

The LENINIST

Issue 50 May 1 1987 30p

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In Defence of Gramsci
4 pg supplement



Troops Out Now!

March to commemorate the 12 Irish
Hunger Strike Martyrs, Birmingham May
9, Sparkhill Park at 12 noon.



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists
of the Communist Party of Great Britain

AS WE CELEBRATE May Day – International Workers' Day – it is pertinent to recall Marx's famous dictum that: "The emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries". This idea has solid material foundations. Capitalist exploitation of workers recognises no national boundaries. "That is why" insisted Lenin "the workers' struggle in all countries for their emancipation is only successful if the workers fight jointly against international capital."

Hence, proletarian internationalism is no sentimental whim, it is an objective law. Nevertheless, as it does not arise spontaneously communists must fight to see to it that the working class comes to understand it.

Workers conduct their struggles on the terrain of nations and states, each with its own peculiarities and problems. Because of this proletarian internationalism must be adapted to the climate of each country, ensuring at every moment the international interests of the working class provide the basic plan of all strategies and tactics.

This is a difficult balance to achieve. A struggle is required, in particular a struggle against tendencies towards nationalism which do arise spontaneously in the workers' movement.

An over emphasis on the national leads to opportunism in the form of social chauvinism. This is precisely the deviation we would accuse the Communist Campaign Group of. True, it constantly proclaims its loyalty to internationalism. But its existence as the one true defender of the Alternative Economic Strategy goes to show that behind the internationalist mask lies a social chauvinist face.

What is the AES? In broad terms it is a reformist package designed to reverse Britain's decline. This the CCG would not deny. But what it would deny is that this automatically lands it in the camp of class collaboration. Indeed the CCG, in the form of Photis Lysandrou, actually made the claim in the *Morning Star* that the AES represents a bridge to socialism. It is claimed to be similar to the ANC's Freedom Charter and that left critics of it, like ourselves, believe in instant revolution!

This is the most monstrous sophistry. The AES used to be the economic platform of the Eurocommunists – and no wonder! It rests on using the bourgeois state to reform the British economy so it can compete with its rivals like Japan. Only a couple of years ago both the Labour Party and the TUC had their own version of the AES. This should be enough to put paid to the lie that the AES is some sort class struggle minimum programme – a communist minimum programme aims at smashing the state, not reforming it.

The AES is a reformist response to capitalism's difficulties. It can never advance the real interests of the working class. In reality it is a ready made reformist schema which finds its advocates inexorably drawn to social chauvinist conclusions.

To hide this CCGers latched onto the Freedom Charter. Yet although this programme is a bourgeois democratic one, it, unlike the AES, envisages the smashing of the existing state. Communists are therefore quite correct to seek a revolutionary alliance with the ANC.

As to instant revolution, this is nonsense. This is the sort of argument employed by right wing Labourites. No one is saying revolution will happen tomorrow. Certainly Leninists are not against fighting for reforms. But we see them being gained as a by-product of the revolutionary struggle in the here and now for what the working class needs under capitalism – not, as with the AES, what capitalism can afford.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Elections 1

It is stimulating to read a true Leninist presentation of the role of parliament (editorial, March 20) in contrast to the reformist/centrist servile acceptance of parliamentary elections as the political battleground for the workers to fight the evils of capitalism. This parliamentary cretinism is typified, particularly by the Trots in the slogans 'out with Thatcher' 'for a Labour government on socialist policies'.

These very slogans exclude the projection of a true Marxist-Leninist analysis of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, as these organisations pivot their policies and tactics around the elections to parliament. They thereby credit parliament and the government with the power to act effectively in the struggle for socialism, negating the Marxist-Leninist analysis of the real state machine ie armed bodies of men, police etc.

The very act of accusing the Tory government of creating the misery, unemployment etc, which is the product of capitalist decay, opens the door to suggesting some other government can, if it wishes, equally intervene in the workings of the system and rectify the problems facing the working class. In contrast, Marxist-Leninists expose the system as responsible and logically conclude that the system must be changed through socialist revolution. It is a class against class issue, not one government versus another government. Our tactics of struggle and attitude and policies flow directly from such an analysis.

Comradely
Dave Mundy
South London

Elections 2

Comrades, you state the need to reforge our Party, to also support it financially to keep it viable etc, all this I can accept. However when we analyse Party policy, we see a reformist social democratic view pre dominating. If we have party candidates these are the views they will project, not a real (if at all) alternative.

No incentive for anyone to support and use in building the Party. If it were possible to campaign on Leninist policies then I would see the need to support Party candidates. Yes we need some political campaign/alternative to Labour/capitalism but how can we do this without falling foul of the Party EC?

Neil Willis
Southampton

Elections and the USSR

I agree entirely with your editorial, except that, if there is no CP candidate I think one must vote Labour (with one's eyes open).

Dave Adams' letter also echos my view.

I've just seen a programme on glasnost in the USSR with a British journalist interviewing various people, always trying to denigrate what has gone on before and intimating that Gorbachev is somehow bringing in private enterprise and that making the Soviet Union more democratic is an amazing turn of events. Surely this Gorbachev line is the Marxist principle of a quantitative change to a qualitative

change?

As for voting for a choice of members to the various Soviets, I was under the impression that this was already being done at local level, the winning candidate being placed on the voting paper.

Anyway, I enclose a cheque for £5 for the fund.

Fraternally
Joe Reid
Midlands

Wapping 1

Although there are many good points in Jack Conrad's article 'Wapping' (issue 47/48), they are somewhat invalidated by the opening sentence: "Do not permit the enemy to choose the time and place of battle".

If the working class were sufficiently farsighted, united and powerful enough to so shape circumstances as 'not to permit', we would have the socialist revolution today, or at any rate tomorrow!

As you say "the real education of our class is bound up with the class struggle itself". But, your opening sentence suggests that the education is almost complete. You are running ahead of realities.

Yours fraternally
Mike Liddle
Manchester

Wapping 2

On Wapping you mention the condemnation etc of violence by union leaders and criticise this (rightly so), then at the end of the article you talk of a defense corps 'policing' the demo's/picketing and throwing out anarchist riff-raff.

Some anarchist groups did stirring work during the print strike and not all are too undisciplined. In the circumstances of the way the strike was run they did try to create some meaningful demonstrations. I do not agree with their policies and would question some of their tactics but I feel your remarks are uncalled for. You probably meant anarchist with a small 'a' but one should be careful of referring to such elements otherwise you end up in the same camp as Dean and co.

Comradely
Paul Hunter
London

Wapping 3

I feel that your article on the print dispute is generally very good. The union's did allow Murdoch to call the tune. Undoubtedly they should have taken action before. Even when unions have ballots, a lot depends on how the forms are worded the discussion beforehand and the general question of how you take your policy to the membership, so I agree trade union leaders must take the main blame/criticism for defeat.

The left leaders, by trying to placate the police blaming outsiders for violence and relying on the TUC to expel EETPU etc also had wrong strategies. One should, in class situations such as this, fight to get maximum support such as an all out print strike and then a general strike. Days of action where everyone does his own thing, some out for the day, some half day, some a lunch hour meeting, is no good.

My trade union membership goes back to 1938 so I feel I know a little. Workers do not always respond to anything that does not directly affect them but if the issues are put and argued for and one is

consistent in one's policy and actions, you will find that there is a greater realisation and response.

Yours Fraternally
Billy Conlon
London

Cuba

The Academy of Sciences of Cuba has established the Mirta Aguirre Library of Social Sciences to bring about the development of the social sciences throughout the country, increase the depth of publications of the social sciences in general, as well as to look at the problems of the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

We are interested in receiving by exchange or donation your publication *The Leninist* and any other publications edited by yourselves to enrich our collection.

Yours
Comrade Maria Antonia Arus
Section of Acquisition and Exchange
Havana

Nationalism

Red Rackham needs to learn the difference between prescription and description. I wasn't advocating a pan-Celtic entente, only stating that in the realm of self determination the celtic nations could decide on that option as against some revamped 'British state' albeit a socialist one. It was John Maclean who projected this "dreary piece of utopian romanticism" as Rackham describes it.

The peoples of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Brittany will doubtless be outraged that Rackham describes their vivid and dynamic cultures as "a figment of Victorian novelists". It takes a special sort of contempt to come up with an ignorant remark such as that.

Finally, as for my "line" being reminiscent of pan-Slavism, I'm not sure what it means but it can't have much to do with me as I was only in Bulgaria for a fortnight!

Dave Douglass
Yorks

Dangers

Reconstruction and openness in the USSR has great possibilities but also great dangers. It would seem elements of private capital are being introduced and some idea of a market economy. There are many who have and are doing well. They will not want things to change unless a political revolution comes from the people. I feel it is going to be difficult and dangerous to bring about change. On the peace front is not the price of co-existence pulling out of Afghanistan, easing off support for liberation movements, etc? Could you do some articles on these points as a basis for discussion?

Phil Armstrong
Birmingham

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

WRITE OR RING

If you would like 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 us on 01-431 3135.

AFTER THE BROADWATER FARM TRIAL

RACISM AND THE MORNING STAR — AGAIN!



IN JANUARY, Hackney police kicked hell out of a young black man, Trevor Monerville, putting him in hospital with brain damage after many days of such treatment. In February, the scum in blue in Wolverhampton murdered Clinton McCurbin — again a young black man. In March, what is laughingly termed 'British justice' was turned on Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip at the conclusion of the Broadwater Farm show trial.

If the filth suffered a shock on the Farm in the summer of '85, they have been winning back lost ground with a vengeance, not just in Tottenham, but throughout the country. As the show trial proved, they have the whole range of the forces of the bourgeois state backing them up, and along with them the vile camp followers of the media. If, by some fluke or miracle, Silcott had been freed, then he would have found a rabid lynchmob in wait, whipped up by the vile racist rantings of the *Sun*, *Daily Star*, *Mirror* and the rest of the gutter press.

Black people have a formidable enemy ranged against them. But their strength lies not only in their willingness to tool up and fight back, as they have done, but also in the fact that their enemy is the enemy that took on the miners, the printers and that takes on gays. Indeed, it proves to be the enemy of the entire ranks of the working class and oppressed every time they are forced to fight for their rights — who collectively have a potential strength that far outweighs that of the police, the courts and their hyenas.

But it is only a potential strength. We are still far from realising it in practice. Unity is a fine word, but it cannot just be proclaimed, it must be fought for. It needs to be struggled for around demands which place the immediate needs of our class to the fore, developing through that struggle the consciousness of the working class as a class, and as the only class that can champion the rights of all the oppressed, in doing so developing a revolutionary vanguard for the class. Sounds fine, doesn't it? And indeed it is. But as we said, it cannot just be declared. There are objective barriers to this. Not just the barriers of the police, the courts, the pernicious influence of the media, but barriers without which all the others would have been smashed asunder long ago. These are barriers within our own ranks, the barriers of sectionalism and reformism, erected and enforced by opportunism — the influence of bourgeois ideas

within the workers' movement.

It is paradoxical that often those who cry 'unity' the loudest are those whose practice is the most divisive, whose politics are the most opportunist. In reality what these unity mongers demand is unity, true enough — but unity around Kinnock's Labour Party and its chauvinist politics. Yet the working class cannot be united around 'left' bourgeois politics, as is expressed by the Labour Party. It can only be genuinely united around its own class politics — those of the revolutionary communists.

One of the greatest blocks to this being realised in practice is the politics of the reformist 'communists'. Take for instance the Eurocommunists. At the time of writing they have not as yet dared to enter into print in *7 Days* on such a 'hot' issue as the Broadwater Farm trial. If they venture to do so, we will no doubt get a paraphrased version of Neil Kinnock's 'condemnation of violence on both sides' combined with liberal-reactionary calls for that age old utopia, 'police accountability'. Such a prospect is about as likely as 'guard accountability' to the prisoners in the Nazi's concentration camps.

Another favourite, of course, is 'community policing'. That's precisely what Blakelock was; your friendly community Plod, slinging his way round the estate, chatting up the kids, getting to know the lie of the land and who was who in the community. Then his friends in the CID could pick off victims and, in case of general resistance, other friends of his, this time in full riot gear, would be waiting. Broadwater Farm is like an Orwellian parody, where the pigs on the Farm are given free rein against the residents. Is it any wonder they hacked the bastard to death?

Maybe we can look forward to seeing a representative of the CPGB Executive Committee follow in the footsteps of Kinnock and lay a wreath at the spot where this 'honest copper' fell. After all, the Euro controlled YCL (before they liquidated it) sent tear stained condolences to the widow of scab taxi driver Wilkie during the miners' Great Strike.

Perhaps we are being unfair. As we said, the Euros have not gone into print on this as yet. The *Morning Star*, however, has. But reading the editorial in the March 21 *Star* we thought, by some strange quirk of fate, there had been some kind of mix-up, and the *Star* had got *7 Days*' editorial.

Quick as a flash your intrepid reporter got on the blower to Farringdon Road to verify this horren-

dous and embarrassing mistake. But no: the editorial was a kosher *Star* job. Given the tone of it one wonders what political differences could justify the Euro/CCG schism. But enough. Judge for yourself on this:

"The murder of PC Keith Blakelock", says the editorial, "during the October 1985 Broadwater Farm disturbances was horrible and cruel. It must be, and has been condemned by the black and white community in Tottenham as well as around the country."

It is right that the police investigate thoroughly such a murder. And it is right that the due process of law takes its course...

"[But] there is now a great danger in the wake of the sentencing of three young men for life for the murder of PC Blakelock that the very causes of events on the Broadwater Farm, and similar disturbances in Brixton, Toxteth, Handsworth and St Pauls before, will be exacerbated."

I think we have heard enough! Suffice to say that the editorial continues in a similar cringing and outrageously chauvinist vein. How can anyone calling themselves a communist fit so much rightist and opportunist filth into so few lines? It is disorientating trying to pick out where to start in tearing the whole thing apart. It is a veritable Augean stable of opportunism.

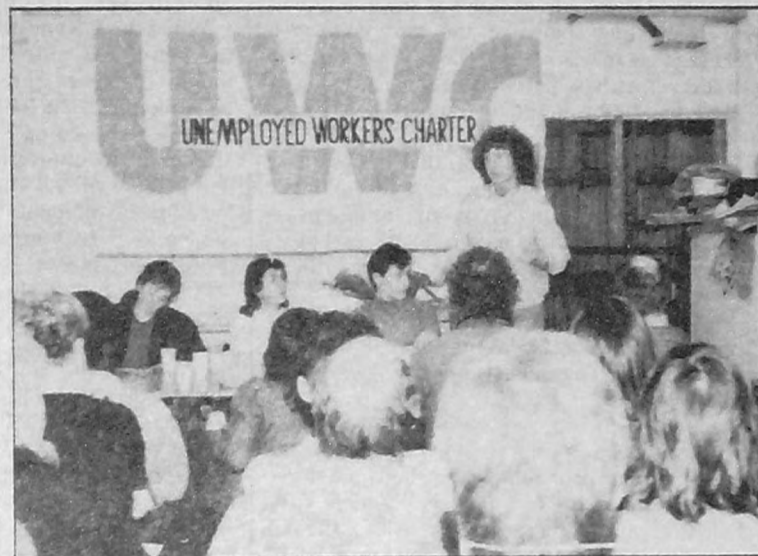
Well, for a start, what about this contention that PC Blakelock was murdered? Since when, Mr Chater (*Morning Star* editor) has the violence of the oppressed against their oppressors been murder? Is the necklacing of proved collaborators in the South African townships 'murder'? For that matter, was the revolutionary war of the NLF in Vietnam 'murder'? Or is it just murder when it is the forces of 'our' state, 'our' oppressors get it in the neck (excuse the pun)? Come clean, Chater, exactly how deep does your chauvinism run, how wide is that yellow stripe down your back? Never will *The Leninist* state that it is "horrible and cruel" for the oppressed to fight back.

Furthermore, we get tacit support for the jailing of the three scapegoats of the state. We are told that it "is right that the police should investigate such a murder". If one did not know Chater, the coward of old, it would take no time at all to tell that he is not black and does not live on Broadwater Farm. This 'investigation' has meant the continued persecution of the black community on the Farm.

Sean Quinn

PARTY PIECES

Organising the unemployed is one of the most important challenges facing the workers' movement in Britain. In the 1920's and 30's the CPGB took the lead in forming the National Unemployed Workers Movement. Its leaders were prominent members of the Party. Today opportunism means that the official publications of our Party as well as the *Morning Star* reject the tradition of the NUWM. *7 Days* acts as the mouthpiece for the sympathy mongering Hands Across Britain — attacking those on the 'far left' who 'dismiss it as a mere stunt'. The *Morning Star* does not put all its eggs in the HAB basket. Instead it actually calls for the organisation of the unemployed — but in unemployed centres. According to Kevin Halpin they "could maybe provide a forum to do this" (April 9). The government which helps to finance these, hardly used, tea and ping pong centres, through the MSC, clearly has little to worry about from the *Morning Star* and its CCG lodgers.



Meanwhile the Unemployed Workers Charter gets on with its campaign calling for the organisation of the unemployed. Not in MSC financed and controlled tea and ping pong centres, but in a NUWM type movement. It has made the call to turn Hands Across Britain's May 3 stunt into a militant manifestation of the anger of the unemployed. As part of this the first meeting of the East London UWC took place on April 2. It attracted nearly 40 people and regular meetings are now being held. For more details of the UWC contact: Mark Fischer on (01) 431 3135 or write to BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

The *Morning Star*'s Farringdon Road press is now no longer printing Maxwell's *London Daily News*. Its presses are again lying idle under dust covers. Printing the *Morning Star* will still have to rely on SWP's East End Offset. To those who only read the *Morning Star* all this will be news. In fact, as they were not informed about the deal to print Captain Bob's paper in the first place, it will be news indeed. George Bolton and Chris Myant, the two members of the Party's EC, on the management committee, proposed — along with the trade union chapels at the *Morning Star* — that a special shareholders' meeting be held to discuss the implications of virtually putting the fate of the *Morning Star* into the hands of press baron Robert Maxwell. Concern to keep the *Morning Star*'s troubles as secret as possible meant the proposal found no other support. Unfortunately, given the visible bankruptcy of the so-called survival plan, the Party's EC is to consider, at its meeting in May, proposals to give up the fight to rein the *Morning Star* at the forthcoming PPPS AGM in early June. We say it would be a profound political error to let Chater get away with his UDI just because he could cobble together a majority at the AGMs in 1985 and 1986. Not to fight is sheer liquidationism.

The Communist Party's £100,000 appeal raised £75,518. With *7 Days* reportedly losing from £900 to a £1,000 a week, and with steps being taken to reduce expenditure on it, this shortfall is not good news. This said it is, almost £4,000 up on last year's total. We argued in our columns against Party members boycotting the appeal. We called upon our readers to donate to it directly and via *The Leninist*. Comrades who support the ideas of our paper tell us they did their duty as Party members. We are still awaiting acknowledgement from fund organiser, Eric Atkinson, of receipt of the £150 sent via our paper towards the appeal.

HAPPY RETURNS

To mark the 50th edition of *The Leninist* and our return after a brief absence donations from our readers have been coming in thick and fast. Sending us £20 a veteran of the movement congratulated us on our "hard hitting attack" on the *Morning Star* over its opportunist position on racism. A reader in the West Country has pledged a monthly standing order of £10 to "help our truly Leninist paper" and one comrade who has only recently "been won to join the struggle to reforge the Party" and who has just ended a long period of unemployment has doubled his monthly standing order. This leaves our £600 monthly fighting fund at a healthy £560.

CAPITALISM is truly like the sorcerer's apprentice. It has conjured up the scientific and technological revolution but it cannot control what it has produced with its spells. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto* the "conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them." (pp.15)

This was vividly shown on March 30 1987. In one day we saw the stock markets around the world lose billions of dollars in value, on Wall Street the Dow Jones Industrial Average experienced its third largest one day drop by falling 57.39 to 2,278.41. The London and Tokyo markets experienced a similar wave of selling. On the same day the dollar slid to a new post-World War II low against the yen.

The immediate cause of this is the great American public. They have been gobbling up Japanese products, particularly in the electronics field. This has created a massive imbalance in trade between the two countries. Since Reagan was elected the US merchandise trade deficit has skyrocketed from \$39.7bn in 1981 to \$170bn in 1986 - most of it due to Japanese imports.

It is against this backdrop that US business leaders have been pointing an accusing finger at Japan for engaging in 'unfair' trading practices, i.e. selling their goods cheaply and profitably. They have grown increasingly shrill in their demands that 'something must be done'.

The catalyst which produced the latest talk of trade war was US accusations that Japan was breaking agreements concerning semiconductor trade.

Japanese finance capital has for a number of years been trying to become the world leader in the production of semiconductors, through dumping (a practice pioneered by British capitalism in its heyday). Using the so-called laser beam approach Japan has deliberately cut the price of its chips in order to capture overseas markets, in the process pushing rivals out of the market.

This has led to a situation where in 1986 Japan edged ahead of the US in the export of semi-conductor chips (*Financial Times* April 1 1987). It is also poised to make a determined challenge in the field of microprocessors, just as it has successfully done with cars, motorcycles, hi-fi equipment and videos.

In September 1986 the US manufacturers won the Reagan administration to threaten 'anti-dumping' duties. To ensure 'fairness', i.e. to preserve its still dominant position in the world market for high tech, the US demanded from Japan that it must sell at higher, what it called 'fair', prices in the US. Out of the window went all the platitudes about free trade and in came good old fashioned threats of protectionism.

With its dependence on the US market Japan reluctantly agreed to bow before US pressure. But six months later, with the US deficit with Japan still rising and uncompetitive US businessmen still crying 'unfair', Reagan at last actually agreed to impose tariffs specifically aimed at Japan.

Despite earnest declarations that a trade war would have disastrous consequences for the world economy and would wreck the whole Gatt system, the Reagan administration announced its first unilateral trade retaliation since 1945. With this act the US, in one fell swoop, doubled the price of a whole range of Japanese electronic goods and not just semiconductors.

Of course, the US is not alone in brandishing trade legislation against Japan. Britain is also aggrieved. It has announced measures which could curb the operation of Japanese banks and airlines in response to the Japanese government preventing the British transnational, Cable and Wireless, from taking a significant stake in the Japanese telecommunications industry. And in an attempt to further tighten the screw on Japan, Britain has successfully taken the lead in proposing joint anti-Japanese action by the EEC.

Japan did its best to pre-empt the sanctions. Nakesone indicated Japan will purchase US supercomputers and he bent over backwards to show he was trying to persuade the Japanese population to buy Scotch whisky and other luxury products from overseas. He also promised to increase access to its markets for foreigners by removing non-tariff barriers and generally lowering tariffs. Moreover, Nakesone allowed the yen to remain at an historic high and took other measures to stimulate the economy in an effort to draw in imports.

But Japan's rivals are sceptical. The Nakasone government is facing a storm of internal criticism over existing measures to open-up Japan. Its capitalists simply do not want to see

still lower growth and profit rates, let alone go bust in order to help inefficient US capitalists. It is of little wonder therefore that while Japan's imperialist 'friends' have exacted similar packages before, the results have hardly lived up to their expectations.

Japanese competitiveness may have been blunted (sending growth rates for both Japan and the world economy down to the level of sluggish Britain) and have triggered a massive surge in the export of capital, particularly to the US where 32% of foreign investment is now of Japanese origin. (*Financial Times* February 25 1987) but in 1986, despite the sharp increase in the value of the yen, Japan doubled its trade surplus to a record \$83bn, compared to the year before. And even this is said to hide the true extent of the imbalance. Throughout 1986 the Nakasone government was importing huge quantities of gold in an effort to reduce the surplus.

While the US and Britain have broken both the spirit and letter of the Gatt and play tough, the mere threat of sanctions had a negative effect on their domestic economies. For this reason both Britain and the US have attempted to draw back from the brink and dampen down talk of trade war. All sides have for the moment more interest in keeping the world market open than splintering it into protectionist pieces.

As to the future, there are dark forebodings about a trade war sparking off an inflationary explosion and a pull out by vital Japanese capital from the US stocks and bonds markets. Although the present disputes around semiconductors and Cable and Wireless are unlikely to spark a full blown trade war, there can be no doubt that the danger of one breaking out is increasing.

What lies behind the growing tension between the great economic powers of the capitalist world?

Comrade Myant, writing in his turgid *7 Days* says its all to do with "anti-Japanese flag waving" in a bid by Thatcher to get in for a third term (April 11 1987). If this were the case one can only wonder why the Reagan administration has imposed sanctions when by US law he cannot stand again. The bourgeoisie is slightly more realistic, but only slightly. Ian Rodger in the *Financial Times* puts it all down to the Japanese having been a developing nation which legitimately used protectionist measures, became "set in their ways and reluctant to change until forced to" (March 31 1987). Likewise James Baker, US Treasury Secretary, has argued that the imposition of sanctions will prompt Japan to break from old attitudes. A short sharp shock will make it see the light and restructure its economy so it is not so reliant on export-led growth.

Of course, it is not electioneering or Japanese stubbornness which is behind the spiral towards a trade war and the consequential splintering of the open world market. It is the very mechanisms of the capitalist system itself. As Marx said, "The real barrier to capitalist production is capital itself."

The history of the last eight or nine decades and especially the last five years has above all been the history of the revolt of the modern productive forces against the existing property relations over which the bourgeoisie rules.

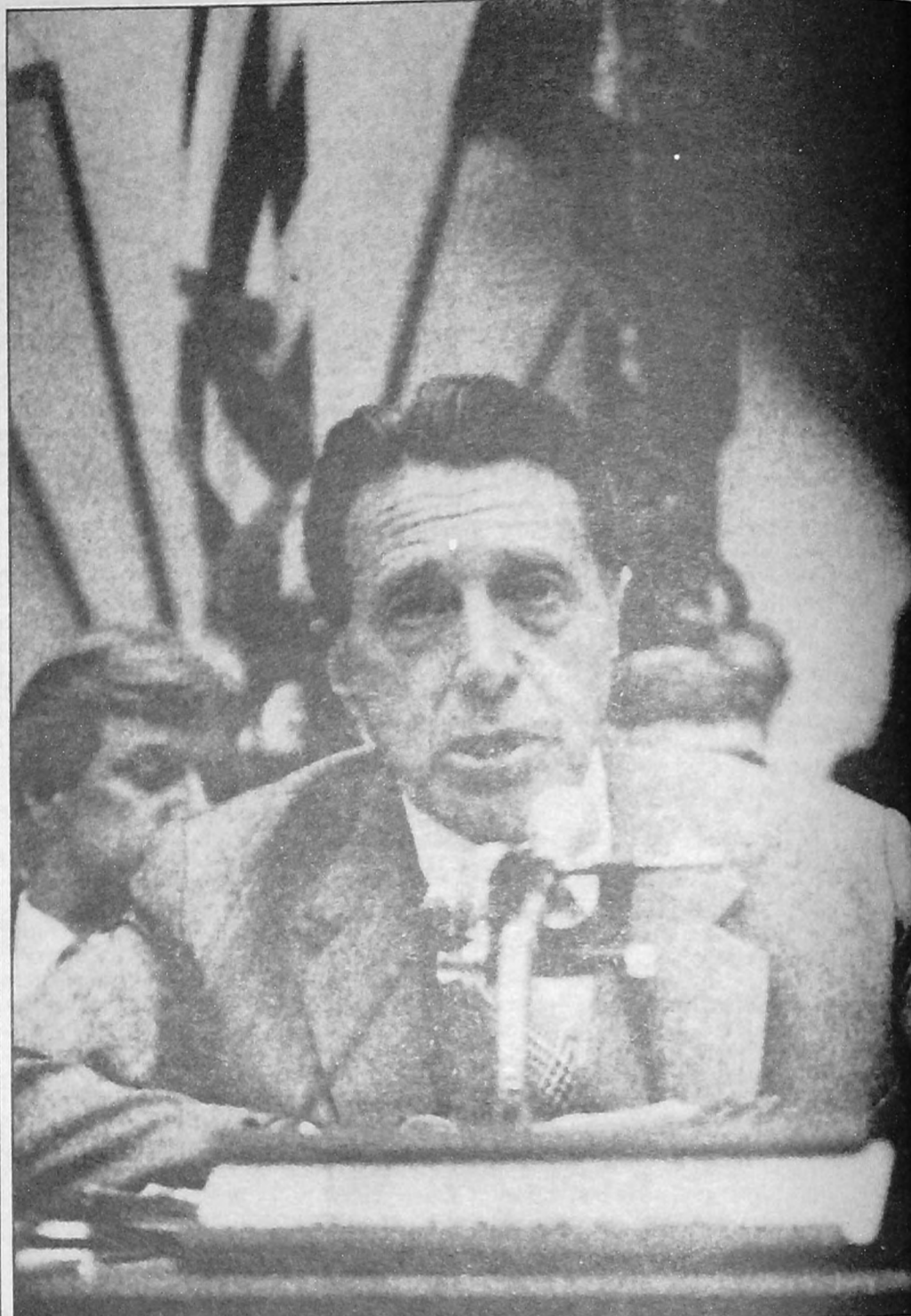
Capital on a cycle

In the capitalist system individual companies, branches of industry and countries develop unevenly and through a business cycle of booms and slumps. It cannot be otherwise, given the nature of the capitalist system itself.

The fundamental contradiction of capitalism - the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of appropriation - means production is carried out for profit not need. This eventually leads to not "the production of too much wealth. But periodically, there is a production of too much wealth in antagonistic forms of capital." (K Marx *Capital* Vol III, Part 3) And under imperialism, when the world has effectively been divided, commodities simply cannot find markets. This poses the necessity for the violent entry into closed markets through war, and the destruction of antagonistic capital.

Thus where industrial (pre-imperialist) capitalism developed through a cycle of booms and crises of overproduction, imperialism adds to this wars of redivision as a necessary and inevitable feature of capitalism's mechanism. Capitalism has therefore not only become a fetter on the full development of productive forces but threatens to plunge all of humanity into the most devastating war imaginable.

TOWARDS



Casper Weinberger orchestrating world imperialism against the Soviet Union...im USSR...it increases it.

Marx described three phases of capitalism's business cycle. There was the period of rising profits and prosperity, the period of declining profit rates, over-production and speculation, featuring the stretching of the credit system to its limits, and finally the period of general crisis, stagnation and the collapse of the credit system.

The epoch of imperialism has not only added war to this, it has greatly expanded and generalised this cycle. Where capitalism went through its cycle first every two years, then every five and then every ten, under imperialism the credit system has allowed booms to reach unprecedented highs for unprecedented periods. But there has been a price to pay. The subsequent general crisis reaches unprecedented depths and lasts for an unprecedented length of time.

Thus the last general crisis saw two world wars and spanned the years 1914-1948. It also included the crash of 1929 which almost overnight wiped out a third of the capitalist world's productive capacity. This general crisis was only resolved by World War II which redivided the world and created the conditions which allowed capitalism to enjoy the long boom of the 1950s and 60s.

Yet since the late 1960s we can clearly see that capitalism has again entered the intermediate phase of its cycle between boom and slump, the phase of declining profit rates, overproduction and speculation, featuring the stretching of the credit system to its limits.

We have certainly seen the rate of profit tending downwards. One study has estimated the rate of profit in US manufacturing fell from a peak, in 1965, of 36% to 10% in 1980. During the same period in Federal Germany it went down from 20% to 10% and in Japan from 40% to 14%. Undynamic Britain only had a profit rate of 10% in 1965 and this had been reduced to a miserable 3% in 1980 - though the Thatcher years have undoubtedly seen a rise - perhaps to 1973 levels.

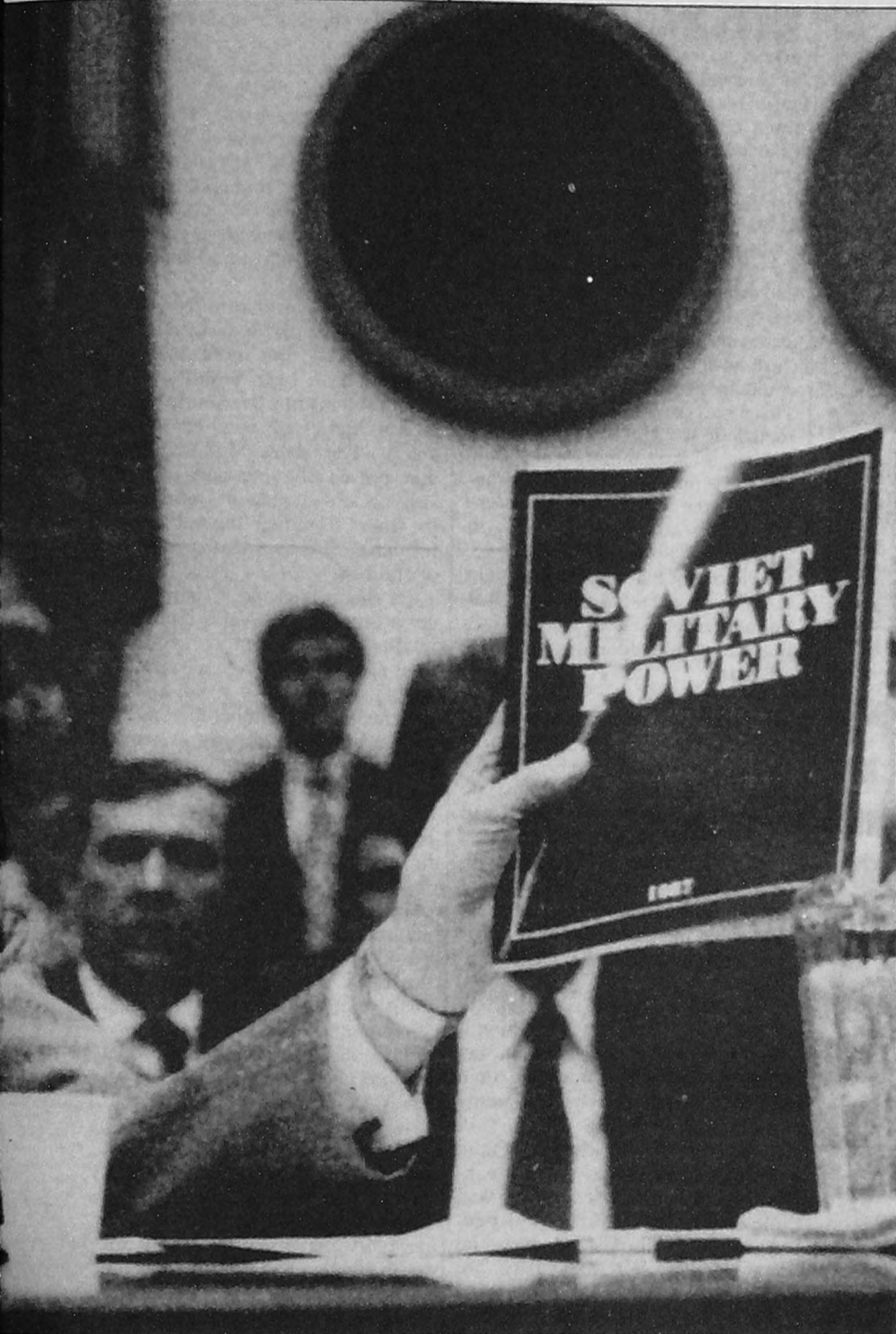
Within this phase economic upturns (such as the one we are meant to be in now) have become ever more fleeting and economic downturns ever longer, deeper and more intractable.

This means that in order to survive and keep the mass of profits up, capitalism seeks to raise the rate of exploitation, it also turns to the export of capital to find new markets. Britain is a classic case in point.

Union power has been attacked in no uncertain fashion. But perhaps the main reason companies have been able to restore some of their lost profitability has been overseas investments. Between 1979 and 1984 privately owned external assets went from £43 billion to £156 billion, netting huge superprofits to top up domestic profit rates.

Part and parcel of this and in an effort to curb open competition the process of centralisation and concentration of production is dramatically increased. Mergers and takeovers are taking place at a staggering rate. Tokyo,

THE BRINK



Imperialism's drift towards trade war does not lessen the danger of war against the

New York, Frankfurt and Paris have all seen their own versions of London's 'Big Bang'.

Capitalism has reduced itself to the omnipotent rule of a score or two of giant transnational corporations and a dozen or so giant banks. The fundamental contradiction of the capitalist order, between social production and private expropriation, has reached its highest expression. This produces greater masses of profit but it also produces heightened conflict between labour and capital and individual capitalists and individual capitalist countries.

The emergence of imperialism (monopoly capital, finance capital and the export of capital) means the uneven development of capitalism becoming ever more pronounced. Domestically we see islands of rapid growth, such as computers and microtechnology, amidst a sea of decline. Internationally we see Nics (Newly Industrialised Countries) emerge as significant powers on the world market (such as South Korea). At the same time some established big powers stagnate (such as Britain) and the majority of the so-called 'Third World' sink further into poverty and starvation.

Unevenness becomes a decisive law in the operation of imperialistic capitalism. True it opens up the possibility for certain countries (like a Federal Germany, a Japan and even a South Korea) to catch up and outstrip previously dominant powers. Yet obviously at the same time it confronts established powers (like a USA or a Britain) with the prospect of

decline and decay.

This makes stable international alliances by imperialist powers impossible. The relative strengths of different countries is constantly changing and coming into conflict. This lies at the root of talk of trade war we hear today.

We can draw some valuable conclusions about the future if we correctly understand the past. So let us look at what uneven development under imperialism has led to.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Germany and Japan were 'miserable insignificant' countries compared with Britain and Russia (Lenin). And yet within the first decade of the twentieth century Germany had overtaken Britain in GNP and was building up its military power with which to challenge for domination of the world economy. As to Japan, it had inflicted a crushing defeat on its main rival in Asia, capturing Port Arthur and sending virtually the whole of Russia's Baltic fleet to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

So imperialism, in the shape of monopoly and the export of capital greatly accelerates the development of some countries, retarding the further growth of others. It also leads to war. The existing division of the world forces emergent powers, like Germany and Japan, to engage in violent attempts to redivide the world. If they are to continue their expansion they must gain access to new markets.

As we know, Japan's and Germany's attempts at redivision failed despite two world wars. After World War I Germany was shorn

of all its colonies and Japan was cheated by being given none. In the immediate aftermath of World War II Japan and Germany lay in ruins.

Yet this time the general crisis which gripped the capitalist world since 1914 was resolved. This was possible partially through offloading the destruction of capital onto Japan and Germany by force, but mainly because the US succeeded in seeing through a redivision of the world – mainly at the expense of its wartime ally Great Britain.

On the ashes of Hiroshima and Dresden and with the break up of the French, Dutch and British empires a new cycle of accumulation was initiated.

The US emerged from World War II supreme. It was, with the exception of the socialist countries, able to reorganise the world economy in its own image. The American century had begun. With rising profit rates and 50% of the world capitalism's GNP concentrated within its borders, on the basis of a massive export of capital the US constituted itself as a sort of 'super' imperialist power.

Inevitably, though, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and the related law of uneven development steadily undermined Pax Americana. Its Reich was not to last a thousand years or anything like it.

During the long boom of the 1950s and 60s the world economy grew at an unprecedented rate. But while the US could boast a 1.4 times increase in its per capita production, Federal Germany multiplied its by 2.1 and Japan by a staggering 3.8 times. And far from this unevenness being reduced, since the petering out of the long boom in the late 1960s it has become more pronounced.

Japan has grown at significantly higher rates than its main rivals. This has meant the Japanese trade deficit of \$480 million in 1964 had by 1978 turned into a surplus of \$18.2bn and as we have already said in 1986 this surplus reached \$83bn. Thus today Japan has become the United States' major industrial rival and has overtaken both Britain and the US in the net export of capital.

As the Japanese sun rises the US dollar declines. It is no longer the world currency it was. The breaking of its link with gold in 1971 saw to that and led to the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system the rates of exchange between the currencies of the capitalist states were fixed in relationship to the dollar. This was the beginning of the end of the US position as a 'super' imperialist power. Now it stands as merely a first among equals.

Profiting from labour

Capitalism must grow in order to survive. More and more capital must be accumulated. The nature of the profit system dictates this. Capitalist accumulation is like a labour of Sisyphus. Every capitalist must never endingly strive to put onto the market the greatest possible amount of commodities, and this demands more and more capital – it is this or certain bankruptcy.

The striving for profits incessantly demands increased productivity and new techniques of production. As sure as night follows day this leads to the sort of overproduction of capital we see today when an ever expanding mass of capital is finding it ever more difficult to realise its surplus value in a market saturated with commodities.

The overproduction of capital also means the rate of profit tends to fall. Why? Because living labour is the source of all surplus value. The decline of living labour, i.e. workers' labour power employed, relative to dead labour, i.e. machinery, buildings and raw materials, causes the rate of profit (a converted form of surplus value) to fall. In *Grundrisse* Marx called this "in every respect the most important law of modern political economy..." (p. 748)

Marx noted the fact that until the market had become completely saturated with commodities this tendency for the rate of profit to fall could be partially offset through increasing the exploitation of the working class, but mainly through the extension of the credit system. This is exactly what we see today.

The credit system is used to overcome the immediate restrictions to production caused by the falling rate of profit. Of course this only stores up trouble for the future, ensuring as it does further overproduction of capital and the emergence of balance of payments difficulties as over-production is extended to the international sphere with over-imports and over-exports.

Since the termination of the gold/dollar exchange system in 1971 the credit system has

been expanded beyond anything seen in the past. Credit has become truly global, truly interdependent and truly massive. London, New York and Tokyo now stand at the hub of a world-wide network which keeps the wheels of the capitalist juggernaut rolling.

But the power of these centres is based solely on 'fictitious capital' – stocks, bonds and shares, whose call on existing wealth relies on nothing more than an accumulation of claims on future profits.

Under present conditions fictitious capital grows extraordinarily fast in a series of speculative booms. Yet because of its lack of intrinsic value, the entire credit system is extraordinarily fragile, nervous and prone to panic selling. At the least disturbance the whole pack of cards can come tumbling down and throw the world market into a general commercial crisis.

Certainly, in an effort to keep its economy from nose diving, the US has increased the rate of exploitation suffered by the working class. It has also sucked in ever larger amounts of imports (both commodities and capital) – which it has paid for through stretching the credit system to its limits.

Over the last five years the US has thus been transformed from the world's principle creditor into its principle debtor with a total internal and external debt of some \$8,000bn. Of course, the US simply cannot afford to let this debt continuously spiral upwards. Borrowing and the related negative trade balance must be reduced if an inflationary explosion is to be avoided.

The dollar has therefore been allowed to fall by about 40% compared with the yen and the D-mark in an effort to boost US exports and reduce its imports. Unfortunately for the US this devaluation has only had a marginal effect. Because of the inability of the US to achieve a really significant shift in its trade imbalance the *Financial Times* of February 24 1987 remarked "the dollar may still be overvalued".

Against Japanese competition the value of US commodities is not being fully realised. This has produced a spate of bankruptcies in the US.

The only way to really reverse this trend is by destroying surplus capital and the US capitalists will do their damndest to ensure that it is not they who suffer but overseas rivals. In this they are joined by the US labour movement, which as with its British counterpart and its AES, demands import controls against 'unfair' Japanese competition. Stand up for America says the United Auto Workers prime time advertising campaign.

Those who 'stand up' for American capitalism want to see Japanese capital 'decommissioned'. In effect they demand certain key sectors of Japanese industry, the most dynamic sectors, commit harakiri. Understandably this is something Japanese businessmen are unwilling to do. (And just as with the social chauvinists at the top of the British and US labour movements, they are supported by the Japanese labour bureaucracy).

Because of the sheer size of the US economy (it is bigger than Federal Germany and Japan combined) and its importance as a market, the US can still exact compromises from Japan. It can in effect get the world's two over-exporters, Japan and Federal Germany, to pay for its over-imports through their purchasing of US stocks and bonds. But not for ever.

Sooner or later Japan and the other more dynamic capitalist powers will be unable to compromise with the US. The need to survive will overcome the need to cooperate. And when peaceful compromise becomes impossible jaw, jaw will become war, war. Inter-capitalist contradictions will in turn produce protectionism, trade war and finally a shooting war to open up markets, either against other imperialist powers, or the socialist countries, or both.

The bourgeoisie instinctively knows this but refuses, for the moment, to openly face up to it. Looking at its own history, especially the period of economic crisis in the 1920s and 30s, and the horrors of World War II which this directly produced, it closes its eyes with a shudder.

But however much it refuses to see, preaches the virtues of free trade and the evils of protectionism, the boss class and its representatives cannot escape from a reality which with every day that passes increases the drift towards crisis. Warnings against the dangers of a trade war are destined to be like the prophecies of Cassandra. The bourgeoisie cannot escape its fate.

Jack Conrad

The NUM has always been one of the strongest and most militant unions in Britain. For Thatcher they were the enemy within. On the defensive since the defeat of 1984-5 the leaders of the NUM are now wanting to bow down to British Coal's demands for more job losses and in South Wales a six day week. For the rank and file this means that the leadership has become the enemy within.



The rank and file are right to back Scargill – but only to the extent he backs the rank and file.

UNDERMINING UNITY

THE NUM is again facing a major challenge to its unity from within the ranks of its own officialdom – chillingly, this time, from the leaders of South Wales – a leadership once renowned for its militancy, its socialism and its courageous solidarity.

Its acceptance of the British Coal ultimatum over working a six day week at Margam represents a challenge to miners just as dangerous as the formation of the UDM.

When the South Wales Area conference agreed by 137 to 77 to accept the recommendation of the area leadership and surrender to the 'take it or leave it' conditions of British Coal, they were underlining the fact that the miners suffered a defeat at the end of the 1984-85 Great Strike and exhibiting the sectionalism that has plagued the miners' union since its formation.

The area was undoubtedly cleverly targeted by British Coal: it has lost 11,000 members, a 50% drop, since the end of the strike and its leadership has increasingly adopted a hostile stance against Scargill and his brand of syndicalism. The defeat of 1985 has sent the left reformists of the South Wales NUM scurrying to the right and thus created the ideal conditions for the management to open up yet more divisions within the miners' ranks.

In the immediate aftermath of the Great Strike, the phrase that was repeated mantra-like in order to ward off the terrible reality of

defeat was 'the next Labour government'. This magical administration was going to give justice to the sacked and jailed miners, abolish Tory anti-trade union laws and generally make everything in the garden 'rosy' again.

We pointed out that under Kinnock the Labour Party was not even promising significant reforms let alone socialism. We said that workers should not look to Kinnock but instead they needed to equip themselves with a revolutionary leadership able to fight in the here and now.

Only such a leadership has the possibility of overcoming sectionalism, which is inevitable within the working class while it confines its struggle to the realm of improving its lot within the capitalist system. Revolutionary politics presents the only realistic and realisable basis for unity among workers.

The reformist trade union bureaucracy has, of course, no stomach for revolution or the class struggle. But, after a fashion, it has come to appreciate just how unrealistic the perspective of 'the next Labour government' really is. The Labour Party has reverted to its pre-1945 role of a party of crisis and is currently coming consistently third behind the LSD Alliance in polls. So it has responded by retreating into various forms of overt sectionalism.

The cause of steel workers, miners and Caterpillar workers losing their jobs becomes rule from Lon-

don, not the nature of the economic system itself. A broad cross class alliance is then proposed to save Scottish or Welsh industry – as opposed to workers' jobs. Demands are cut to suit the cloth of the church and establishment allies. The result is a sickening 'moderation' and defeat.

The trade union bureaucracy, in an effort to save its own skin, will gladly stand with north versus south, men against women, Scotland against London. A recent Communist Campaign Group document in Scotland reflected this mood. It claimed that priority number one for communists in Scotland must be to "lead the demand for devolution." As with the labour bureaucracy, socialism is not at the top of the CCG's agenda for Scotland or for that matter anywhere else.

Surely the Great Strike showed that Welsh and Scottish workers need unity, not with Norman Willis, but a fighting unity with their fellow workers in the rest of Britain. This is why *The Leninist* has always fought the poison of nationalism.

Despite being reared on the slogan of 'unity' at their mothers' breasts, the politics of reformism in today's conditions cannot but engender sectionalism and thus disunity. Des Dutfield, the South Wales miners' president, revealed this when interviewed in our Party's paper, *7 Days*:

"I believe Margam will go ahead

whatever the union decides...If this Tory government is (inexplicably) re-elected then solid NUM membership will be more vitally needed than ever." (March 14, 1987).

The question that occurs is of course, why? If the South Wales NUM starts selling the rights of its members in order to save Welsh jobs, and even accepts conditions that the UDM has rejected in the past, in an effort to promote Welsh industry, then what exactly is it that makes it "vitally needed". The truth is that Dutfield and his ilk are more concerned with the formal structure of the union (and thus, of course, with their jobs) than with what that framework is supposed to be there for: to protect the interests of the miners.

In other words, defeat and the realisation of the futility of waiting for 'the next Labour government' has caused many left reformists in the NUM to drop their leftism. If, as seems likely, the Tories win a third term, this drift to the right could become a full-scale gallop. This a real danger to every worker, so how do we fight it?

Most militant miners will simply say by supporting Scargill. Struggles in the union are therefore often seen not in political but in personality terms. For example, the victory of Sammy Thompson in the vice-presidential elections was undoubtedly related to the fact that he was looked upon as a 'Scargill man'.

Thompson is, like Scargill, a left reformist but as we all know his record is by no means as honourable. In the Great Strike he blocked effective picketing at Orgreave; he adopted a very hostile attitude to Kent miners who sought to carry on the strike by picketing Yorkshire and he is reported as saying at an election meeting in Hatfield Main that the "sacked miners' issue was lost the day the strike finished."

As Dave Douglass of Hatfield Main NUM put it to us, "I think it was a vote for consolidation behind Arthur Scargill rather than for any specific merits of Sammy Thompson. It was a vote of solidarity with Arthur Scargill." Quite right. But as far as we are concerned, it is time for the rank and file of the union to stand independently of reformist leaders, no matter how left they may be. While workers tack their fight onto the coat-tails of reformist leaders the cancer of sectionalism cannot be checked.

The South Wales capitulation to British Coal represents a potential breach which should not be underestimated. The government could use the South Wales lever to enforce similar deals throughout the coalfields and effectively shatter the NUM.

In response Scargill wanted to 'open up' South Wales to NUM propaganda through the national ballot on this issue. The fact that the executive blocked this because of fears of a South Wales breakaway shows all too clearly the need for the organisation of the militant minority in South Wales, to organise and conduct their own unity campaign in the anti-capitalist spirit of A J Cook and the *Miners' Next Step* of 1912.

Rank and file miner must talk to rank and file miner and not leave it to national officials to compromise with the South Wales Area in some rotten deal. That's why we say: Build rank and file committees, including the remaining Women Against Pit Closures groups, to spearhead the drive in South Wales to overcome the drift towards division!

Given the recent shift to the right on the EC, Scargill is making overtures to the rank and file of the

union more than at any time since the end of the Great Strike. At a major rally in the North East recently, Arthur is reported as saying: "We need rank and file participation at all levels, with democracy and accountability in our unions."

Too true! But if Arthur is sincere in this statement, it contradicts much of his practice since the defeat of the Great Strike. For instance, the revision of the NUM's rules in the second half of 1985, in particular the clause in effect making Arthur president for life, made a mockery of democracy and was a complete abandonment of his promise when elected in 1981 to be willing to submit himself for regular re-election. We say all officials should be elected and recallable at any time, and for that matter receive only the average pay of the membership – that's real accountability.

If Arthur is now turning to the rank and file, that is welcomed ... but cautiously. For there does not seem to have been a shift in the way problems like the South Wales breach are being handled in the union. The delegate conference that passed the increase in subs also backed a plan to reorganise the union to reduce the number of full-time officials and size of area operations.

Is this a back door method to get around South Wales-type area revolts through simply reducing their apparatus to skeletal staffs? It could well be. And if so, it is a thoroughly anti-democratic and typically bureaucratic way to try to overcome the federalistic weaknesses that have plagued the union. It is an approach which could, ironically despite itself, further fragment the NUM.

Dutfield is perfectly correct to point to the hypocrisy of the national leadership's attempt to bring South Wales into line over this issue. As he points out, on a great many issues and national agreements, even ones as important to all miners as the national incentive scheme, the areas already go their own way. True, but two wrongs do not make a right.

The working class has learnt over countless bitter struggles that unity is no abstract principle, no luxury, no barrier, but a vital necessity that must be fought for tooth and nail and preserved as the apple of one's eye.

Ian Mahoney

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Ghostly polemic

Communist Campaign Group
Communist Campaign Review No 3, Spring 1987, pp32, £1.00

THREE DAYS after the publication of the South Wales CCG *Discussion Papers* as an 8 page supplement in *The Leninist* 47/48 (March 20), the third issue of *Communist Campaign Review* landed on the mat.

A quick search through the pages sufficed to dash any ill-conceived hopes and confirm one's worst expectations of this dishonest non-discussion journal. No mention of the *Discussion Papers* - no report of the South Wales discussion conference itself, which dealt at length with the first two CCG policy pamphlets, no excerpts reprinted, no review of the document, not even an advertisement so that comrades can buy it.

This bureaucratic suppression of dissenting views and hiding of facts is precisely comparable to the exclusion from the columns of *Marxism Today* experienced - and bitterly complained of - by the CCG leaders themselves.

This gives the lie to the various official statements of the CCG National Steering Committee calling for the widest possible discussion among communists about how to resolve the Party crisis and achieve Party unity. These are evidently mere window dressing. Only 'constructive' discussion is permitted, and comrades are supposed to exercise their 'constructive' critical faculties without being given access to other comrades' views, or to basic facts about what the Steering Committee is doing.

For example, the New Communist Party sent a statement on "Communist Unity" to the CCG Steering Committee, calling for formal discussions and united action. Eventually the CCG replied, rejecting the offer. All this was published in *New Worker* (January 16 and March 20), to the NCP's credit, but readers of *CC Review* have been kept completely in the dark, their frail loyalty being thus protected by their 'we know what's good for you' leaders.

It may seem strange that the NCP, which split from the CPGB in 1977 on a platform of rejecting the Party programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, as reformist, should now make overtures to the opportunist CCG leadership, which has chosen to base itself on the very same BRS. What price principles, when there are members to be poached?

Certainly, we can recommend the NCP to those comrades who wish to retire from active politics and turn their backs on the fight in the CPGB. Because the NCP makes revolutionary noises, is always 100% uncritical of the (present) Soviet leadership, and never stands candidates against Labour on principle, this home for the politically dead has won not a few recruits from the ranks of the CCG.

To prevent this trickle becoming a flood Photis Lysandrou has already penned an article against the NCP in the *Morning Star* (and ghosted a good percentage of the subsequent letters defending him). His article attempted to prove that

the AES is a principled platform for communists to fight from and because the NCP has differences with the AES it is therefore "ultra-leftist". A similar need to wrap the CCG in revolutionary raiment can be seen in Lysandrou's article on *The Vanguard Party* (in CCR).

Photis tries his very best to be very revolutionary. Expounding Lenin's views on a "vanguard party of the working class" for which "it is not enough merely to pose the issue of state power", Photis boldly proclaims it is necessary to pose it "in a revolutionary way, in a way that makes clear the objective of destroying the bourgeois state..." (p10, my emphasis - IF)

Yet despite upholding Leninism in the abstract, Photis has quite a different understanding of the Party's role when he deals concretely with modern Britain. Here he speaks of its "usual organising and coordinating role", which Photis wants to "re-establish" by getting back to how things were just before the Euros took over the Party.

His description of Euro-liquidationism is naively appropriate as self-criticism, considering his CCG strategy of reforming capitalism through the AES and then democratising it to get socialism.

What the Euros require is "a loose, open amorphous association, functioning more as a pressure group or debating society..." But what are the CCG and the *Morning Star* doing if not pressurising Labour in order to give left reformism credibility?

Photis is at his most hypocritical when calling for "at all times a frank and open debate, based on mutual respect for different standpoints, and aimed at establishing ideological clarity..." What do the South Wales comrades think of that, we wonder.

Mike Hicks' year of action in the Wapping dispute seems to have toned up his superlatives, but not dampened his complacency! (Mind you, his article is reported to have been based on notes he made before being imprisoned - we wonder who ghosted this one - and whether Mike liked the results? Given his previous position against a split he has either changed his view or had it changed during the writing up of his notes).

British capitalism is in a "chronic, deeprooted, and irreversible crisis of the system" and consequently is "now obliged to take back the concessions..." Confrontation has replaced consensus, and in the "total struggle against capitalism...the revolutionary road is now the only way". Wow! This is not exactly BRS, is it?

Mike wants "a properly functioning Communist Party rooted in the labour movement and based upon a Marxist-Leninist class approach".

We should note, however, that for Mike reformism is "the strategy and ideology of Labour's right wing leadership" (p20) and therefore left reformism does not exist for Mike. Consequently, when Mike says "revolutionary" we must understand the opposite of his definition of reformism, in other words the "principled socialist left", a phrase coined by the editors of *CC Review* in their first issue.

Mike's "properly functioning Communist Party" was "destroyed...three years ago..." when he and other communists were expelled. This is where his complacency comes to the fore. Mike appears to have no inkling that anything was wrong with the Party when he was on its EC. He is unable to distinguish between a 'proper' CP and himself. 'Re-

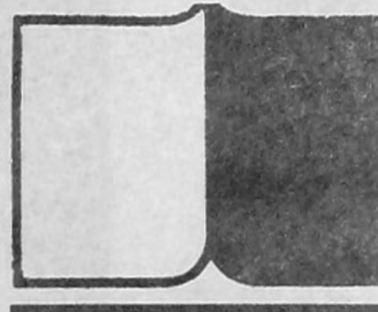
establishing the Party' means nothing more than reinstating Mike and his friends.

The CCG's intention of convening its own Party Congress and hi-jacking the Party's name, rules and programme, is gradually being made more explicit. Changes to the rules and programme "can only be made at a congress... We are not talking here about splitting the Party or creating a new Party. That has already been done by the revisionist leadership in a sort of coup three years ago". (p21, our emphasis - IF)

This is how the CCG leaders deceive themselves, to justify putting themselves above the Party. In practice they have encouraged dissolved branches not to re-apply for membership. If they had not been working for a split all along, they would have fought to keep every oppositionist inside the Party.

Comrades were right to argue in defence of the rights of those bureaucratically suspended and expelled, but wrong to follow a self-appointed clique into a split based on the discredited reformist strategy. Do not be misled by talk of revising the rules and programme at a proper congress. Make no mistake, the CCG 'Party' has been fought for on the chauvinist, opportunist politics of the *Morning Star*, AES, and BRS, and the resulting organisation (if any) can only be a chauvinist, opportunist party.

Ian Farrell



Down...but not out

Linda Melvern, *The End of the Street*, pp275, £9.95

WRITING an obituary while the corpse is still breathing can be a tricky proposition. That hasn't deterred shoals of journalistic and political vultures and entrail diviners dining out on the Great Printers Strike of 1986/87.

End of the Street is no exception. A true child of *Time* or *Insight* journalism with all the superficialities and pedantic verbosity that go with the genre. We are told that the Murdoch wage-slaves in taking strike action which led to inevitable defeat brought about the end of the Street - whatever that means.

An Epilogue lists all the cuts and sackings of the London newspaper workforce in recent times. But this book doesn't take into account that there is still a London newspaper printing industry; still with a strong trade union organisation. A bit battered maybe, but...

What then, after the end of the street? Some streets end in brick walls, some are the approach to other roads. Certainly this is the end of the pleasant tree-lined garden-edge suburbia which has been Fleet Street in recent years.

The bailiff is now moving quickly among the self-satisfied petty bourgeois villas, and there is the prospect of the hard cobbles of capitalist crisis. But one thing is certain, the end of this street does not mean the end of class struggle.

The London newspaper print industry is probably the most classic example of the flowering of that

greatest millstone round the neck of the British working class - opportunism, and especially economism, one of its most pernicious British forms.

On the marches to Fortress Wapping were the typical 'radical aristocrats', descendants of the top-hatted composers who marched alongside the Chartists, and supported the fight for the Dockers Tanner. Many of them are the very people who even today are so proud of the fact that their craft has permission to wear swords within the sounds of the City of London. If only they had had those swords with them when they marched from Fleet street and Tower Hill.

What Linda Melvern underlines is the crippling effect of the isolation of union organisation in the dispute. Apart from the five national unions, there were dozens of chapels involved, each with its own sectional aspirations and demands. There was little or no cross-chapel, cross-house, or cross-union co-ordination and therefore every action was weakened.

The need for a rank and file movement or a minority movement was never more glaring. But that in itself does not excuse the bureaucratic sell-out policies of union head offices, nor the contemplating-the-arses of Dubbins and Dean policies adopted by the left activists.

Strikes, like military actions, are lost so soon as they go on the defensive. Right from the start the policy of confining action to just part of the Street, and not making it industry wide, let alone class wide, spelt disaster. Dean and Dubbins let Murdoch choose the time and place of battle.

What did the CPGB do? One thing was to funk the issue when it came to scabbing. One Communist Party member declared right from the start he would scab. It took a deal of protest for him to be disciplined by the Party executive. Linda Melvern tells part of the story: "A *Sunday Times* chapel of the NUJ was discussing whether to go to Wapping. This CP member stood up and said for years the printers 'had treated him like shit. The boot was now on the other foot.' Whatever the vote he would go to Wapping. Those who were against going were a bunch of liberals sitting around on their fannies not knowing what to do."

With 'comrades' like these who needed Murdoch? Why wasn't there a Communist leadership...economism, ecomonism...that's the problem and answer.

Economism is simply that tendency of opportunism in the socialist movement which holds that workers should concern themselves only with economic battles.

They should not put forward the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist state, for workers' power leading to socialism. Economism believes that class consciousness develops spontaneously out of and in the course of these economic struggles.

This is a false theory. In *What is to be Done?* Lenin pointed out: "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness" and also that communists "lead the struggle of the working class not only for better terms for the sale of their labour power but also for the abolition of the social system which compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich". Communism represents the working class, not in relation to a given group of employers but in its relation to all classes in modern society, to the state as an organised political force.

Hence, it follows that communists must not allow the organisation of purely economic struggle to become the predominant part of their activities.

Another quote, this time from Marx, on the working class and every day struggles... "They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction, not curing the malady."

"They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights necessarily springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forces necessary for an economic reconstruction of society."

"Instead of the conservative motto 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword 'Abolition of the wages system'" (*Value, Price and Profit*).

This approach was totally lacking among leaders of the Wapping dispute, official and unofficial. Indeed the whole basis of the defeat was lack of a revolutionary socialist political centre...a general staff which knew what it was doing, based on a revolutionary theory. Such a general staff could have risen above all the horrible petty squabbling, the fractional divisions, and the weighty blanket of trade union bureaucracy. In other words a communist leadership was lacking.

Tony Eastman.

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HOW MANY TIMES have we heard British governments, Tory or Labour, crow that the IRA are isolated, that they have been forced to the margins of Irish society? How many times have they vainly brayed that 'right thinking' people in 'Ulster' have rejected the 'men of violence'? And how many times has the IRA thrown this right back in their faces with daring displays of their growing ability to carry out the war against British imperialism?

Few can now be taken in by the wishful thinking of successive British governments. Recent actions of the IRA against crown forces conclusively prove their claim to be deeply rooted among the nationalist community in the Six Counties. Successful attacks on British soldiers, RUC and UDR by the IRA active service units have kept them on their toes and heartened the nationalist community.

Late March saw the first British soldier killed in nine months when a British army landrover was blasted by grenades while on patrol in the Divis flats, West Belfast. Soon after, a mortar bomb attack was mounted on heavily fortified RUC barracks in New Barnsley. Both attacks were carried out by the Belfast brigade, the latter despite Belfast security forces being on full alert following on from the killing of the soldier. More, equally bold, attacks followed.

Collaborators with British imperialism have received short shrift from the IRA too. Two garages in Dungannon, County Tyrone were extensively damaged by large car bombs because both had refused to obey repeated instructions to cease servicing UDR and RUC members. Afterwards, East Tyrone brigade of the IRA released the following statement: "Our policy on this remains the same. Anyone engaged in the maintenance, servicing or building of crown forces property, or providing facilities for crown forces personnel, will be regarded as legitimate targets." (AP/RN, April 2)

This had been emphasised with devastating effect the previous week when a prison lecturer in Derry was shot dead in his car after leaving a night class. Derry volunteers then topped it all by attaching a bomb to the car, which later detonated, killing two investigating RUC officers, one of them key to operations against the republican movement in Derry.

There are some on the British left - *Militant* and *Socialist Organiser*, for instance - who respond to such attacks with condemnation. Yet similar action by the armed wing of the ANC in South Africa is given at least lukewarm support. We, on the other hand, defend the right of the Irish people and their liberation movement to deal with collaborators within their ranks as they see fit, just as we do in the same situation in South Africa.

Like South Africa, it is clear that a liberation movement that can operate this successfully, hit the state's forces this hard, cannot do so without a mass base. Those, not only in government circles but among the left, who denounce the republican movement as elitist, sectarian or 'aristocrats of the gun' (one of our fraternal Communist Party of Ireland's favourites) are proven wrong each and every time that one more action is added to the continuously lengthening cata-

logue of successful actions of the IRA.

Men who appear as if from nowhere and disappear back there cannot do so without mass support. To not see this is to be intentionally blind. Britain's imperialist, and consequently brutal, presence in Ireland has always given rise to mass resistance as is today portrayed by the republican movement. The experiences of the late '60s proved that even with the absence of republican resistance Britain must still oppress, maim and kill. Every oppressive act of imperialism in Ireland fuels the revolutionary fire of republicanism, winning the masses to its banners.

In the Six Counties today the focal point of this rallying cry is becoming, as it has in South Africa, the funerals of murdered freedom fighters. The RUC uses such events to terrorise the nationalist community. The IRA reported that "between December 1983 and last Tuesday March 14, the RUC attacked mourners at at least 25 funerals". At least 25 became at least 26 when these thugs in blue twice disrupted attempts to bury volunteer Larry Marley, murdered by the UVF, before he was eventually buried on April 8. And even then the service did not pass without further confrontation.

The IRA has responded with characteristic courage and determination. On March 13 they detonated a car bomb outside a cemetery where the funeral of an RUC member, killed three days earlier in an IRA ambush, was to take place. The IRA warned that this "was a warning to the British government and the RUC of the nature of the reprisals the RUC's brutality at nationalist funerals can provoke."

For three years now mourners at republican funerals have had plastic bullets fired at them, been batoned into the ground and attacked within church grounds and at gravesides...Our message to the RUC is quite simple: if you want to bury your dead in peace then keep a dignified distance from the funerals of nationalists and republicans." (AP/RN, March 19)

This the RUC have not done. At the funeral of volunteer Gerard Logue in Derry on March 24 there were 1,000 heavily armed RUC, 100 British troops, 75 armoured cars bringing up the rear and a helicopter gunship overhead. Despite all this, two volunteers, protected from the vultures of the crown forces by the masses of people, managed to fire a volley of shots over the coffin of their fallen comrade.

It was only the large mobilisations of people that in the end enabled Larry Marley to be buried. Under the conditions of the revolutionary situation in the Six Counties today, even the enactment of a simple burial forces the masses out onto the streets. Like in South Africa, in Ireland republican burials take on the character of major political events. They prove those who call the IRA 'elitist' a thousand times wrong when such events take place.

Would the volley of shots fired over Gerard Logue's coffin have been possible without the masses behind them, prepared to turn out onto the streets and risk the batons and plastic bullets of the RUC to enable members of their army to bury their dead with honour? No way!

Such events also show the way forward. Now the masses are



As in South Africa the funerals of freedom fighters is a focal point of political protest.

IRA ON THE OFFENSIVE

organising to defend their dead. This points the way to a higher level of organisation: the people armed on the streets, organising in defence of every aspect of their rights, broadening the basis of armed resistance in the fashion of Connolly's Irish Citizen Army. There is still a long way to go, but we have great hopes for the future.

But the Irish people cannot be left to struggle alone. This has been the case for far too many years. Anti-imperialist demonstrations in Ireland that bring tens of thousands onto the streets all too often merely bring hundreds onto the streets of the imperialist power in question - Britain. This is shameful. The solidarity movement in Britain has little to be proud of.

One of the major reasons for its sloth-like approach to solidarity work is that it is caught in the death like embrace of Labourism. There is reliance on bureaucratic manipulation, on the signatures of Labour MPs, and little attempt to build support from the grass roots up, to take the issue to the class. Anti-imperialist militants are frustrated in attempts to get any concrete details about Irish demonstrations

and the like. The usual excuse for this is to avoid attack from fascists.

Now, aside from the fact that these fascists are tiny in number and more often than not middle aged inadequates or spotty youths in their mid-teens, the best way to get an event attacked is not to mobilise enough people to defend it properly. This is a lesson that Ireland has learnt but that seems not to have taken root in the movement in Britain.

At the moment the Irish solidarity movement is treated as the property of sections of the Labour left. This was taken to ridiculous extremes on this year's Bloody Sunday commemoration when the mobilisers of the largest contingent - the RCP-backed Irish Freedom Movement - had to take the platform forcibly to even be allowed a speaker.

While we do not believe the IFM poses a realistic alternative for Irish solidarity work in Britain - because it is a self-confessed RCP front - we oppose all attempts to turn such work into anyone's property, especially Labour Party property. If it is anyone's property, it is that of the British working class by virtue of the fact that it is in the

interests of our class as a whole.

While we do not deny that there are many sincere anti-imperialists in the Labour Party, we can see what effect the Labourite politics in the movement has had on solidarity work, or rather the lack of it. We cannot forget that Labour Party MP Don Concannon visited Bobby Sands when he was close to death to tell him that the Labour Party could not, would not, support his cause for political status.

On May 9 in Birmingham there will be a march to commemorate the heroic hunger strikers headed by Sands. Again, it will undoubtedly be small. All the more reason for you to support it, to be there on the day. If Labourism refused to support the hunger strikers in 1981 it can hardly be won to support them now. But an anti-imperialist alternative must be built. The Irish people have struggled alone for too long. A change must come; join us there.

Alan Merrick

Hands off Ireland - Troops out now!

Britain's defeat will be our victory!

Make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam!

IN DEFENCE OF GRAMSCI

ON APRIL 27 exactly fifty years ago the most innovative thinker that Marxism in Italy has produced ceased to think. Antonio Gramsci, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Italy died, after a long illness and nearly eleven years captivity in Mussolini's jails, in a Rome clinic.

Today, he finds self-proclaimed adherents to his theoretical writings in those Eurocommunists around *Marxism Today*, and equivalent revisionist publications world-wide. *Marxism Today* editor-cum-hipster, Martin Jacques, has shrugged off the somewhat derogatory term 'Eurocommunist' to proclaim himself a 'Gramscian'. The Party journal, which he now regards as his own personal property (*deja vu!*) launched the *Gramsci 87* event on April 11, claiming in the advertising blurb that "Gramsci's ideas provided the basis for Eurocommunism". Those attending were treated to sessions of discussion and debates hosted by national and international celebrities of Eurocommunism; and in the evening the now inevitable *Marxism Today* Italian fashion show.

In the 1950s PCI General Secretary, and one-time collaborator with Gramsci, Palmiro Togliatti, used Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, albeit somewhat selectively, as ideological grapeshot against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to justify the PCI's break with them. The obscurotically written *Notebooks* have been used ever since by the 'intellectual' wing of Eurocommunism to justify subsequent rightward lurches in their political journey into the bosom of bourgeois society.

It is our contention that the claims of the likes of Jacques to Gramsci are not only mistaken but wilfully dishonest. The Euros have used Gramsci in rather the same fashion that Christians use the bible. Bruce Kent can pick a phrase out, say here, and use it as justification for 'going floppy' outside Greenham or Molesworth. Ronnie Reagan, another ardent Christian will pick out a bit and launch World War III.

Likewise our Euros with Gramsci. A line here, half a paragraph there from the *Prison Notebooks* and there you have it: a cast iron excuse for your latest bit of rightism. Never mind the fact that you ignore everything else in the *Notebooks*, never mind that you ignore all Gramsci's previous writing, you have selected and distorted the quote you need. Enough of all this graft, and off to the 'Gramscian' fashion show. We will take a look at these political conjuring tricks of our Euros later.

Italy and the young Gramsci

In Western European terms, Italy came late into the camp of bourgeois nation states. As a

coherent and clearly discernible ruling class, the Italian bourgeoisie emerged and asserted itself in the late 19th century.

What this resulted in at the time of Gramsci's birth was a rather loosely knit national bourgeoisie, a relatively low (for Western Europe) level of industrialisation and, importantly, an exacerbated contradiction between town and country.

This needs some explaining. Unlike other bourgeoisies, the Italian variety had not, in its rise to power, welded the peasantry to it through a process of land reform. Instead a pronounced 'rift' was created between town and country, which in turn had a geographic character. The major cities were concentrated in the north of Italy, whereas the south was dominated by agriculture, functioning as a peasant economy. This produced 'the Southern Question'.

Born into an impoverished petty bourgeois family in Sardinia in 1891, this situation was to have a considerable effect on Gramsci's early political consciousness. The brutal repression of Sardinian struggles by northern troops deeply influenced him, and although he abandoned his nationalist sentiments after his experiences in the workers' movement, he was never to lose his interest and concern with this problem of Italian society.

Gramsci left Sardinia for Turin in 1911 after winning a scholarship for poor children to the university there. Now, away from his agrarian background and transposed into Italy's major industrial centre, he was to get his first taste of the workers' and socialist movements.

Under the influence of his friend, and later frequent sparring partner within the PCI, Angelo Tasca, Gramsci joined the Socialist Party of Italy in 1913. He gravitated immediately to its left wing, at that time led by the editor of the party's daily newspaper *Avanti!* — one Benito Mussolini. Although Gramsci at this time can definitely be termed a left socialist and a revolutionary, it was a revolutionism that was far removed from the scientific Marxism that he was later to champion and develop.

Gramsci's first serious foray into the world of the socialist journalist was, ironically, to pen a defence of Mussolini — then still editing *Avanti!* but beginning to show signs of his future development — in October 1914, in a polemic against Tasca. Of course Tasca proved right, Gramsci had committed an enormous *faux pas* which was to deter him from any further writing for some time to come. But far from indicating a capitulation to Italian chauvinism, what the article actually illustrates is his tendency towards voluntarism, prevalent in his writings at that time. He wanted to shake the PSI out of its passivity.

The problem was that he failed miserably.

Indicative of the same trait was a later article, *The Revolution against Capital* on the October Revolution, written at the end of December 1917, where Gramsci wrote: "This is the revolution against Karl Marx's *Capital*. In Russia, Marx's *Capital* was more the book of the bourgeoisie than of the proletariat. It stood as the critical demonstration of how events should follow a predetermined course: how in Russia a bourgeoisie had to develop, and a capitalist era had to open, with the setting up of a western style civilisation, before the proletariat could even think in terms of its own revolt, its own class demands, its own revolution...The Bolsheviks reject Karl Marx, and their explicit actions and conquests bear witness that the canons of historical materialism are not as rigid as might have been and has been thought." (*Selected Political Writings I (SPW I)*, p34)

Of course Gramsci was again mistaken. It was not Marx who the Bolsheviks rejected, less still *Capital*, but the wooden, determinist and economicist Marx fashioned by the 'official' Marxists of the Second International such as Karl Kautsky and the Mensheviks.

The war years were a transitional period not only for the workers' movement, but for Gramsci also. The Russian Revolution was not only to fire him with enthusiasm but, following on its heels, to give that enthusiasm scientific content. By July 1918 his anti-economicism had taken on a Leninist coloration: "Anyone who finds Lenin a utopian, who states that any attempt to establish a proletarian dictatorship in Russia is a utopian attempt, cannot be a conscious socialist, and cannot have acquired his culture through the study of historical materialism." (*SPW I*, p52) The furious developments of the war years were transforming Gramsci, like so many others on the international level, from an Italian socialist into an Italian Bolshevik.

L'Ordine Nuovo and the Turin Factory Councils

The Russian Revolution that so impressed Gramsci was itself a product of a world wide upsurge in revolutionary class struggle which welled up towards the end of the war, and was indeed given further impetus by the creation of the world's first workers' state. It had national repercussions which were to effect Gramsci's — and the whole of Italy's — political development. Importantly, it threw forward the Turin factory council movement.

The economic and political situation in which Gramsci was operating in Turin in the second decade of the century was conducive

to the sort of working class action he wanted to bring forth and was to lead. Turin's population rose from 400,000, 20% of which were industrial workers, in 1911 to 500,000, 30% now being industrial workers, in 1918. The war had caused massive concentrations of capital, thereby creating a massive increase in the urban proletariat, and although the rate of profit had actually risen in this period the lira had depreciated by 80% between the years 1914 and 1920. This led to a whole host of economic ills.

This was, as per usual, resolved on the backs of the workers. The tendency for the rate of profit to fall had only been reversed in this period by suppressing workers' rights and living standards, thus hiking up the rate of exploitation. The general crisis of capitalism hit Italy particularly savagely, being a mere junior imperialism and therefore having least access to imperialist superprofits from abroad, so the Italian capitalists responded with particularly savage attacks on the working class, dragooned into the army as cannon fodder for the front, or crushed down harder than ever in the workplace.

It would be a mistake, however, to depict the Turin proletariat as simple victims. This they most certainly were not. They went into the war with militant traditions and came out more militant still.

In an attempt to lead the rapidly left-moving proletariat, Gramsci, Togliatti, Terracini and Tasca launched a paper, *L'Ordine Nuovo* (*The New Age*), which was to prove decisive in its impact on the ensuing emergence of the factory councils and eventual formation of the PCI.

Later, in August 1920, Gramsci described the paper's emergence thus: "When, in the month of April 1919, three or four or five of us got together and decided to begin publishing the review *L'Ordine Nuovo*...none of us (perhaps) thought in terms of changing the world, of renewing the hearts and minds of the human multitudes, of starting a new historical cycle. None of us (perhaps: some dreamed of 6,000 subscribers in a few months) entertained rosy illusions as to the success of the enterprise. Who were we? What did we represent? Of what new tidings were we the bearers? Ah well! The only sentiment that united us, in those meetings of ours, was the sentiment by a vague passion for a vague proletarian culture. We wanted to do something. We felt desperate, disorientated, immersed in the excitement of life in those months after the armistice, when the cataclysm in Italian society seemed imminent." (*SPW I*, p291)

Various political orientations for the group and the paper were suggested and discussed.

Initially, little was decided or concretised: "What was the programme of *L'Ordine Nuovo* in its first numbers? The programme was the absence of a concrete programme, just a vague and hopeless aspiration to deal with concrete problems. What was the idea of *L'Ordine Nuovo* in its first numbers? There was no central idea, no inner-organisation of the literary material published." (*Ibid.*, p292) Until, that is, they hit upon the factory internal commissions.

These bodies were something like – in the broadest terms, mind – British shop stewards committees. Unlike the shop stewards committees of today so well loved by Mick Costello, however, these internal commissions became staffed by revolutionary workers, and purged of bureaucratism by the tight control kept over them by their mass, active proletarian base. Instead of being transmission belts for the bureaucracy, these commissions were taking on the character of schools and organising centres for revolution.

Gramsci and the *L'Ordine Nuovo* group also saw it as being "a germ of a workers' government" (*Ibid.*, p292) and leapt on it with unfettered eagerness. This was finalised when Gramsci, backed up by Togliatti, "staged an editorial coup d'état". The abstract musings about soviets were concretised through a direct and decisive orientation of the paper to the Turin rank and file workers and their internal commissions *cum* factory committees. *L'Ordine Nuovo* did not tail the militancy of the rank and file, SWP fashion, but sought to develop and organise it; to transform the realisation of the need for the most extreme forms of class struggle into the realisation of the need for proletarian rule:

"For ourselves and our followers, *L'Ordine Nuovo* became the journal of the factory councils. The workers loved *L'Ordine Nuovo*...and why did they love it? Because in its articles they rediscovered a part, the best part, of themselves." (*Ibid.*, p293)

Freed from the stultifying grip of the reformist leadership of the PSI and the 'militant' verbals but inaction of the maximalists (Italian centrists) by the ability to print and distribute their own paper, the group around Gramsci was swept forward by the flood of workers' action in Turin, which culminated in an 11 day general strike in April 1920.

Gramsci's attitude was in sharp contrast to all other sections of the PSI. The maximalists had a mechanical understanding of the link between party and class, which proved ineffective, if not dangerous in practice, as it was unable to give leadership to the masses. Even Tasca had broken with *L'Ordine Nuovo* over the issue of the factory councils, favouring orientation to the trade union structures.

On the ultra-left, pro-abstentionist, wing of the PSI, future founder-leader of the PCI, Amadeo Bordiga, was not immune from the dogmatic 'Marxist' approach inherited from the Second International. Indeed, in his own way he was more prey to it than most. Bordiga's position was an effective denial of soviet power: "The Soviets of tomorrow must arise from the local branches of the Communist Party." (Bordiga, *Ibid.*, p205) For him, like the maximalists, class struggle was in practice denied any relevance or any revolutionary input outside of the party. At this juncture it was only *L'Ordine Nuovo* that was able to transcend this narrowness and give genuinely revolutionary leadership to a section of the proletariat.

However, in response to the one sided position of the rest of the PSI, Gramsci's position too was somewhat one sided. All other left leaning sections of the party saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as the dictatorship of the party, denying the factory councils any real significance. On the other hand, Gramsci's position at this time, a one sided concentration on the factory councils, amounted to a *de facto* relegation of the struggle for a revolutionary party, an indispensable tool if soviets are to make the transition from organs of class struggle to organs of class power. As we shall see, this is a mistake he was later to rectify.

The isolation of the Turin strike wave, which spread over the whole Piedmont area of Italy, was due to the betrayal of the leadership of the SPI and the General Confederation of Labour (Italian TUC), which refused to try to spread the Piedmont general strike nationally. Consequently it was defeated, leaving the Turin workers to take the full force of the employers' renewed offensive after the strike. It was a struggle which was to teach both Gramsci and the Turin workers much, though, and set them in good stead for con-

frontations to come.

It cannot be claimed that the factory councils were in and of themselves a form of soviet power, because they were by definition restricted to workers employed in the factories thereby excluding housewives and the unemployed. Nevertheless they were, as Gramsci said, to provide the social basis for soviets. They would act as beacons of light to attract the masses.

It is worth reiterating the role of *L'Ordine Nuovo* in the transformation of the internal commissions in more detail. We would contend that this not only distances Gramsci from the Eurocommunists – an easy task – but also provides a classic model for communist work in trade union structures, still applicable today:

"Small committees of workers were already in existence inside the Turin factories: they were recognised by the capitalists and some of them had already launched a campaign against the bureaucratism, reformist spirit and constitutional tendencies of the unions...What followers of *L'Ordine Nuovo* emphasised most in their propaganda was the transformation of the internal commissions. They stressed that the lists of candidates should be drawn up by the working masses themselves and not by the upper echelons of the trade union bureaucracy. The tasks they assigned to the factory councils were control over production, the arming and military preparation of the masses, and their political and technical preparation." (*Ibid.*, p316)

Now not only does Gramsci stand leftwards of his would-be Euro friends, but leftwards also of the r-r-revolutionary left in Britain who, given spontaneous bodies of working class action to work with in the miners' strike (the support committees), fought to restrain their activities to baked bean collecting. Gramsci tried to develop armed revolutionary workers' organisations. The left in Britain, '84-85, was after flatulent miners.

Despite the preparations enacted by many sections of the proletariat, more or less along Gramsci's lines, despite a situation of dual power existing in the country, despite the question of state power being posed in an extremely sharp form, the workers were again defeated. And again, it was down to the cowardly betrayal of the PSI and GCL leaders.

Once more, and harder than ever, the question of the need for a revolutionary party, of an Italian section of the Communist International, was forced to the fore. The troops of proletarian revolution had been armed, eager and ready. What they had lacked was an effective general staff. Heroic defeats are wonderful things for history books. It is a different thing to live through them, let alone twice in one year as Gramsci had done. The task of the forging of a Communist Party in Italy was now, belatedly, on the agenda.

Towards the PCI

It is possible from the above passage to infer that Gramsci made a sudden transition from a syndicalistic figure to a communist towards the end of 1920. To do so would be a mistake and gross injustice to him. It is true, however, that a change took place in 1920 in his attitude and priorities as regards the PSI and the need for a communist party.

Throughout that year he had been moving towards a more 'party' orientated mentality, and consequently away from the *L'Ordine Nuovo* group, who had yet to appreciate the importance of this. In 1924 he was to rationalise the mistakes of this period thus: "In 1919-20 we made extremely serious mistakes, which ultimately we are paying for today. For fear of being called upstarts and careerists, we did not form a faction and organise this throughout Italy. We were not ready to give the Turin factory councils an autonomous directive centre, which could have exercised an immense influence throughout the country, for fear of a split in the unions and being expelled prematurely from the Socialist Party." (*Ibid.*, p xv)

Gramsci had always played an active part in the PSI, and always on the left. Two articles written by him in January 1920, *First: Renew the Party and Action Programme of the Turin Socialist Section* (*Ibid.*, pp154-62), assert the importance of increasing the temperature of the inner-party struggle. He had not yet arrived at the understanding that an entirely new party was needed and, as the above quote indicates, these existing positions were shelved during the Turin factory council movement.

The situation was not as clear as it seems in hindsight. The PSI was very little like the British Labour Party. The party had moved radically left during the war, under the leadership of the reformist Turati. The centrist 'maximalist' wing led by *Avanti!* editor Seratti had grown in strength during and after the war, as had the left grouping around Bordiga. In the Congress of Bologna, furthermore, held in October 1919, Seratti had got through a motion calling for the PSI's affiliation to the recently formed Comintern. The party sent delegates to the Comintern's Second World Congress in 1919.

But as 1920 progressed Seratti proved unable to make an effective political challenge to the party's leadership, to provide alternative leadership to the workers and, as Lenin suggested to him, to break with Turati and then make an alliance with him. Reformists expose themselves to any revolutionary with two brain cells to rub together; centrists are a different matter. Gramsci was in a different trend from Seratti but it was not immediately obvious to him that Seratti and the maximalists were suffering from a severe case of political paralysis and were unable to compete with the reformists. Gramsci was unable to draw a line of march based on this understanding.

The maximalists could not but be exposed by the prevailing situation of intense class struggle in 1920, and the way was pointed to a party of a new type. This had been a position of Amadeo Bordiga and his abstentionist faction in the PSI for some time, and it was natural for Gramsci to gravitate towards this grouping as he came to appreciate the primacy of the struggle for a communist party.

He broke from the *L'Ordine Nuovo* group in July, although Togliatti and Terracini were to join him in the autumn, having moved towards, and then away from, the maximalists. It is important to note that, while Gramsci joined Bordiga's national communist faction, he did not accept its position on abstention from bourgeois parliaments.

When the September factory occupations broke out, although Gramsci did not have the same input into them as he had in April, he now had the understanding of the need for a party to be forged in the battle this time, of relating the struggle in the factories to the struggle in the PSI: "After saving the working class from a disaster in the metalworkers struggle [resulting in the factory occupations – AM] through their energy and spirit of initiative, the communists must push their attitudes and actions to their logical conclusion. They must (by reconstructing it) save the primordial fabric of the party of the working class [PSI – AM]. They must provide the Italian proletariat with a Communist Party capable of organising the workers' state and the conditions needed to bring about a communist society." (*Ibid.* p339) And after the occupations, in October: "The present problem, the fundamental historical problem of Italian life, is the organisation of the Communist Party." (*Ibid.*, p359)

In practice the PSI resisted the attempts of the communist fraction to 'reconstruct' it into a communist party, although it already was affiliated to the Comintern.

The watershed in Italian proletarian politics was at the PSI's congress in Livorno in January 1921. On Comintern instructions the congress was to be devoted to "rectifying the line of the Party and...purging it and its parliamentary group of non-Communist elements." (*Thesis, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, p457)

What these non-communist elements constituted was the reformist right wing under Turati. They went to Livorno with 14,000 votes. The communist fraction, now encompassing Togliatti and Terracini as well as Gramsci, under the leadership of Bordiga, had 58,000 and Seratti's centre grouping had an absolute majority of 98,000.

But instead of complying with Comintern instructions and expelling the reformists, the maximalists, expressing disquiet over the Comintern's 21 conditions of admission, turned tail and formed a bloc with them, causing the communist fraction delegates to walk out and hold the foundation congress of the PCI in another hall.

Lenin, in his speech *The Italian Question* at the Third World Congress of the Comintern in June 1921, mocked Seratti's spinelessness, condemning him as a Menshevik and pledging his support to the PCI. The formation of the Party was far from perfect. Gramsci some time later expressed dissatisfaction with Bordiga's haste. Both he and Bordiga were hos-

tile towards centrism, but whereas Bordiga was happy with the dynamics of the split, being solely concerned with achieving an independent Communist Party and as a consequence dismissing the centrists, Gramsci saw the need to struggle for the workers under the influence of centrism at the congress, and in 1923 wrote that the "Livorno split (the separation of the majority of the Italian proletariat from the Communist International) was without a doubt the greatest triumph of reaction." (*SPW II*, p160)

In addition, like so many other communist parties, the PCI was formed, in a manner of speaking, too late. The revolutionary wave was declining in 1921, and there had been the lack of a mature, Bolshevik-type party to harness it at its peak. In Germany this was seen in the murders of the Communist Party's leaders, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, in 1919 and the failed 'March Action' of 1921. Gramsci showed his awareness of this: "The Livorno split should have come about at least a year earlier, for the communists to have had the time to give the working class the organisation required by the revolutionary period in which it is living". (*Ibid.*, p25)

But the communists had not split a year earlier, and had not won over the maximalists. They were also under the leadership of the intransigent Left Communist, Bordiga. If it sounds something of a truism to say that nothing enters the world perfect or fully formed, it was certainly never more true than with the Communist Party of Italy in 1921.

Gramsci and the PCI till 1926: Communism in retreat

The PCI's first Central Committee elected at the breakaway Livorno congress consisted of six abstentionists, two old *L'Ordine Nuovo*ists (Gramsci and Terracini) and seven ex-maximalists. The abstentionist minority quickly became a majority as the personality and politics of Bordiga came to dominate the CC.

Initially, Gramsci, though maintaining his position against abstentionism, was not hostile towards Bordiga and made no challenge to the leadership. He even went as far as siding with Bordiga against the Comintern in his rejection of the United Front tactic. At this time the Comintern's man in Italy was the foremost representative of the Party's right wing, Tasca, the only man of any standing in the PCI to support the United Front. This was to remain the situation in the Party for some time; a broad alignment of forces ranged against the right wing. Gramsci was always to be found in the fore of the attacks on the right.

It is worth reemphasising that the situation following on from the PCI's formation was one of defeat and of growing confidence on the part of the bourgeoisie. Its choice of vehicle for the renewed attacks on the working class was Mussolini's fascists.

There was a progression of the fascisation of the country both prior to and during the Mussolini regime, culminating in the massive state repression launched against the workers' parties in 1926. The approach of the leftist PCI, Gramsci included, was a denial of this which resulted in an inability to fashion its tactics in accordance with the prevailing situation.

This could only assist the rise of the fascists at the end of the day, they being the party that could forcibly unite the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, with the only proletarian party that could respond by uniting the proletariat against it – the Communist Party – actually refusing to carry out this task because of its congenial sectarianism.

The introduction to Volume II of Gramsci's *Selected Political Writings* describes the effect this had on Party membership: "The Communist Party was, of course, from the beginning a prime target for fascist repression, and its membership figures reflect this: some 25,000 in late 1922; perhaps no more than 5,000 active members in early 1923; a slow build up to around 8,500 in November of that year and to 12,000 in the Spring of 1924 (with 5,000 more in the youth organisation); expansion to 25,000 members by the end of 1924...27,000 members at the end of 1925, despite renewed repression – a figure which probably did not alter much in the year that remained before the Party was driven into total clandestinity in October 1926." (pp x-xi). What the upswing in membership reflects is the growing challenge of Gramsci and the centre to the leftist Bordiga leadership as the centre began to differentiate

itself. Along with this differentiation came a reappraisal of the fascist menace, which in many ways was very farsighted. We shall look at this more closely in a later section. The tide began to move towards Gramsci at the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern in 1923, although despite encouragement from Comintern loyalist Rakosi, Gramsci refused to challenge Bordiga. Differences emerged firstly over fascism, Gramsci attacking Bordiga's blase approach to the phenomenon, and only later, towards the end of 1924, when the centre had already been organised as a faction for some time, on the touchy subject of the United Front.

In January 1924 Gramsci declared "I will ...take the doctrine and tactics of the Comintern as the basis for an action programme for our activity." (*Ibid*, p175)

Gramsci's main concerns now rested on the national level. His commentary on international issues, specifically on the factional disputes within the Communist Party in Russia, was reluctant and largely determined by its national ramifications. His initial sympathy with the Left Opposition turned to (comradely) opposition as Gramsci moved in to challenge Bordiga, who had aligned himself with Trotsky and the Left Opposition.

His analysis of the situation in the CPSU was therefore rather simplistic. At times he opposed the split merely because it was a split: "Trotsky's conception, and above all, his attitude, represent a danger inasmuch as the lack of party unity, in a country, splits the state. This produces a counterrevolutionary movement; it does not, however, mean that Trotsky is a counterrevolutionary, for in that case we would ask for his expulsion." (*Ibid* p284) Later, he echoed the 'official' line of the Comintern, against the Joint Opposition but called for a comradely handling of differences and moderation: the opposition threatens "the alliance between workers and peasants...ie the pillars of workers' state and the revolution" he wrote. (*Ibid*, p431) However, Gramsci continued: "we like to feel certain that the majority of the Central Committee of the USSR does not intend to win a crushing victory in the struggle, and is disposed to avoid excessive measures." (p432)

These hopes, of course, were to prove unfounded. Reportedly, Gramsci protested to Togliatti immediately before his imprisonment about the heavy handed treatment of the Opposition. Togliatti destroyed the letter. What we are contending here is that while Gramsci was not a Left Oppositionist, neither was he one of 'Stalin's men'. This position was occupied rather by Togliatti. In terms of a definition as to his politics within the Comintern, Gramsci can only really be defined with any degree of exactitude on the national level after 1924 as anti-Tasca, anti-Bordiga.

When he tried to apply this to the international arena, at least so far as we can guess from his writings so far published in English, he was wide of the mark.

In Gramsci's writings on the situation nationally, during and after his break with Bordiga, we find the most mature and provoking products of his work before, and I would contend during, his imprisonment. From 1923 onwards we see developing 'communist realism' as opposed to the Left's 'theory of the offensive'. He had embarked on a project to rationalise, within a revolutionary framework, the defeats of the period and from there construct a realistic plan of action to chart the way forward so that the working class could be put on the offensive in the real world, and not just between the ears of Amadeo Bordiga and his co-thinkers in the International.

It is interesting that while Gramsci was developing this, the Comintern, from the Fifth World Congress in 1924 to the adoption of the disastrous 'Third Period' line at the Sixth in 1928, was moving in precisely the opposite direction, attempting to deny the past defeats, and therefore compounding them, with voluntaristic flights of fancy. Unfortunately we find no analysis of this, or even awareness of its occurrence, in Gramsci's writings of this period.

But, as I said before, if his international commentary was weak this was most certainly not true of his national analysis. The most developed example of this is the *Lyons Theses*, co-written with Togliatti for the PCI's congress in exile in Lyons in January 1926. The orientation of the document was to develop the Party's understanding of the current situation in a manner that would decisively

defeat Bordiga's left wing, but without in any way making any concessions to Tasca and the right in order to do so.

This was to be the PCI's line, and Gramsci's too, at the point that he entered Mussolini's jails. As we shall see, he showed no sign of ever having rescinded it; quite the opposite. We would contend that this document must be taken as the basis for the *Prison Notebooks* if they are to be properly understood.

The *Lyons Theses* provides the framework for an undeniably revolutionary programme for the prevalent Italian conditions at that time. They aim to provide answers to a number of questions, both posed objectively by the situation and arising in the debates between Gramsci and Bordiga.

Two crucial ones were the nature and tasks of a Communist Party in general, questions which had to be dealt with before the specific tasks of the PCI could be dealt with on the terrain of Italy in 1926.

For starters: "The basis of ideological unity is the doctrine of Marxism and Leninism." (*Ibid*, p358) This, an uncontested fact for us, is proclaimed in the CPGB's programme the *British Road to Socialism* too (page 24, if you find this a little hard to believe). The difference between the two is that the *BRS* as a whole is an absolute denial of this, whereas the *Lyons Theses* is an absolute assertion of it. Or are we just being pedantic? We shall see.

Communist Party intellectual (or anyway, what poses for one nowadays) comrade Roger Simon, in his book *Gramsci's Political Thought* asserts that the CPGB "has developed a clear strategic perspective, set out in its programme *The British Road to Socialism*, for a revolutionary strategy centred on a 'broad democratic alliance', which is a creative development in British conditions of position." (p127)

Now, although here Simon is referring mainly to the *Prison Notebooks*, we are assuming a continuity, which we will develop in the next section, between the *Prison Notebooks* and Gramsci's previous writings, specifically the *Lyons Theses*. It might prove rather interesting, then, to make some kind of a comparison between Simon's *BRS* and Gramsci's *Lyons Theses*.

For the *BRS* (all references to the 1977 version) "the winning of power by the working class and its allies will not be a single act, but a process of struggle, in which an important stage will be the election of a new kind of Labour government which will carry out a left policy to tackle the crisis and bring about far reaching democratic changes in society, opening the road to socialism... the path to socialism in Britain is through the fullest development of democracy, ending monopoly domination, giving the people control over the economy, transforming parliament into an instrument of the will of the vast majority of the people and the sovereign body in the land." (p4) Gradualism, gradualism all the way through. Never a hiccup in the transition.

But for Gramsci and the *Lyons Theses*: "The Communist Party links every immediate demand to a revolutionary objective; makes use of every partial struggle to teach the masses the need for general action and for insurrection against the reactionary rule of capital." (*SPW II*, p370 - my emphasis)

Can you spot the difference? It seems Simon can't or won't. The *BRS* only links one reform, one action, one concession to the next. A long chain of seemingly interminable reforms with somewhere in the distance the hazy promise of socialism, sometime, somehow. Gramsci's *Lyons Theses* links each reform, "every immediate demand" to the revolutionary insurrection. Can the two possibly be further apart?

If we may move on from our Party's programme - many Euros feel it dates somewhat anyway - let us take a look at recent trends in Party organisation. For quite some time the trend has been away from the workplace, away from activity even, and towards the lifestyle designer socialism. Opponents of this are derisively dismissed as economists by the hard line Euros, as they sink ever deeper into petty bourgeois navel gazing.

Not for Gramsci the laid back lifestyles of these latter day 'Gramscians': "The party organisation must be constructed on the basis of production and hence of the workplace (cells)...By locating the organisational basis in the place of production, the party performs an act of choice of the class on which it bases itself. It proclaims that it is a class party and the party of a single class, the

working class." (*Ibid* p362) Today's 'Gramscians' would find such an approach totally alien - and indeed it is - to them. As for us we certainly agree with Gramsci when he declared: "It is necessary to reject vigorously, as counterrevolutionary, any conception which makes the party into a 'synthesis' of heterogeneous elements...the proletariat must be guaranteed a leading function within the party itself." (p363) Today in the CPGB, even the ageing Party bureaucrats are having their much diminished hold over the Party whittled away by the petty bourgeois dull middle aged things around *Marxism Today*, the self same dull middle aged things who claim Gramsci for their own. One cannot help but wonder why.

But back to the *Lyons Theses* versus the *BRS*, and on to the tasks of the Party. In 1926, the PCI's "fundamental tasks can be indicated by these three points: (a) to organise and unify the industrial and rural proletariats for the revolution; (b) to organise and mobilise around the proletariat all the forces necessary for the victory of the revolution and the foundation of the workers' state; (c) to place before the proletariat and its allies the problem of the insurrection against the bourgeois state and of the struggle for proletarian dictatorship, and to guide them politically and materially towards their solution, through a series of partial struggles." (*Ibid*, p365) For the *BRS*, the fundamental tasks are not 'creative applications' of the above, but can be summarised as "for a 'Labour government of a new type' which would be the outcome of the broad democratic alliance". (Simon, *op. cit.*, p127) The terms, or even the concepts, of a workers' state or proletarian dictatorship, let alone insurrection, are not to be found in the *BRS*.

We are not doing very well so far, are we comrades 'Gramscians'? Well, let's move on and make a comparison of the analysis of social democracy found in the *Lyons Theses* and in the *BRS* - a 'Labour government of a new type' being a central component therein.

The *BRS* has a lot to say on the Labour Party. It likes it. It is "the mass party of the working class" (p24); "the Communist Party does not seek to replace the Labour Party as the federal party of the working class" (p28; here we may as well delete the word 'federal', given the Euros' liquidationism), and is even the vehicle for socialism, or 'a new kind of Labour government' at least (see *BRS*, pp44-45).

Gramsci and the PCI, on the other hand, were faced with a socialist party 'left' beyond the CPGB's dreams for the Labour Party - indeed, left beyond the CPGB Euros, Straight Leftists and CCGers. But, for Gramsci, the problem of the PSI was not how to make it love the PCI, not how to buddy-buddy with it in parliament but "the problem of destroying the influence of the PSI and its newspaper" through the tactic of the United Front (*SPW II*, p373).

The idea was to pose demands, and where possible initiate joint action with the PSI and its leadership, and in doing so expose it and win its working class base. Indeed, we see in the minutes of the Political Commission of the Lyons Congress Gramsci resisting any attempt to blur the definition of the PSI as a fundamentally bourgeois, and not proletarian, party: "Rienzi [Tasca]: Asks...that the passage where it is asserted that social democracy is the left wing of the bourgeoisie should be changed."

"Gramsci states that the modification asked for by Rienzi cannot be accepted." (*Ibid*, p338) So we see that whereas the CPGB opportunist groupings today see their role as shield bearer to social democracy, Gramsci, in line with Lenin, saw the role of communists as its executioner.

It is not for a 'Labour government of a new type' to spearhead the 'transition' - lets use a neutral word for argument's sake - to socialism, but the proletarian vanguard, the Communist Party. Gramsci was unequivocal on this.

If the Eurocommunists were honest in their Italian analogy, it is not Gramsci who they would choose as their figurehead, it is a trend described by Gramsci in the *Lyons Theses*: "After the victory of Marxism, the tendencies of a national character over which it had triumphed sought to manifest themselves in other ways, reemerging within Marxism itself as a form of revisionism. This process was encouraged by the development of the imperialist phase of capitalism. The following three facts are closely related to this phenomenon: the disappearance in the ranks of the working

class movement of criticism of the state, an essential element in the Marxist doctrine, and its replacement by democratic utopias; the formation of a labour aristocracy; and a new mass transfer of petty bourgeois and peasants into the working class, hence a new dissemination within the proletariat of ideological currents of a national character, conflicting with Marxism." (pp340-1) Gramsci continues, writing of "a group of intellectuals who represent nothing more than a tendency towards democratic reform of the state: their Marxism did not go beyond the aim of arousing and organising the forces of the proletariat in order to make them serve to establish democracy." (p341) History repeats itself. The first time as tragedy, the second as farce.

The Eurocommunist school of lies and falsifications: the Prison Notebooks

Writing on the distortions of Marx's works, Lenin said in *The State and Revolution*: "During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, receiving their theories with savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, to hallow their names...while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it...The bourgeoisie and opportunists within the labour movement concur in this doctoring...They omit, obscure or distort the revolutionary side of the theory, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie."

This is precisely what has been done to Gramsci's work, especially his *Prison Notebooks*. When he was jailed in 1924 the fascist prosecutor stated: "For twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning". Unfortunately for them, and for our Euros, they did not succeed. But in their own way the Eurocommunists have tried to silence Gramsci by removing the revolutionary essence of his prison writings. In this they are helped by the language in which Gramsci was forced to couch his work: "With his transfer to the prison clinic in 1933 and consequential partial recovery, he began to recopy, reorder and rework much of the material from his earlier notebooks. But he did so with extra caution, eliminating any surviving words and phrases, like the name of Marx or the word 'class', which might attract the attention of the censor and so cause his work to be brought to an end...certain identifiable concepts of Marxism-Leninism such as the class struggle or the dictatorship of the proletariat are usually masked in innocuous sounding titles." (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, introduction, pp xi and xiii) So this provided the basis for the most hideous distortions by the Eurocommunists. But even then, they have been most selective with their quotes.

The first selections from the 2..48 handwritten pages of the *Prison Notebooks* were published in Italian in 1947. The main man behind this being Togliatti. All references to Trotsky, Bordiga, Luxemburg and others were removed. The idea was to project Gramsci as a loyal follower of Stalin. When the break with the CPSU came the whole thing was rejigged, and with this and the temporal distance between the man and his 'adherents' the PCI felt safe - eventually - to print the *Notebooks* in full.

In the *Notebooks* we encounter such concepts as hegemony, war of position, corporate interests, historic bloc and so on, which the Euros have used shamelessly to give justification to their long march to the right. In Britain, the most ardent 'Gramscian' has been the already mentioned Roger Simon. His book *Gramsci's Political Thought* is a baneful attempt to reconcile Gramsci with the British brand of Eurocommunism.

He presents his work as an assault upon economism, but this is a cover for an assault on Marxism: "An economic approach is reflected in the widespread use of the metaphor 'base and superstructure' which is derived from Marx's famous *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). The significant developments are understood to be those taking place in the economic base, whereas political struggles are considered only part of the superstructure erected on the base." (p12) "Although

the *Prison Notebooks* contain many references to base and superstructure, "argues Simon "the direction of Gramsci's thought, and his rejection of economism, is against it. Instead, he uses the term *historic bloc* to indicate the way in which a hegemonic class combines the leadership of a bloc of social forces in civil society with its leadership in the sphere of production." (p27)

First let us take a look at Marx's conception of 'base and superstructure', and then we will deal with Gramsci's 'rejection' of it. The object of Simon's attack is the passage: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage in development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."

Simon tries to interpret Marx's formulation into some kind of *Metropolis* scenario, where we are all pushed on unthinking and totally helpless by the iron hand of the economic process. It is not an interpretation that Marx would recognise as his own. Engels clarifies the real Marxist position: "The ultimate determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure...also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in their determining form." (quoted in Robert Griffiths, *Was Gramsci a Eurocommunist?* p4) So the base/superstructure metaphor is clearly not as Simon paints it. It is a far richer, profoundly dialectical, concept than the wooden, lifeless picture he describes.

What then was Gramsci's view of it and what did he mean by 'historic bloc'? Simon tells us that the *Prison Notebooks* contain many references to base and superstructure, but does not tell us in what context. The context, however, proves crucial. "Concept of 'historic bloc'," writes Gramsci in a note, "ie unity between nature and spirit (structure and superstructure), unity of opposites and distincts." (SPN, p137) On page 366 we find another definition: "Structures and superstructures form a 'historic bloc'. That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the social relations of production." How can anyone interpret this as a 'rejection' of the base/superstructure metaphor?

The 'historic bloc' is not against it, as Simon claims, but defined with the use of it, as an attempt to explain the results of the interaction of base and superstructure in society. This is quite plain. It is not a matter that I interpret it one way, and Simon another. We are not arguing about the interpretation of a piece of abstract art in the Tate gallery, but of something which is down, clearly, in black and white; indeed, more clearly than a lot of the concepts in the *Prison Notebooks*.

Simon is taking his readers for a bunch of fools. This is something we do not like. It is, however, a practice he is most consistent in throughout his book.

Let us move to his 'interpretation' of Gramsci on the state. Simon attacks 'Marxism-Leninism' for contending that "Only after the capture of state power by the working class can the construction of socialism begin." (p27) If this is what he wants to accuse us of, then we are guilty. But what Simon implies is that socialism can be constructed, or at least begin to be, before the working class attains state power. "The struggle of the working class for socialism in Britain cannot be confined to the winning of state power, but has to be concerned with the transformation of the social relations of civil society as well." (p102) Now, if you want to believe this utopian tripe, that is your problem. If, on the other hand, Roger, you are contending that Gramsci did also, then this is another matter entirely.

Simon's basis for this is to claim that

Gramsci did not see the state as a wholly rigid body, and indeed he did not, and that it was therefore in some way transformable. This again is another matter entirely. Simon quotes Gramsci as saying that "the life of the state is seen as a 'continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria'." (p31) Here the quote is ended but Gramsci continues with "(on the judicial plane)" (SPN, p182). What the state is seen as, because of fetishised social relations and consequent structural relations, such as the judicial, and what the state actually is are two distinct things entirely. Anyway, Simon is quoting extremely selectively from a passage in the *Notebooks*, where this aspect is only the second of three 'moments' defined by Gramsci. The first is "A relation of social forces which is closely linked to the structure, objective, independent of human will", (SPN, p180) and "The third moment is that of the relation of military forces, which from time to time is directly decisive". (Ibid, p183) Gramsci also says: "Historical development oscillates continually between the first and the third moment, with the mediation of the second." (p183) So, far from being the be all and end all of the matter, as Simon would have us believe, the factor he quotes is but one of three, and a mediatory one at that.

Possibly the most maligned concept in the *Prison Notebooks* is that of the 'war of position'. Simon writes: "Gramsci compared civil society to a powerful system of fortresses and earthenworks standing behind the state. And he drew a comparison between Tsarist Russia and the West..."

"In Russia the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between the state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed." (SPN, p238)

"...in Western Europe, a war of movement has to give way to a different strategy, a war of position. Revolution...is not a sharp rupture at a single moment when state power passes from one class to another." (Simon, pp27-28)

Thus, for Simon and the Euros, the war of position is not interchangeable, in a tactical fashion, with the war of manoeuvre as the situation changes. They are strategies defined by the strength of civil society, or closer to what Simon means, the degree of development of the nation state. To be fair to Simon, Gramsci is not so straightforward and unequivocal on this question. Taken by itself, the above passage quoted by Simon seems to mean what he says it does. Seems, that is, if you isolate it from everything else Gramsci wrote on the concept.

For a start, elsewhere Gramsci indicates that the war of position is not nationally 'fixed', in the way that Simon interprets it. It changes to the war of manoeuvre as circumstances change, although in the two examples printed below he is inconsistent in the dates he chooses: "The problem of the political struggle's transition from a war of manoeuvre to a war of position certainly needs to be considered at this juncture. In Europe this transition took place after 1848...the same transition took place after 1871." (SPN, p110) meaning that it had shifted back at some point between the two dates. And again (but with different dates): "In Europe from 1789 to 1870 there was a (political) war of movement in the French Revolution and a long war of position from 1815 to 1870. In this present epoch, the war of movement took place politically from March 1917 to March 1921." (Ibid, p120)

Now, contest Gramsci's dates if you will, but there can be little doubt that what Gramsci is talking about is not a strategy for socialism, as Simon claims, which can 'smooth over' those nasty 'sharp ruptures'. Rather it is a tactic to regroup revolutionary forces around the revolutionary party, so as to prepare for the time when the revolutionary crisis breaks forth and the war of manoeuvre again comes on the agenda. The 'war of position' was not a break with Leninism, but rather an attempt by Gramsci to develop and enrich it. For Gramsci, the war of position was "what the formula of the 'United Front' seems to me to mean". (SPN, p238).

Now, this we can accept without any difficulty. We are indeed in a situation which can be called a war of position. Take a look down your street. You will notice there are no armed Leninists building barricades at the end of it. Insurrection is not yet on our immediate agenda. But, as we have said, the difference arises with Simon not over whether we are in a

war of manoeuvre or position situation, but that we, and also Gramsci, mean an entirely different thing when we use the phrase.

Furthermore, Gramsci's war of position in the *Prison Notebooks* is fully consistent with his later pre-prison writings. The first reference is in February 1924: Gramsci argues of the differences between Russia and the West "because in central and western Europe the development of capitalism has not only determined the formation of the broad proletarian strata, but also - and as a consequence - has created the higher stratum, the labour aristocracy, with its appendages in the trade union bureaucracy and the social democratic groups. The determination, which in Russia was direct and drove the masses onto the streets for a revolutionary uprising, in central and western Europe is complicated by all these political superstructures, [yes - superstructures AM] created by the greater development of capitalism. This makes the action of the masses slower and more prudent, and therefore requires of the revolutionary party a strategy and tactics altogether more complex and long term than those which were necessary for the Bolsheviks in the period between March and November 1917." (SPW II, pp199-200)

And later, in 1926: "in the advanced capitalist countries, the ruling class possesses political and organisational reserves which it did not possess, for instance, in Russia. This means that even the most serious economic crises do not have immediate repercussions in the political sphere. Politics always lags behind economics, far behind. The state apparatus is far more resistant than it is often possible to believe; and it succeeds, at moments of crisis, in organising greater forces loyal to the regime than the depth of crisis might lead one to suppose." (Ibid, pp408-9)

Is the link between the *Notebooks* and these two texts not apparent? And was he not at this time, beyond a shadow of a doubt, advocating revolution as a 'sharp rupture'? What then happens to Simon's fine, intricate and oh so 'subtle' interpretations?

Quite simply, it puts him and his kind into one of the two following groups: "The transformation of the subordinate group into a dominant one is excluded, either because the problem is not considered (Fabianism...), or because it is proposed in an inappropriate and ineffective form (social democratic tendencies in general)." (SPN, pp160-1)

It is tempting just to keep hacking away at Simon until there is nothing left. But he spoils us of our sport. At the end of the day he does it himself.

"Gramsci", he writes, "never abandoned his belief in the factory councils as the embryonic apparatus of power, destined to replace the bourgeois parliamentary state by a system of direct democracy which, in his view, would enable the workers to participate actively in the work of administration..."

Thus Gramsci never went beyond the Leninist view that direct democracy based on factory councils should replace parliamentary democracy." (Simon, p114-5) And; "We may conclude that Gramsci does not advance the theory of a revolutionary party beyond the stage it reached under Lenin. His thinking on the party, as on parliamentary democracy, was not brought into line with his concepts of hegemony, civil society and war of position." (Ibid, p122)

If this is the case, and we feel that here, at least, we are at one with comrade Simon, in what light does it put these concepts? Simon wants us to believe there is a chasm that separates Gramsci's Leninism and his supposed proto Eurocommunism. What dishonesty! Instead, as we have shown here, Gramsci's contributions should and can only be understood as developments within the Leninist 'paradigm'. In the end, we can only conclude that Gramsci - the real Gramsci - has no blame for the development of Eurocommunism. He is as innocent of this crime as is Lenin or Marx.

Simon mocks those who take the October Revolution as a model, elevating Gramsci as something apart from, and above, this. In doing so he mocks the true Gramsci: "Now the modern form of the conquest of the state arises from the mistaken conception of historical development, from the old game of compromise and from the cretinous [note, cretinous, Roger! - AM] tactics of parliamentarianism."

"We, on the other hand, remain convinced, in the light of the revolutionary experiences of Russia, Hungary and Ger-

many, that the socialist state cannot be embodied in the institutions of the capitalist state...the socialist state must be a fundamentally new creation." (SPW I, p76)

That is the real Gramsci; that is our Gramsci, whether in 1920 or 1930. Hands off!

Why the Euros want Gramsci, and who they deserve

To put it simply, no one likes to be the 'bastard child'. Legitimacy - social, historical or whatever - is much sought after, and not least by our Euros.

To admit one's anti-Marxism in the communist movement at the beginning of a struggle, or at any stage before it is decisively and unequivocally resolved in your favour, is to concede defeat. So you must struggle as a 'Marxist'. And for this you need historical allies; preferably dead ones who won't answer back.

Those comrades who recall our Party back in the late 1960s and early 70s will remember the Eurocommunists attempting to cover their tracks using Lenin. In his *Gramsci's Political Thought*, written in 1982, Simon abandons this but still attempts to unite certain aspects of his interpretation of Lenin to his interpretation of Gramsci, and thence to the BRS. It does not work.

Gramsci is a good historical ally. He fits the criteria very well. He is dead, he is a founding member of the Comintern and the PCI - which became 'officially' Eurocommunist using his works as a cover. He is also not associated in any sense with Stalin's excesses and crimes, nor with any faction within the Comintern that fought against them. His imprisonment confers on him a somewhat 'neutral' status. How comforting. But, most importantly of all, because the *Prison Notebooks* were written with the censorious eye of the fascist jailer over Gramsci's shoulder, the *Notebooks* are open to a large degree of poetic licence.

April's *Marxism Today* comes clean, in the persona of Stuart Hall: "here, what was undoubtedly a limitation from a textual point of view - namely the fragmentary nature of his writings - was, for us, a positive advantage. Gramsci's work resisted even the most concerted effort to knit up its loose ends into a seamless orthodoxy." Meaning you can use it (selectively, mind) to justify whatever you choose. No doubt they will drop Gramsci soon enough when they feel that they have replaced his communist legitimacy with the comfortable legitimacy of bourgeois respectability. Nevertheless, we should do our utmost to assist them in making this transition as speedily as possible.

If the Euros have no right to Gramsci, then we will, if we may, suggest two more suitable candidates for Eurocommunist 'adoption'. What about Eduard Bernstein, for instance, whose famous book *Evolutionary Socialism* written in today's conditions could have been penned by Martin Jacques, had he the talent. "No socialist capable of thinking dreams today in England of an imminent victory for socialism by means of a violent revolution...But they rely more and more on work in the municipalities and other self governing bodies." Surely our Euros could find little to disagree with here. In fact, in many respects, the Euros merely recapitulate much of Bernstein's past work.

The second candidate can only be Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Look at what underpins Eurocommunism today, what theories are central to it. The Party programme envisages a national road to socialism, hermetically sealed off from all international upsets. Why, Stalin laid the basis for this as early as 1924, in *October and the Tasks of the Russian Communists*. Check it and see.

It was Stalin who gave unqualified support to the CPGB's first (1951) version of the BRS, no different in essence to today's version, of which Simon speaks so highly in his book. It is even reported that Stalin encouraged Harry Pollitt to strengthen the programme's orientation towards parliamentarism. Peaceful roads to socialism were only ever sanctioned at a CPSU congress under Khrushchev, but this was only the continuation of a process set in motion by Stalin.

So come clean you Euros! If you want to know your roots, your origin, do not look to Gramsci. He wouldn't want you. Embrace instead Joseph Stalin, whose practice you despise but whose politics gave birth to you. Leave our comrade Gramsci alone.

Alan Merrick