



RALLY COMRADES

THE REVOLUTIONARY upsurge in South Africa is reaching new heights. Because of the bombing raids on Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Botswana, the invasions of townships, death squads, and divide and rule reforms, ever increasing numbers are drawn into the fray.

The revolutionary alliance of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, and the South African Congress of Trade Unions, continues to advance in terms of mass support and organisational strength. Indeed its slogans, symbols and perspectives have become the property of the masses.

The South African people are not prepared to be ruled in the old way and are making the country ungovernable. They have shown they are prepared to die in order to see apartheid destroyed. In this Umkhonto we Sizwe has played a key role in inspiring the comrades, the black youth, to form combat groups.

Although often armed with only makeshift weapons, the comrades have, along with the democratic mass movement, made certain areas ripe for insurrection. What needs to be done now, is to integrate these groups into Umkhonto we Sizwe, give them a clear revolutionary direction and generalise conditions for revolution. This is one of the most important tasks of the SACP.

Botha's claim that 63% of the

ANC Executive Council elected at its last congress in Kabwe, Zambia last June, are members of the SACP and the setting up of Mandela as the 'last peaceful hope', are both part of an attempt to drive a wedge between the SACP and the ANC. In the face of this, the SACP itself emphasises the need to strengthen the revolutionary fighting alliance and develop the liberation movement's ties with the Soviet Union and the socialist community, where much of the humanitarian and military aid to the ANC and the MK originates.

The unity, the ever-increasing political and military power of the revolutionary alliance, combined with the deepening economic and social crisis affecting South Africa, means the SACP can step up its work amongst white workers. It aims to prise away a significant number of them from apartheid through drawing them towards the non-racial trade union movement and presenting the real perspective of advancement through socialism.

Unless this is done, unless the democratic movement — especially the SACP — can split, or at least neutralise, whole sections of apartheid's social base, including its state machine, there remains the possibility of the revolution being resolved negatively through fascism.

Some looking at South Africa today say it is fascist already. This is

an important mistake, not least because it spreads complacency about the dangers the future could hold. In essence fascism is not racism, nor authoritarianism, nor the use of force. Fascism is counter-revolution and the imposition of a monolithic regime.

In South Africa there is a wide range of white, black and multi-racial legal and semi-legal opposition organisations and parties which are allowed to operate within the law as it exists. Fascism would mean unrestrained terror against the black masses. But it would also mean the suppression of contradictions inside the ruling class through force. For one of the features of the revolutionary situation which grips South Africa today is the crisis inside the ruling class and its inability to rule in the old way.

It is through the fissures of this crisis of apartheid, the break-up of Afrikanerdom, the collapse of 'Total Strategy', the English/Afrikaner conflict and the fears of big-business, that the anger and discontent of the masses has burst forth. Yet, if the masses are not for one reason or another strong enough to resolve the revolutionary situation positively by overthrowing the crisis-ridden ruling class through revolution, the only alternative is fascism. This is the one sure way the ruling class can suppress the

contradictions in its own ranks and crush the revolutionary upsurge of the masses.

Central to a positive resolution of the revolutionary situation and the consolidation of the democratic revolution is of course the working class. Its social position and weight makes it the most intransigent and powerful enemy of apartheid. Moreover its class interest means it will fight to ensure the democratic revolution does not lead to the replacement of the exploitation of black workers by white capitalists, with the exploitation of black workers by black capitalists.

The workers want to see the revolution go uninterrupted from democratic to socialist tasks. Only this programme can win over white workers and break the hold of the evils of tribalism, sectionalism and racial division.

Already the organisation of the working class has taken a giant stride forward with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Parallel to this the workers are increasingly asserting themselves. As well as staging important economic strikes the working class gave a glimpse of its power on International Workers' Day on May 1 with a massive nationwide political strike.

This points to the rise in political consciousness amongst the workers

and the spread of the ideas of socialism and communism. It rests upon the shoulders of the SACP to spread further socialist consciousness within the working class and lead it to become the hegemon of the democratic revolution.

In Britain our job is to do all in our power to aid the SACP and the revolutionary alliance. This cannot be done by appealing to Thatcher, Reagan, or the Eminent Persons' Group to side with the liberation movement through imperialist sanctions. We must take a leaf out of the Hands Off Russia campaign which saw the working class itself impose sanctions. Real sanctions are workers' sanctions.

Jack Conrad

DEMONSTRATE

London Saturday June 28

*Imperialist sanctions
are no sanctions
Real sanctions are
workers' sanctions*

Assemble around
our banners
11-12 Hyde Park



PPPS AGM

THIS YEAR'S Annual General Meetings of the People's Press Printing Society (the co-op which owns the *Morning Star*) necessitates a firm stand from genuine communists.

Presented as we are with a slate of pro-Euro reformists for the Management Committee on the one hand, and a slate of pro-Chater reformists on the other, many will say: 'they all stink', and abstain. Others, using the dubious doctrine of the lesser evil, will reluctantly plump for the Chaterites simply because they cannot bring themselves to 'support Euros'.

Others will have no difficulty. Those who support the Executive Committee politically and the neo-Fabian 'think-tank of the left' hopes of *Marxism Today* naturally still want the *Morning Star*. (Though, if comrade Myant's *7 Days* is anything to go by, many a Euro would be disappointed by the result). Then there are the 'my Labour Party right or wrong' types like Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill. Not seeing why they should look a gift horse in the mouth, they are quite prepared to be given a daily paper on a platter.

We Leninists are enthused by neither the idea of the *Morning Star* promoting Eurocommunism nor mainstream left Labourism. Despite this we have no hesitation in voting for the candidates of the EC. Why?

It is not because we have gone soft on Eurocommunism. Our ideological differences with the EC are well known. No, we are supporting the EC candidates because saving our CPGB from liquidation is at the centre of our strategy. To support the Management Committee is to support a course away from CPGB politics.

Chater's branding of our Party as "an outside body" was no mistake. It was a proclamation of liquidationist rebellion. This had led him to take the struggle around the *Morning Star* from being an inner-Party question to being for or against the Party.

His liquidationism is shared by others. Those who set up the CCG did so as a prelude to the formation of an NCP Mark II. Because Chater treats the paper as his private property he has allowed it to act as their mouthpiece. It has reprinted CCG statements in full, while denying access not only to groupings like the Straight Leftists and the Leninists, but the EC itself.

Claims from CCGers, like Mary Davis, that the *Morning Star* can become Britain's *Iskra*, are flatly contradicted by its day-to-day practice. The *Morning Star* is, unlike Lenin's *Iskra*, anti-Party, and again unlike Lenin's *Iskra*, transparently economic and reformist.

Many in the CCG camp do not want a split but they are cynically being led into one because of gut reaction against 'supporting' Euros. Comrades, by voting for EC candidates you are not voting for Eurocommunism, you are voting for the Party. In local and parliamentary elections we vote for communist candidates whatever tendency they come from. The same principle should apply at PPPS AGMs.

Until last year we had an abstentionist position, faced as we were with two equally reformist and opportunist Party trends. But Chater has taken the struggle out of the realm of an inner-Party struggle. The *Morning Star* was built by the CPGB; it should have the right to edit it whatever political shade leads it at a particular moment. Clearly, whatever ideological differences we have with the EC, it is at the moment standing for the idea of the Party, while the CCG/Management Committee grouping is against it.

Chater wants to hand the paper over to the Labour left. The best way to stop him is to vote for the EC candidates and above all to take the inner-Party struggle to the point where the Party is won to Leninism. After all the main weapon Chater and the CCG splitters have is the fact that the outrageous statements coming from comrades like Pete Carter and Sam Aaronovitch have official or semi-official status.

There is a huge difference between disciplined Leninist ideological struggle and the 'it's more important that the *Star* survives than the Communist Party' position of CCG supporters. One seeks to build a vanguard workers' party, the other is, the NGA allowing, drifting towards Labourism and Neil Kinnock. It is the difference between reform and revolution.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Anarchy

I came across the February issue of *The Leninist* only recently, so this reply to your article on anarchism is a bit late. However, some of the points you make need to be answered.

You seem to have learnt well in the 'Stalinist school of falsification'. For example you say that "it may be unfair to tar all anarchists with the same brush as Proudhon," ... then devote a large part of your article to him. Let us be quite clear, very few anarchists take much note of Proudhon these days. Bakunin criticised him as an "incorrigible idealist immersed in the Bible, in Roman law and metaphysics." Marx as a thinker was probably on the right path. He had established the principle that juridical evolution in history is not the cause but the effect of economic development, and though he did not originate it, to him belongs the credit of giving it a solid base. On the other hand, remarked Bakunin, Proudhon understood the concept of liberty far better than Marx. (Arthur Lehning, writing on Bakunin)

You describe Bakunin as a dilettante, yet he devoted much of his life to the revolutionary movement, including eight years in Saxon, Austrian and Russian prisons, and four years in Siberian exile. Is this the behaviour of a dilettante? And where is your evidence for his alleged desire that all of his followers had to submit to his authority?

As to the debate over the Paris Commune, compare Marx's concept of the future society in the Communist Manifesto to his shift of position after 1871. "Its general effect (the Paris Commune) was so striking that the Marxists themselves, who saw all their ideas upset by the uprising, found themselves compelled to take their hats off to it. They went even further, and proclaimed that its programme and purpose were their own, in the face of the simplest logic and their own true sentiments. This was a truly farcical change of costume, but they were bound to make it, for fear of being overtaken and left behind in the wave of feeling which the rising produced throughout the world" (Bakunin).

When it comes to the anarchist militants, the Ukrainian Makhno, and the Spaniard Durruti, you show considerable ignorance or stubborn unwillingness to face the facts. Makhno's units were not absorbed into the Red Army, they were physically crushed. Many of the unit commanders were invited to a conference with the Red Army, where they were treacherously shot. A cursory reading of, for example, *Serge's Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, reveals this. It seems strange that you obscure this fact.

As to Durruti and the 'inability' of the Durruti Column to fight, you again employ strange criteria. You use a bourgeois historian, Joll, to justify your arguments, something you would never do with an episode from, say, Lenin's life. This historian happens to be completely inaccurate by the way. The incident referred to relates to the Lopez Tienda Column, which had not one anarchist in its ranks. The Durruti Column saved the day (November 8 1936) when the Lopez Tienda Column gave way. As to the International Brigades saving the situation, let's quote a Republican Staff Officer, Vicente Rojo. "The truth is that on the day Kleber and his men were simply sunbathing in some village in the valley of the Tagus or the Tajuna, even too far away for echoes of the battles to be heard." The International Brigades did not intervene till the 10-11 November (Durruti, the *People in Arms*, by Abel Paz)

It would be interesting to hear your comments on all this.

Virus Supporter,
London

Alan Merrik replies:

The *Virus* supporter raises many questions, and while space does not allow a fully comprehensive reply on all points, I shall attempt to deal with the most important ones satisfactorily.

On Proudhon, we 'falsify' nothing. As argued in the article, "although Proudhon was not a revolutionary, many aspects of his thought were adopted by revolutionary anarchists such as Bakunin." But don't take my word for it. Bakunin praised Proudhon's "instinct" and talked of "the anarchist system of Proudhon broadened and developed by us." (cited in J Joll, *The Anarchists*, p90). Anarchism did not spring ready made and pure into the world. It, like Marxism, is a development from preceding ideologies. In the same way that the features of *homo sapiens* can be traced back to its anthropological ancestors, so can key facets of anarchism be traced back to Proudhon. Contradict Bakunin if you will!

This is very clear in the sphere of economics. Whereas Bakunin paid lipservice to Marx's critique of political economy, neither he nor any other anarchist did any more. In fact Marx ridiculed Bakunin's concept of "abolition of the right of inheritance as a starting point of the social movement", and "(Proudhonist) abstention from the political movement." (*Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence* p254) In doing so Bakunin had taken the stand of the bourgeois political economists in placing capitalism's 'problems' in the sphere of *distribution* (in this instance, only the particular form of inheritance) and not as Marx had done in *production*.

If you still have doubts, read Enrico Malatesta's *Anarchy*, a clear example of the false estrangement of "juridical evolution" from its base of "economic development" if ever there was one. As was said in February's article, Malatesta like Proudhon, actually *ignores* economics. There are differences between Proudhon and the 'anarchists-proper' it is true — and important differences too — but they share many central concepts. Here, strangely enough, I am in agreement with Bakunin against the *Virus* supporter.

As to the allegation that Proudhon understood the concept of liberty better than Marx, this is nonsensical. 'Liberty' is not an entity; men are 'free' within the boundaries the economic infrastructure allows them. Without an understanding of this infrastructure you understand nothing.

But surely this was all explained in the article? Have you actually read it, comrade *Virus* supporter, or did you just pick up the gist of it in conversation over a pint or at the bus stop? Please, some new ammunition, not spent shells.

And so on to Bakunin's 'alleged' authoritarianism. Three quotes should suffice; Bakunin, "in theory a protagonist of absolute liberty... resorted, in organising his revolutionary activities to methods which were not only the precise contradiction of his own principles, but went far beyond the most extreme ambitions of the dogmatic and dictatorial Marx." (E H Carr, *Michael Bakunin*, p193); "... he simply could not tolerate rivals, and would prefer to command a small, select group which he could dominate by virtue of his considerable personal magnetism than be prominent, but not predominant, in a larger, more impersonal organisation." (P Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, p300). And one from the horse's mouth: "The representative of the people — that am I. For I alone

am right." (Bakunin, cited in G Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p98)

The frequency with which he established these 'small, select groups', flitting from one to the next, toying with them and then folding them, like a capricious child, has led many to label him a dilettante. This does not relate to his personal heroism, but to his attention span.

What of Marx and Bakunin on the Paris Commune? The *Virus* supporter quotes Bakunin on the Marxists' 'change of costume' after the Commune, but furnishes us with not one quote from Marx or Engels to back this up. Anyone passingly familiar with Marx's writings can tell that there was no "shift of position", but a development in the depth and breadth of his ideas. This development occurred, and was impossible before, because what had only been postulated exploded into real life in the shape of the Commune. Living theory develops alongside real life. Abstract formulas remain for ever abstract formulas, ossified and inapplicable. Up in the air quotations to justify previous up in the air formulations by Bakunin do nothing to change this. Anyway, the Paris proletariat did not organise, as predicted by Bakunin, federalistically, but as predicted by Marx, centralistically. Classes were not abolished because they could not and cannot disappear until their material conditions for existence have also disappeared. Again, this was all in the article. Really, you must read more carefully, *Virus* supporter.

As regards Nestor Makhno, in November 1920 the Red Army ordered all insurgent units to be absorbed into its ranks. By August 1921 no military units remained outside its ranks, save the Whites. Some were physically crushed, others absorbed. This is not a minor point in the Russian Civil War, but it is not central to an analysis of anarchism. We did not seek to 'obscure' any facts, it merely did not fall within the scope of this article. The important point to make was that the anarchists played a marginal role throughout the revolution. Surely this is in no doubt.

However, on the point about Durruti, the *Virus* may well be right. But Spain was a defeat for both communists and anarchists. We have settled accounts with the past errors of our movement. All the anarchists have ever done is to point an accusing finger at the communists, bourgeoisie or whoever else happens to be at hand, not just on one occasion, but every time. Through bravery and commitment they have won battles, but never wars.

The issues dealt with, and others raised in the letter, leave the bulk, indeed the *essence* of the article untouched. Does the *Virus* supporter then agree with it? Or does s/he feel unable to take up the polemical cudgels against it? We both have the same aim — a classless society — but important disagreements as to its achievement included in the article were neglected in the letter; the criticisms made in the article of the anarchists' understanding of the material basis for classes, class dictatorship and hence the nature of bourgeois and proletarian states, amongst other things. In the interests of clarity, surely these should be tackled.

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



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PARTY PIECES

The inner-Party struggle is having a devastating effect on the state of Party organisation. London in particular has suffered being the centre of the CCG rebellion.

The state of London



Straight Leftist-led Camden: now the largest borough organisation

READERS might be interested in the following assessment of the state of the London District of our CPGB. Our sources of information include *District Bulletin* No.9 which appeared on February 24 1986 and a CCG document published in April.

If added together, membership amounted to a total of 1,410. At the London District Congress the membership figure was said to be 1,655. Therefore, even if the figure given at the London District Congress in March 1985 is correct, membership has dropped by over 900 compared with the figure for October 1984.

The information can be broken down under 1984 borough headings. Figures for 1984 membership are taken from July of that year and were given in the report of work to the aborted District Congress of October 1984. Membership for 1986 is counterfoils returned in February rather than cards issued.

BARNET: 1984 membership — 131. 1986 — 87. Very little CCG organisation. *Morning Star* Readers' and Supporters' Group in Hendon.

BRENT: 1984 membership — 104. 1986 — 43. Borough Committee dissolved along with Willesden branch dissolved and re-registered. Both continue to meet as CCG organisations.

CAMDEN: 1984 membership — 210. 1986 — 168. With the decimation of Hackney the borough with the largest membership. Straight Leftists dominate borough committee and comrade Susan Michie is secretary. Despite this Camden Hospital, Camden Workers, Grafton, Parliament Hill Fields, Adelaide were not ordering any copies of *7 Days* at the time of the last District Congress. One CCG supporter removed from office. Parliament Hill Fields and Bart branches amalgamated. *Morning Star* Readers' and Supporters' Group exists only in South Camden.

ENFIELD: 1984 membership — 61. 1986 — 31. Borough turned into one branch which takes six copies of

7 Days. Only one member removed from office.

GREENWICH: 1984 membership — 108. 1986 — 76. Branch congress meetings supervised by District Committee. Was CCG-influenced area though new Borough Secretary, comrade Rob Rolfe, is a hard line Eurocommunist.

HACKNEY: 1984 membership — 336. 1986 — 154. Seven members expelled. Five removed from office. South Hackney and Woodberry branches dissolved. Clapton branch reorganised. All three branches continue to meet as CCG organisations. 59 members not re-registered in 1985. CCG bastion — if overly consisting of OAPs. One Straight Leftist controlled branch which takes 10 copies of *7 Days*.

HAMMERSMITH: 1984 membership — 67. 1986 — 44. Borough committee dissolved. One member removed from office. Lillie Bridge branch disbanded. *Morning Star* Readers' and Supporters' Group meets only once a month. Comparatively large Straight Leftist presence although the average dues-paying membership in November last year stood at only 23.8%.

HARINGEY: 1984 membership — 231. 1986 — 130. Thirteen expelled and two suspended. Borough committee dissolved. Wood Green and Crouch End branches dissolved. (Although Wood Green branch revived for purposes of district congress) Tottenham and South Hornsey branches "partially re-organised". Borough committees and four branches now operate as CCG organisations.

HARROW: 1984 membership — 87. 1986 — 55. *Morning Star* Readers' and Supporters' Group only meets monthly.

ISLINGTON: 1984 membership — 121. 1986 — 63. Bastion of Eurocommunism. One branch disbanded, one member expelled.

KENSINGTON: 1984 membership — 42. 1986 — 31. One member expelled, one removed from office.

LAMBETH: 1984 membership

— 144. 1986 — 121. Eurocommunist stronghold. Comrade Paddy Farringdon secretary. One member expelled, one suspended from office.

LEWISHAM: 1984 membership — 184. 1986 — 103. Sydenham branch was dissolved in May by the EC and its members will be "re-registered". Borough Secretary, comrade Sarah Gasquoine, is a Euro/feminist.

NEWHAM: 1984 membership — 55. 1986 — 61. Straight Leftist comrade Gillian Staniforth, Borough Secretary.

SOUTHWARK: 1984 membership — 140. 1986 — 77. *Morning Star* Readers' and Supporters' Group with leading local Labourites. Attempts to withhold card from one member in Dulwich.

TOWER HAMLETS: 1984 membership — 129. 1986 — 23. One member expelled. Borough committee, Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Poplar, St. George's, and London College of Furniture branches dissolved. Old borough now merged into single branch responsible directly to District Committee. Majority of former members now in CCG organisations.

WANDSWORTH: 1984 membership — 119. 1986 — 82. One expelled. Straight Leftist comrade Nick Wright Borough Secretary.

WESTMINSTER: 1984 membership — 106. 1986 — 27. Two expelled, one removed from office. Borough committee and six branches dissolved. Five of these continue to meet as CCG organisations. Only two CPGB branches left.

DISTRICT MEMBERS: 1984 membership — 61. 1986 — 30.

PRINT: 1984 membership 55. 1986 — 13. Three expelled and one removed from office. Branches at the *Financial Times*, *Sun*, *Express* and *Morning Star* take no copies of *7 Days*.

Compared with November 1984 there are 20 fewer branches, four fewer borough committees, 16 fewer district advisories and seven fewer industrial advisories.

If comrades are to be judged on performance John Peck, our Party's National Election Agent should go. We had less than half the number of candidates fielded than in 1982 and according to comrade Peck "where the results can be compared to previous contests, ten are up and 24 are down." It is dishonest for comrade Peck to blame this pathetic performance on "the Party crisis". True the number of candidates could be due to this but surely not the fact that, on the day, voters did not think it worthwhile to vote Communist. This failure lies in a failure to project our Communist Party as an alternative to Labourism. Equally damning, *7 Days*, like the *Morning Star* it so closely resembles, hardly mentioned our candidates let alone campaigned for them. Above all though, the failure was political. The election platform we stood on was little more than left Labourism. Voters clearly reasoned "why vote Communist when I can vote for the real thing?"

There are still 19 miners in jail and around 500 sacked. Mistakenly our Party has done its best to turn the fight for them into one to elect the 'next Labour government'. This is despite the fact that scab Kinnock has made it perfectly clear, to those that do not refuse to listen, that 'the next Labour government', like the last one over the Shrewsbury Two, will not free our class war prisoners. Indeed so frightened of breaking or even being seen to challenge the bourgeois law are those committed to the reformist *British Road* that those in jail are more or less ignored. Only the tendency around *The Leninist* has championed their cause and demanded a mass campaign for their unconditional release. Others criminally insist that the issue of the sacked men be divided from that of those in jail, such is their craven concern for respectability with SDPers, Liberals, the church and nationalists. Of course this reformism does next to nothing for those sacked. It leads to nothing but straightforward passivity. Tragically therefore David Hamilton, a Labour Party member and victimised miner imprisoned for 64 days during the Great Strike, was able to put himself forward as a champion of the victimised miners against comrade George Bolton in the elections for the vice presidency of the Scottish Area of the NUM. So although after the 1926 General Strike our Communist Party was at the forefront of the fight to free the class war prisoners and against victimisation, the same thing cannot be said for today.

May's edition of *Marxism Today* carried a law and order "Communists — on the beat for a better Britain" ad to join the CPGB. Apparently "communists believe that only a police force that enjoys the support of all sections of the community can tackle rising crime levels." For Leninists, until communism itself, no such thing can exist. Far from the scum in blue being able to serve "all the community" ie all classes, they serve one class — the ruling class. The police are not primarily designed to combat anti-social behaviour but to protect the existing mode of production. As every Wapping picket is showing, they are part of the bosses' state machine. Indeed for us Wapping shows — as did the miners' Great Strike — the need for Workers' Defence Corps. They could enforce working class law and working class order at Wapping. Like the Red Guards, given the right conditions and leadership, they could grow into organs of working class state power. In the process, they would smash the police force *Marxism Today* is so keen to reform. Because of this we must take the ad's call for "democratic control" of the police, their "demilitarisation" and the making of racism "a disciplinary offence" with a pinch of realistic revolutionary salt. Such reforms are utopian and, what is more, diversionary.

Comrades will be shocked to hear that a Communist Party workplace Civil Service branch in Sheffield has been decimated by the resignation of nine members and their defection to the decrepit New Communist Party, which previously had no branch in the area. The mass walk out leaves just three members in this SCPS branch and the Party's work in this area is in ruins. The fact that this branch was dominated by the poisonous politics of Straight Leftism illustrates the degeneracy of this so-called "hard-line" faction and the nonsense of their current pretensions to be pro-Party. How can you be 'pro-Party' with politics that lead your rank and file either to drop into Labourite politics or that rest-home for centrist weary minds, the NCP?



With £367 raised within the last two weeks, our £600 monthly fighting fund, stands at £756. But as readers will know we called for £1,200 on top of this to allow us to make up for equipment robbed from our organisation. This would allow our immediate plans for pamphlets etc. to go ahead and would be the best answer to the two treacherous individuals we trusted. Our rally to celebrate the launch of the fortnightly saw a collection of £632. This means we have raised £1,398 within one month. A splendid effort. But we can, and must, still raise around £400 extra, alongside June's £600 monthly fighting fund.

FOR THE third time in the past 15 years the price of oil has come to dominate the economic news and the agendas of major economic summits. Everyone is talking or writing about the question of oil, just as everyone talked or wrote about the oil price rises in 1973 and 1979.

In the past the price of oil has been blamed for the slump in world trade in the period after 1973, and for the debt crisis which is said to have grown out of the second oil price rise. Now the debate is focused very firmly on conjunctural issues — on how the change in the price of oil will ease the problems faced by the world capitalist system, or, in the case of the odd bourgeois pessimist, on how it will make some of these problems marginally worse.

The shift in emphasis is marked. No one is rash enough to argue that the fall in the price of oil will spark off an economic recovery which will end unemployment in the imperialist countries, only that there is now scope for *some* more growth. No one is saying that the debt problems of oil-importing medium-level developed capitalist countries such as South Korea will disappear; only that the fall in price will lower their import bills, and (if all goes well) might induce a reduction in the rate of interest, thus making it easier to service the still expanding debt. "Oil may have caused all our problems", a typical bourgeois economic commentator might say, "but it cannot solve them."

This 'new realism' is undoubtedly a more accurate reflection of economic reality than was the viewpoint of the past. To reduce the problems of the world capitalist system to, on the one hand, the unilateral raising of the price of oil by OPEC (the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), and, on the other hand, 'incorrect policies' pursued by individual nation states in response to this price rise, was frankly absurd. The current fall in the price of oil won't cure the economic crisis because the previous price rises weren't the cause of the crisis in the first place. The price of oil, whether it moves up or moves down, is itself a consequence of the process of accumulation of capital on a world scale, of the unfolding of the internal contradiction of this process. This process is uneven, and hence changes do not occur smoothly — different commodities are affected in different ways, and face different market conditions; sharp jumps and collapses in the prices of individual commodities are not exceptions, but arise from the very nature of capitalism as a mode of production.

If the debates among bourgeois commentators, academics and journalists alike, on the 1973 and 1979 oil price rises were absurd, this is no less the case for the theorists on the left. The reformist left shared the same economic theories as the bourgeois commentators, and therefore shared their mistakes. But the revolutionary left has made equally fundamental mistakes. A predominant trend in Marxist theory has tended to refer to the period of the 1970s and 1980s as a whole as a period of permanent general crisis dating back to 1914. Each change is seen as further proof of the general crisis: the crucial task of analysing the concrete effects of each change or development subsides in favour of reference to the impending doom. But we do not find ourselves in a period of general crisis of capitalism at all, at least not in the scientific sense in which Marx used the term, but rather in the period leading up to the general crisis.

Marx's writings, even *Capital*, are not holy scriptures, however much various Marxist tendencies may treat them as such, delving into them in Talmudic fashion to come up with the quote which makes further analysis unnecessary. Our preference for remaining true to Marx's usage of the term 'general crisis' does not belong to that class of ritualistic quotation beloved of the 'religious' sects. On the contrary, it is precisely because the essence of Marxism is the concrete analysis of the concrete situation that we insist here on fidelity to Marx — far from absolving us from the necessity to be concrete, it makes it all the more important. For this period is the one where the stretching of the credit system prior to the general crisis, is pushed to its limits. The tensions which result from this process need to be analysed in the concrete forms in which they appear, not reduced to the content which they express, however much it remains imperative to grasp that essential content.

The causes of the collapse of the oil price lie in the final analysis in the nature of capitalist production as the production of capital, just as we can say the same about, say, the problems faced by the European Monetary System which culminated in the devaluation of the French franc in April. But the implications of each are very different, and this demands that we offer an

explanation at this level of abstraction, too. Which tensions are aggravated, which are eased, and in what ways, by the collapse in the price of oil will form the subject matter of the remainder of this article. As will be seen, these include some very dangerous tensions indeed. To confuse the present period with the general crisis itself can only blind us to what lies ahead and the severity of the crisis to come.

1. Commodities and Cartels: The Rise and Fall of OPEC

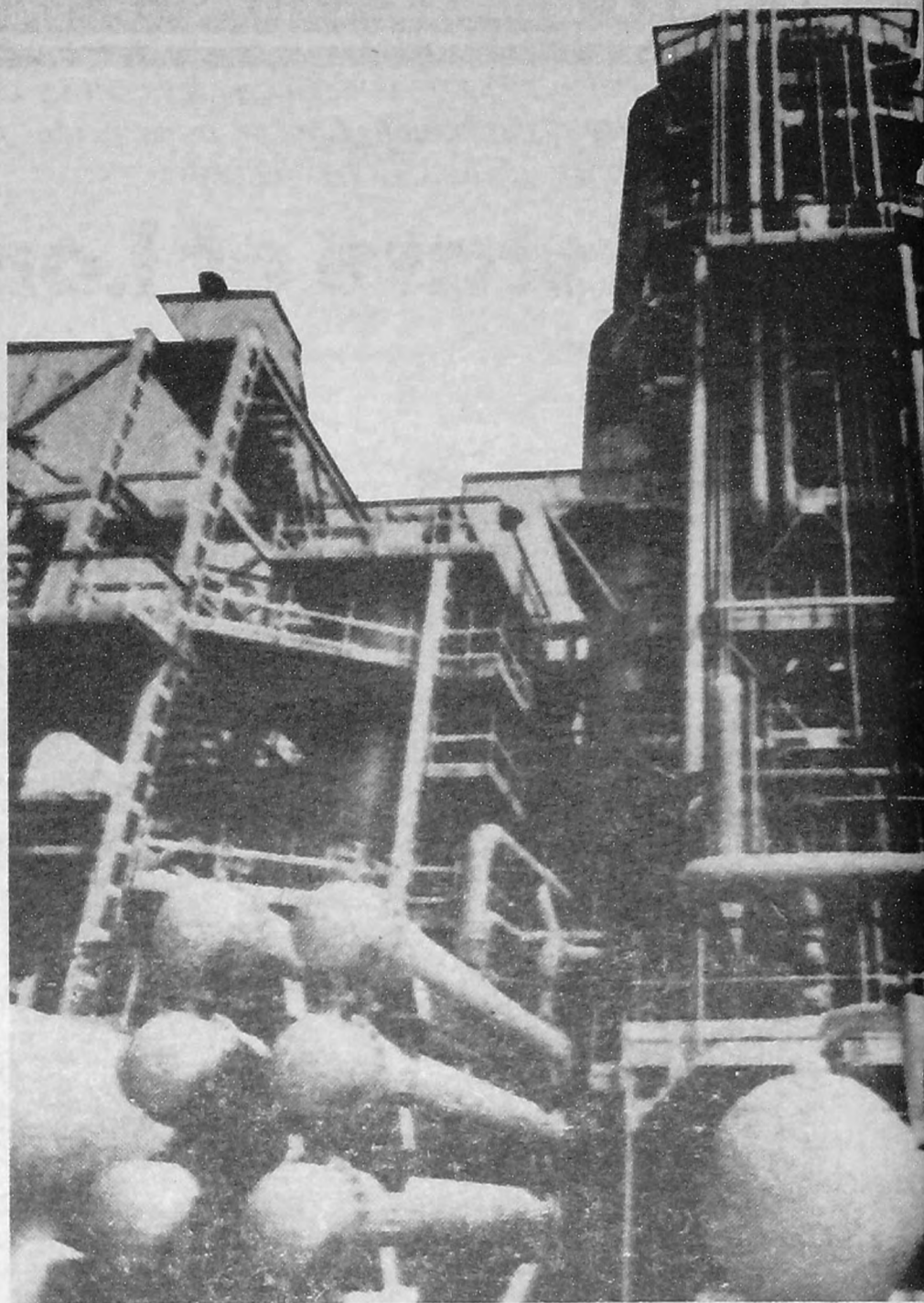
The 'long boom' of the post-war period, and particularly the intense level of economic activity of the late 1960s associated with the US imperialist intervention in Vietnam, resulted in, and was accompanied by, a rapid rise in the demand for raw materials in the world economy. For a period this growth in demand outstripped the growth in supply of these commodities, resulting in a generalised primary commodity price boom, by which 'market forces' — ie the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production — asserted themselves against the will of the imperialist powers. A rise in the price of any primary commodity reflects a (temporary) shift in the balance of these forces in favour of producers of that commodity. For primary commodity producers as a whole, this shift in the balance of forces in their favour was linked directly to the rapid accumulation in the imperialist countries, and was doomed to evaporate as this rapid accumulation itself increasingly ran into problems.

Under capitalism, it is in the nature of primary commodities that their prices are subject to considerable fluctuations in accordance with the ups and downs of the business cycle and with climatic conditions. Dissatisfaction with this price instability led to attempts to iron out these fluctuations by means of governmental interventions into the operations of the market. In broad outline, these commodity schemes consist of the establishment of a buffer stock of the commodity in question, and of an authority to manage the system, so that in periods of low demand the authority buys the commodity from the producers at the old level and at an agreed price, thus building up stocks and holding supplies back from the open market, preventing or partially offsetting any fall in price. Similarly, in times of high demand the authority will release stocks onto the market to offset a rise in prices, and stocks will fall.

This type of intervention — smoothing out fluctuations — can work in the short- and medium-term, so long as the fluctuations involved are small, and so long as there are no long-term secular trends at play. Price stability is in the interests of both producers and consumers of the commodities, and both will be willing to co-operate in achieving greater stability. But if there is a secular downward or upward pressure on the price, interests of producers and consumers begin to diverge. In the period after the primary commodity price boom of the late 1960s one can talk of precisely such a secular downward trend.

Under these conditions, commodity agreements are transformed into an arena of conflict between producers and consumers. Any commodity agreement can offset the pressures towards a fall in price and a cut-back in production only at the expense of rising stocks and increased indebtedness. The law of the market must assert itself in the final analysis, be it directly or indirectly. A prime case is that of the International Tin Council which collapsed this year. Lower-cost producers increasingly saw the opportunity of increasing their market shares through terminating the agreement, which also regulated these shares; the ITC found it increasingly difficult to raise loans, as its only collateral was the tin in its buffer stock — and the price of this tin was artificially high; and the imperialist nations were increasingly unwilling to put in money to finance the scheme which subsidised high cost producers whose output was no longer demanded. Push came to shove, and the renegotiation of the agreement proved incapable of producing a mutually acceptable scheme. The ITC imploded in a storm of ill-feeling and futile law-suits by creditors trying to retrieve their capital.

When a commodity agreement develops into a mechanism through which primary commodity producers seek to maintain a price and levels of production above those which the market will stand, then the writing is on the wall for that agreement. Low cost producers will always have an interest in breaking free of an agreement at the expense of higher cost producers — and co-operation turns into conflict. The same applies to any other form of



OIL AND

agreement which attempts to overcome the anarchy of the market within the confines of the capitalist mode of production. These other forms include direct cartels, such as OPEC. OPEC is a cartel through which oil-producing states have sought to combine and offer a united face against their customers — large monopoly capitalist firms such as Exxon, Shell, BP etc. OPEC has never included all oil producers, nor even all the major oil-producing states, but does control a sufficient proportion of the world oil output to have a decisive impact on the oil price at certain points. As *Financial Times* journalist Anatole Kaletsky put it in February, OPEC controls almost all the *marginal* production of oil, which means that at the moment the non-OPEC oil producers are producing at capacity level, so that an expansion in demand would have to be supplied by OPEC members. As such, in periods of buoyant demand, OPEC is very strong, but at times of weak demand relative to supply, it is OPEC which feels the pinch.

A very simple but far-reaching fact is that oil-producing states — within OPEC and without — produce under very different conditions, and oil production plays very different roles in the economic structures of different producers. Some states — Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for example — produce a lot of oil, and produce very little besides. Others — Mexico, Venezuela, Nigeria etc — could hardly be more different. These latter states are dependent on oil export earnings to pay the interest on vast external debts which have derived from an export-oriented strategy of industrialisation depending on foreign capital. A cut in oil earnings means dire financial straits — the total interest bill for the three states mentioned amounts to \$15 billion at current rates of interest. With OECD (Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development — consisting of all the imperialist countries plus some medium-level developed ones) estimates that each \$1 fall in the price of oil reduces Mexico's debt-servicing ability by \$550 million, the implications of the fall in the price of oil to below \$15 per barrel for Mexico's ability to pay the interest on its debts do not bear thinking about for most bourgeois commentators.

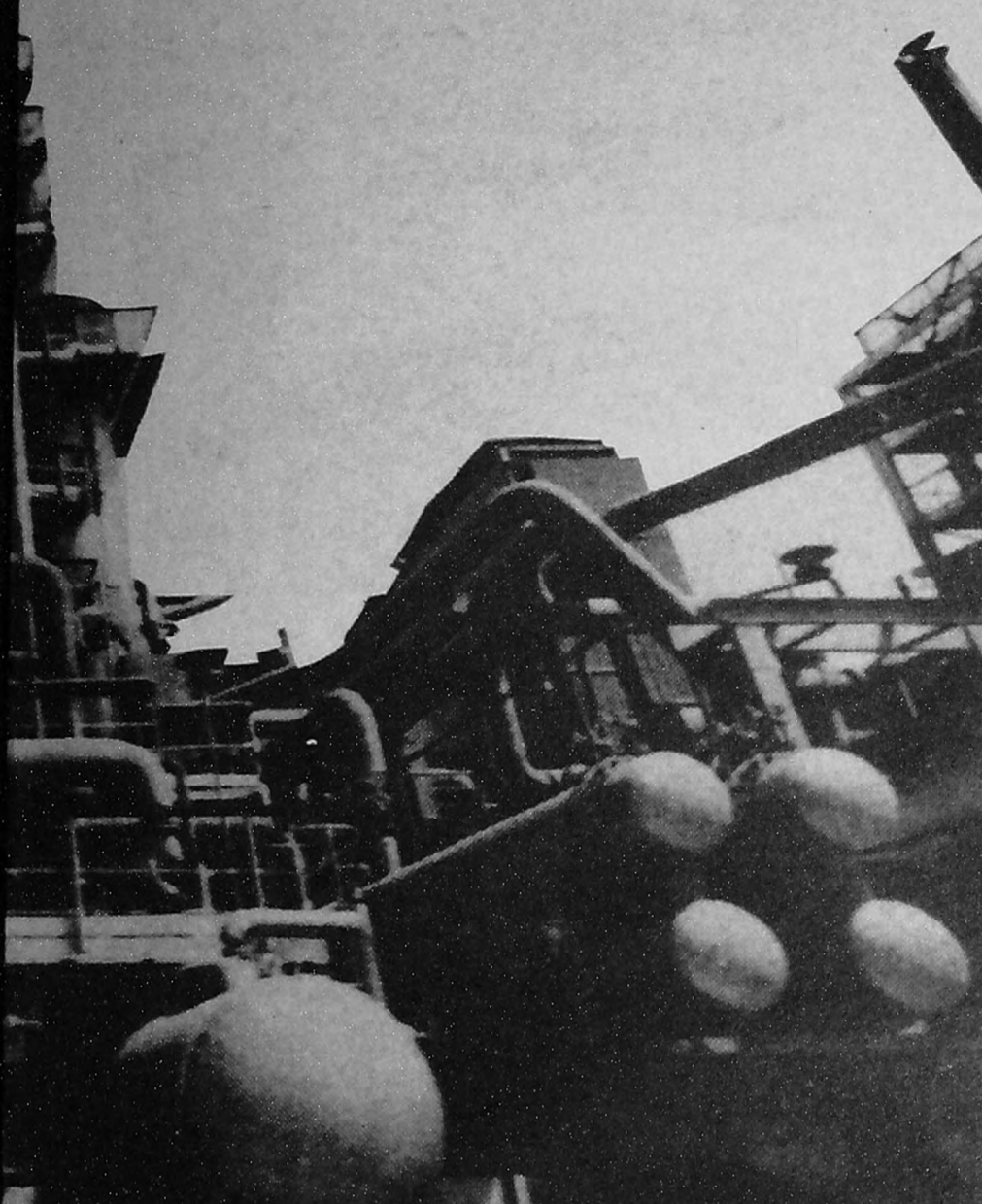
2. The Fall In The Price of Oil and The World Economy.

(i) The Imperialist Countries: Growth and Speculation.

Not thinking about the implications of the fall in the price of oil for Mexican debt repayments is precisely what most bourgeois commentators have done. Instead they have put the focus on how the fall in the price of oil has improved the possibilities for economic growth in the imperialist countries, for boosting world trade including exports to the 'Third World', and how it has increased the chances for the implementation of the Baker Plan (see inset).

A lower oil price means lower costs of production, which means, oil companies excepted, higher profits and lower prices. With a windfall decline in inflation of this kind there is scope, it is argued, for increased demand expansion, without causing rampant price rises. If this expansion of demand is stimulated by lower interest rates, the argument continues, then the stage is set for mutually beneficial expansion, benefitting imperialist powers and 'Third World' countries, as lower interest rates and increased export earnings ease the foreign exchange constraints faced by the latter.

Under these circumstances, the 'economic



CRISIS

increased the likelihood of a limited economic recovery, and by so doing has generated a speculative boom which has heightened the instability of the system, not reduced it; has increased the tensions in the already stretched credit system, not lessened them.

(ii) The Oil Companies and the Oil-Exporting Debtor Nations.

There are at least two more areas in which the tensions in the credit system have been increased by the fall in the oil price. The oil companies are major exceptions to the rule that low oil prices and low interest rates promise better times economically. On the contrary, they are heavily indebted to the banks, and the lower trading price for oil and the stagnant demand for it have put severe limitations on their ability to meet their financial obligations. Oil companies are in deep economic trouble, which means that the banks that have lent to them are also in deep economic trouble.

In these days of extreme interpenetration of financial institutions, this means that the entire financial system is in trouble. If one major bank goes to the wall, the problem doesn't end there. If this is true for the debts of the oil companies, then it is even more true for the debtor oil-exporting countries. The implications of the reduced ability to pay interest as far as these countries are concerned have already come to the surface. The first stage came when President de la Madrid announced unilaterally that Mexico would not be willing or able to pay more than 6% interest on loans already contracted. The Mexican bourgeoisie is far too dependent on imperialism to stare the major imperialist countries down for too long, and de la Madrid has since backed away from confronting his country's creditors. Instead he has turned on the Mexican workers and peasants, with international approval. In late April the Mexican government announced massive budget cuts amounting to \$1 billion less government expenditure, and about the same amount in tax increases, in accordance with IMF/World Bank/Baker Plan economic reforms. The price of keeping the Mexican bourgeoisie in line is to heighten internal political pressure, thus shifting the focus of the conflict rather than eliminating it. Nor will the economic tensions themselves disappear. Mexico's debt will be 'rolled over' (which is to say that it will be made possible for Mexico to borrow money to pay interest rather than actually to pay the interest back out of export earnings) in return for preparing the Mexican economy for even greater prostration before the interests of international capital. Mexican debt will continue to grow, without prospect of solution, further stretching at every turn the credit system. And Mexico is but the most severe case, and in this category one must also include Venezuela, Nigeria and the other oil exporting developing countries which accumulated foreign debts.

3. The USSR and Comecon

It would be irresponsible for communists to overlook the implications for the Comecon countries of the turn in oil prices. Burying our heads in the sand will not make the problems faced by our comrades in these countries go away — the USSR is heavily dependent on oil exports for foreign exchange and will be severely stretched by these developments. At a time when intensification of the arms race by the US is already putting increased stress on the Soviet economy, the fall in oil price has reduced the USSR's ability to buy the imports it needs. Bourgeois fantasies about the implosion of the

Soviet economy are not about to be fulfilled, but the bankruptcy of the theory of 'communism in one country', which sees the development of socialism within the borders of the already existing socialist countries as guaranteeing the future, rather than recognising world revolution as the key to the defence of the gains already achieved in the socialist countries, is clearly exposed. Exposed too is the erroneous notion that there are two world economic markets — one capitalist and one socialist — which co-exist side by side. The interpenetration of the economies of the socialist countries and those of the capitalist states is such that the fall in the price of oil affects the Soviet economy as deeply as it does those of the capitalist countries. The collapse in the price of oil shows that far from being insulated from developments in the world market, the socialist countries are very much part of it. Put concretely, the fall in the price of oil will mean that the USSR and the socialist countries will not be able to import as much western technology, which means the socialist bloc will find it even harder to compete economically with the west. Khrushchev's hopes of flooding the imperialist countries with cheap commodities are even further away than when they were first formulated, but far more important than dashing the hopes of a centrist, the fall in the price of oil will intensify the pressure on the Soviet economy as it attempts to keep pace with the US in weaponry. What is more, the disaster of Chernobyl may well put the USSR's nuclear industry — economic and military — back years, at a time when Reagan and his allies are intensifying their war drive aimed at the USSR. And that threatens all of us.

Conclusions

We characterise the present period as that in which the credit system is stretched to its limit, that is as the period leading up to the general crisis and collapse of the world market. The fall in the price of oil, far from containing the seeds of the recovery of the imperialist system, has increased the tensions within it in three critical ways. Firstly, there can be no clearer sign of how fragile is the financial system than the fact that the announcement of 'good' economic news, namely that lower interest rates and a lower oil price offer the prospect of marginally improved profitability, can spark off a stock market boom worldwide which undermines and threatens to tear asunder the credit system which binds the economic order together. Secondly, while offering increased profitability for industrial firms generally, the oil price fall has seriously affected the economic position of the oil producers, perhaps increasing the contradiction in countries like Saudi Arabia to the point of revolution; also affected are the oil companies and the banks to which they are indebted, further reducing their ability to service debts of the oil-producing debtor countries like Mexico. In these the effect is to intensify domestic contradictions, as the working class and the peasantry are forced to pay the price for the economic misfortunes and political weakness of 'their' bourgeoisie. Thirdly, it has had the effect of intensifying the pressures on the economies of the socialist countries, which threaten to further weaken their ability to keep up with the imperialist war-drive and escalation of the arms race. A weakened Soviet Union means a weakening of world socialism and increases the necessity and urgency of revolution in the imperialist nations.

The fall in the price of oil has brought the general crisis one step closer, paradoxically by apparently easing the constraints on the system such as higher costs and high rates of interests.

Brian Curran

reforms' envisaged in the Baker Plan will be easier to implement, as economic growth worldwide will ease the domestic frictions involved in the process of restructuring the economy of the 'Third World'.

The agendas of major economic summits are dominated by this scenario. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank half-yearly meeting echoed and supported the Baker approach, and the Tokyo summit of the seven major imperialist countries last month followed suit, at least when it could drag itself away from the subject of 'terrorism'.

The effect on the stock markets of the world has been, if anything, more dramatic than the fall in the price of oil itself. It has sparked off a boom which has not been confined to Wall Street or the City of London, but has encompassed the entire capitalist world. Lower costs of production, the prospect of increased growth, and the fall in interest rates which has already taken place, have all fuelled speculation about increased profitability.

What is more, low interest rates have meant higher share prices, as money is shifted out of banks and government bonds and into commercial shares. As everyone is aware that higher prices will result from these actions, an added twist of instability gets built in. Firstly, there is a rush to ensure that no one gets left behind, and secondly, because everyone knows that stock prices are not determined solely by objective factors such as the profitability of the companies concerned, but also by speculation as to the trading in the stocks and shares in and of themselves, as fictitious capital, the instinct of the herd drives share prices way beyond the level which one might term a rational reflection of the economic prospects of the firm whose shares are being traded. It is a particular feature of the irrational rationality of the stock market

that the knowledge that trading is at prices which no longer reflect objective economic reality, far from inducing caution, fans the flames of yet more speculation, as the speculators attempt to milk the boom for all it is worth before the bubble bursts.

This bubble must — and will — burst. In 1929 the speculative boom was so intense that the New York Stock Exchange collapsed and triggered a financial collapse and world slump. The present speculative boom is not of these proportions, certainly not yet, and may not ever reach that level. Marxism is not a crystal ball, and we shall not here speculate on the likely actions of gamblers on the stock exchanges, but one must note the following points. Firstly, the world economy is much more interdependent and capital much more internationalised than in 1929. If a collapse of the scale of Wall Street in 1929 had world-wide effects, the world-wide effects of the bursting of a speculative boom now would be felt much more quickly and much more sharply. Secondly, this internationalisation of capital is reflected in the internationalisation of stock markets themselves. The fact that a speculative boom such as the present one is not confined to one stock exchange but is rather taking place simultaneously in all major stock exchanges, means that a collapse would not simply have world-wide implications, but that it would itself actually be worldwide. Thirdly, financial collapse would not destroy capitalism by itself — that task would still need to be carried out by the working class. Financial bankruptcy in Germany between the wars gave rise, through the defeat of the revolutionary proletariat, to fascism. The 'inevitable collapse' of capitalism heralds an intensification of struggle; it does not make capitalism go away, but makes capital resort to ever more violent and desperate methods. The fall in the oil price

The Baker Plan

At the IMF talks in Seoul, South Korea, last autumn, US Treasury Secretary Mr James Baker unveiled a plan to ameliorate the debt crisis. Baker called for a co-ordinated set of initiatives comprising:

(i) economic reforms in the developing countries, aimed at clearing away government restrictions on the operations of foreign capital, dressed up as a battle against corruption and inefficiency.

(ii) the provision of finance by Western nations, and in particular by commercial banks, who were to provide a further \$20 billion in new loans, to finance these economic reforms in the short to medium term.

(iii) closer co-ordination between the IMF and the World Bank in policing and overseeing these economic reforms.

(iv) a climate of generalised economic

expansion to ease the transition. Supposedly a solution to the debt crisis, the Baker Plan was never more than a smokescreen: a token fiddling about with the margins of the debt crisis through extra commercial and institutional lending provisions, while insisting on still greater subordination of the economies in the medium-level developed capitalist countries' economies to the interests of foreign capital. Baker is seen by bourgeois commentators as a liberal, and as a pragmatist, counterposed to doctrinaires such as Reagan and Thatcher. Central to his approach is a case-by-case method which sees the debt crisis as nothing more than the sum of its parts, and those parts as nothing more than unsound economic policies in the debtor countries.

Yes, a pragmatist all right — a cynical, pragmatic agent of imperialism.

AFGHANISTAN



As in previous years, one of the main worries of certain stewards on the '86 May Day march was the comparatively massive contingent from the Leninists of the Communist Party of Turkey (Iscinin Sesi) and from the Mensheviks of the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey. "We can't have foreigners taking over our march", they insisted. British Leninist comrades overheard these pro-Morning Star stewards buddy-buddying it with the police, and joking with them about these 'crazy' Turks, referring to the Leninist comrades from Turkey, (the Morning Star actually backs the Mensheviks). A police superintendent however assured the stewards, "Well, we don't really think it is our job to take sides in these type of splits". Rumours that Straight Leftists are organising cells in the Met have been strenuously denied.

The Morning Star of May 3 had an interesting human interest slant on the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Canadian student Erly Court, ordered out of Kiev for her 'safety' by the British embassy, was pictured in the Morning Star building gleefully drinking from a flask of Ukrainian water to show her confidence in the reassurances of the Soviet authorities. Ms. Court, it needs to be pointed out, is a rather elderly lady and, as radiation poisoning often takes up to thirty years to manifest itself, she should be well out of harm's way before any potential unpleasant consequences pop up. Very irresponsible reporting on the part of the Star, we feel; but then we reckon that under Chater's editorship this hack rag will also have passed away in the not too distant future and thus avoid the NGA chickens (radiated or otherwise) coming home to roost.

Donny Gluckstein of the right-leaning Socialist Workers' Party pens an article in this month's Socialist Worker Review which puts an interesting view of the phenomenon of the mass Workers' Defence Corps that sprang up in the course of the 1926 General Strike. According to Donny these bodies were "designed to prevent clashes with the police and keep picketing under disciplined bureaucratic control." Got that everybody? So when a picket line is unorganised, defenceless and thus is attacked with ease by the police, that's revolutionary organisation. But when the picket line is protected by disciplined bodies of militants, tooled up with pick axe handles, and consequently the police are too scared to attack, that's "bureaucratic control". Funny lot, the SWP ...

THE REPLACEMENT of Babrak Karmal as General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was widely reported in the capitalist press. Despite this it has excited little comment in the communist movement. Perhaps this is because Karmal is said to have given up the post for health reasons.

Yet although the new general secretary Dr Najibullah has not denounced Karmal who retains the position of president, unofficial criticisms have been made and there are stories that Karmal will be replaced as president before too long.

There are those like the tailist New Communist Party who have greeted every new leader in post-April 1978 Afghanistan. They applauded Hafizullah Amin when he took over from Noor Mohammad Tarakki and in turn lionised Karmal and reprinted his accusations that Amin was a CIA agent etc. Nonetheless, not being part of the school of diplomatic internationalism, we do not automatically welcome every new leader, or believe the reason for comrade Karmal's retirement.

It could well be true that Karmal spent a month in Moscow for health reasons. Yet it must be admitted our world communist movement, especially the ruling parties, have a record of getting esteemed comrades to step down for their health one month, only to brand them as revisionists the next. We also do not exactly have a custom of comrades retiring at 65. Karmal is only 57. Most leading comrades in our movement, political strength permitting, have stayed in their jobs till they died. This is not necessarily a good thing. But the tradition of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Tito, Brezhnev, Andropov, Hoxha — the tradition of replacing leading comrades only after they have died — is more or less a universal one.

Negotiations

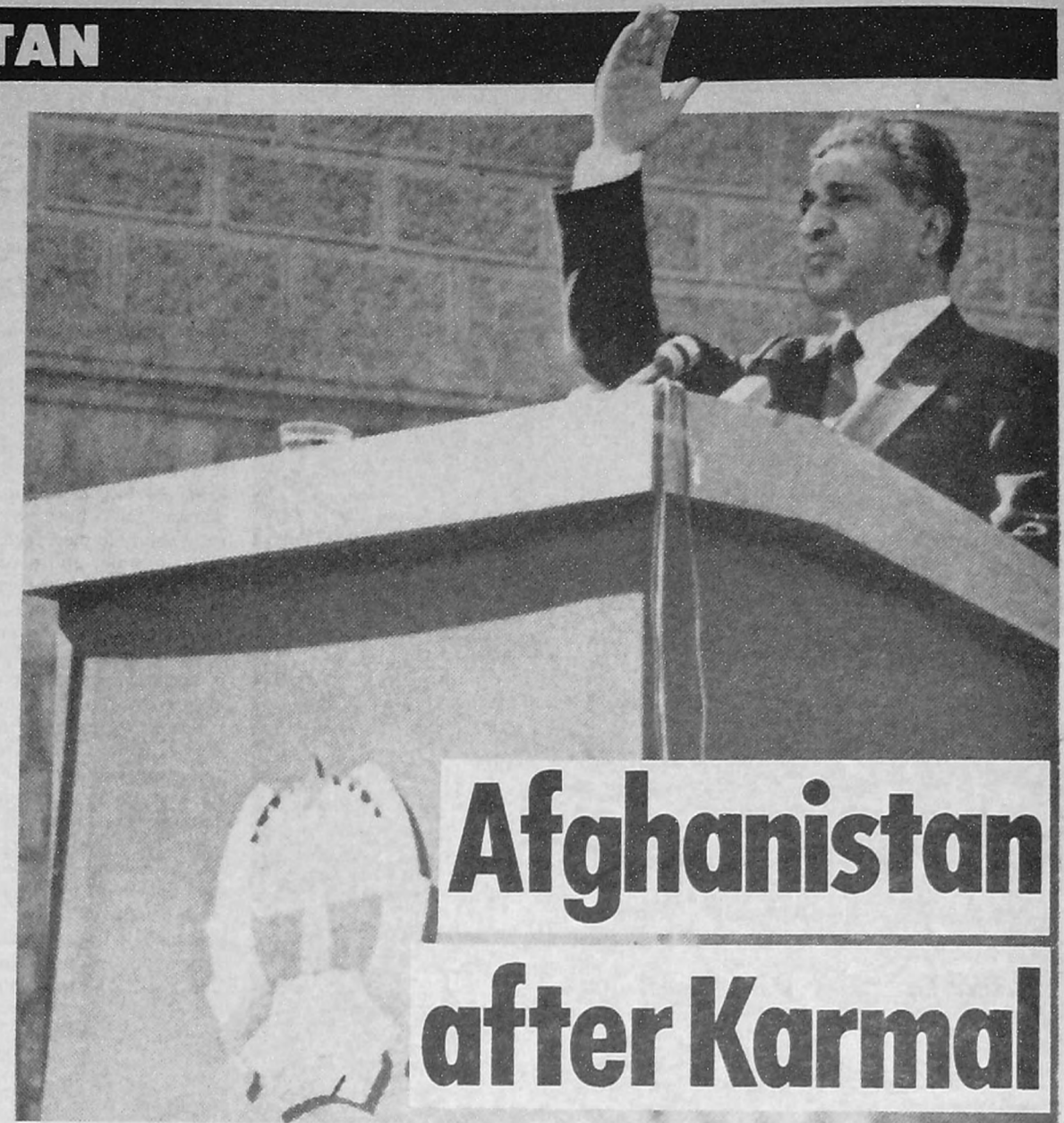
Even if Karmal was terminally ill this would not explain his replacement by the PDPA. But the PDPA has also given vague "international reasons" for the move. Could it be that the "international reasons" are the real reasons for comrade Karmal's departure? We must say this seems to be the likelihood.

What are these "international reasons"? Obviously they are a reference to the Geneva negotiations.

These talks between Afghanistan, (behind which stands the Soviet Union with its massive aid and substantial troop presence) and Pakistan (behind which stands US led international imperialism which has financed the counterrevolutionary war to the tune of \$2 billion) started in 1982. Although some became optimistic after the November Gorbachev/Reagan summit, the talks have been deadlocked since December over the Afghan government's insistence that Pakistan drop its refusal to recognise the PDPA government in Kabul. To break this impasse and facilitate the talks as they enter their seventh round, the PDPA has now dropped this insistence — and perhaps Karmal too.

Diego Cordovez, the UN mediator, spent two months in shuttle diplomacy between Moscow, Washington, Kabul and Islamabad, in order to obtain a resumption of the 'proximity' talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because these talks are not direct but take place through the medium of Cordovez this allows Pakistan to maintain its refusal to recognise the PDPA government.

At the centre of the negotiating differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan lies the question of linking the withdrawal of Soviet troops with the already agreed



Afghanistan after Karmal

articles for a settlement on non-interference and the return of refugees. Pakistan, pushed in particular by the US and Britain, is arguing for an immediate Soviet withdrawal, once a settlement has been reached. This, they hope, will lead to a speedy victory for the forces of counterrevolution. Naturally, the PDPA and the Soviet comrades have refused to agree to this. Instead they have removed Karmal, offered rather vague suggestions of a broader government and presented a long term schedule of troop reductions. This they believe will allow the PDPA gradually to consolidate its position.

Changes

Already within eight years the revolution has brought about significant changes. The public sector budget, spent mainly on education and health, has risen 450%, literacy in all languages has soared, and land reform has seen 800,000 acres distributed to 332,000 peasant families. As a result, the revolution can count on growing support, as illustrated by the 200,000 or so who demonstrated recently in Kabul against the US attack on Libya. Certainly in conditions of peace the PDPA's programme of reforms would eventually cut the ground from under the feet of the feudal tribal chiefs and the Islamic reactionaries.

Imperialism is determined not to allow this to happen. It wants to see the Soviet Union tied down in a drawn out and bloody war and fears that other countries in the region, like Pakistan, could follow the Afghan example. The US has therefore upgraded the quality of the weapons it is supplying to the forces of counterrevolution and is no doubt quickly making plans to divert the growing mass movement against the authoritarian regime of General Zia ul-Haq into a Benazir Bhutto, Haitian or Filipino style dead end.

Pakistan is a medium developed capitalist country where the internal contradictions constantly create conditions of extreme instability. For a long time Zia found it very useful, if very costly, to support Afghan counterrevolutionary bands

and allow them bases and facilities in Pakistan. Waving the Soviet bogey and championing the 'Mudjahdeen' cause diverted attention from internal problems and gave Zia standing as a Muslim as well as with the imperialist world.

Now the imperialists are worried that Zia might buckle. He is confronted with mounting agitation by Bhutto and the Pakistan People's Party for free elections, and by a growing body of ordinary Pakistanis who demand revolutionary change and see the Afghan counterrevolutionaries as little more than bandits. Indeed it was comrade Najibullah who successfully mobilised Pushtu and Baluchi tribal leaders from inside Pakistan's Free Tribes Zone to join a Loya Jirgah (grand assembly) in Kabul during April.

This assembly brought together 1,750 tribal and political leaders, who voted to support the Afghan revolution and demand the expulsion of the counterrevolutionary bands from Pakistan. That so many delegates (1,545) came from Pakistan was a result of the growing leverage of the Afghan revolution and tension between the tribes and Zia which has already resulted in numerous clashes with the army.

Counterrevolution

Despite this, it would be foolish to dismiss the continued strength of the counterrevolutionary forces. There can be little doubt that their writ runs throughout much of the Afghan countryside. In fact comrade Najibullah recently estimated that the PDPA government only controlled 35% of the country outside the towns.

With this in mind we can only welcome Najibullah's declaration that he will "reinforce the armed forces fighting the rebels". Coming as it did at the same time as the counterrevolutionaries had just suffered a major setback in Zhawar with 2,000 killed and 4,000 wounded, this is good news.

With an end to the use of Pakistan as a counterrevolutionary base, powerful armed forces and growing popular support, a slow rundown of the level of Soviet army involvement

could be considered. It is said the Soviet Union thinks comrade Najibullah will keep the Afghan government orientated towards socialism under such conditions where they feared that Karmal would be ousted or come under imperialist influence. Another Soviet black mark against comrade Karmal was said to be his inability to overcome differences in the PDPA.

Although Karmal's opportunist grouping, the Parcham, dominates government ministries, it only makes up about 40% of the PDPA's membership. Remarkably the revolutionary Khalq, once led by Hafizullah Amin, retains much of its strength. For those who so easily branded Amin a CIA agent, this should provide food for thought. These same elements blamed Amin and Khalq for causing the counterrevolution because of the extent of their land and other reforms, and because of their tough attitude to the counterrevolutionaries. They have been proved wrong.

It was the revolution which caused the counterrevolution, just as in Russia. And again, just as in Russia, it has been the revolutionary reforms which have increased the popular support for the PDPA government and will ultimately defeat the reactionary tribal leaders by undermining their base.

The Soviet Army's intervention in 1979 ensured counterrevolution could not win, but it also fanned tribal xenophobia; the killing of Amin and 97 other Khalq leaders put into power pliant opportunists, but weakened the PDPA forces; many of the Khalq led PDPA government's reforms — like teaching girls to read and write — were not liked by feudal reactionaries, but Karmal's holding back some of the early plans for reform has proved no answer to counterrevolution. The fact that the new PDPA General Secretary, Najibullah, has a reputation for giving no mercy to the forces of counterrevolution, and there are suggestions that the pace of reform will be increased, vindicates much of what Amin and his Khalq comrades said and did between April 1978 and December 1979. It's about time his and their reputations were rehabilitated.

Jack Conrad

Liberal tipplers and partners in crime



David Steel et al, *Partners in One Nation*, Bodley Head, London 1985, pp.148, £4.95.

SOME capitalist protagonists see more or less clearly the future facing their class. A bunch of them is the subject of this book.

David Steel, golden boy of the middle way, presents essays by a group which discussed the problems of the world, and then adjourned to a hostelry not far from the House of Commons.

There these well-fed, well-breeched savants sat over their claret. At their table sat another, uninvited guest. Not a skeleton at the feast, but the spectre that Marx and Engels said in the 1840s was haunting Europe.

Now it is a living reality. In the 1980s it is still revolution and communism which confronts imperialism and gives the bourgeoisie nightmares. Let's listen to some of these gentlemen.

Here is Trevor Phillips, former Broad Left president of the National Union of Students. He asserts that under the 'Butskellite consensus' everyone agreed that social stability was guaranteed by economic success (boom phase of the capitalist economic cycle) in which everyone could share. He now yearns (in this run-up-to-general-crisis phase of speculation, credit explosion, and volcanic world debt) for a new consensus.

"If we perceive it wrongly it could lead to precisely the kind of social disintegration we fear so greatly".

That is the overriding fear of these seekers for the middle way ... fear of the masses, fear of the class struggle exploding.

Wait for these gentlemen to refill their glasses and then listen to John Alderson, one-time top policeman, darling of *Marxism Today* and all radical reformers.

Alderson senses a general crisis of capitalism nearing. "Our economic deterioration is generally admitted, though the extent and future direction are the subject of political debate. The effect for Britain, already one of the weakest Western economies, will be particularly severe and the strains are already showing."

Alderson agrees there is the possibility, though not necessarily the certainty, of both disorder and ruthless authoritarian government.

He says that over the past 25 years police organisation has been developed which could quite easily be converted into an offensive arm of authoritarian government.

This former police chief also speaks of "social convulsions", "deepening bitterness", and the "plausible arguments for preparing the police to cope with tougher times."

David Steel himself says the book has tried:

"to outline what policies and more

importantly values will take us in a new direction towards a partnership society."

But: "A tired country is also a frightened country". Bold David and his 'middle way' friends may be scared but they are not stupid. For all their 'moderation' they know all they can offer is 'Thatcherite' solutions.

Just listen to Professor James Meade. Meade was director of the economic section of the Cabinet Office and is a guru of capitalist economics. He was one of Steel's boozy table-talkers, and a major thought from him is that trade unions should be muzzled and Japanned. Of the future, Meade has an almost Orwellian view (incidentally, he labels workers "hands"). His "most probable" forecast is:

"There would be a limited amount of well-paid, perhaps very highly-paid employment of a few persons to look after the robots; the rest of the labour force would be unemployed — or possibly in a few cases acting as poorly-paid butlers to the new highly-paid workers who were in employment or the not-quite-so-rich owners of capital equipment."

What does all this talk add up to? Not some kind of Robert Owenesque profit-sharing which forgets to take into account crises of capitalism, and the class struggle.

Consensus politics are all very well. It sounds great on TV but after a couple of bottles of claret even the 'middle road' bourgeoisie have to admit the truth of crisis and the consequent sharpening of class antagonistic contradictions. Consensus may work in a time of capitalist boom. But these are not the clothes for a capitalist crisis.

If the Alliance did have some say in government their policies could only lead to repression for the working class. This comes out between every line of this book. Is it too fevered an imagination to think David Owen a latter day Mosley?

Admittedly this David is not of the rent-collecting aristocracy. But he has the style, he has the Cabinet pedigree, and he can play the cynical demagogue. Who knows what role the future may call him to play.

Britain is entering into a period of class polarisation. British imperialism is an imperialism without an empire to cushion it from the crisis. The middle classes who put their hopes of a return to the 1960s in an Alliance government would be in for a rude shock if the Alliance had ministers. They would be thrown into political flux by the class war reality of any government administering capitalism in crisis.

We have no time for *Marxism Today* which can only see the middle strata, we have no time for the *Morning Star* which refuses to see them at all. While we can have no perspective of forming a revolutionary alliance with these elements — simply because of their social position of being the servants of capital — we do seek to neutralise them. But this can only be done if the working class is united around principled Marxist-Leninist politics and led by a genuine Communist Party.

The lesser evil ... tactical voting ... vote as left as you can. A general election is approaching, all the old catch phrases are trotted out. Labour is up one day, next it is the Alliance. Which capitalist politician: blue, yellow or pale grey-pink, do you want to cut your pay, or possibly your throat?

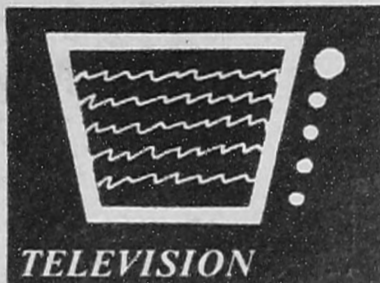
Every specious exhortation comes to cover up the inability, or rather unwillingness and opposition, to giving a clear, class revolutionary line to the workers.

Anything to dump Thatcher, say opportunists from Martin Jacques, and his neo-Fabian *Marxism Today*, to Reg Birch and the whimpering ex-Maoists. Never, never mention

imperialism, except US imperialism; and never, never make a central point that capitalism is in inexorable decay, heading headlong towards a new general crisis, in Britain as in the rest of the capitalist world. Never declare that capitalism has nothing to offer our class except the prospect of hunger, war, and nuclear oblivion. And above all never say that the only solution is class struggle, workers' revolution and the smashing of bourgeois courts, army, police and bureaucracy.

Tony Eastman

Tragedy into farce



David Benedictus (producer and lyrics), Guy Woolfenden (music), *What a Way to Run a Revolution*, Channel Four, May 7 1986.

NO, NO, NO. Surely this is not the way to commemorate one of the peaks of the struggle of the working class in Britain.

Channel Four had to do something to recall those tremendous days of May 1926, sixty years ago. It is a good indication of the trivialities Channel Four can plunge into that they should have chosen this show as their token obeisance to things past.

The musical was staged last year at the Young Vic in London and this TV version was recorded in the theatre, converted into a supposed House of Commons, with the audience sitting on the party benches.

In fact, this is more than trivialisation. The tragedy of '26 has been turned into a farce. By making the whole thing into a sanitised student rag suitable for presentation by any village amateur dramatic society, the presenters have given us something which is objectively reactionary.

The format — part documentary (the speeches come from Hansard and other contemporary records), part musical, part fiction — could be used as a weapon to destroy illusions of history perpetuated by bourgeois education and reactionary media and to advance the proletarian cause.

Remember *Oh, What, a Lovely War?* That really stripped bourgeois

imperialist hypocrisy down to the bones (even though it may have fostered pacifistic illusions), and its images really struck.

Not so with *What a Way*

This travesty just corrupts the imagination.

The continuity blurb told all: "After the break ... the 60th anniversary of the General Strike. As good a reason as any for a knees up celebration. Singing, dancing, big power politicians, the flavour of the month, and the odd confrontation. What a show ..."

But it doesn't matter, does it? This is the way to get through to the kids, in true Kinnockian style. And leave them with the impression that Ernie Bevin was some plump nubile female, and Jimmy Thomas (that archetypal class traitor) was just a thrusting Welsh lawyer-politician, or Communist MP Shapurji Saklatvala a nonconformist chapel elder. They weren't and it doesn't help to portray them this way, as *What a Way* did.

What about Winston Churchill, evil genius of the strike, purveyor of the capitalist hypocrisies through his *British Gazette*. Sure, he jumps about like the devilish imp he was. But this capering clown was not the real Churchill ... the Liberal turned Tory, the Home Secretary who 15 years before brought out the troops against the strikers of Tonypandy.

"My time will come" he sang, and even this fostered the great Churchill image as the saviour of British imperialism in World War II, adored by the masses in the time of 'their peril'.

What an opportunity was missed. The best part of the show, if you shut your eyes, and did not look at the figures speaking, was the quotes from contemporary orations. How revealing. An epicene Joynson-Hicks (Jix), the Home Secretary, declares (reminiscent of today's Whitehall optimists) that the milk supply was being conducted satisfactorily, and in any case the powers he had showed that he was the "ruler of England".

A shirt-sleeved A J Cook (almost a doppelganger of Scargill) scented the death of capitalism. The strike movement had fanned the fire that will overthrow it, and he sung of the old house (capitalism) that was rotten and would come crumbling down. Unfortunately A J Cook, a radicalist to the core, did not realise that only a revolutionary party could be the general staff organising the demolition of the old house, and so he rapidly moved to the right after the strike, and so, 'tis said, ended up not unsympathetic to the ideas of Mosley's New Party.

The waffling Ramsay MacKinnock, grandfather of the Neil MacDonald who leads the Labour Party today, with his pie-in-the-sky

visions and his web of wonder words, would be most appropriate today.

Ramsay Mac even boasts that he is not a trade unionist. Then this major class traitor Jimmy Thomas, the railwayman's misleader, has quite a telling song. "My people", he intones .. "I would have grovelled for peace." As if he, and the other TUC and Labour Party tops weren't grovelling all the time, the Right Honourable J H Thomas: "I said to the King, I said ..." as he grovelled his lickspittle way. Yes, some of these extracts from the old speeches were



1926: no song and dance

tremendously revealing. If only they had not been the filling of the song-and-dance sandwich.

The gritty nothern voice of the ever-present miner, appearing and re-appearing in the gloom, rubbed all this in. But sometimes his comments were singularly out of step with the knees up atmosphere. They, like the music and word of *What a Way*, just did not impact.

Tony Eastman

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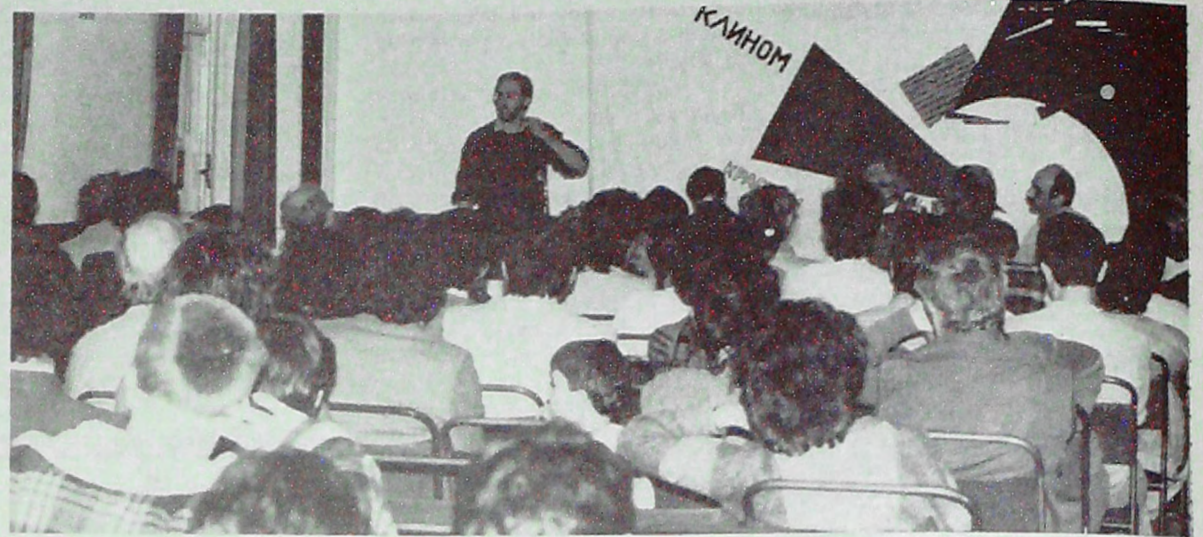
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Our rally to celebrate the launch of The Leninist was characterised by internationalism, militancy and optimism about the future. The rally was more than a resounding success it was a political statement of determination to reforge our CPGB into the organisation that will lead the socialist revolution in Britain.



Fortnightly launch

THE RALLY to celebrate the launch of *The Leninist* on May 16 was a resounding success. It was attended by over 90 people, some old, some young, some new to the communist movement, some veterans of fifty years, some came from London, some travelled hundreds of miles to join their comrades. Communist dedication, internationalism and confidence in the future characterised the gathering. We had a speaker from the Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain, David Kitson for 20 years a prisoner of apartheid spoke in a personal capacity, and a member of *The Leninist* editorial board. As well as this messages of support were read from Jack Collins (Secretary of Kent NUM), the Wolfe Tone Society and Un-American Broadcasting. The rally also saw People of No Name, an agit prop group which featured the heroic songs and words of Irish working class resistance and rebellion, and dancers from Turkey. They performed the dances of 'Turkey's Irish' the Kurds who have unremittingly fought for national freedom decade after decade. Given the enthusiasm of both groups and the revolutionary spirit of their work this half of the rally proved immensely successful and both musicians and dancers were warmly applauded. Showing the healthy response to the launch of our fortnightly and the recognition that *The Leninist* could not, and did not want to, live off the fat of the past, or subsidy from the socialist states, the rally was capped with a magnificent collection of £632.09p.

UTPB

Fittingly the first speaker was from the Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain. He was introduced in the light of the profound impact the ideas of *İşçinin Sesi* (*Worker's Voice*) had had on those who founded *The Leninist*.

The comrade from Turkey explained how the Mensheviks who dominate the 'official' Communist Party in Turkey had failed the proletariat miserably. As a result of this and the formation and growth of the Communist Party of Turkey (*İşçinin Sesi*) "today the difference between Menshevik politics and revolutionary politics is what we are doing about the practical organisational problems of the working class in Turkey." The comrade said that this resolved "around a single point". And that is "are you for the independent organisation of the workers to fight for better conditions and democracy, or are you in favour of tacking the workers' struggles onto the coat-tails of the treacherous social democrats."

Closing his remarks the comrade correctly declared that "in parallel with us, *The Leninist* must now put forward concrete proposals and ideas to the working class of Britain. We must aid each others' struggles and walk forward together to revolution."

David Kitson

Chastened and inspired by the level of struggle achieved in South Africa, in tribute to his contribution and sacrifice, the rally greeted comrade David Kitson with a standing ovation. The comrade said it was "an honour and a great pleasure to appear on this occasion to mark *The Leninist* newspaper becoming a fortnightly." He went on to describe the innovative and militant way the masses in South Africa have begun to control their own destinies, the rent strikes, the Alexandra township rebellion and the growth of the armed struggle. Comrade Kitson also pointed to the desperate attempts by the apartheid authorities to split the ANC and how the communist Joe Slovo and the nationalist Nelson Mandela were not falling for Botha's tricks. The impact of a successful revolution in

South Africa was emphasised. "It would produce a situation for British workers that would be equivalent to the liberation of Ireland, remembering the huge impact that Marx saw that would have on the working class in Britain. Indeed the South Africa revolution "will be a resounding blow against the whole of world imperialism."

The Leninist

The comrade representing *The Leninist* pointed out that this May saw the 60th anniversary of the General Strike. He insisted that while there was room for legitimate criticism of our CPGB in the mid-1920s, it did not as many 'left' groups say today betray the British revolution. "There was no revolutionary situation" the speaker said Turning to the present period it was pointed out that "if the working class had had the type of Communist Party they had in 1926, the outcome of the 1984-5 miners' Great Strike would have been significantly different." Ironically many of the 'leftist' critics of the 1926 stand far to the right of it as their record in the Great Strike showed. Because of the lack of a united vanguard party and its tragic effect on the class struggle the comrade declared the "task before communists in Britain is to reforge the Communist Party onto a higher level." This is a task "only *The Leninist* stands for" and the fortnightly will be "the vehicle for doing this". "*The Leninist* fortnightly will aim to unite theory with solid practice."

This the comrade concluded is the key to swinging the balance of class force towards the working class. The defeats of the workers at the hand of Thatcher did not show that "our class is weak" but "our movement's leadership and the dominant ideology in our class are."

