

The LENINIST

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CPB, Euros p5

Post-coup special

Gorbachev's return: Counterrevolutionary danger increases

The August 19 anti-Gorbachev coup was in objective terms badly timed and poorly executed; predictably its collapse has strengthened the hand of counterrevolution. There is nothing to celebrate in this

GORBACHEV'S triumphant return to Moscow was due *primarily* to the depth and breadth of popular resistance and *secondarily* the effect this had on exacerbating divisions within the conservative bureaucracy: it was the divisions that resulted in the dislocation and fissuring of the Soviet Union's armed bodies of men. However it would be wrong to simply regard the failure of the pathetic State Emergency Committee as a wonderful and inspiring triumph of democracy. Democracy does not exist in a vacuum. It has to be evaluated in the context of a world divided by classes and *class interests*. Democracy is either revolutionary or reactionary.

The collapse of the eight man State Emergency Committee, their arrest and the return of Gorbachev has nothing to do with proletarian democracy or revolutionary mass action. It is a victory for the forces of reaction, imperialism, capitalism and counterrevolution. True, as in Eastern Europe, this victory has taken a democratic *form*. Nevertheless that should not lead us for one moment to lose sight of the fact that what we are dealing with is *democratic* counterrevolution.

That explains why those who in Britain brutally imposed the universally hated poll tax, crushed the miners and, despite almost universal opposition, run down the NHS - Thatcher and her chosen successor Major - called for mass action on the streets of Moscow and Leningrad. That is why Bush, the world's number one imperialist butcher, supported strikes in Siberia; why the *Financial Times* urged Yeltsin to appeal directly to the class interests of Soviet workers; why the BBC

welcomed splits in the army - hardly the sort of thing they do at home.

Our position is equally clear, equally partisan and completely different. With us the long term interests of the working class are the beginning and end of our politics. And what leads us to champion the working class and oppose the ruling class here in Britain leads us to oppose Gorbachev in the USSR. We do not celebrate his return. He is a class traitor. Gorbachev's perestroika had nothing to do with strengthening socialism. Perestroika was a transparent cover for the restoration of capitalism. Its progress in the USSR paved the way for a worldwide period of reaction and capitalist triumphalism.

Whatever they believe now, for the Soviet masses the restoration of capitalism can only mean misery, massive unemployment and a political system that owes more to South America than Western Europe. That is why at no point did we join in the chorus demanding the restoration of Gorbachev, why we opposed all imperialist financial, diplomatic and military threats against the Soviet Union during the 60 hour reign of the State Emergency Committee.

That did not lead us to politically support the State Emergency Committee coup. Our position was clear: the August 19 coup created an opportunity, an opportunity to make *political revolution* against both the conservative bureaucracy and the *most* counterrevolutionary forces fronted by the Yeltsinites.

Clearly the conservative section of the bureaucracy behind the ousting of Gorbachev no longer believed in itself. As a section of society that faces social extinction it was fitting that its coup was as desperate as it was pathetic. It was badly timed and

badly executed.

Disobeying the first law of the military art, the putschists were half hearted, acted with a complete lack of decisiveness - and thus fatally gave away the initiative. Gorbachev was placed under house arrest, that is true. But Yeltsin was allowed to operate with hardly any restrictions. The 'White House', the Russian parliament in the heart of Moscow, was left to grow into a Versailles-like counterrevolutionary centre. No attempt was made to even cut off its phone lines. It was a gift. Yeltsin made sure he had numerous well reported (on the BBC World Service, Radio Liberty, etc) chats with Bush, Major and other western leaders.

If the eight men of the State Emergency Committee bungled militarily, they fell flat on their faces politically. They began badly, and over the three days in which they formally exercised power, got steadily worse. Showing not the slightest glimmer of imagination, these perfect representatives of the historically exhausted bureaucratic caste claimed that Gorbachev had not been overthrown - he was ill. The same bureaucratic mind-set dictated the insistence of the State Emergency Committee that it remained committed to and would carry through Gorbachev's perestroika - hardly an inspiration to those millions already facing unemployment, price hikes and fearing the prospect of economic meltdown as a result of this counterrevolutionary programme.

Quite rightly the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB therefore argued from day one of the State Emergency Committee coup that it might have *temporarily* stayed the hand of counterrevolu-

tion but defence of the USSR "more than ever necessitates intransigent criticism of its leadership" (see statement on page 4). The State Emergency Committee coup was in the spirit of Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968 and Poland 1981. It was, in other words, classically bureaucratic, sectional and, given the general crisis of bureaucratic socialism, even more contradictory.

The ragged and bungled State Emergency Committee takeover and its humiliating collapse has paradoxically immediately *facilitated* the restoration of capitalism. The binary stars of counterrevolution, Gorbachev and Yeltsin, both say that there can be no holding back on the transition to capitalism. It will be full steam ahead. Moreover, although Gorbachev's star remains dim, Yeltsin's burns brighter than ever. Yeltsin now demands yet more powers under the Union Treaty, his own army, KGB and control over all industry.

Crucially, through its conservatism, inability to mobilise any social base, negative attitude towards democracy and lack of any alternative programme, the masses were handed over by the State Emergency Committee as a gift into the arms of Yeltsin - unhappy is the land that needs such a 'hero'. Russian president Yeltsin - the chief counterrevolutionary personality in the USSR, has been greatly strengthened by the botched coup, as have his alter egos in Georgia, Moldavia, the Baltics and the other republics. Already Georgia, Moldavia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have announced their independence as *capitalist* powers.

There can also be no doubt that as well as broadening the base of *democratic* counterrevolution, the

Communist Party of the Soviet Union has been further marginalised. The State Emergency Committee did not see the need to involve it. Nor was it quick to state its own attitude. Its passivity will cost it dearly. The CPSU now faces disintegration, and what remains eventual persecution. If it is to be saved, the genuine communists must act fast, cleanse their party of careerists and rights and raise the Leninist flag of *socialist* democracy and mass action.

In broader terms the State Emergency Committee debacle must be seen against the background of the worldwide period of reaction. The fall and return of Gorbachev, the rise of Yeltsin and counterrevolution can only deepen that reaction and fuel the capitalist ideological offensive. What is seen as communism will be branded as totally discredited, as will all ideas of social progress.

This moment in history, like the blackest periods in the past, requires communist steadfastness. We must steel ourselves to withstand the reactionary floodtide that will result from recent developments in the USSR. Both those who joined the imperialists in demanding Gorbachev's "reinstatement" or in "welcoming" the State Emergency Committee coup are in no position to do so. They will be torn apart and swept away. Only those who fought for working class political independence and a programme of political revolution will survive in order to fight another day ... and whatever our class enemy might say or think, have no fear, that day will come.

Jack Conrad



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

THE August 19 coup brought a predictably limp, legalistic and thoroughly opportunist response from the 'official communist' *Morning Star* and its Communist Party of Britain. Summoning up all the passion of a speak your weight machine, the *Morning Star* editor, Tony Chater, dryly noted that the "action" "has to be regarded as unconstitutional" (August 20 1991). That is stating the obvious. The real question is what conclusion we come to. We called for a communist-led mass *revolutionary* struggle against the State Emergency Committee and those, both in the Soviet Union and internationally, demanding Gorbachev's reinstatement.

Not the *Morning Star*. It was all at sixes and sevens ... and hedging its bets. In order to balance its daring assessment of the coup, the paper ventured to suggest that Gorbachev "could certainly have been criticised for indecisiveness and the lack of a coherent strategy for democratisation and reform within a socialist context. For too long he has been strong on generalisation and short on detail."

From the *Morning Star* this is true to form. Gorbachev could "have been" criticised for his "indecisiveness" and "lack of coherent strategy". But the *Morning Star* never did; indeed its CPB's programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, gives full support to Gorbachev's so called "new political thinking" and his perestroika "restructuring" of socialism. Only when it appeared that Gorbachev was banished from all positions of political power (no longer able to reinstate the Soviet Union's "suspended" order) did Tony Chater offer his readers any such criticism.

Yes, this is true to form. The *Morning Star* and its predecessor did exactly the same with Stalin, Krushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko. Only when they were ousted, or even better, safely interred in the Kremlin wall, was ground for criticism suddenly discovered.

Of course, what was wrong with Gorbachev pre and post-August 19 was not so much "indecisiveness" nor "lack of coherent strategy". What was wrong with him was that his perestroika served the interests, not of socialism, as the *Morning Star* had previously always claimed, but of capitalism. That is why the imperialists united as one in mourning his unexpected overthrow and rejoicing at his dramatic comeback.

Given that, and the *Morning Star*'s one minute past midnight admission that Gorbachev's Union Treaty - due to be signed on August 20 - left the centre "almost powerless" and threatened the Soviet Union "with disintegration", "that the socialist objective (sic) was in practice being compromised", that there was an "unwillingness to contest openly views which were in fact hostile to socialism" and that "pressures were building up from the so-called radicals for a type (sic) of privatisation that would open up the door to capitalism", it was criminal for the *Morning Star* and its CPB to join in the clamour "demanding" Gorbachev's "reinstatement".

As we will see, Gorbachev's reinstatement will only speed up the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the completion of the counterrevolutionary process begun by his perestroika. Thus the *Morning Star* and its CPB have - in spite of their sudden admission that Gorbachev's politics in practice undermine socialism - lined up with reaction. Such bodies can play no positive role in the struggle of the working class. They deserve the special contempt and hatred our class reserves for traitors.

Of course, there are elements in what remains of the CPB and other 'official communist' rumps who openly welcomed the coup. These comrades saw it as an honest, if heavy handed, attempt to put a stop to counterrevolution.

This view might have lacked theoretical clarity, it was undoubtedly based on wishful thinking. Nevertheless it does have the virtue of putting these comrades on the right side of the class war barricade. Gut instinct led them to oppose not only imperialism but also its agents in the USSR, above all Gorbachev and Yeltsin. That is praiseworthy ... but not enough.

These are the most testing times for communists. They demand more than a defence of the past. All that seemed certain for 'official communism' has already turned to dust. Where Hitler failed, with the help of Gorbachev and Yeltsin modern day imperialism stands on the brink of success. Its takeover of the USSR is imminent.

What is needed now is a break with the agents of imperialism in Britain who still dare call themselves communists. Only then can we take on imperialism itself. Excuses for inaction no longer wash; the battle lines have been drawn. What we need is more than gut feelings, what we need is *real communist* organisation.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Militant

I recently attended a Youth Rights Summer Camp, where a jolly time was had by all - unless, it seemed, you had come to debate politics. CPGB supporters found themselves rather unwelcome as the week went on.

Interestingly, individuals admitted that the Militant Tendency was not revolutionary, since this would alienate the working class. The general attitude was - "Yes we are revolutionary, but we can't tell people that. We know we can't get socialism through an enabling act in parliament, but our programme is only a transitional programme". Militant not only panders to the backward ideas of the working class, but actually reproduces those ideas. The real danger is that Militant has the potential to lead the working class - to disaster.

As one would expect, Walton was a talking point. There are obviously many differences within Militant at all levels. Taaffe and Leslie Mahmood more or less swore their total allegiance to Labour come hell, highwater or complete expulsion. From other lofty heights came rumours of experimenting with independent organisation, Real Labour continuing elsewhere, Tommy Sheridan standing in Glasgow, but a continuing orientation towards Labour. Militant is clearly faced with a dilemma. The more independent it becomes from Labour, as it has been forced to do already to certain extent, the more this highlights the fruitlessness of fighting for a socialist Labour Party.

Linda Addison
London

More Millie

The way to 'end' a party is not to walk out of it, just as the CPGB has done. The socialist way, the proper way is to stay there and fight for it. Our perspective is the labour movement - that's why we're there. Expulsions mean nothing. There are thousands of Militants, true socialists, in the Labour Party.

The CPGB is dead. Long will socialism reign. It will come, make no mistake. Breaking from the Labour Party is very wrong and will never happen.

We also practice what we preach, politically, with MPs of Terry Field's stature, a world class library, the biggest school of cadres here and internationally. Who, in their correct political mind, would join sectarians like you? A life long Militant
Kent

Bile

P Conlon (letters *The Leninist* No107) continues his outpouring of bile against Trotsky and Trotskyism. We find on close inspection that his arguments are simply dishonest and contrived, and his logic suspect. The method is roughly as follows: find a couple of quotes from 'Trotskyist' groups (Militant or the 'hard' Workers Power) to show them as soft on Labourism - that's the easy bit to swallow. Then expand the argument to Trotsky with some carefully selected quotes and go, on the basis of this 'proof', to brand all who claim allegiance to Trotskyism as Menshevik.

Pivotal to Conlon's argument is his portrayal of Trotsky's position on the Bolshevik demand in 1917 for the Mensheviks and SRs to take power. Conlon tells us that Trotsky deliberately omitted the allied demand of 'All Power to the Soviets', thus reducing the "demand for the reformists to take power to a passive and reactionary

slogan: a demand for the establishment and support for reformist bourgeois governments". This he presents as the hallmark of Trotskyism inseparably linked to entryism in the mass reformist movements.

Trotsky also deals with the "Workers and Farmers Government" slogan which the Bolsheviks used in this same context. Trotsky explained the meaning of the slogan as no more than a popular designation for the Dictatorship of the proletariat, which "underscored the idea of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry upon which the Soviet power rests."

The question arises, why does Conlon do this? I suggest that he is pandering to a prejudice - a deeprooted one, at least within the Stalinist milieu from which *The Leninist* has emerged. It ultimately reflected a bureaucratic fear and hatred of revolutionaries, whose ideas were falsified and cadres vilified, purged and murdered. It seems to me that there are still people in your movement infected with such prejudice.

The danger, for you, is not merely that barriers are set up to the pursuit of political clarity, but that theory ceases to be a guide to action and becomes instead a talisman, an index of loyalty to a party regime.

Mike Martin
Sheffield

Stalinist

After ploughing my way through numerous back issues of *The Leninist*, I have noticed (it is hard not to!) that you never use the terms 'Stalinist' or 'Stalinism'. You use the expressions 'official communism' or 'bureaucratic socialism', or sometimes 'living socialism'.

Do I infer from this that you reject the term 'Stalinist/Stalinism'? If a comrade or a reader can briefly explain *The Leninist*'s attitude towards this question I would be very grateful.

Also, what is the attitude of *The Leninist* towards the events of Hungary 1956? Do you regard it as a 'counter-revolution', a 'spontaneous uprising' against political tyranny, a terrible tragedy, or what?

Finally, why exactly do you talk of Trotskyism's 'self-imposed' exile from the world communist movement - surely Trotsky was forcibly driven out of the Communist Party and then the Soviet Union? Better a living revolutionary than a dead martyr!

Eddie Ford
Cornwall

USSR

The inability of the far left in Britain to come to terms with the reality of living socialism, despite the 'impure' or 'bureaucratic' form that it may take, is its single greatest weakness. Such a weakness is displayed by comrade Ashe (letters, *The Leninist* No107).

According to comrade Ashe, "exchange the words 'bureaucratic socialism' for 'degenerate workers state' [and] we would have an analysis of the USSR straight out of the most fanatical of Trotskyist papers".

To assert that the phrase is purely a cover-up for the 'Stalinists' to secretly 'appropriate' Trotsky's theory shows Ashe to be a dilettante.

The unconditional defence of the socialist countries, while recognising their bureaucratic weakness, bears no resemblance to perfidious Trotskyism which capitulated wholesale to anti-Sovietism after World War II.

Compared to a concept, reality will always be 'wrong'. The superiority of the socialism of the USSR, Eastern Europe, etc. over other possible 'socialisms' was the fact that it existed, it was real.

To paraphrase Lenin, those who

wait around for pure socialism have no concept of what socialism really is.

Greg Black
Southampton

ANC

We have lately returned from Durban where we attended the recent ANC Conference. I had been invited to attend as a 'Stalwart' of the ANC, and Norma as an observer at the open session. There were more than 2,300 delegates to this conference, of which 54 were stalwarts. It was pleasant to meet people one had worked with 30 years ago when umKhonto weSizwe started, and to inflict one's presence upon those who had tried to push us out.

We got a tremendous welcome from most of the delegates, whose average age was 34, with 85% of them from inside the country. I attended the commissions on negotiations and on MK. If the reportback on negotiations is anything to go by, it will take years before a Constituent Assembly is reached, unless matters are settled in a more violent fashion beforehand. Many people were concerned that umKhonto weSizwe should be preserved, held in combat readiness, and participate in community-based defence units against the perpetrators of the violence. There has been talk of winding it up.

The new NEC is much younger than before too. The South African Communist Party clearly had a slate and was successful in getting many of its members onto the NEC.

I have engaged the SACP in polemic in *Work in Progress* No73, for pretending to be Marxist-Leninist. A party spokesman shot me down in flames in *WIP* No74, but, being fireproof, I am making a riposte in No75, where I had to compete for a place with other contributors, because it looks like I have started a hot discussion.

David Kitson
Zimbabwe

Gulf

I agree with comrade David Rhys' letter (*The Leninist* No106) that the Trotskyite slogan 'military not political support' used by some groups during the Gulf War was very spurious. No communist could give any support to a Saddam Hussein who has the blood of many Iraqi CP members and trade unionists on his hands.

However, this did not stop me from marching behind the banners of the anti-imperialist contingent in London at the time of the conflict. Instead of abstaining from these demos, why couldn't the Communist Party have marched behind a banner proclaiming international solidarity with the beleaguered Iraqi working class during that horrific imperialist slaughter of the innocents? Sadly, on this occasion, the Communist Party was notable by its absence.

Clive Morris
Herts

Sean Quinn replies:

Actually, comrade, we ran a non stop picket of the US embassy throughout the conflict, intervened in many (particularly healthworker's) union branches on a revolutionary anti-war platform and in many other areas of the movement around the Gulf War. What did you do in the war, daddy?

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.

Finance: striving for the necessary

After the revolution in Russia Lenin championed the subbotnik - communist work for the common good. Before the revolution in Britain we champion the Summer Offensive - communist work for the communist future

AT a meeting in central London on July 28, comrade John Bridge announced the decision of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party to extend the 8th Summer Offensive by one month until the end of August. Comrades then and there raised their pledges to £24,300 - magnificent, but still well short of our £30,000 target. However, by mid-August - with a number of new comrades joining the offensive and several comrades yet again increasing their pledges our 8th Summer Offensive stood at £26,940.

We need more. We have already bought a laser printer and other equipment, started campaigning in the four constituencies we are going to contest in the general election, given financial backing to the Unemployed Workers Charter's September lobby of the TUC, and increased the frequency of *The Leninist's* publication.

The initial target of £30,000 was obviously an ambitious one. It represented a 20% increase from the 1991 £25,000 total. We certainly overcame a negative feature of previous campaigns - the tendency to start very slowly and only build up to a fever pitch right at the end. A brilliant start was made to this year's Summer Offensive at its launch meeting on June 8. Party members, supporters and sympathisers pledged an initial total of £19,525.

This represented some £4,000 more than last year's initial figure, which put us more or less on course for the £30,000. Taken together with the figures for those comrades who had jumped the gun on this year's campaign and actually already paid money, this meeting saw £3,964 raised. With a number of comrades absent and their pledges not initially included, we confidently expected to smash through our £30,000 target.

We were particularly keen to aim for an ambitious £30,000 total this year because, as we noted in *The Leninist* No103, we had already pointed the way forward to £30,000 as the next Summer Offensive position to be stormed way back in 1988 when we had just successfully completed a Summer Offensive of £20,000. As we wrote then: "We must be aware that with a little more of a tough approach, with our sympathisers overcoming their misgivings, we could be raising in the region of £30,000 now."

The problems that have subsequently developed with this year's Offensive partially reflect a series of weaknesses with our organisation, but also objective conditions that lie outside our ability to influence.

● **The character of the Party's periphery.** The numbers of new sympathisers and supporters around our organisation has grown since last year - a very pleasing development. Yet there is a high percentage of comrades in

very low paid and part time work. So while they have had to waste precious time earning a living, they have had little or no 'spare' cash to devote to the campaign.

● **The recession.** All comrades are well aware that in approaching readers and friends of our paper and organisation there is a deep sense of economic insecurity. Whether they are poorer in relative terms or not is hardly important. They feel they are poorer and thus have been far less generous than in previous years.

● **World reaction.** With the disintegration of the world socialist system and the crisis in the USSR there exists a world period of reaction. Capitalist ideas have gained a new strength. More and more people have lost their belief that working class action and communist dedication are the key to the future.

Despite these problems and weaknesses, the 8th Summer Offensive of the Communist Party has again underlined the fact that our organisation is the legitimate heir to the banner of the Communist Party of 1920; that we are building, slowly, painfully, a genuine Bolshevik organisation in the difficult conditions of Britain.

Overwhelmingly, this year's campaign total has been raised from our comrades' own personal incomes - from Communist Party members eating less, drinking less and generally making do for the three months of the Offensive.

At the same time, the Summer Offensive always marks a particular high point of the Party's public activity, not hermit-like abstinence. In all senses then, the Summer Offensive, more than any other campaign the Party runs or sponsors, expresses in the purest form what is required from the individuals who come together with the task of reorganising the Communist Party of Great Britain as a genuine mass, working class party.

As we wrote just before the beginning of this year's campaign:

"In order to be a communist in bourgeois society, it is necessary to constantly swim against the tide of ideas, attitudes and norms that dominate one's social environment. Against the anarchy of bourgeois individualism, we counterpose communist collectivism; against the poisonous 'I'm alright, Jack' attitude which capitalism fosters, we pit our communist solidarity and morality; and against the fatal complacency that bourgeois society engenders - the idea that the laws which govern this society are 'natural' and eternal, so the struggle for revolution is futile - we match our communist consciousness and our fight to translate Leninist theory into Leninist practice." (*The Leninist*, No103).

The basic definition we offer of a communist flows from this understanding: it is a woman or man who consciously fights to overthrow bourgeois society, and thus consciously takes the

necessary steps that will lead to communism - building the Party, fighting for the revolution.

We have had to overcome many doubters and detractors to build our organisation. The very idea of the Summer Offensive, when it was first mooted in embryonic form back in August 1984, provoked stiff opposition from elements that were soon to slink off to the dubious pleasures of private life. This should not surprise us.

At every point where our Party has pushed its organisation forward, has undertaken some major new field of endeavour, there have been elements who have balked at the enormity of the tasks we were setting ourselves. Bill Rust, in his fascinating book *The Story of the Daily Worker*, explains that the idea of a mass communist daily newspaper provoked furious opposition in the late 1920s, not only from the bourgeoisie and their various rags, but "it should also be remembered that the *Daily Worker* was the fruit of a political fight within the ranks of the Communist Party, a long drawn out conflict on whether the establishment of a communist daily newspaper under British conditions was really possible. In the end the doubters and the pessimists were routed."

The inspiring fight to build the *Daily Worker* - against advertisers' boycotts, government bans and harsh, desperate poverty - has very direct parallels with today's fight to build the Party's Summer Offensives. Those, like Tony Chater's Communist Party of Britain, who claim the heritage of the Party and who support what they claim as the direct successor of the fighting *Daily Worker* - the insipid and boring *Morning Star* - would be absolutely incapable of building and sustaining genuine communist ventures like the Summer Offensive or the *Daily Worker*.

The fighting spirit that animates the Summer Offensive was on display at the celebration meal on August 3. Guests at the meal included Jean Turner (ex-member of the Euro Executive Committee who has often lent her help to the Leninist forces of the Party); Bob Doyle (veteran of the Spanish Civil War and the struggle in Ireland); Kath and Arthur Gander (Kath is the daughter of the late comrade Jack Dash, Honorary President of the Unemployed Workers Charter); and comrades from Turkey, Iran, Ireland and Italy. Comrade John Bridge summed up the Summer Offensive 1991 as an "inspiration, an outstanding example of the type of communist self sacrifice that provides the building blocks for a reformed Communist Party in this country."

There is still time to contribute to the 8th Summer Offensive! Rush your contribution to the fight to reforge the Communist Party!

Mark Fischer

An industrial tribunal ruled on August 20, after two years deliberation, that 19 Tilbury dockers - 17 of them T&GWU shop stewards - sacked by the Port of London Authority during the 1989 national dock strike were unfairly dismissed. The PLA's case was clearly, as the tribunal put it, "justification after the event". The 19 were summarily dismissed, breaching the formal procedures laid down by the Docks Labour Scheme, which stipulates that the union must be consulted. Another 600 sacked dockers may now be eligible for compensation. Yet the victory is hollow. The employers have made it clear that they do not intend to reinstate the men and will not budge on reinstatement or union recognition. Since the national strike was lost, the balance of power has shifted toward the bosses. The abolition of DLS has seen the number of registered dockers fall by a half and a growing threat of privatisation. The sacked men may have been 'vindicated', but that means nothing, not even three years back pay, as TGWU Region 1 secretary Ken Reid will press for. Real victory will not be secured via tribunals. As sacked Tilbury T&G shop steward Frank Shilling told us: "of course, we are all delighted with the decision. But it doesn't end there. As far as we are concerned, we feel that the reinstatement of all sacked men should be the minimum 'compensation'". MF

East London Unity Carnival (2-7pm Sunday September 8, Hackney Downs) organised by Cable Street Beat and Anti Fascist Action, is the first step in a series of events designed to mobilise mass working class action against racism. Racist attacks, estimated at one every 26 minutes nationally, are on the increase. East London, which the British National Party has made a priority, has the highest level of racist attacks in the country. In the St Peters ward (Bethnal Green,

August 1990) the BNP's 1 in 8 vote represented some 25% of the disillusioned white working class vote, in a ward evenly divided along racial lines. While Bethnal Green Labour MP Peter Shore wants to ban marches which "generate an atmosphere of tension and conflict" (*East London Advertiser*, August 16), this can only strengthen the racist British state and demobilise working class action. Class action is the only way to fight racism, in all its forms. This is the platform on which the CPGB will be standing on in the Bethnal Green and Stepney constituency, where racism has become the central question, in the

general election, and why we urge readers to support this and the activities of AFA: rally to commemorate the 1936 Battle of Cable Street (Saturday October 12); national anti-racist march through East London (Sunday November 10). Details from AFA, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX. SK

In July local government employers made their 'best offer' of a 6.4% pay rise to manual and white collar workers. The negotiators of the main unions involved, Nalگو and Nupe, recommended the rejection. Both unions organised a national ballot calling for industrial action to force the bosses to meet their demands. Nalگو's original claim was for a 12% minimum pay increase, measures to address low pay, including a minimum wage of £9,330, and improvements in conditions of service - longer holidays and a shorter working week. The industrial action being proposed included a maximum of 10 days strike over an eight week period, and indefinite strike by selective groups (up to 5% of membership). After a three week ballot period and a reasonable amount of propaganda for a 'yes' vote from the leadership, the result was a disappointment and setback. The action was rejected by 68% of those voting (32% voted in favour) on a turnout of 60%. The impact of rate-capping, poll-tax capping, massive cuts, redundancies and attacks on the conditions of these workers over the past few years has had its effect. Despite this setback workers must be ready to defend themselves against further onslaughts from the employers as they look to consolidate their grip and make more demands on workers. One positive side of this campaign was the apparent co-operation between Nalگو and Nupe on joint action. This must be built on at rank and file level to prepare to fight back when the next attacks come. NC

Ambitious plans



The CPGB is to launch a number of initiatives in the coming months. Besides *The Leninist*, the plans include: Publication of Jack Conrad's book *Which Road?* Production of local campaign papers in the constituencies where the Party is standing candidates in the general election. The re-launch of the *Daily Worker* during the election campaign itself. Contributing to our £600 monthly fighting fund can be your way of backing these projects, because *The Leninist* is the linchpin of all our activity. Send us a cheque or postal order. Better still, ask for a bankers order form. The fund for August began with a super £67 donation from CPGB comrades working with the Unemployed Workers Charter. Special thanks also to comrades AS, PV and SN. So far the August total stands at £141.

Vernon Douglas, Fund Organiser

Crisis in the USSR: Len

Every organisation on the left had its theories put to an acid test by the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB issued its statement. On these pages, where our politics were clear and principled, others were workers to be won to defend socialism they need to suffer a bout of the defence of abstract democracy, while the soon to be disappointed

Provo CPGB

The August 19 anti-Gorbachev coup came like a seismic shock to the whole capitalist establishment - not least the stockmarket, which in London went into a minus £15 billion free fall as soon as news flashed round the world that its man was under house arrest in his Black Sea holiday dacha. In a single electronic moment imperialist plans for getting hold of the Soviet Union's industrial and natural assets at bargain basement prices and hopes of a *smooth* capitalist restoration were seemingly reduced to mere static. Certainly the benign smile has been wiped from imperialist lips. In its place is a plutonium tipped snarl. The representatives of the increasingly antagonistic capitalist powers - Major, Kaifu, Mitterand, Kohl and Bush - united in mourning Gorbachev's demise and issuing barely concealed military threats to those who overthrew him.

We, in contrast, have no sympathy for the Soviet Union's Nobel prize winning version of Alexander Dubchek. As an organisation which intransigently stands against decadent capitalism in all its forms and guises, why should we do otherwise? Gorbachev's perestroika had nothing to do with strengthening socialism. Perestroika was a cover for the restoration of capitalism and its introduction in the USSR paved the way for a worldwide period of reaction and capitalist triumphalism.

Gorbachev is a traitor - a traitor to the true interests of the Soviet Union and to the cause of the working class internationally.

Domestically his presidency took the Soviet Union to the brink of disintegration; the economy nosedived and mafia and bureaucratic capitalism stepped in to fill the vacuum. No wonder at home he was deeply unpopular!

Abroad, in an effort to ingratiate himself with imperialism Gorbachev cynically put the knife into the back of socialism in Eastern Europe, ran down aid to revolutionary Cuba and lent support to the US-led 100,000 slaughter in the Gulf. No wonder with the imperialists he was ever popular!

The road to counterrevolution in the USSR will not after all be paved with Gorbachevite good intentions. The State Emergency Committee has seen to that. For communists, for all genuine partisans of the working class, anything that, even momentarily, stays the hand of counterrevolution is good!

It gives us room for manoeuvre, room for independent action.

That is why the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB refuses to join the 'official communist' rumps, Kinnockites and Trotskyites in the bourgeois orchestrated chorus attacking the State Emergency Committee. We will *unconditionally* oppose all financial, diplomatic and military sanctions against the USSR.

But that is only half the story.

Marxism demands an all round analysis. What that concretely means as regards the USSR today is straightforward. Unconditional defence of the USSR more than ever necessitates intransigent criticism of its leadership. The takeover by the State Emergency Committee relied on the army and the KGB, not the masses.

This "defence of socialism" is in the spirit of Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968 and Poland 1981. It is, in other words, classically bureaucratic, sectional and highly contradictory. By definition therefore it is not motivated by nor capable of ushering in the *socialist democracy* which is vital if socialism in the USSR is really to be defended and socialism advanced.

Paradoxically the State Emergency Committee takeover could mean that the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, while *delayed*, will at the end of the day be *facilitated*.

In typical bureaucratic fashion the State Emergency Committee says it has *not* overthrown Gorbachev. This apparently is a real doctor's coup. Gorbachev, it claims, stepped down for reasons of health. An old fashioned story and, in plain old fashioned language, a lie. Gorbachev has been Dubchecked.

But clearly the State Emergency Committee needs its article 127 (paragraph 7) legalistic excuses for a "state of emergency regime" more than it needs truth.

This is no small matter. It is pivotal. Neither lying nor legalism are the chosen method of genuine communists. Such an approach is, though, the alpha and omega for the conservative section of a bureaucracy which has grown fat on bureaucratic socialism and the so-called nomenklatura system, a caste which as a result of its parasitic social position relies on a false ideology, ie, prostituted Marxism-Leninism.

It has to be emphasised that the State Emergency Committee coup is of far more significance and far more risky than the ousting of Nikita Krushchev in October 1964.

That was a palace coup par excellence - no tanks, no arrests, no counter-demonstrations, no counter-tanks. Then the Soviet Union was a bureaucratic monolith.

That monolith has long since shattered and what now remains faces, in the no doubt sincere words of the State Emergency Committee, a "**profound and comprehensive crisis, political, ethnic and civil strife, chaos and anarchy that threatens the lives and security of the Soviet Union's citizens and its sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom and independence**". That is why a Politburo vote was not enough this time, why the KGB and soldiers were needed. But does that mean that socialism is now, at last, safe?

A couple of months ago, in a keynote article, our organisation repeated its considered opinion that the conservatives in the USSR "**are not against the restoration of capitalism, only its disruptive effects ... the conservatives want to carefully control and manage the restoration of capitalism**" (speech by John Bridge, general secretary of the CPGB, *The Leninist* No104-5, June 28 1991). Unfortunately we see no reason to reverse this judgement. Revealingly, on the day he took over from Gorbachev, 'loyal' deputy, Gennady Yanayev, insisted that both he and the State Emergency Committee remain committed to perestroika and all Gorbachev's *unequal* arms deals with the USA.

True, the State Emergency Committee has struck a blow against the *most counterrevolutionary* and *most reactionary* trends in the Soviet Union. But it is a contradictory blow!

The State Emergency Committee coup should not lead us to imagine that the danger of counterrevolution no longer exists. It does.

Not only from without in the form of imperialism, not only from within in the form of the *temporarily* weakened nationalists, Pamyats and bourgeois democrats. The danger continues from above in the form of the State Emergency Committee itself and from below in the form of the mass of the population!

They have been alienated by the failure of bureaucratic socialism and perestroika. Now they have been further alienated by the anti-democratic measures enacted in the wake of Gorbachev's sudden "inability to perform the duties of federal president".

Although the State Emergency Committee has decreed that prices for certain basic goods be reduced, this is clearly only a propaganda gesture. The economic problems in the USSR are, by its new leadership's own admission, of crisis proportions and organic.

Reducing prices of goods that are not on the shelves is not going to satisfy anyone. Nor will



Yeltsin's Finland Station in reverse: rallying the counterrevolution from the roof of a tank

and placing a ban on *all* political activity and strike action.

Such measures can only further the marginalisation and disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and broaden the social basis of *democratic* counterrevolution.

The State Emergency Committee has no programme apart from 'law and order'. What is needed is a programme of political revolution, a return to the world revolutionary line of Lenin, Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky.

Ousting Gorbachev is not enough to stop the slide towards the counterrevolutionary abyss.

Indeed, in discarding all democratic pretensions and legitimacy, in bringing the army and KGB to the fore, the State Emergency Committee has enhanced the standing of the main counterrevolutionary personality, Boris Yeltsin - in a sickening parody of Lenin at the Finland station this CPSU renegade denounced the State Emergency Committee from on top of an armoured car. This scum has now in effect called for a counterrevolutionary civil war.

Clearly the closest parallel from the recent past is Poland 1981. There are important lessons here. Jaruzelski's Military Council for National Salvation was, unlike Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968, an act from within.

It put off the counterrevolution, but *contradictorily* it also made it easier when it came.

Not surprisingly Jaruzelski could do nothing to overcome the chronic economic crisis of Poland, produce a new communist politics nor end the alienation of the masses. In fact the masses were thrown into the arms of Solidarnosc while the Polish United Workers Party was reduced to total impotence. The same danger exists in the USSR.

In light of this lesson, communists in the USSR must operate independently from the State Emergency Committee. They must struggle to remove it and the thick layer of bureaucrats and revision-

ists who now dominate their party, the CPSU.

Communists of the USSR, no matter what restrictions have been placed on you, fight to win the hearts and minds of the masses in order to begin a real defence of socialism.

It is either that or certain counterrevolution!

In Britain one by-product of the State Emergency Committee takeover will undoubtedly be the shattering of what remains of 'official communism'. That at least is no bad thing.

The Euro organisation, which is itching to rename itself the Democratic Left, will find in the anti-Gorbachev coup *the excuse* it has been waiting for.

The Euros' November congress will see them at last complete their drawn out transformation into fringe *bourgeois* politics. The *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain will in contrast be torn apart, as will the New Communist Party of the 'mealy mouthed' Eric Trevett. The remaining non-party communists will be scattered to the four winds.

Such developments are as historically minor as they are inevitable.

What matters at the end of the day is that no genuine communist loses their faith, their willingness to fight for communism, their determination to unite scientific theory with revolutionary practice. That can only be done if all communist forces rally *immediately* to the bright unsullied banner of the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB. Our organisation represents all the glorious hopes of the past, but above all the certainty of the future.

Our organisation will not be thrown into crisis by the State Emergency Committee coup, nor will it buckle under the weight of the reactionary propaganda floodtide that will follow it.

Our Communist Party will remain strong, remain committed to the world revolution, remain communist.

August 19 1991

Revisionism vs opportunism

the August 19 coup. Within hours of Gorbachev's overthrow the... over the next few days others followed suit. As can be seen on... crumbled new opportunist depths. Militant thinks that for Soviet... capitalism. Others, such as the CPB, Euros and SWP, rushed to... ed NCP political prostitutes imagined that their day had come



But the lack of a socialist alternative means that the mass of the Soviet people now have illusions in the market, in one form or another.

The tragedy is that they must find out what this means through the experience of unemployment and capitalist exploitation.

In doing so, they will have to defend their interests. They will rediscover that to do this they must defend the nationalised economy but replace the bureaucrats' mismanagement with workers' democracy - workers rule of society and democratic workers' control and management of industry to make it meet the needs of the majority.
Militant, August 22 1991

Communist Party of Britain

Communist Party of Britain general secretary Mike Hicks said yesterday that the crisis facing the Soviet Union would only be made worse if military means replaced the complex political process necessary to benefit the working people.

He called for a peaceful political settlement "fully involving the Soviet working people in resolving political and economic difficulties that have been exacerbated by a narrow form of nationalism in some of the republics.

"We share the concerns of progressive and peace-loving people throughout the world on the turn of events in the Soviet Union and will work for the development of a peaceful resolution", he said.
Morning Star, August 20 1991

Party has been vindicated by the necessity for and the act of his removal.

His removal will further undermine revisionist tendencies in the communist movement and help facilitate the process of communist unity being based unequivocally on the revolutionary philosophy of Marxism-Leninism.

In the Soviet Union the emergence of a leadership dedicated to communist values deserves our full solidarity and support.

Nor should we waver in giving this in the face of some social unrest.

The new Soviet leadership has to deal with a complex and difficult situation. It is hoped that the new Soviet leadership will reverse the drive to capitalism, strengthen socialist democracy and help unleash the creative energy of the working class and its allies in a process that genuinely does consolidate socialism with a technologically advanced planned economy.

Such an economy must be based upon the social ownership of the heights of the economy, the means of production, distribution and exchange.

In their task they will be well served by the restoration of pride in the Soviet peoples' achievements and their heroic past.

We are confident that mature communist leadership will enable the Soviet working class and people to overcome all obstacles in the way to their material prosperity and well-being.

With such a leadership the Soviet Union can once again take its rightful and deserved place in the vanguard of progressive humanity in the struggle and achievements of peace, national liberation and socialism.

Eric Trevett, General Secretary, New Communist Party

Morning Star letters, August 22 1991

Euros

We are shocked by the news of the coup in the Soviet Union and reports of the arrest of President Gorbachev. We demand his immediate release and reinstatement. It is ominous that this action takes place on the eve of the signing of the crucial and forward looking Union Treaty. We offer our support to all democratic forces in their resistance to the unconstitutional and undemocratic actions of the Deputy President and his supporters. We condemn the clampdown on press and other democratic freedoms and the series of arrests that are taking place. The armed forces should act only on the orders of President Gorbachev or the Congress of Peoples' Deputies.

We urge that the Congress of Peoples' Deputies be convened and that President Gorbachev be allowed to address it and the Soviet people. The complex economic and constitutional crises that have developed in the Soviet Union will never be solved by resorting to Stalinist methods in the name of "continuing reform".

The methods used and statements made today turn the clock back towards militarism, a central command economy and authoritarianism - policies which will be disastrous to the Soviet Union and humanity. The economic and political crisis in the Soviet Union necessitates the development of perestroika and glasnost, not their reversal.

The solution to the Soviet Union's deep crisis also demands further progress in the formation of dialogue and pluralistic political culture, including the CPSU's attempt to break with its former dogmatic attitudes.

The announcement of the formation of a new democratic left party in September and the emergence of other democratic parties and movements

are welcome developments in this direction. We believe today's developments represent a grave threat not only to this process but also to the international process of detente and disarmament with which the name of President Gorbachev is so closely associated.

Nina Temple

Gordon McLennan

Ian McKay

Joe Marshall

Rosemary Bechler

Monty Johnstone

The Guardian letters, August 21 1991

Socialist Workers Party

The workers hold the fate of the USSR in their hands.

The military coup's success depends on whether they strike to defend their recently won freedoms or sullenly accept Gorbachev's overthrow.

The old guard army, KGB and party bureaucrats who have taken charge in the Kremlin are universally detested by the country's workers.

They stand for a system which claimed to act in the interest of the working class, but which denied workers even the most basic rights.

They are the living embodiment of the Stalinist regime that screwed workers' living standards for the last 60 years while the rulers lived in luxury.

Whatever they say, the coup leaders want a return to those days.

They are gambling that Mikhail Gorbachev is now so unpopular in the USSR that ordinary workers will see the coup simply as the replacement of one bureaucrat by another.

Gorbachev was loathed inside the USSR - for good reason. Every act of liberalisation was sooner or later matched by a crackdown.

His promise of a glittering future under "market socialism" and then just the "market" turned to dust.

... Genuine socialists, those trying to organise free trade unions and who support the USSR's oppressed nationalities, are absolutely opposed to the coup against Gorbachev.

They know there can be no freedom for anyone under the new rulers.

But if those attempting to organise resistance simply call for Gorbachev's restoration, they will certainly fail.

The coup can only be defeated if workers fight for their own demands and develop their own organisation.

It can be done. Workers' councils sprang up spontaneously during the magnificent 1989 miners' strikes and the general strike in Byelorussia earlier this year.

They are needed again - across the USSR.

Boris Yeltsin, Federation President, has courageously called a general strike. But workers cannot rely on him to stand firm.

... Over the coming days we can only hope workers develop the organisations needed to roll back the coup.

If they do, it will be a giant step on the road to rediscovering the real socialist traditions of the USSR.

Socialist Worker, August 24 1991

Militant Tendency

The courageous defenders of the Russian parliament are celebrating on their barricades. The coup has crumbled. Army tanks have turned around and driven out of Moscow.

Across the Soviet Union demonstrators took to the streets. After Yeltsin's appeal for a general strike, workers stopped workers, from Kuzbas in the south to Vorkuta in the north. Workers in Leningrad factories formed armed defence squads.

All over the world workers will see this as peoples' power reducing the threat of dictatorship to a poorly scripted farce. Every dictator will tremble at the prospect of his own subjects taking such action.

In the course of this historic drama the Soviet people lost their fear of the military chiefs and joined the growing action.

And mass action had only just begun; the strikes were only at an early stage. The putschists' only weapon, the armed forces, fell to pieces in their hands. They faced the opposition of all the nationalities; all the republics refused to accept their rule.

Workers around the world are cheering. But the capitalists are cheering too.

Why? Because they see Gorbachev and Yeltsin as drivers on the fast track to capitalism and they have their greedy eyes on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Not that they couldn't have done business with the coup leaders, after a token protest. The hardliners were for restoring capitalism too, albeit at a slower pace.

The return of the old guard has been thwarted.

New Communist Party

The removal of Mikhail Gorbachev from office is to be welcomed. His betrayal of communist principles and the moral and material interests of the working class in the Soviet Union itself and internationally has been curtailed.

His administration led the country to the brink of economic ruin, unleashed counterrevolutionary forces, and threatened the Soviet Union with disintegration.

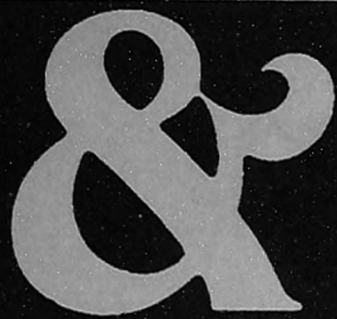
His removal is a setback to US imperialism, whose plans for global domination have been dealt a body blow. His removal injects political uncertainty into the ranks of all the imperialist powers whose system of capitalism is in deep and chronic economic crisis.

With his removal the morale of genuine communists and progressives throughout the world has risen. The perspectives for an anti-imperialist struggle are brighter. Confidence in the socialist alternative has gained strength.

His removal will help the sound revolutionary elements in the former socialist countries of Europe to extend their basis of support against the onrush of capitalism.

The developing countries, crippled by debt, will feel able to take a more assertive position against their imperialist oppressors.

In Britain, the position of the New Communist



OUR HISTORY

First assessments, first tasks

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

Revolutionary Internationalist, organ of the Revolutionary Internationalist League, British Section of the Internationalist Trotskyist Committee for the Regeneration of the Fourth International (more initials than members - we kid you not) writing on "the future of Irish solidarity" mentions *Hands Off Ireland!* In particular, it whines about HOI's "noisy and inane slogans". Sorry about the noise. Didn't realise you were so sensitive. But inane? "Troops out of Ireland, prisoners out of jail", "Ireland one, Ireland free, take it from the bourgeoisie", "For the IRA, against the British Army". 'Inane' means 'empty, senseless'. We suppose "workers of the world unite - you have nothing to lose but your chains" is also empty and senseless.

The IFM demo on Saturday August 10 brought together many contingents, calling for troops out now! Different contingents were freely handing out different literature. The Revolutionary Internationalist League, whoever they are, told us all that it is defending its revolutionary "principals", whatever they are, on the national question in Ireland. All well and good. But what are we to make of the Army's 1974 "munity" and the "fraudelet" nature of "Brook's" talks in the north of Ireland, and then let's hope he has a revelation in the world of politics, not one of their "revelations" (cure available from your chemist on request!).

Alternatively, the Revolutionary Vanguard is offering another original approach, that of Maoism. In their Red Rebel they call for liberation through revolution. Perhaps this is why they are calling out to the "Radical youth of all ages". Have they discovered the elixir of ever lasting youth?

The Morning Star has never been slow to jump on the establishment bandwagon. And so it has been with its line on the Soviet coup. This rag was always the mouthpiece for Soviet officialdom. It even attempted a balancing act between the contending sides during the coup. But sicker still has been its attempt to court US imperialism. Its front page of August 21 proclaimed "Bring back Gorbachev - Bush". The bulk of the article underneath was a series of direct quotes from the world's leading imperialist, and not one word of criticism. Now the Soviet franchise is long gone, maybe the Star is trying to get itself sold on Washington news stands.

THE formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain was a tremendous achievement for the whole working class movement in our country. It represented far more than the coming together of the British Socialist Party, the Communist Unity Group and other, smaller, left organisations. The CPGB was to be a party of working class action, a party of revolution. The August 5 1920 edition, the first edition of *The Communist* - an "organ of the Third (Communist) International" published by the CPGB "incorporating" the BSP's *The Call* - carried a series of short articles by leading comrades giving their impressions of the Unity Convention (later known as the 1st Congress of the CPGB).

Impressions of the Conference

Arthur McManus: chair of the newly formed CPGB and workers' leader on the Clyde: The convention more than surpassed the best of my expectations. The feeling created was that, after all, everything involved in its preparation had been well worth while. The atmosphere was intense, with the earnestness and determination of the delegates. To preside over such a convention was a pleasure indeed, because however delicate the moments may have been, and these I can assure were many, the sincerity of all was demonstrated by the willing and ready assistance rendered to the chair. The value of the work done is inestimable at the moment, but of one thing I feel sure. It will bring more hope and gladness to the soul of our struggling comrades in Russia and elsewhere, than anything else which has been done in this country

Rob Stewart: the former leader of the Socialist Prohibition Fellowship and a popular figure in Scotland who spent years in goal because of his resistance to World War I: The essence and value of the conference was its evident eagerness and sincerity. Its old men were young, its young men did not lack wisdom and that comprehensive understanding which seeks and finds and acts upon its findings.

To chair a conference where all can talk and nearly all wish to, where tension is strong, and issues are straight is a test to try even a nimble-witted lad like McManus, but he survived the ordeal, and will chair a bigger, where issues will be still further narrowed to immediate questions of life and death import. The leftest of the left and the rightest of the right showed an evident anxiety to start fair, and to keep the Communist Party of Great Britain free from puerilities and that ineptitude for action which has hitherto been not an uncommon feature in the debating stage of our growth.

In resolute action and emulation of the high-spirited and farseeing but practical social revolutionists of Russia, minor differences will be relegated to their proper place, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, belated in arrival though it be, will play its part in the overthrow of capitalism and the rising of the first real common civilisation built by workers for workers.

AA Watts: former treasurer of the British Socialist Party: It will be of no use for the capitalist press to call this convention a collection of hot-headed, irresponsible youths; there were a very considerable number of middle-aged men and women delegates, and when it is remembered that these men and women have arrived at the need for a Communist Party, that they represent a definite membership, and also a large, indefinite body of opinion outside their actual membership, the outlook for a powerful revolutionary party in this country is exceedingly hopeful. Its power will depend upon the numbers, its energy, its determination. It is possible for every communist organisation to be affiliated; it should be made possible for every individual communist to become a member. It is up to every organisation and every communist to rally to the Party and to make it the power it should be.

Lt Colonel CJ Malone: a sitting MP originally elected in 1918 as a Coalition Liberal, in 1919 he visited Soviet Russia and on his return he joined the BSP: The number of delegates who were able to be present was good, remembering that owing to the difficulties of travel, expenses, etc, the numbers present were only a percentage of the communist groups in Great Britain, apart altogether from the bodies of communist opinion not yet organised.

Some delegates appeared even now a little muddled as to parliamentary action. Of course it is purely for propaganda, and I still hold, not the most effective means of employing available energy. As to affiliation [to the Labour Party] with the Thomas, Henderson crowd, a little more effort and the motion would have been defeated.

But the formation of the Party stands out as a definite milestone of the weekend. The resolutions are subsidiary.

Work, work everywhere, and organisation are now required; not discussions or resolutions. Let the delegates go back and those who were not present devote all efforts they can spare in the workshop, factory, town, and hamlet to make the Party not merely a strong force, but in the not far distant future, the governing force in this country.

JT Walton Newbold: a sitting Labour MP, a member of the left wing of the Independent Labour Party who would soon join the Party: The heartiest possible welcome to the Communist Party of Great Britain! To my mind it behoves every out and out communist in this country to lend every energy towards building up "this party in one rock-bound programme of the Communist International." We who embrace without hesitation or reserve the soviet system, the dictatorship of the proletariat, with all that it entails, who reject parliamentary "democracy" and all the apparatus and ideology of the capitalist state must, responding with enthusiasm and determination to the ringing call "to the Communists of the Independent Labour Party" ... do all in our power to swing our party into, and merge it into, the Communist Party. My loyalty, at any rate, is now as it has been for two and a half years - first and foremost to the position of the Third International.

I call on my comrades to fight for the affiliation of our party with the

Communist International; not by obtaining the unwilling consent of your leaders to join it, but by means of determined propaganda within our own party to rid ourselves of the opportunist leaders of the right

Who is not with us is against us, and we are with the Communist International every time!

The Communist also carried an important lead article by comrade Arthur MacManus dealing with the immediate tasks of the communists.

The Task awaiting the Communist Party

The education of the masses to Communism, the shattering of their faith in the institutions of capitalism, the encouragement of a belief in their own powers of social construction, of self-reliance, the general work of agitation and organisation, and the stimulation of an aggressive revolutionary fervour amongst the working class. These are but a few of the matters to which we must bend our efforts at once.

The general situation with regard to capitalism has lost none of its vicious, soul-destroying, and slavish qualities, while we have been engaged in constituting our organisation; if anything, it has become much more intense. The cost of living still goes soaring up, and the endeavours of the engineers, miners, textile workers, etc, to secure even a compensating increase in wages are ruthlessly turned down with contempt. More production is called for, further working class exploitation is insisted upon, if the relative position between wages and prices would be maintained

Such is still the capitalism ... which continually promises to amend itself, when approached by our reluctant Trade Union and Labour Party delegations. Capitalism, and particularly that section which emerged victorious out of the recent commercial struggle, is saturated with the power of achievement

The birth of the Communist Party is not a moment too soon. The shams, hypocrisies, and lying subtleties must be torn aside, and the beast revealed in all its perfidy and soulessness.

The challenge of our Churchill's must be taken up, and the spirit of the working class struggle for emancipation nursed, tended, and directed to smash capitalism in its entirety. Nationally, locally, and in our individual capacity we must set about this task - expedite the organisation of your branch and facilitate the work of stabilising the machinery of the Communist Party; transfer the zeal and enthusiasm of the convention into the local work, and set about the work of local education, agitation, and organisation; take fullest advantage of every opportunity to acquaint the workers of communism; explain it to them inside of the workshops and outside; assist and encourage the formation of shop stewards' committees inside every workshop, plant, or factory; develop the interest of the worker in that committee; explain the possibilities which are latent in such organisation, and by insistent discussion endeavour to wean away his faith

from the false moral values of capitalism.

Here is work awaiting us in every town and village; vital work, work of essential importance. The ultimate success of the Communist Party will rest more upon the amount of energy and attention given to this work than by theoretical comparison with the other organisations. The Communist Party was formed because we felt that such an organisation was indispensable if this task had to be accomplished - that is our justification.

A word here on the convention will not be out of place ... The voting on the Labour Party was such as indicated a strong, evenly divided opinion on the question of affiliation, and while, according to the result, the minority are honourably expected to acquiesce in the decision, there is also an obligation placed upon the majority to fully appreciate the strength and character of the minority.

The matter has now, for the time being, got beyond the stage of argument, and time and actual experience alone will indicate the validity of other points of view. Let us, then, cease devoting our full energy to discussing the various points involved, to the neglect of our other work, and let both sides realise that the Party itself is our immediate responsibility. This much, I think I can safely say, was the definite impression gathered from the discussion.

The only points of difference were tactical points, and not a single voice was raised against the Party's principles. Let us carry these to the masses, then, and endeavour to secure their acceptance. Every communist employed in a factory or workshop should secure election as shop steward or delegate, and there try by argument and example to demonstrate the full value of a communist outlook by the advice and guidance given to the workers.

Don't stand aloof because you may from time to time be asked to negotiate for something which to you may appear as trifling and non-essential; state your opinion on the matter first, and, in the event of its not being accepted, pursue it to its ultimate, assured that sooner or later the workers will come to learn the full value of your advice and guidance. Remember always that it is the working class alone who can effect the emancipation of the workers, and that you must be with them when they may be wrong today if you hope to be with them to guide them rightly tomorrow.

Thus, and thus alone, can a movement be working class, and absence from their ranks in the everyday struggle can in no way be compensated for by the serenity of theories superbly aloof.

The Communist Party is not its executive, but every single member of that Party, and the extent to which it will succeed will just be the extent to which we each individually respond to our obligations and responsibilities. The revolutionary movement has received a considerable impetus by this weekend's deliberations, and the decks are cleared for action. The Third International is our one international hope, and in this country it must become the rallying standard for the revolutionary movement.

REVIEWS

Prawn Vindaloo

Victoria Brittain (Editor), *The Gulf Between Us: The Gulf War And Beyond*, Virago 1991, pp186, £5.99

THIS COLLECTION of 14 essays provides a useful statement of pacifism's opposition to the Gulf War in all its many facets. Imperialism's manipulation of the media and the UN, the devastation and carnage of the conflict, its ecological consequences and the hypocrisy shrouding all these elements are clearly exposed. Also highlighted are the racism and chauvinism widely used to justify it all, and the adverse effects on 'Third World' poverty and the National Health Service in Britain.

In short, this is a summary of all the left and pacifistic arguments put forward at the time. Its usefulness, then, does not lie in its originality, but in its structured restatement of each of those arguments. Most of all, however, it lies in its (no doubt unintended) exposure of the helplessness of pacifism when confronted by the single-minded aggression of imperialism.

Nowhere in the book is there the slightest hint of how the war could have been stopped, nor how future conflicts can be prevented. How could this be otherwise, when the authors are equally at a loss to explain the causes?

"All war is a failure of imagination", states journalist Edward Pearce (p97), placing the cause of conflict firmly in the realm of individual human deficiency, rather than any objective necessity. History, according to this simple-minded reasoning, is determined by the strengths and weaknesses of leaders, largely unrelated to the class interests those leaders represent and almost always without reference to the masses.

Mind you, Mr Pearce's clarity of thought should not perhaps be held up as a shining example. Here is what he has to say about the hypocrisy of imperialism's war drive: "The advocates of war invoked Saddam Hussein's murderous record, which they had blithely ignored for a decade. They invoked it much as they might send out for prawn vindaloo with plain boiled rice and a nan and onion bhaji" (p104).

Historian Roger Owens argues in much the same vein. As for the war's opponents, their arguments "were based on the assumption that they were dealing with rational men" (p161).

This reasoning is not exclusive to western journalists. For example, Iraqi writer Faleh' Abd Al Jabar identifies the war's causality as being in the state of mind of the Iraqi leadership, believing that Iraq could have survived the economic hardships of the war with Iran had a rational policy been pursued: "The sane Dr Jekyll, however, invented the insane Mr Hyde. At the end of 1989 Iraq was at a crossroads: either to embark on peace and democracy, or to opt for continued expansion and terror - a mad alternative" (p36).

Anti-nuclear medical campaigner Dr Lesley Morrison goes so far as to ascribe the war's causes to "irrational psychological processes" (p114). Not only are the leaders' actions "insane", you see, but we are all overcome by a kind of "collective madness".

Equally unconvincing, of course, is the feminist argument that it is the deficiencies of male individuals which result in violence and conflict. If only women were in positions of leadership, "sanity" would surely prevail! This is because "whereas men, positioned at the conflict's epicentre, perceive war in terms of strategy, ideology and violence, the women, from their situation at the margins, experience the dailiness of the war" (quoted in a footnote to the chapter from Jordanian novelist Dr Fadia Faqir). We would suggest that the 100,000

(male) Iraqi conscripts slaughtered as they retreated from Kuwait experienced "the dailiness of war" in a very real way. Are we mistaken, or have there been cases of female leaders "positioned at the conflict's epicentre"? Thatcher, Meir, Indira Gandhi...

United Nations fan Barbara Rogers puts it all down to a plot on the part of the United States to undermine the authority of the UN, as if this body has ever been, or could ever be, anything other than an instrument of imperialist policy (except when Soviet and Chinese vetoes ensured that it was reduced to a talking shop). Ms Rogers contends that "A proven ability to enforce effective international sanctions would be an enormous boost for the UN but extremely threatening to US interests ... You could say that the US coalition went to war, among other reasons, to prevent the UN becoming too effective in defending the peace" (p148).

We continually argued that the call for sanctions as opposed to war is in fact a call for imperialism to employ a different tactic to achieve the same ends. Why should we prefer starvation to bombing as a means of ensuring the imperialist status quo?

In fact, the pro-UN argument is effectively demolished later in the book by Roger Owen: "it was only because of the Cold War and the Chinese revolution that the Security Council lost much of its original power ... we are back roughly to the situation as it was in 1946 with the Great Powers firmly in the saddle again" (p169-170).

Not that Mr Owen is any more adept than his co-authors in clarifying for us the causes of the war. Adopting a mechanical historical approach, he traces the origins of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait to the end of the Iran-Iraq war (but what caused that war, Roger?). Not surprisingly, he is then at a loss to explain why Iraq decided not to disarm when left with its huge army and huge debts.

Perhaps the most illuminating chapter is that written by two advisors to US imperialism, Rear Admirals Carroll and La Rocque, from the Washington Center for Defense Information. They are open in their analysis of US war aims (including the bypassing of UN "authority"), the "sophisticated management and control of press coverage", and lessons learned for future conflicts. "It was the first significant test of US military force in the post-Cold War world", likely to be useful "as it reconfigures its armed forces for the future" (p43).

This book confirms once again the uselessness of pacifism when faced with the power and devastation of imperialism. Totally incapable of understanding why wars occur, pacifists of whatever strand are equally incapable of providing any solutions for preventing them. Only the politics of revolution, not least in the US itself, can end war by removing its cause - the reactionary nature of imperialism, and proto-imperialism in the case of medium-developed capitalist countries such as Iraq.

Jim Blackstock

Making History

Ken McMullen (Director), *1871*

IN THE late 1970s and early 80s, Ken McMullen produced a series of independent films which investigated the interrelationship between political conditions and individual and collective behaviour. In *Being and Doing* a filmic survey of pre-industrial rituals and contemporary performance art was used to investigate the social situation in Poland, Ireland and Czechoslovakia.

Despite hours of material being cut by the Arts Council, the film exists as an important politicised work.

On into the 80s we have the Channel 4 funded *Ghost Dance, Zina*, a narrative based around the psychological condition of Trotsky's daughter, and the current *1871*. By its very title I anticipated that this work in some way set out to investigate the events surrounding the Paris Commune.

Of course, a general historical outline is developed. We are told that Paris is under siege by Prussian forces. Starvation ensues. The Commune is proclaimed. Cluseret proposes the seizure of the Bank of France. The failure to do so contributes to the eventual defeat of the Commune by Prussian aided government troops. Thirty thousand Communards are murdered in one week of state terror.

These key events are not, however, central to McMullen's film, for they are only introduced in the latter part of the film. Instead the viewer endures a seemingly interminable, highly romanticised 'love story'. I am confident that McMullen intended to research the formation and development of a revolutionary centre through the use of film. However it seems that the seduction of success weighed too greatly. Indeed, what I presumed to be the motivation behind the film is entirely lost in McMullen's orgy of opulence.

McMullen focuses on the development of a Parisian music hall in the years leading up to and during the Franco-Prussian War. It would be kind to suggest that he attempts to chart the politicisation of the company amidst sexual intrigue and espionage. Instead he wallows in the portrayal of the leading actress, Ana Padrao, as an object of male desire.

In an interview with *Living Marxism* in October 1989, McMullen suggested that the film was being shot in a lavish way not only to amplify the decadent period before the war but to enhance the final section of the film which is devoted to the Commune. With this last section he stated: "the method of editing becomes like Eisenstein's montage and starts fragmenting and using juxtaposition of images rather than tracking shots to say something. So there is a stylistic development going on".

There is indeed a stylistic development from earlier slow tracking shots to the aggressive editing towards the end of the film. However the similarity is purely stylistic. In the films *Potemkin* and *October* there is a concerted effort to investigate realism through an awareness of photography and the historical proximity of the events. In *1871* McMullen makes no reference to photography taken at the time of the Commune. By projecting the notion of theatre beyond the confines of the music hall, all historical perception becomes theatricalised. The use of metaphor then no longer operates as a tool for concrete analysis, and the context of the film (*1871*) is swept downstream leaving McMullen with his own society of the spectacle. This is reinforced through the script in the words of the British agent: "The whole world has become spectacle".

This is well trodden ground. It is the current line on our present social and cultural condition; the death of history, the great levelling of style and the end of ideology. The result is a post-modernism of reaction and its flagship, the infantile concessions of a trendy left.

1871 resembles a nineteenth century history picture set to the music of Barrie Guard and Simon Heyworth. Central to the musical score for *1871* is a repeated orchestral string sequence. There is a rendition of the *Internationale*, but even this was not written until after the events in Paris. In all, the purpose of the music is to add to the all purveying romance of history.

1871 is McMullen's gold card into the big time, big movie world of the 90s. The work should be seen as such, and should be placed alongside its Hollywood counterparts of *Doctor Zhivago* and *Reds*.

Geoff Zimmerman

ACTION

Communist Party

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

This seminar series provides collective discussion to assist the CPGB Provisional Central Committee in drawing up its Draft Programme, section by section. The Draft Programme will be published subsequently for discussion within the class, as a guide to action and as a rallying point for the reforging of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Join in the debate. Fight to forge the weapon of the proletarian party in Britain. (The second part of each seminar is a weekly discussion on current political developments.):

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Unemployed Workers Charter

UWC LOBBY OF TUC - 1991

● 'Eve of Conference' social - music, theatre and comedy. Maryhill Arts Centre (£4 employed/£1 with UB40), Sunday September 1, from 7.30pm. Performers include North Staffs Miners Wives Action Group, the Proles, Freddy Anderson and others.

● Lobby of the TUC, Monday September 2, from 9am - Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Finnieston, Glasgow G3.

● Fringe meeting - 1pm-2pm, Waverley Bar, Broomlielaw (three minutes from the Exhibition Centre).

Unemployed Organiser - 20p each plus 10p p&p. Send for details of bulk order rates).

Send SAE for UWC petition to TUC and sponsorship letter.

London mobilising meetings for lobby: For details ring 071-431 3135.

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(three minutes from the Exhibition Centre)

FOR the first time since the Unemployed Workers Charter was launched in 1986, unemployment is climbing. The unemployment figures announced for July underlined the urgent need for an organisation like the UWC. They recorded a 126,521 jump in the total.

Officially, there are now 2,368,100 on the unemployed register. But, according to the independent research organisation The Unemployment Unit, at least another 1,075,000 would have been included on the total if the thirty identified changes to the methods of calculation had been taken into account.

Thus, if you exclude the Tories' fiddles since 1979, the 'official' figure would be something like 3,443,000. In fact, the true figure for those that capitalism has thrown onto the scrap-heap is far higher. The system stands condemned.

The threat of unemployment is looming over the heads of every worker in this country. Establishment economists calmly speculate about the possibility of four to five million officially unemployed in under two years.

This underlines the importance of this year's UWC lobby of the TUC in Glasgow on Monday, September 2. The UWC is the only organisation in this country that is fighting to rebuild today the type of fighting unemployed organisation that the unemployed created in the 1920s and 30s - the National Unemployed Workers Movement.

In spite of this, the TUC consistently refuses to meet delegations from the UWC or from our lobby. This expresses graphically the contempt and fear with which the top bureaucrats regard the unemployed. The campaign of the UWC relies on the rank and file and those few principled leaders who are prepared to take a stand with the fight of the out of work.

The latest issue of *Unemployed Organiser*, campaigning paper of UWC, includes, in its 'Blast from the Past' section, reprints for the Richard Croucher book *We Refuse to Starve in Silence - the History of the National Unemployed Workers Movement*. These passages relate the fighting unity that the NUWM was able to build with sections of the employed working class, in particular the besieged miners. As Croucher points out, in some areas in South Wales, "the NUWM and the South Wales Miners Federation were virtually synonymous."

We need to get back to that state of affairs today. The unemployed need their own organisation, an organisation that ties the interests of the unemployed to the employed section of our class organically.

That is what the UWC lobby is all about. There are still a few places available on the London coach taking



UWC: of the working class and for the working class

UWCers to Glasgow. Contact the UWC as soon as possible to book your place!

Battle Plan for UWC lobby - 1991

Friday, August 30: Comrades gather at a venue in central London for a briefing about the lobby and our plans for the weekend. Just after 12 midnight, comrades will board the coach and travel overnight to the proletarian capital of Scotland, Glasgow. Tickets for the round trip from London are £5 for unemployed comrades and £20

employed. Accommodation and food in Glasgow is provided, but you are advised to bring a sleeping bag.

Saturday, August 31: Comrades will be divided into teams and will spend Saturday spreading the word of the UWC in the city, building for our concert on the Sunday and our lobby on the Monday. Comrades will be involved in leafleting, street meetings, posterage, a UWC 'float' that will tour the city with megaphones, door to door canvassing - in fact any and every method that will spread the message of militant struggle and unemployed organisation to as many workers as possible!

Sunday, September 1: The day will be spent in last minute preparations and mobilising for our two events - the

concert and the lobby. In the evening, we have our 'Eve of Conference' social and concert - Maryhill Arts Centre, Burgh Hall, Gairbraid Avenue, 6pm till late. Music, theatre, poetry and comedy. £4 waged

£1 unwaged. Artists confirmed include the North Staffs Miners Wives' Choir; Freddy Anderson; the Proles; the Blues Poets; Bobby Christie; the Maryhill Writers Group and others.

Monday, September 2: UWC lobby of the TUC - 9am till 11am - to demand: End all collaboration with Tory Cheap Labour Schemes; Fight all harassment of the unemployed; Organise the unemployed; Fight for real jobs with real pay! Followed by fringe meeting in the Waverley Bar, Broomlielaw (three minutes walk from Centre). Speakers

confirmed: Ernie Roberts (Honorary President, UWC), Tam Burn (prospective Communist Party candidate, Glasgow Central), Lee Anne Burk (UWC), Phil Griffin (TGWU).

Manchester march

The annual lobby of the TUC is just one aspect of UWC work. As unemployment climbs, we have plans to dramatically up the work of the UWC and to make a real impact on the forthcoming general election. We want to put unemployment where it belongs - at the top of the political agenda.

There is a dawning realisation among the working class that the threat of unemployment is not just something that hangs over school leavers or the unemployed. This has found its most brilliant expression so far in the North West Defence of Jobs march on Friday August 16 in Manchester, the largest demonstration on unemployment involving sections of the employed working class movement since the Peoples' March for Jobs in 1983.

Over 1,000 engineering workers marched with representative delegations from factories in Merseyside, Crewe, Barrow, Carlisle, Bolton, Preston and Manchester. The significance of the demonstration is important to underline: a section of the employed working class marched against the threat of redundancy that hangs over them. Clearly, this must be the tip of a very large iceberg of unease and fear that affects whole swathes of the working class in today's Britain. That potential needs to be tapped and given expression.

Of course, the UWC has disagreements with many of the policies that this march advocated. But we recognise that this is a significant development that must be built on.

That is why the UWC is calling a national demonstration against unemployment in February next year. We believe that such a demonstration must take place on a working day - that workers must take *strike action* in order to join this *political demonstration*. We say that the work to initiate such a national action needs to be initiated now.

Over the coming weeks, the UWC will be approaching leading figures and organisations in the workers' movement to support a national demonstration against the capitalist crime of unemployment.

Support the fight of the unemployed! Build the UWC lobby of the TUC on Monday September 2! Prepare for the national demonstration against unemployment - February 1992!

Mark Fischer