guildford Four, we argued for "the freeing of the Birmingham Six, not through a judicial enquiry, as the Labour Party wants, but through mass working class anti-imperialist

## Take the streets for Irish freedom!

**Assemble:  
Saturday  
April 20, 1pm  
Islington  
Town Hall,  
Upper Street,  
London N1**



James Connolly

**75 YEARS SINCE THE  
EASTER RISING  
TROOPS  
OUT NOW!**

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**S**EVENTY-FIVE years ago the Easter Rising burst forth on Dublin's streets. The heroic few who, in 1916, fought to turn imperialism's war into a war for national and social liberation sent a message of revolutionary defiance ringing round the world.

In the wake of the west's slaughter in the Middle East, and with the Irish war in its 22nd year, the lessons of the Rising, and of the Irish revolutionary socialist James Connolly, could not be any more relevant. Had he not met his death before a British firing squad, we can be almost certain that Connolly would have found himself in the ranks of the Communist International, formed three years later from those like himself who took an internationalist stand against the war. The revolt in Dublin represented the opening shots of that phase of the world revolution, victorious in Russia just over 18 months later. Today, when workers are still dying in our rulers' wars, when Britain still wages war against the Irish people, the parallels and solutions are stark.

The embarrassment with which the bourgeoisie of the Twenty-six Counties view their own revolutionary predecessors is clear. Their ineloquent apologies are an eloquent testimony that the heroic

legacy of the Rising has passed to those whom Connolly called the incorruptible inheritors of the struggle for Irish freedom - the working class.

Those who fought for liberty in 1916, Connolly's Irish Citizen Army - Europe's first Red Guard - and the Irish Volunteers struck a blow for all those facing exploitation by striking at the British state. In Belfast and Brixton, this is still what we face. Weapons of repression honed in the north of Ireland are turned on workers in Britain who stand up for themselves: black youth, trade unionists - anyone who fights back. We are all put against the beast that has sharpened its claws in Ireland - British imperialism. Those who rose up in 1916, the volunteers of the IRA and Inla in Ireland today, show it can be resisted. We must join the might of the working class in Britain with theirs and show it can be killed.

Take the streets for Irish freedom on April 20 in London and build the movement that can do it.

For the IRA: against the British army!

Self determination for the Irish nation!

Troops out now!