

# The LENINIST

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## Revolutions are not for sale

**O**N MAY 15, Soviet Forces began their pull-out from Afghanistan.

This paper has consistently fought against this treachery. For there is little doubt that the withdrawal of Soviet troops will leave the revolutionary People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan government in Kabul severely weakened. The 40,000 strong Afghan army will soon lose the support of 115,000 Soviet troops, their high grade technical equipment, their helicopter gunships and their fighter aircraft. This can only be a severe blow to the morale of these troops. They have been shamelessly deserted.

Thus, not only has the military balance shifted – perhaps decisively – towards the counterrevolutionary barbarians of the various Mujahedin factions: their brutish *jihads* has been bolstered morally by what is a Soviet betrayal.

Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Party has begun to treat living revolutions as little more than pieces of marketable real estate, bargaining counters to be traded with the US imperialists in exchange for paper agreements on arms. Gorbachev himself has warned that: “**Behind the political settlement in Afghanistan already looms a question: which conflict will be settled next? And it is certain that more is to follow.**”

His words are ominous. They should serve as a dire warning to revolutionaries in Nicaragua, Kampuchea, Angola, South Africa and all the other areas of the world thought of as ‘hot spots’ by the Soviet leadership.

Yet the savage irony of Gorbachev's willingness to betray revolutions in other countries in order to appease imperialism should not escape us. Whatever temporary respite he wins by giving in to imperialism's rapacious demands, it can never be satisfied.

Imperialism's revisionist hunger is ultimately aimed at the world revolutionary centre – the USSR itself. Thus, objectively, Gorbachev and the opportunists who head the Communist Party of the Soviet Union effectively undermine defence of the Soviet Union by their Judas deals. Defence of the USSR begins in Afghanistan, the frontline of the world revolution!

The undignified scramble of the Soviet leadership to high tail it out of Kabul, and to hell with its revolution, is a stark illustration of the extent of the political degeneration the Soviet Party has undergone since Lenin's day. Concomitant to this has been the progressive separation of the interests of the Soviet Union from the world revolution.

Lenin's Bolsheviks understood clearly that there was an indissoluble link between the revolution in their country and the development of the proletarian revolution internationally. Indeed, as Lenin pointed out, the Russian revolution itself was possible not simply because of the contradictions internal to the Tsarist regime: the

victory of the working class in Russia was above all a product of the contradictions arising from the world economy.

The existence of the world economy poses the necessity for rational planning on a world wide basis. Capitalist imperialism represents the barrier to this historically necessary development: to remove it requires a world revolution. Of course, this will not and does not happen all at once. Revolutions break out first and foremost in imperialism's weakest links, not those where capitalism is most advanced. This forces backward and medium developed capitalist countries to the forefront of the world revolution; a phenomenon full of problems and contradictions but nonetheless it is precisely revolutions in such countries which have dominated the history of our 20th century.

For dogmatists whose ‘Marxism’ is a crude mechanical restatement of abstractions, building socialism in such countries is impossible. This was the view of the Mensheviks in Russia. They argued that because the working class was tiny, because capitalism was so undeveloped, the revolution in Russia would have to be a bourgeois one, and take place under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Only after many years of capitalist development – and the growth of the size of the working class – would it be possible to pose the question of socialism.

Lenin took an opposite view. His genius lay in recognising that the proletariat could – indeed had to – take the lead in the ‘bourgeois revolution’, not in alliance with the bourgeoisie, but instead with the peasant masses against landlord and capitalist alike. Having done this the proletariat should not hand power to the bourgeoisie – become a party of extreme opposition as the Mensheviks advocated – but fight to maintain their hegemony over the revolution from the position of governmental power and take it *uninterruptedly* from the tasks of democracy (the bourgeois revolution) to the tasks of socialism. This was the programme of Bolshevism.

There are many groups that pay lip service to the Russian revolution but stand against the living revolutions of today, like Afghanistan, which have followed in its wake. These groups include the reformists of social democracy and the centrists of the right moving ‘official’ communist movement in the imperialist countries, also the entire spectrum of the decomposing Trotskyite milieu. From *Socialist Organiser* to *Workers Power*, from the WRP to the Spartacist League, the Afghan revolution was dismissed as an army coup, nothing more and nothing less.

For all these opportunists the idea that there was a dictatorship of the proletariat in a country where there is ‘no proletariat to speak of’ is an absurdity.

We disagree. The nature of the state is determined, not by the

numbers a class possesses, but its leadership of society through the agency of state power. The Afghan working class ruled Afghanistan through the PDPA. It was a product of the world communist movement and in 1978 it was led by genuine revolutionaries who made a revolution.

We say to deny the genuine proletarian nature of the Afghan revolution is to deny the Russian revolution. True, prior to the 1978 April revolution, the total number of Afghan workers did not exceed 90,000 out of a total population of some 17 million. But then, if we only recognise the possibility of a proletarian dictatorship when this class constitutes over 50% of the population we would not only deny the class nature of the October Revolution but Chinese revolution, where the proletariat consisted of perhaps 2% of the population and played no direct role in the protracted revolutionary struggle led by Mao Zedong. Likewise what about the proletarian dictatorship in Outer Mongolia? It began in 1921, when the workers of that country were counted in hundreds and certainly not thousands.

The mechanical, anti-Marxist approach of our reformists, opportunists and various Trotskyites replicate almost perfectly the arguments that the Mensheviks used against Lenin before and after the October revolution. The Trotskyite Spartacist League are, if anything, the most explicit in their slander of the Afghan revolution.

For them it was “a **putsch by a group of reform-minded petty bourgeois nationalists, primarily junior officers in the Afghan army, of the Khalq wing of the PDPA.**” Similarly, taking their cue from the left radical academic Fred Halliday, they dismiss the division in the Party between *Khalq* and *Parcham* as a “tribal” schism.

Of course, using precisely the same reasoning, it is quite possible to call the Russian revolution a “putsch”. In reply to the dogmatists of his day, who could not, or would not, see a living revolution, with all its contradictions and ‘rough edges’ when it is in front of them, Lenin defined a ‘putsch’ as an “**attempt at insurrection [that] has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses.**” (Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 22, p355). The Afghan revolution does not fall into this category.

The “junior officers in the Afghan army” who formed an important striking force in the 1978 revolution, did not fill a vacuum in the political sphere; rather they performed the *military function of the Party*, under the political leadership of the PDPA in the person of Hafizullah Amin, a leading member of its revolutionary *Khalq* wing.

The revolution was the culmination of years of mass work. When the revolution was announced, hundreds of thousands of working people poured out onto the streets

to greet the news. Since then many have given their lives to defend the revolution. This hardly indicates a ‘conspiracy with no sympathy from the masses’!

And as for the idea that the differences that rent the PDPA were essentially tribalistic – there are none so blind as those who will not see! From its genesis in 1966, *Khalq* pursued a revolutionary line, no matter what specific criticism we may have of them, while the *Parcham* wing were constantly drawn to reformism. Now it is true that in a country like Afghanistan these fundamental political divisions can sometimes find reflection in ethnic or geo-political divisions. This hardly explains them, however, and nor should it be used to belittle them.

The divisions in Russian social democracy were often explained away by philistines of various kinds as a fight between the ‘westernised’ Mensheviks and the ‘eastern’ barbarity of the Bolsheviks. Similarly, in support of their far-reaching social and political reforms in Mongolia after November 1921, the Soviet government counted on the assistance of large numbers of Buryat-Mongols from their side of the frontier.

These forces had had a longer exposure to secular Russian civilization and were introduced into Outer Mongolia precisely in order to provide a social basis for the consolidation of Soviet power and to raise the cultural and political level of their priest-ridden kinsmen. Consequently, there were clashes in the area which took an ethnic form, but were in essence a reaction by conservative forces against the developing revolution. The Mongolian revolution and the struggle against backward forces often appeared as ethnic differences but was in essence just like the Afghan revolution – a class question.

Glib dismissals of the political divisions that split the PDPA down the middle are simply not good enough. Indeed, they have more than a whiff of chauvinist arrogance about them.

Working class power came to Afghanistan through an indigenous revolution, heroically led by the *Khalq* wing of the PDPA in April 1978. There was the inevitable counterrevolutionary backlash from the dispossessed ruling elements of the *ancien regime*. Unfortunately, this backlash was aided by important subjective errors by the party. Instead of boldly striking out with revolutionary initiatives, most importantly sweeping land reform that would have undercut the base of counterrevolution, both wings of the PDPA temporised, vacillated and thus lost the initiative.

The failure to weld a firm link between worker and peasant has been the congenital weakness of the Afghan revolution. It has played into the hands of Mujahedin black reaction.

Faced with the burgeoning counterrevolution – now armed by US imperialism and its proxies in the

region – the PDPA repeatedly (13 times in fact) called on its Soviet ally to provide direct military aid to bolster the revolutionary regime. When the Soviet intervention eventually came however, it was an intensely contradictory phenomenon.

On the one hand, it strengthened the weight of the revolutionary forces against their mediaevalist enemies. On the other, the Soviets manufactured an opportunist coup. Its men shot Amin, leader of the revolutionary *Khalq* wing of the Party and 97 of his comrades and installed Karmal, leader of the opportunist *Parcham* wing, in power. This was a crime which effectively crushed the dynamism of the Afghan revolution.

Since then, the Soviet Armed Forces have acted as the crutch to a revolution they themselves had crippled. Now even that prop is being pulled away.

Afghanistan is just the tip of a very imposing iceberg. If the revolution here goes down, there is a real possibility that a ‘domino-effect’ will be set in motion. And by its nature, imperialism will never be satisfied until it has the head of Soviet socialism itself on the chopping block.

Only by a resolute defence of living socialism and the active promotion of revolutions in other countries can the Soviet workers’ state hope to survive in the long run. The betrayals by Gorbachev and his ilk therefore not only place in jeopardy the revolutionary gains in countries like Afghanistan, they also threaten the survival of working class power in the USSR itself.

The betrayal of the Afghan revolution stands as a shabby monument to the political dead-end that the Soviet leadership has reached. Despite bureaucratic deformations, the Soviet Union was able to extend socialism into Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War II and defended and gave crucial material aid to indigenous revolutions – the Cuban, Vietnamese, Chinese, etc.

Now it has abandoned the Afghan revolution to the forces of reaction, signalling to imperialism that they are prepared to do similar deals in other so-called ‘hot spots’ (Nicaragua, South Africa, *Poland even?*). Lenin's dictum that there is nothing so false, so dangerous as an artificial separation of domestic from foreign policy is apt here: the murder of the Afghan revolution is the foreign complement of the internal retreats embodied in Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

Precisely because it is the frontline of the world revolution today – the country where the question of revolution or counterrevolution is posed point blank – the task of the defence of the Afghan revolution has exposed the theoretical poverty and dirty political cowardice of the left in Britain. Only Leninists greeted and still defend the Afghan revolution. That is why we say: No sellout in Afghanistan! Gorbachev, revolutions are not for sale!

Ian Mahoney



IT WAS inevitable that the lifting of the lid in the USSR with *glasnost* would lead to the emergence of political activity of all types. The CPSU has monopolised political power for over 60 years and has, since the victory of the centrist forces in its ranks, struggled to maintain a bureaucratic monolithism both in the party and in society in general.

Bureaucratic control has become an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces. Hence socialist democracy is no luxury it is a historical necessity. But Gorbachev only pays lip service to this.

The CPSU is now a party of the labour bureaucracy.

The fact that the CPSU represents this ruling section of the society, and not some amorphous mass designated as the undifferentiated Soviet 'people', as it claims, is confirmed by the power struggle that seems to be developing its ranks. It has its foci around Gorbachev and Ligachev, the No.1 and No.2 in the CPSU. The struggle looks like reaching some sort of conclusion at the CPSU's forthcoming special conference - the first since 1941. It undoubtedly centres on the drive by the managerial elements of the ruling stratum to transform the bureaucracy.

In this fight to modernise the ruling caste, the Gorbachevite 'technocrats' attempt to tap the widespread frustration that exists at all levels of society, but in particular, through the limited 'opening up' associated with *glasnost*, the intellectuals. The limited criticism this allows is designed as a complement to the campaign of the technocrats against the old-style bureaucrats.

This is the historical significance of *glasnost*. As we have seen, it has allowed for the emergence of organised political activity on the right. As it stands today, the CPSU is not an adequate vehicle to fight rightism.

We do not demand that the bureaucracy bans these forces. This will simply drive nationalism, chauvinism etc underground. What is needed is the independent intervention of the working class with its own programme.

What the formation of the so-called Democratic Union, the nationalist outbursts in Armenia and the emergence of sinister groups like *Pamyat* demands is not a clamping down, a return to a supposed monolithic golden age. We are in favour of the fullest democracy under socialism. We are for the plurality of parties. But this does not mean a passive approach to reactionary manifestations. Far from it.

Such organisations as the Democratic Union and *Pamyat* will find no place in the democratic institutions of socialist democracy - the soviets. More than that under a soviet democracy the working class would actively intervene to win the hearts and minds of those people influenced by reactionary ideas using all the means at its disposal.

From devastating debates with the Democratic Union on TV before a 'statistically representative' studio audience to massive millions strong demonstrations in Yerevan expressing the unity of Armenian and Azerbaijani and all Soviet workers against the poison of nationalism. This is what mass working class democracy can turn on.

But the independent organisation of the working class has a far greater significance than rebuffing *Pamyat* and other scum which fester under bureaucratic rule. They are small fry. Today, the CPSU is advocating 'market socialism'. This is a technocratic retreat which carries with it a far greater danger of capitalist restorationism than *Pamyat*.

The transition to communism necessitates struggle. It is not automatic. It will only come through the continuation of the class struggle of the working class. This will take many forms, not least the struggle to transform the bureaucracy into a servant of the working class. This is the key task for the working class in the USSR today, a task we are confident it will fulfill with all the dynamism and inventiveness it showed in October 1917. The Soviet working class will again shake the world.

The Editor

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## LETTERS

### Anarchy in the UK

Real class struggle anarchists do not disagree with the Marxist method, only with Leninism. There is no escaping the fact that the class needs to utilise the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (organised in workers' councils) for the purpose of defending revolutionary power from the counterrevolution. We have to assume the sincerity of most left wing groups and their members. Only *Black Flag* and some of the liberals associated with *Freedom* like Nicolas Walter, would attempt to deny this. Any refusal to work with the left will leave us isolated from the majority of militant workers.

We have to address the working class politically, not waste our time repeating the bankrupt practices of the past.... The inability of Direct Action Movement members to adequately assess reality is not mere coincidence. The failure of the International Workers Association to adapt to the fundamental political developments of the post war period is a direct result of the theoretical basis of anarcho-syndicalism. Linked to this is a more cynical process of 'Bakunisation' which has been in operation within DAM from its inception, but which in recent years has grown to sinister proportions.

The objective treatment of the problems facing the Spanish labour movement in *Sinews* was howled down as being support for the CNT-U 'Renovados' (said by *Black Flag* to be a CIA-PCE-Catholic-Trotskyist-Masonic front!), and its editor Mick Larkin was promptly expelled from DAM for daring to challenge the myth of the one true CNT-AIT.

Comrades who opposed this insidious anarcho-Stalinism in a principled manner (eg Hull Syndicalists), and put forward viable political perspectives for the 1980s have been hounded out of DAM on trumped up charges of supporting 'enemies' of the IWA. One of them, Guy Cheveton, a former editor of *Direct Action* who has been the victim of a vicious whispering campaign based on his membership of Gay Switchboard, falsely alleging that he had contracted Aids, has since been physically attacked by DAM members (who brag among themselves of having him under 'surveillance'). Now we learn that Brian Bamford was forced to move his family to Spain after receiving death threats and a 9mm pistol bullet through his letter box, after writing articles in *Freedom* critical of the CNT-AIT.

We must reject gangster tactics like these as being completely alien to principled revolutionary praxis. This is the sort of futile petty bourgeois 'illegalism' which so discredited the Russian anarchists and sabotaged the re-emergence of an autonomous workers' movement in Spain after the CNT-FAI collaborationist policies of the civil war period gave way inevitably to the dead end terrorism of semi-gangster elements like Sabate - providing Franco with the pretext for criminalising genuine class struggle anarchists working patiently to build libertarian communism.

In the present period of downturn it is necessary to utterly reject these provocations and fight alongside reformist workers in the existing unions in order to demonstrate that we are the best class fighters, and in order to win the arguments on the left. History shows that it is only mass struggle of the class that throw up mass revolutionary organisations and not the other

way around. Through mass struggle the class can create its own mass organisations that will take the revolutionaries by surprise. Our task is to assist in building these organisations but also to have our own revolutionary programme accepted by a significant minority. This programme must include the demand for unitary organs of class power. Unions cannot be the production units of a socialist society for the simple reason that they divide workers. This is why organs of power will probably not be the same as organs of struggle. This is why modern anarcho-syndicalists must advocate workers' councils to eventually supercede all previous organs of struggle. What is needed in the interim is a political organisation of anarchists to prepare for this qualitative leap and be ready to give the ideological lead to the class.

If the IWA cannot respond to the changing nature of capitalism with changing tactics then it cannot be a revolutionary international, but only a federation of ancestor worshippers.

For Communism!  
SW London Direct Action Movement

### Kim Philby

Kim Philby died peacefully in Moscow on May 11. Born into the exploiting classes he betrayed his class. He provided invaluable service to the KGB in his position as a high flyer in the British diplomatic and intelligence until he went into exile in Moscow in 1963. Ironically, Philby was appointed during the 1940s as the head of the MI6's anti-Soviet intelligence operations. From this position, he was able to successfully unmask numerous British agents who were dealt with effectively by the KGB. This was of great value.

*The Leninist* pays tribute to Kim Philby and his comrades, both known and unknown, who took the side of the USSR against imperialism. We also recognise though, that in spite of Philby's subjective desire to aid the fight for revolution, the path he chose was not a genuinely communist one. At the end of day, masses make history, not spies, not matter how audacious or talented. This is something the leaders of the CPSU ought to make clear. Nonetheless Philby's course took courage and was testing. All partisans of the working class will mourn his passing.

We Leninists are confident that in the future the bourgeoisie will produce other Kim Philbys, other class traitors, from its ranks. The more the better. The revolution will need men and women of talent to serve the working class as it carries out its historic mission, the building of a world communist order, the only social order fit for human beings.

The Leninist Editorial Board

### Sinn Fein

A Chara, please find enclosed a letter from Joe Cahill (Sinn Fein National Treasurer) and a brochure, with personal appeal from Gerry Adams, in relation to a Sinn Fein appeal for funds.

I have been authorised to contact people who have given their support and help in the struggle for

national self determination; hence the reason for writing this brief letter to you and sending with it the above mentioned appeal for funds.

Thanking you in anticipation of your generous support, Is mise,  
Eddie Caughey

### IRSP Reply

Having recently seen Tommy McKearney's letter to *The Leninist* (January 21 1988), I feel it necessary to comment on some of the issues which he has raised. Foremost on my agenda is McKearney's proposal to attempt a resurrection of the long-dead Republican Congress, and his suggested process for the formation of an Irish revolutionary workers' party.

Who is going to relaunch the Congress anyway? The republican movement? Certainly not. As far as they are concerned they constitute the anti-imperialist movement and the left-wing groupings are irrelevant. And in objective terms they are right!

The Irish socialist movement is tiny and exerts no significant influence, so from the Provo's viewpoint an alliance would serve no purpose but could lose them dollars from the US. They are not going to participate in an altruistic effort to build the Irish left.

So that leaves the handful of groups that constitute the 'revolutionary left' - it doesn't leave the Workers Party or the Labour Party as both have no quarrel with imperialism or the status quo. Most 'hard left' groups who might possibly involve themselves would probably pull out after a few weeks because the committee is 'Stalinist', because the committee is 'Trotskyist', because 'so and so' is 'too authoritarian' etc, etc. The objective and subjective circumstances, in essence, rule out a revival of the Republican Congress at this time.

Really though, McKearney's method, or suggested method, is not how Marxists establish organisations. Marxist parties must be consciously created, the theoretical base must be consciously formulated. Individuals do not simply 'lobby' for the establishment of a party, they get together and establish an embryonic organisation or proto-party.

Whether or not the IRSP will develop as a revolutionary force has yet to be seen, but in its struggle to do so it has spawned an excellent forum for Marxist debate. I would strongly suggest that Tom McKearney, who is quite obviously articulate and a good writer, and his other comrades in the Communist League, utilise the *Starry Plough*.

Through the paper it is possible that a theoretical base can be created. This base, in turn, might help build a mass party that, as part of the objective circumstances, is capable of affecting the objective situation as Tommy McKearney would like to see a Republican Congress do now.

Robert Lake  
Cork, Ireland

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.

# Shape of things to come



A section of 'The Leninist' contingent on May Day

**M**AY DAY marches in Britain are today a test of the state of the communist movement in our country. It is an annual gauge of the relative combative strengths of communist organisations, of their collective organisational confidence and *panache*.

We are therefore proud to announce that *The Leninist's* contingent was by far the largest. This is what we said we wanted and this is what we achieved. What is more, as well as being the biggest section, we were the most vocal and the most militant. Our slogans and banners on Ireland, gay rights, the NHS, Afghanistan and the seamen stood in contrast to the deafening silence of the opportunists.

The London District Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain brought along its banner but was pushed for people to march behind it. Likewise, we shamed organisations like the newly formed 'Communist' 'Party' of Britain who could only manage to muster a handful of bedraggled and acutely embarrassed people to silently shuffle along behind a 'Brent Communists' banner.

Presumably, because they are dominated by supporters of the Communist Party of Turkey and *The Leninist*, the CPB is doing its best to sabotage May Day demonstrations in London and substitute a safe festival at Ally Pally instead. Thus the demonstration was pointedly not reported in the *Morning Star*. What renegades! We say: Hands Off May Day!

Given the fact that it is the most important date in the calendar of the working class internationally, one might have expected the CPB to use May Day to publicly launch its 'party' before the advanced workers, both British and from other countries, who march on May 1 in London.

To be brutally frank, however, judging from its turnout — on what was, remember, its first public action since it was formed — reports of the birth of the CPB are greatly exaggerated.

Speaking to some younger CPB supporters at the end of the march, Leninist comrades were able to gauge our impact. As one put it: "Our contingent was crap. There was hardly anyone on it and we just ambled along, not chanting or

anything. You and your comrades from Turkey were the real communists."

How true! *The Leninist* section was quantitatively and qualitatively different. This is an important achievement of which we are justly proud. But nevertheless, in spite of what was a step forward in terms of numbers, we did not make the qualitative step which we aimed for and which we could have made.

After all, we should not judge ourselves in relation to the tired revisionists of the CPB nor the rump Euro-dominated CPGB. We must assess our impact in relation to the tasks of communism. And those tasks are rather more ambitious and serious than simply dwarfing what remains living of the Euro structures of the CPGB, or its pathetic throwback to the 1970s, the CPB.

So what shortcomings did our action have? We mobilised hard for this march and in that sense it proved an invaluable test of the commitment of our sympathisers and their identification with the paper. Also, it told us a lot about the impact of Leninist politics on workers in struggle like health workers who read our paper.

A principle we adhere to is that it is fatal to ask too little of people; what we think they can manage. That type of approach, so typical of reformist groups like the CPGB or the CPB, will never build a genuine Communist Party in this country. No, Leninists ask what is necessary. The task before us was to build the largest contingent. That was what was necessary and that is what we fought for.

The effects of this approach were two-fold. On the day, comrades — including unemployed comrades — travelled from Scotland, the Midlands, from all over the country to join us. They thus not only helped to develop our organisation, but also took a step forward as sympathisers.

On the other hand some comrades used secondary political differences, finance, old age or distance as an excuse not to support the only genuine communist contingent from Britain marching on May Day. We were thus able to clarify the relationship of these comrades to the organisation and identify the obstacles that stand in the way of them taking an active

part in building a genuine Communist Party.

Interestingly, we also discovered that the 'sea' of sympathy that *The Leninist* 'swims' in is bigger than we thought. Our comrades kept the telephone lines buzzing throughout the week before May Day. We rarely got a totally negative response. And very often we discovered friends in places we never expected. We are therefore well set for the future to engage new forces in political dialogue and that will develop our paper's influence.

Our key weakness, however, was the fact that we failed to mobilise more contacts like those we have among miners, dockers, car workers or printers. In particular we did not mobilise the health workers we had been aiming for.

Nevertheless, we are not worried by this weakness. We are growing and going forward. Our weaknesses will be overcome. This is something we are sure of. We were pleasantly surprised at the extent of sympathy and good feeling towards our paper, even if not active identification, from those health workers, miners etc we phoned. We will build on this for next year.

We had another — less important — weakness. Although the size and dynamism of our contingent shook many in the CPB, we could have had a far more profound impact. Until the very day of the march, we had the promise from dissident members of the CPB that they would march with us. As it turned out, however, centrist cowardice got the better of these comrades.

In the recent past they found no problem in selling Tony Chater's pro-imperialist *Morning Star*, but when it came to marching with — not agreeing with or joining — *The Leninist*, the fact that we criticise Sinn Fein (yes!) and put principles before easy popularity became an insurmountable difficulty. No matter. The centrist politics of 'official' communism is in terminal crisis in Britain.

Serious communists who did not march with us this May Day must resolve that next year, come hell or high water, they will! We are the shape of communist politics to come. Join us!

Alec Long

## IN STRUGGLE

The rank and file of the National Union of Seamen not only has to fight the bosses, the government and its courts in their battle: they also have to fight their own leaders. Sam McCluskie has again buckled before the threats of the courts. Blaming his own members for their lack of backbone he has called off all solidarity action. McCluskie is now banking on the TUC, propaganda about safety and commercial competition from James Sherwood's Sealink to "force Sterling back to arbitration". Such an approach is no way to beat P&O. It is sad and bad news. The TUC has no record of solidarity, only betrayal; a PR campaign against P&O is bound to fail; and all the bosses are aiming to cut jobs. The seamen can still win. But only if they take the lead. The strike must be extended and consolidated through rank and file based strike committees. French and Belgium dockers and seamen must be won to take solidarity action and a bold call made to all workers in Britain to strike with the seamen. The P&O strike is of vital concern to all workers. Sterling is out to break the NUS and has used the Tories anti-trade union laws to do so. The seamen should not only fight for their own jobs but for the smashing of the anti-union laws. This is the way to draw in other workers into the struggle and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

The resounding defeat for *Militant* and the victory for the right in the CPSA is also an important step forward for 'new realism' in the trade union movement. The right wing National Moderate Group now has an absolute majority on the CPSA executive. Though it is vehemently denied this was in the main thanks to Broad Left '84, an assorted grouping of Kinnockites, Eurocommunists and 'official' communists. In the lead up to the elections, the *Morning Star* (May 9 1988) came out for right wing CPSA general secretary John Ellis and against *Militant* supporter John Macreadie, the union's deputy general secretary, who the *Star* labelled as an 'ultra left'. The paper carried a picture of Macreadie and Ellis at a press conference where Macreadie called for a token one day general strike in support of the seamen and Ellis opposed executive policy against the Alton Bill, the Poll Tax, industrial action and made personal attacks on Macreadie. Under the picture was the caption "CPSA deputy general secretary John Macreadie expounds his militant views as general secretary John Ellis suffers in silence." We have no illusions about the left reformists of *Militant*: but unlike the *Morning Star*, genuine communists do not fight them by lining up with the right.



•John Macreadie is no "ultra leftist". He is a left reformist with revolutionary pretensions

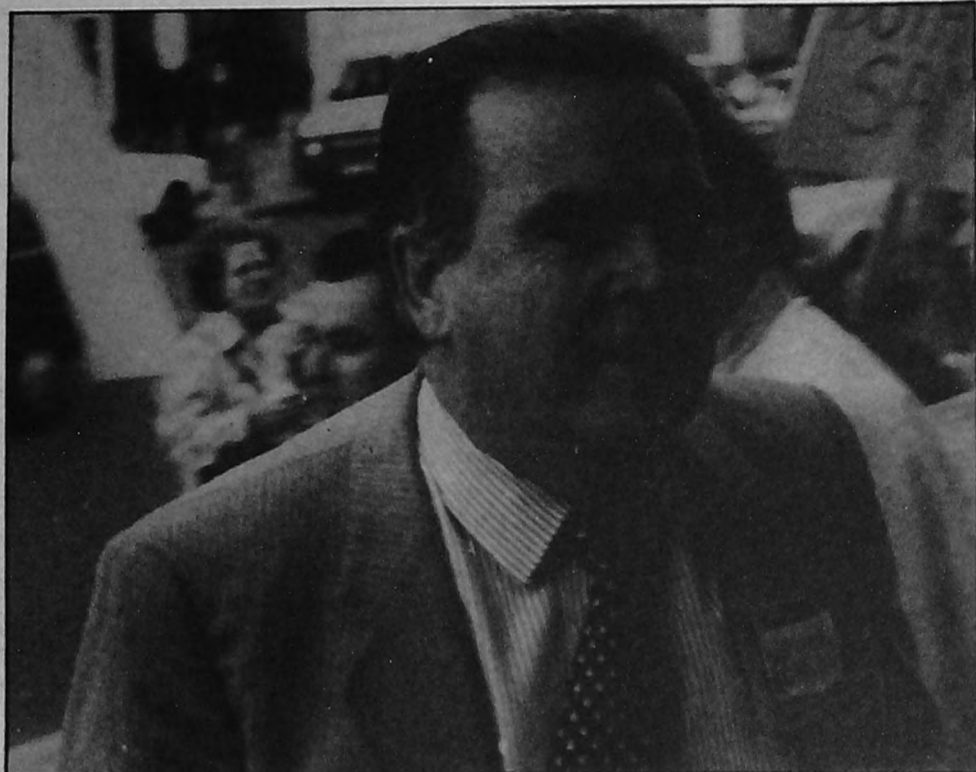
The government's offer to teachers of a 4.25% wage increase will do little to pacify discontent in the staff rooms. Baker's offer came after years in which the teachers' unions showed they were unwilling to defend their members. The response from the unions was to be expected. The largest, the NUT, issued a press statement and shunned any mention of strike action. Their 'moderate' rival, the NAS/UWT, eager to look more militant, has announced plans for a half day strike. Following a ballot of its members in May, strike action is planned for early June. After years of token industrial action many teachers have become battle weary. Many will rightly see more half day strikes as more of the same old medicine. There clearly are large numbers of teachers willing to fight. Up to 40% of the recent NUT conference voted for action. Within the next month NUT members must be won to take joint strike action alongside the NAS/UWT, even if it is unofficial. The establishment of joint strike committees could be the first step towards the unification of the two unions from below.

## Well Spent



With just a few weeks to go before the start of our Summer Offensive on June 1, Leninist comrades are busy preparing the biggest and best money raising campaign we have ever had. Pleasingly, our readers are also responding to our call to 'fill the breach'. In April our fund closed with a total of £672 in — well over £600 target. Donations in May have so far come in from several new quarters and comrades who give regular financial support have upped their contributions. In particular, one comrade from the South West has doubled the amount he regularly gives to our paper. This is the type of approach we need if we are going to lay the basis in Britain for a genuine Communist Party. Our serious approach to money raising is in line with our aim: revolution. When comrades give *The Leninist* money to help build a genuine Communist Party, they also give to the coming revolution. It is money well spent.

# No short cuts



Mike Hicks: a part time general secretary

## Britain needs a genuine Communist Party. It has not found it with the newly formed Communist Party of Britain. The most revolutionary thing about its founding congress was the Leninist picket lined up outside it. The CPB's congress was a dull reformist affair

**I**F WE WORKERS in Britain are going to turn the tables on the union busting bosses and their Victorian values government we will have to build a Communist Party to organise our fightback. The weak kneed Labour Party will never do it. Likewise if we are going to transform the Britain of industrial decay, gross inequality, unemployment, despair and poverty into a Britain of progress, internationalism and socialism we must have a Communist Party; not just any old 'Communist Party' though, but a genuine Communist Party which is capable of uniting the most advanced Marxist theory with the most effective revolutionary practice.

The most revolutionary thing about the congress of the newly formed Communist Party of Britain was the Leninist picket lined up outside it. The congress itself was a dull reformist affair. Separate the CPB supporters of the *Morning Star* from the *Marxism Today* Eurocommunists and they do not seem to know what to do. They never produced much light but now they do not even produce the heat of passion. They certainly do not know how to go about building a party which can take on and overthrow capitalism and class society.

The truth is that the CPB rank and file reflects the CPB leadership. They both have a part time approach to communist politics. That is why it was prepared to elect Mike Hicks as its general secretary (he was given 17 votes on the CPB's new executive committee against 14 for Derek Robinson). We are told that Hicks will be a *part timer* - he cannot afford to give up his lucrative job in the print trade - this is a measure of the CPB's serious-

ness. Life in the CPB will not be so different to life in the CPGB - which they ludicrously claim to have 're-established' - CPB leaders will be college lecturers, £400 pw labour aristocrats (or whatever) first, and communists second.

The CPB has more in common with the Eurocommunist CPGB than it likes to admit. The Euros prefer life without the CPBers. The CPBers prefer life without the Euros. Neither grouping has any liking for the cut and thrust of real debate. But the similarity goes further than that. Both groups have the same political ancestry, the same revisionist roots and both, in spite of past disagreements concerning the USSR, now find themselves lined up together behind the revisionist Gorbachev.

The CPB is just as enthusiastic about Gorbachev's anti-Marxist 'New Political Thinking' as the editors of *Marxism Today* - who can at least say 'we told you so' when reporting the turn to 'market socialism' in the USSR. Likewise on peace, Gorbachev's social pacifism is again greeted with approbation by Euros and CPBers with equal enthusiasm. In complete contradiction to Marxism, Gorbachev, Martin Jacques and the CPB are united in putting peace first, class politics second.

It was therefore no surprise to hear CPB leader, Photis Lysandrou, talking like the most addle-brained Eurocommunist peacenik on Afghanistan. He used the platform of the CPB's congress to applaud the Soviet sell out in Afghanistan as proof "that peace is compatible with socialism." Let us talk frankly. Such talk is an insult to anyone who claims to be an intelligent person. It is also treachery!

A Soviet pull out will not bring peace. It

will result in a bloodbath; in the butchery of a living revolution. Lysandrou and the Euros know this, but both put Gorbachev's attempt to appease imperialism above revolution against imperialism. This is typical of rightism. The working class in Britain, or anywhere for that matter, has no need for such 'communists'.

The similarities between the CPB and Eurocommunism did not stop here. Bob Morrison from Kent spoke for the CPB leadership when he told its congress that "the bishops are starting to stand up and preach against injustice - we must stand side by side with these church people". Of course, if the CPB does "stand side by side" with the troublesome establishment priests it will find itself united with Gorbachev ... and, yes, the Euros. Praise be - they richly deserve each other.

Rightly, the CPB will be judged by genuine communists not against the Euro dominated CPGB but against the founding principles of our Party, ie the principles of Bolshevism as crystallised into such documents as the *Terms of Admission into the Communist International* (see VI Lenin CW Vol 31 pp207-212), which we will use in this article against the CPB.

We genuine communists are not concerned that the CPB can only claim 1,591 members (a huge exaggeration - the true figure is well below 1,000), nor that it has not a hope in hell of being recognised by the CPSU under the leadership of Gorbachev. Neither are we concerned with which bunch of opportunists claiming to be *The Party*, the cancerous 'official' CPGB or the suicidal CPB, is the lesser of two evils. We are fighting for communism, not choosing which way to die.

The lesser of two evils theory is a *defeatist* doctrine. Many have gone with the CPB because of it. Its logic leads its advocates into a helter skelter of compromises: the CPB against the Euros, Labour against the Tories, the Church of England against Thatcher but also Thatcher against a British version of Le Pen and a British version of Le Pen against a British version of Hitler.

This form of opportunism asks what is possible, not what is needed. And what is needed in Britain today, as yesterday, is not compromise with bourgeois society but the *active* building of a party which can organise and direct the class struggle towards the conquest of state power by the proletariat. This is what communists must dedicate themselves to, not the miserable 'take things as they are' doctrine of what is on offer.

Only a party guided by the scientific method of Marxism-Leninism can lead Britain to socialism; there cannot be any half way houses. Weakness in theory will always produce weakness in practice. And to carry through a revolution and build socialism requires granite hardness in theory and practice. Hence to build a genuine Communist Party requires the highest levels of dedication, discipline, hard work and self sacrifice. It also requires a ruthless and unyielding struggle against all forms of opportunism, not least the bourgeois 'art of the possible'.

That is why we will conduct an open ideological struggle against the CPB, an integral part of which was our militant picket of the CPB's congress. We will, in the words of the *Terms of Admission into the Third International*, "expose systematically and relentlessly, not only the bourgeoisie but also its accomplices - the reformists of every shade." (Condition 1).

The CPB in reality, for all its pretensions, is in essence neither communist nor a party. Its commitment to reformism stands in complete contradiction to genuine communism. And like the CPGB (since the CPB split - the NCP always was) it is no party - ie a revolutionary leadership rooted in the working class, capable of playing the role of the general staff in the class struggle - it is merely a collection of right centrist groupings.

Unless such opportunism is fought and beaten in the eyes of the advanced sections of the working class there can be no hope for socialism. The working class can only triumph over the boss class if it is united behind the leadership of a genuine Communist Party. There is no alternative.

'Unity' on the basis of opportunism, whether it be on the basis of trade union politics, tailing Labour or attempting to foist upon capitalism an Alternative Economic Strategy, provides not only fragile but false unity. Opportunism leaves the working class divided along sectional, national and sexual lines. Indeed opportunist practice - from Eduard Bernstein to Francois Mitterand and Ramsay MacDonald to Mikhail Gorbachev - has shown that those who champion opportunism are often better defenders of capitalism than the capitalists themselves.

The opportunists chatter on about the unity of human interests but use this as a veneer for their class collaborationism and betrayal of the workers' struggles. Only a genuine Communist Party can unite the working class, like the five fingers of a hand into a fist and deliver the knockout blow against capitalism.

Opportunism is therefore our principal enemy. This was one of the key lessons Lenin sought to impart to the newly formed communist parties which made up the Third (Communist) International, not least the CPGB. It is today a position we alone in the communist movement in Britain adhere to.

Of course, by using Andrew Rothstein, veteran of the founding congress of the CPGB in July 1920, the CPB attempted to link itself to the early CPGB and Lenin's Bolsheviks. After telling delegates to boost the sales of the *Daily Worker* (!) he told the CPB congress that it has recreated the "spirit of July 31 1920" ie the spirit of the First Congress of the CPGB. A protesting ghost maybe, but no living spirit!

The CPB is no genuine Communist Party. It is immovably stuck in the reformist rut. It is the direct product of the disintegration and social democratisation of the 'official' world communist movement. To prove it, let us look at its basic theoretical positions and compare them with the Communist International and the CPGB when it was formed. This will put paid to any CPB pretensions to have anything to do with genuine communism.

### Founding principles

Those who laid the basis for the establishment of the CPGB drew their inspiration directly from the October Revolution. On the eve of our Party's First Congress, the Joint Provisional Committee outlined the following "fundamental principles", on which the CPGB would be based, in the *Call for a Communist Party*:

1. The Russian revolution indicates "the path to follow and the course to pursue."
2. The idea "of a gradual evolution or peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism" is "time worn" and cannot be defended. Social revolutions are not "quiet constitutional affairs ... carried through by the most correct parliamentary procedure."
3. Parliament is "an instrument of class oppression ... engineered and wielded in the interest of the bourgeoisie."
4. Against "the sham of parliamentary democracy of capitalism the workers' republic places the method of direct representation and recall, as embodied in the soviet idea". The "Communist Party must stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat."
5. To "hasten the world revolution ... a Communist Party is wanted, a party of action. One that will wage the class war up to the point of revolution, rejecting with disdain all compromise and truck with capitalist reform, but ever seeking to organise and rally the working class to the standard of international communism."

(Quoted by Tom Bell in his *British Com-*

munist Party - a short history, 1937, pp.53-5)  
Rothstein's vision of the spirit of July 1920 is at best the self-deception of an old man. But whatever his subjective intentions it must be remembered that Rothstein's career is as revisionist as it is long.

He proved a loyal servant to the post-Lenin leaders of the CPSU in their project of turning the revolutionary CPGB into a mere appendage of Soviet diplomacy. And of course, he justified and defended every rightist twist and rightist turn of the CPGB throughout the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s. Rothstein might be the CPB's "No.1 Bolshevik" but this only shows that the CPB is no Bolshevik Party.

The overwhelming bulk of delegates to the CPB congress - unlike Rothstein - have never even been revolutionaries. They have never betrayed the principles of genuine communism because they never believed in them. They have only the vaguest knowledge of pre-1935 communism. Indeed for them communism is all about narrow, trade union politics, social pacifism and the reformist *British Road to Socialism*.

In reality the CPB has only 're-established' the CPGB of the 1970s: only seen through the wrong end of a telescope. It is no 're-established' CPGB of the 1920s but an inferior version, an epigone of the CPGB of the 1970s. It has all the problems, all the proto-factions, but only 5% of the membership.

We will not bore the reader with a detailed examination of the opportunism of the CPGB in the 1970s; suffice to say that its opportunist practice stemmed from the opportunism enshrined in its programme, the *BRS*. It is this very programme on which the CPB bases itself.

The *BRS* rests on a bourgeois (reformist) world outlook. Its fundamental tenets are:

1. The bourgeoisie rules "primarily" by consent, not by coercion. (p.9 - all references from the 5th, 1978 edition)
2. Imperialism must be understood as a policy, not a stage (the last) in the development of capitalism. (p.13)
3. The Labour Party is the "mass party of the working class" and not, as Lenin said, a "bourgeois party of the working class." (p.28)
4. Socialism in Britain will come as a result of an evolutionary process, namely elections of left Labour governments, and not through a violent revolution like the October Revolution in Russia. (pp.36-7)
5. The bourgeois state machine must not be smashed but used to build communism. (p.38)

In other words, the *BRS* is a classic example of revisionism. Its essence is thoroughly reformist and utopian. For all its claims to the contrary it has no similarity with the scientific socialism of Marxism-Leninism.

Several speakers at the CPB's congress voiced doubts about the *BRS* (eg Laurie Nicholai, Irene Cheyne and Jim Barnes). But the leadership have made sure that the CPB will be tied to it body and soul.

True the CPB's next congress will vote on a new draft of it. Nonetheless its founding document *The Re-establishment of the Communist Party - A Perspective* - is on every important question directly based on the *BRS* (p.9).

And, in case there was any doubt, the CPB leadership made it crystal clear that the CPB's Second Congress in 1989 will "update" the existing *BRS*, not debate an entirely new programme. Tony Chater, Kevin Halpin and Derek Robinson all insisted that while the new CPB executive committee had a "mandate to redraft" the *BRS*, the CPB will base its "programme on the principles of the *British Road*." (*Morning Star* April 25 1987)

It is only to be expected that the CPB will produce a slightly more 'left wing' version of the *BRS* than the official CPGB's 41st Congress scheduled for November next year. This is necessary in order to win those committed to the 'lesser of two evils' version of politics. But what we will not see is anything remotely approaching a revolutionary programme. Of this we can be sure.

The revisionism of the CPB's First Congress can only produce revisionism at its Second Congress; in other words a technical updating of the pre-Thatcherite 1977, current, edition. Those CPB members who expect anything else will be bitterly disappointed.

The CPB's founding congress at the North London Polytechnic in April 1988 was very different from the founding congress of our Party at the Cannon Street Hotel in July 1920. The founding of the CPGB was the greatest organisational achievement of the working class in Britain and was recognized by friends like Lenin, as well as enemies like Lloyd George, as a major event in British politics. Our friends hailed it, our enemies trembled. The formation of the CPB has not been hailed

by Gorbachev or *Pravda*, only Tony Chater's *Morning Star*, and hardly rated a mention in the bourgeois press.

The CPGB began its life as the product of stormy class battles and with all the vigorous debate worthy of a great party. Above all it was a party of action as the 1926 General Strike and the building of the powerful National Minority Movement proved. The five 'debates' at the CPB congress were frankly pitiable. And so sleepy was the CPB - which likes to imagine itself the vanguard of the working class in Britain - that it had no banner on the London May Day march the week after it "re-established the CPGB". Such a state of affairs would have been unthinkable for the CPGB in 1920.

The CPB's torpor is a direct product of its politics. Its congress was more like a stage managed *Morning Star* rally than the highest body of a communist party. In place of the passionate debate between revolutionaries witnessed at the Cannon Street Hotel there was a circumscribed series of speechlets along the lines of: 'isn't it great to have a congress where we, rather than the Euros, are in charge'.

One thing that came out in sharp relief over April 23-24 was the fact that the CPB came into existence simply and only because of opposition to the Euros. This is hardly the basis for communist unity or revolutionary action. Indeed the delegates were acutely conscious of it. And yet in spite of the almost embarrassing attempts to maintain 'unity' it was easy to discern the seeds of future divisions.

Underneath the surface the CPB is deeply divided (and not only on who it wants as its general secretary). Of this there can be no doubts. Indeed once things settle down the political culture of the CPB will turn out to be just as unhealthy, just as bureaucratic-centralist as the CPGB's of the 1970s. For the CPB to maintain its 'unity' it will need to be.

Even now, if you take a group of CPB members and name an issue you will get any number of different views. This is a portent for the future.

The CPB will split and split again. The groups that already exist in the CPB were not on open display at its congress, but the artificial unity was ruffled on more than one occasion.

The most open disagreement at the CPB's congress was over relations with the New Communist Party. The NCP broke away from the CPGB in 1977 against the *BRS*. Now it wants unity with the CPB which was formed on the basis of defending the *BRS*. Strange? No, not really. Opportunist? Of course it is!

The NCP split transparently had nothing to do with fighting revisionism. We can only conclude that Sid French and Eric Trevett were more concerned to avoid being expelled for factional activity at the CPGB's 36th Congress and preserving their full time positions than fighting the Eurocommunism permeating the 1977 draft of the *BRS*.

Conveniently the NCP has not drafted its own programme, so an opportunist lash up with the CPB is only encumbered by the NCP's leaders past opposition to the *BRS*. And time dulls the opportunist memory. Eric Trevett, NCP general secretary, could easily be won to swallow a CPB version of the *BRS* if it suited his purposes.

Anyway Derek Robinson won a round of applause (as well as a theatrical head in hands display from Photis Lysandrou) when he said "we're going to have formal discussions with our comrades in the NCP and other communist organisations ... on the basis that we can create the objective conditions to unite to form that single party of Britain that is the vanguard of the working class." (*The New Worker* April 29 1988)

As Robinson was formally replying to the discussion of the main political report this offer presumably was agreed by the CPB tops. It is either that or Robinson is a maverick. Yet, the next day, Kevin Halpin, also replying for the leadership, flatly contradicted him. "People (!) have talked about the NCP and talks with them ... It would be an illusion to imagine that organisational unity with those opposed to... [the *BRS* etc] is a possibility." (*Ibid*)

So what is it to be, unity with the NCP or not? Clearly the CPB leadership has at least two answers to this question. And showing what the CPB rank and file think of its leadership one delegate, Margaret Gadian, said even before Robinson's "formal talks" that they already have a "joint peace advisory" with the NCP in the North West. So one question, one leadership and at least three answers.

Similar - though less open - divisions,

could be seen on other questions. These will prove of importance in the near future. Let us take one example.

Mary Davis, having swapped her *Morning Star* 'expert' role, is now set on becoming the CPB's 'expert' on women. In fact she is a confused 'Marxist' feminist.

Not because of this, but because Davis takes the women question seriously, male chauvinist attempts were made to exclude her from the recommended list for the CPB's executive committee. Only after vigorous lobbying was she put on. One of her allies, Glyn Williams from Hornsey, speaking about the Euros, rightly said that bourgeois feminism flowered because of the decades of neglect by the CPGB leadership of the women question. As a measure of how seriously the CPB will take the question, Mary Davis was given 102 votes, bottom of the list of successful candidates by a long chalk.

## Root differences

Differences in the CPB - as in the 1970s CPGB - in fact go to the root. The CPB was established "on the basis" of the *BRS* and its so-called Alternative Economic Strategy. Yet there are those on its executive committee such as Robert Griffiths who are opposed to the *BRS* and the AES. Others - like the slippery Photis Lysandrou - back in 1977 attacked the *BRS* as an example of revisionism. He only came to praise it as a "splendid document" once he got a sniff of high office in the CPB.

That those who stand opposed to the *BRS* voted for the main political report, based as it was on the *BRS*, (there were only two abstentions and no votes against) was not only cowardly but is a typical example of centrist opportunism. The same must be said on the question of Ireland which only got passing mention in the rambling international report by the above mentioned Photis Lysandrou.

On Ireland - Britain's oldest colony - we see the same (what should be irreconcilable) differences existing under the surface. Condition 8 of the *Terms of Admission* demands that every party "whose bourgeoisie possesses colonies ... must support in deed, not merely in word - every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working people of the colonies".

As every Irish republican will testify, Tony Chater, the editor of the *Morning Star*, has a record of rabid pro-imperialism and inexcusable hostility towards the national liberation movement. In contrast Nidge Tovey, one of the CPB's two full timers, has a far more honourable record.

On his initiative a petition was organised to pay for a large display advert in the *Morning Star* commemorating the anniversary of the death of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, appearing on May 4 1985. Tovey also marched on an ISM demonstration 1985 with a contingent dominated by supporters of *The Leninist* under the auspices of the Communist Committee on Ireland.

What a contrast to the miserable Chater. But why did Tovey remain silent on Ireland at the congress, and the differences he has with Chater and the majority of the CPB leadership? We can only conclude that it was yet another example of centrist cowardice.

What all these open and concealed differences show is that the CPB is no 'party of a new type'. The differences in the CPB are not differences between communist revolutionaries but the difference between narrow trade unionists, bureaucratic careerists and petty bourgeois academics (indeed it is led by them) and those centrists who have or will constitute themselves as the left wing of the party.

Put another way the CPB has more in common with the old parties of the Second International than the parties of Lenin's Communist International.

This is most clearly seen when it comes to the relationship between the CPB and the *Morning Star*. Condition 12 of the *Terms of Admission* states that: "The periodical and non-periodical press, and all publishing enterprises, must ... be fully subordinate to the Party central committee ... Publishing enterprises should not be allowed to abuse their autonomy and pursue any policies that are not in full accordance with that of the Party."

There can be no doubt that in practice if not formally the *Morning Star* was the paper of the CPGB, until, that is, Chater staged his bureaucratic rebellion in 1983 and denounced the CPGB (of which he was a leading member) as "an outside body". This "outside body" had been responsible for founding the

*Daily Worker/Morning Star* and continued to appoint its editors, even after 1946 when the PPS cooperative society was formally given ownership of the paper.

Chater now claims it is nothing other than a broad labour movement paper. And yet at the same time he was quite prepared to swan over to Prague on an all expenses paid trip to a meeting of editors of communist papers in March 1988.

This ambiguity suits Chater down to the ground. It is the perfect arrangement - for a bureaucrat. He can have his cake and eat it. As Chater has said and proved by his actions he thinks the (non) discipline of a broad movement is higher than the discipline of a Communist Party.

This leaves the CPB in an invidious position. Its political line can be ignored by Chater when he chooses. Even better for this grey time server the CPB's membership is committed by rule to support and sell his paper. This is a position totally unacceptable to any genuine communist party. In effect it leaves the CPB as Chater's ventriloquist's dummy.

This was the practice of the opportunists in the Second International and it is only right that the opportunist CPB suffers from the same opportunist disease.

Chater and his clique see the CPB as a vehicle for keeping the falling *Morning Star* from crashing into the oblivion it deserves. He puts the paper above the party. And how can the CPB leadership object to that after they backed Chater against the CPGB's so-called 'interference' in the internal affairs of the *Morning Star*. Its owes its very existence after all to the decision to support Chater's bureaucratic rebellion against the CPGB. The CPB will pay dearly for this opportunism. The CPB will be hoist by its own petard.

The CPB does though *hope* to produce a special edition of its new 'theoretical journal' to commemorate its congress. Wonderful! And after that it aims to get out another edition by the September TUC! Is there no end to its dynamism! And after that Herculean effort the journal, as yet unnamed, will be bimonthly at first, and then, when it can afford it, monthly ... To genuine communists this book keeping approach to politics sounds like a joke, nonetheless it is true.

The CPB - an organisation claiming to be *The Party* - will have a publication perhaps some time next year ... that is if they can afford it ... which comes out less frequently than *The Leninist* does at the moment. Patently the CPB leadership recognises that it has nothing worth saying, or at least nothing worth paying for.

Such an organisation as the CPB might seem to be easy going and free. It will be for Chater and the trade union bureaucrats it has managed to pull in. But like the parties of the Second International it will not be for those who are looking for a revolutionary party of some sort - ie the CPB's left wing.

There were plenty of dire warnings from the platform of the CPB's congress against factionalism. Chater, Robinson and other CPB tops were united on this, if nothing else. What this means in practice - as it does for any opportunist party - is bureaucratic unity and bureaucratic centralism. This allows the likes of Chater to do what the hell he likes but prevents the CPB left organising openly and effectively against him.

Naturally if open debate is not allowed, given free reign - and CPB tops have no record of respect for open and democratic debate - it will find other channels. Whether Chater and Co like it or not, the CPB is already divided into countless groups, tendencies and factional drinking circles. These are the splits of the future. Passing resolutions against factionalism in the CPB is as useless as passing resolutions against death. Its factions are the direct and inevitable consequence of opportunism and cannot be voted or wished away.

There can be no genuine democratic centralism except in a genuine communist party. Only a genuine Communist Party can achieve monolithic unity and then only after the most rigorous debate.

The CPB is doomed to fail. It is nothing more and nothing less than an NCP Mark II. Those who stand on the principles of communism and find themselves for one reason or another members of this 'party' should look for leadership from *The Leninist*. We say to you comrades, stay in the CPB but fight for the politics of Marxism-Leninism even if this risks expulsion. This is the only honourable road: it is a narrow, long and hard road but there are no short cuts in the building of a genuine Communist Party.

Jack Conrad



## WORKERS POWER

**IN MAY** we received a letter from the 'Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International' which in Britain is known as 'Workers Power' – a group which originally broke away from the SWP on a state capitalist theoretical basis, which subsequently adopted 'orthodox' Trotskyism and as with most Trotskyite groups now finds itself in the Labour Party backing Benn and Heffer. Because the MRCI letter raises a number of important questions we have decided to reprint it in full and subject it to a short reply

Some comrades have complained that we overstated the case when we claimed that Morning Star-influenced elements attempted to sabotage this year's May Day demo. However, on the morning of April 29, a comrade phoned the 'Lively Left' Morning Star for details of the weekend's activities. Enquirer: "Can you tell me about the Clause demo?" Morning Star: "What's that? ..." Enquirer: "Well then, can you give me details of the May Day march on Sunday?" Morning Star: "Oh, no! There's no march, just a festival and rally. No, I can tell you quite definitively, there's no May Day march this year". We said sabotage because there is sabotage.

Thatcher may be hated by hundreds of thousands of class conscious workers in Britain, but her tough no nonsense approach to handling the economy and battering the working class is winning her friends ... among the leaders of the socialist countries! Mr Karoly Grosz, Hungarian prime minister, and tipped by many as future party leader, on his recent visit to Britain praised the "outstanding significance" of Maggie's efforts to restructure the British economy and said that Hungary must follow the same line because it is the "only way out" for the ailing Hungarian economy! Hungarian workers will take note.

The conference issue of Open Left – voice of the Broad Left in the NUCPS, the civil servants' union – has an interesting middle page article. Here we read a report on our old friend, Straight Leftist Nick Wright. Nick has just been appointed editor of the union's paper, The Journal. As Open Left points out, the fact that Nick has little journalistic experience (in contrast to the other candidates) apparently did not prevent his appointment, thanks to his friends in the bureaucracy. Neither were they concerned with Nick's record on gay rights – Open Left reprints the photo The Leninist used of him 'creaming' a gay activist in Haringey. As Open Left correctly puts it "Hardly the actions one would expect from a socialist comrade". True – but quite in character for someone schooled in the Straight Left school of politics – or are we being soft?

Dear Comrades, we would like to take up some of the points you raised in your article *For Workers in Britain and Iran: the main enemy is at home*, (*The Leninist* no.61) and reply on behalf of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International.

Firstly, to correct one straightforward misrepresentation of our position on the Iran/Iraq war. You quote from the paper of our British section, *Workers Power*, which outlined why *Workers Power* believed the war had changed its character by 1982, "from being a legitimate war of defence by Iran, to being a thoroughly reactionary war on both sides". You follow this by saying, "Now of course *Workers Power* says Iran is fighting a progressive war once more". This is not the position of *Workers Power* nor the MRCI on the Iran/Iraq war which is one of defeatism on both sides. What you are doing here is confusing (deliberately?) our position in defence of Iran against US aggression with our position on the Iran/Iraq war.

Now on this question there is a real difference between our position and that of yours. While the MRCI takes a Leninist position of defence of Iran against the attacks on it by US imperialism, and stands for the victory of Iran in any engagement with US forces, *The Leninist* refuses to take sides. This should not be surprising to anyone familiar with your position on the Malvinas war where you refused to side with Argentina against British imperialism. Before you once again accuse us of being "cheerleaders for Khomeini" (please bring forward the evidence where,

in what paper, we ever "cheered" the Khomeini regime!) we would point out that we have constantly called for the overthrow of Khomeini, even while supporting Iran against US aggression. Likewise we called for the Argentinian workers to overthrow the Junta, while at the same time supporting Argentina in a just war against British imperialism.

How does *The Leninist* justify its refusal to support nations under direct attack by imperialism? In the same way as those well known defenders of the oppressed nations, the likes of *Socialist Organizer* and the international Spartacist tendency do, by a systematic attack on Lenin's theory of imperialism. In the case of both Argentina and Iran *The Leninist* justifies its position by implying they are imperialist countries. We have to say 'implying' because you appear to be afraid to openly characterise them as such. This reticence on your part (or more accurately evasiveness) is justified because the evidence for your assertions is sorely lacking. A fact we find surprising for a group which is so often stressing the importance of "theoretical analysis".

Thus we are told that the Iranian government's intervention in the economy since World War II has produced the merger of "banking capital and industrial capital ... producing native finance capital. Lenin included this as one of his five criteria of imperialism". He did, but he also included several others. That capital had reached such a high stage of development and concentration that "monopolies play a decisive role in economic life". That the "export of

capital acquire exceptional importance". That these international monopolies "share the world amongst themselves". Does *The Leninist* really believe that these are the defining characteristics of Iranian capitalism? Yet on the basis of a single quote from Fred Halliday and a couple of dubious assertions, Alan Merrik is willing to abandon the Leninist position of defence of a semi-colonial country, Iran, against the world's major imperialist power. What a 'Leninist'! (And if you think Iran is an imperialist power, why do you not support Iraq? Or is that too "imperialist"? And Syria, Jordan etc, etc?)

Finally, in an aside in the same article you attack the MRCI on the question of the Enniskillen bombing, on the basis of a supposed difference between our Irish and British sections. The MRCI has always recognised that there is a difference between communists' duty in Britain and in Ireland. In Britain we place to the fore, especially at times of anti-republican hysteria whipped up by the bourgeois media, our unconditional support for those fighting British imperialism. We are not however uncritical of the tactics, strategy and politics of petty bourgeois nationalism. In Ireland our comrades of the Irish Workers Group are a communist organisation in direct conflict with the influence of the petty bourgeois republicans over sections of workers, and with their bankrupt strategy of 'guerrillaism'. A strategy which is counterposed to, and therefore demobilises, the mass struggle against imperialism. The struggle around the H Block hunger strikes

was a classic example of this. At times this strategy, eg Enniskillen, actually plays into the hands of imperialist reaction and therefore must be condemned in this context. This is the common position of the whole of the MRCI. We would point out the same issue of *Class Struggle* made clear its defence of, and support for, the IRA in its struggle against British imperialism and its armed forces.

We note however that *The Leninist*, in its critical exchanges with the IRSP never manages to raise a Leninist critique of petty bourgeois 'guerillaist' deviations, ignoring the fact that this was an organisation completely wrecked by this strategy, despite its socialist pretensions. (The same applies to your silence on the bankrupt guerillaist strategy of the South African Communist Party which goes hand in hand with its slavish commitment to the popular front.) How different is *The Leninist's* approach to that of Lenin and *Iskra* in their consistent struggle against the petty bourgeois tactics of the Narodniks in Russia. A struggle vital to form a Marxist cadre against the policies and influence of Narodism.

We apologise for the length of this letter but serious issues, as you know, require serious and sometimes lengthy argument, especially in defence of Leninism. It will come as no surprise to those who have correctly analysed the degeneration of the 'world communist movement' under Stalinism, that it is left to the Trotskyists of the MRCI to defend Lenin's positions in the pages of your paper.

J McKee  
For the Secretariat MRCI

## Give 'em enough rope ...

Our friend McKee need not apologise for the length of his letter. He has woven ample rope. Let us first pull the trap-door on the bogey of our "straightforward misrepresentation" of *Workers Power's* position on the Gulf war. Fact, it supported Iran against Iraq until 1982, because Iraq was the aggressor and Iran "had just been through a mighty popular revolution which had overthrown US imperialism's trusted ally and regional gendarme, the Shah". Marxists are not concerned with who is and who is not the aggressor but which side is progressive. It is only on this basis can we give any support.

Neither Iraq nor any section of the Iranian theocratic regime is in any way progressive. Since 1980, when the Islamic Republic was established the revolution was dead. This did not stop *Workers Power* 'defending' Iran against the equally reactionary Iraq or in effect calling workers in Iran to join Khomeini's armed forces because of the presence of the US fleet in the Gulf.

We do take sides: with the working class against their rulers. Unless such a stand is taken the left acts as a recruiting sergeant for reaction and tragedy results. This was the case in Argentina.

We "imply" nothing about countries such as Iran and Argentina. They are not imperialist but have imperialist tendencies because they are 'medium developed capitalist countries' – a concept employed by Lenin, and the basis of comrade R Yurukoglu's *Turkey – Weak Link of Imperialism*. *Workers Power* cannot plead ignorance of this work. Clearly the MRCI prefers accusations of 'evasiveness' because it cannot confront our real politics, let alone answer them. It is not our level of analysis which is "sorely lacking", but their's.

On Enniskillen: yes, there is a difference between the tasks of communists in the oppressor and oppressed countries. But this does not excuse communists deserting principle. *Workers Power's* Irish clone, the IWG, attacked the IRA in the midst of a massive and hys-

terical propaganda campaign directed against it not only in Britain but Ireland: north and south. It joined the class enemy in denouncing the IRA. We defended it because it is conducting a struggle with a progressive and democratic content.

This in no way denies the necessity of independent communist organisation. In China, Lenin recommended that communists gave unconditional support for the democratic content of the programme of the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang. But only conditional support for the organisation itself. Communists must fight for a Communist Party and working class hegemony in the revolution. We have the same position in Ireland.

Irish republicanism may fetishise the guerrilla tactic, but the IWG's reaction to Enniskillen was that of the horrified petty bourgeois. Hack phrases about "guerillaism" and irrelevant quotations from Lenin against the Narodniks are no substitute for concrete analysis of a concrete situation. The republican

movement may be 'green', but where are the reds?

For a revolutionary movement such as the MRCI, the acid test is not in the imperialist countries, but at the sharp end, Ireland, where a revolutionary situation exists in the Six Counties. The IRSP is not fully communist but it has declared its intention of orientating itself towards communism. What its comrades have proved though beyond doubt – as have the IRA – is that they are revolutionaries.

If our comrades in the Communist Party of Turkey had no comrades in jail, no dead to mourn, then it would indicate that they were doing nothing that posed any threat to the status quo. That is not the case. For them theory and practice are one. But not with the IWG. Mirroring their comrades in Britain, they prefer the mire of the Irish Labour Party to the struggle on the streets. This is Trotskyism in practice. Clearly we need no assistance to defend Leninism from such as the MRCI.

Alan Merrik



## War and Peace

Dmitri Luzhkov, *Homo sapiens and 'Star Wars'*, Novosti, Moscow 1987, pp120, 35 kopeks

Mikhail Gorbachev *Perestroika - New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Collins 1987, pp228, £12.85

CLAUSEWITZ'S dictum that war is the continuation of politics, only by different (violent) means, was consistently upheld by both Marx and Lenin. All wars are fought in the interests of a particular class, and cannot be correctly understood in any other way, just as politics cannot be understood except as the expression of the struggle of classes.

For comrade Gorbachev, however, Clausewitz's dictum "has grown hopelessly out of date. It now belongs to the libraries. For the first time in history, basing international politics on moral and ethical norms that are common to all humankind, as well as humanising interstate relations, has become a vital requirement." (*Perestroika*, p141)

This is combined with formalising the elevation of peaceful coexistence from a tactical holding operation to an absolute principle: "we deemed it no longer possible to retain (in the CPSU programme) the definition of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems as 'a specific form of class struggle'." (p147)

Comrade Gorbachev throws aside class politics with the feeble excuse that nuclear war is capable of destroying human society, and therefore classes, overlooking the simple fact that the struggle for peace must take place on this side of the (possible) nuclear holocaust. He has 'jumped the gun', so to speak! If human society is actually destroyed, then and only then will Clausewitz no longer apply!

This scarcely disguised revisionism is pompously proclaimed as a "far-reaching conceptual turning point" reached at the April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, turning towards a "new way of political thinking, to new ideas about the correlation between class principles and principles common to humanity in the modern world." (*Perestroika*, p145) It is certainly a turning point for the Soviet leadership, but far from being a new development of Leninism it is a dangerous retreat to the utopian pacifism advanced by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein and once opposed by the CPSU.

Luzhkov's book helps us here by reproducing (uncritically) the 1955 Russell-Einstein Manifesto (p12): "In view of the fact that in any future world war nuclear weapons will certainly be employed, and that such weapons threaten the continued existence of mankind, we urge the governments of the world to realise, and to acknowledge publicly, that their purposes

cannot be furthered by a world war, and we urge them, consequently, to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them." Unashamed Gorbachevism!

It is interesting to read the review of Gorbachev's book in the South African Communist Party's *African Communist* (Second quarter 1988). In it Sisa Majola exposes the confusion Gorbachev has caused on the left of the 'official' world communist movement.

Communists in South Africa, who seek to add another state to the socialist camp by leading "their own October revolution" in what is a junior imperialist state, cannot fulfil their tasks without arming themselves with the most advanced revolutionary theory. It is essential for them to combat Gorbachev's revisionism, his utopian world view, in the sharpest manner. Unfortunately Majola, in reviewing Gorbachev's book, is out to apologise for Gorbachev's revisionism, being satisfied to tentatively highlight a number of problems but lacking the courage to attack openly.



Gorbachev: retreating down the revisionist road

"True, in the event of a world [nuclear] war ... the dictum of Clausewitz may no longer be applicable, but such a dictum still explains quite correctly the wars that take place in the world today. War is not only nuclear war." (Majola, p102) This concedes Gorbachev's main point and opens the way to acceptance of a future negotiated sellout of the South African revolution, on similar lines to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, in the 'interests of world peace': "Perhaps the main question now is whether their resolve to wage revolutionary war in the present nuclear age should be placed under review since such 'fields of tension' can spark off a nuclear war ..." (*Ibid*) It is obvious that a revolutionary war cannot be led to victory with such an indecisive attitude.

Dmitri Luzhkov bases his explanation of Reagan's 'Star Wars' project, the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) - and the fight against it - on Gorbachev's 'new thinking'. Class interests are mentioned only once (p8) along with "general human and humanitarian", "personal and creative" and "material and selfish" interests, and the crass assertion that "People are motivated by interests". In place of class analysis we are given what every pupil of Marxism learns to scorn - a junior school history of the actions of important individuals, which in the end explains nothing.

We are told that science has a potential for both Good and Evil (p8) and that scientists must be responsible for the consequences of their discoveries. The story of Star Wars then unfolds as a conflict between Good scientists and Bad scientists, between "Star Warriors" who take the money and work on SDI, and "Star Peace Supporters" who are socially responsible and abstain.

We are told that "the scientists

are the dominant force" over the military and the politicians, the military scientist's activity alone fuels the arms race, and "the military-technological tail wags the political dog." (p22)

An alternative 'cause' of SDI offered is the arms industry's search for profits. "US arms corporations ... have a stake in expanding arms production, whose growth can no longer be guaranteed by the strategy of deterrence." (p21) Both of these approaches, however, pretend that the SDI is some kind of grotesque side effect produced by the striving for profits, or for depraved scientific fulfilment. Both undermine the best aspect of the pamphlet, which is the exposure of Reagan's propaganda claim that SDI is a defensive 'nuclear umbrella' which will render nuclear missiles impotent and obsolete.

"The Soviet Union ... has understood its real significance from the very beginning ... It is a dream about achieving superiority and first-strike capability ..." (p49) "... to terrorise the people of all countries and dictate its will to them." This is indeed the task imperialism has set itself, but Luzhkov belittles SDI as "impossible", "irrational", "pseudo-scientific", "a dream", "easy to counter" and so on, preferring to focus on the waste of resources and the danger of nuclear accident than on the real possibility that the enormous financial resources thrown at SDI research will yield the necessary scientific advances. Communists must face facts, comrade Luzhkov. Revolution must end imperialism before imperialism ends revolution.

Ian Farrell

## Revolutionary Solution

Tim Pat Coogan, *Disillusioned Decades: Ireland 1966-87*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1987, pp258, £9.95

TIM PAT COOGAN'S two previous works on Ireland (*Ireland since the Rising* and *The IRA*) remain essential reading for any understanding of today's events. This new work attempts to extend the scope of his study of Irish politics this century from his two previous books.

Between 1968 and 1987 Coogan was editor of one of Ireland's major dailies, *The Irish Press*. From this position he was able to scan the events occurring on both sides of the border, at times enjoying direct contact with many of those who helped shape history, not least the southern bourgeoisie.

Written from the standpoint of a constitutional nationalist, there are many political shortcomings. Yet Coogan often unwittingly describes the revolutionary conditions in the north and the increasingly crisis-ridden south with exceptional clarity.

The book opens pre-1968, with Coogan looking back to his previous work, contrasting that period to the turbulence of today. He cites the assumption at the time that Ireland was making good progress in the world. Industrial expansion was under way, with emigration cut to a trickle. There existed some form of political stability on both sides of the border. A romantic image, not quite of the thatched cottage and the donkey, but that of a modern god-fearing hardworking peaceful Ireland, prevailed.

Ireland stood at the threshold of joining a new world. Membership of the EEC would, Coogan and others believed, bring about an end to any economic problems that still existed in modern Ireland. By applying to join the imperialist club, the southern ruling class hoped to gain more than crumbs. It was also hoped that a new dynamism and the maintenance of social peace would persuade the Unionist north to work more closely, raising the perspective of unity at long last.

For Coogan the problem is that this vision no longer exists. Why, and what to do about it, are the themes of his book. With the light of progress seemingly having gone out, he sets forth to explore what is for him the darkness of Ireland today.

For many years the southern politicians kept themselves in Leinster House by the use of government favours. Especially in rural areas, local TDs (Twenty-six County MPs) were often judged on how much road was tarmac-damed, rather than which political party they represented.

The giving of grants to fly-by-night factory owners was merely the expression of this approach on a higher level. Such an attitude to spending could only occur during a boom period in the world economy, and with capitalism's chickens coming home to roost Ireland's economy finds itself in a mess.

Despite this, even today Ireland's economy has the features of an aspiring medium developed capitalist country, rather than some banana republic. Its national debt is staggering, but it stands well ahead of countries like Turkey and Mexico, let alone Jamaica and Chad.

However, with the cold wind of the world capitalist crisis, Ireland has caught a bad dose of flu. Coogan cites some startling statistics to show the degree of its problem. Throughout Ireland today 40% of the population is dependent on social welfare. Emigration has returned with a vengeance. More people are unemployed than work on the land or in manufacturing industries.

So drastic has been the decline on the land that shops in Ireland are now full of vegetables, including potatoes, from places like Cyprus and even America. "While agriculture is the backbone of the Irish economic and political system," Coogan writes, "it is also alarmingly and appallingly inefficient." The decay of Irish agriculture shows all the features of capitalist decay. Such developments have been accompanied by increasing political instability and social problems in the south, which

Coogan illustrates with the fact that Dublin has a heroin problem equivalent to New York.

As Coogan is well aware, the revolutionary situation in the north has increasingly come to colour Irish life in the south. For a long time many in the south were able to shun what was happening north of the border. With the Anglo-Irish agreement that is no longer the case.

Increasingly, southern politicians are drawn into the revolutionary vortex that is the Six Counties. The crisis situation in the north, beyond their control and understanding, is ever more exerting its influence in the south. Increasingly, the problems of the south are seen in the context of the British occupation of the north.

The link with Britain in the Six Counties is, of course, more visible. The daily resistance against British imperialism cannot be ignored. Coogan charts the attempts by all recent British governments to break the will of the republican population. Imperialism, having failed to win a full victory, faces a stalemate. Unionism's spiral into crisis and fragmentation, as a result, is outlined by Coogan.

He shows the backwardness of the unionist camp, and how all shades of it are politically and culturally bankrupt. "A member of the Ku Klux Klan in America's Deep South," Coogan writes, "a Boer from South Africa or a white supremacist Rhodesian would feel instantly at home at an Orange Lodge gathering in Northern Ireland" (p195) - a fact which has escaped the *Morning Star*, which has given Loyalist fascists favourable coverage.

Coogan's work gives some useful insights into the political problems which face Ireland. The revolutionary future which lies bubbling under the surface occasionally breaks through, but when it does so, he feels threatened. The next decade, he knows, will not bring a return to the pacific pre-1968 period, but a continuation of the unstable twenty years through which we have just lived.

Coogan may not like this idea, but the facts that he has assembled himself in this book hang over the heads of him and constitutional nationalists like him, as a revolutionary sword of Damocles.

Coogan, and what he represents, had no answers for the past decade. Stumbling from one political illusion to another, they are now unable to offer any solution to Ireland's problems. This well meaning and well informed liberal has no stomach for the only sure solution which the deepening crisis in Ireland necessitates - the solution of revolution.

Tony Coughlin

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**For 40 years Israel has existed through oppression of the Palestinians. If it cannot survive without such oppression then it is hardly the business of communists to defend it**

## Down with Israel's apologists!

**T**HE HEROIC UPRISING of the Palestinian masses in the occupied territories is an inspiration for all revolutionaries. We wholeheartedly give them our unconditional support against their oppressors, in the same way as we do the Irish people and the black masses in South Africa. For communists anything else is unthinkable.

Of course, Tories such as David Mellor and Labourites, not least Neil Kinnock, have voiced their 'concern' at the 'excessive force' used by the Israeli Defence Forces. This does not stop them remaining 'friends of Israel' and maintaining their hostility to the armed struggle of the PLO.

This is of no surprise to us. Only a complete fool would expect anything approaching a democratic stand from a Tory government minister. And what goes for Tories also goes for leaders of the Labour Party, who are invariably concerned with putting over a bipartisan policy when it comes to British imperialism's overseas affairs.

But the Tories and Kinnock are not the only concerned friends that Israel has in Britain. *Socialist Organiser* - the Soggy Oggies, as this group of rightward lurching Trotskyite entrists are none too affectionately known - have embraced defence of the state of Israel with all the vigour with which they defend their Labour Party, the "bourgeois party of the working class" as Lenin rightly called it.

These one time open members of the International Communist League are neither internationalist nor communist. Their pro-imperialism extends from Palestine to hostility to the Irish liberation struggle, a refusal to defend the socialist countries - what they term "Stalinist police states" - and an enthusiastic support for the counterrevolutionary *Solidarnosc*. Such malignant boils on the body of the workers' movement need to be polemically lanced, especially while they still swell.

They argue, on principle, that because the Israeli Jews can be said to be a nation they must be allowed to have a separate state and, furthermore, that this state must be that of Israel. To fend off critics, the *SO* 'triumvir' of Clive Bradley, Sean Matgamna and his alter ego, John O'Mahoney, try to paint all anti-Zionists as anti-semites. This might have had some validity when attacking the WRP but to generalise from these degenerates is sheer dishonesty. Obviously *SO* has no choice.

To paint Israel 'pink' one must be dishonest. We are told, for example, that Israel "is a state which is extremely democratic for its Jewish majority. Its army is pretty close to being a citizen army ... for an external force to 'smash the state' is not a matter of destroying the repressive apparatus, or defeating it in war, but of overrunning Israel and forcibly destroying the Jewish nation." (*Socialist Organiser* supplement,

December 3 1987).

This is worthy of Neil Kinnock. Democracy does not exist above classes; it exists precisely in the service of specific classes. In Israel it serves the Israeli imperialist bourgeoisie; for the masses it is a sham. Through its democratic carrot it ensures the loyalty of Israeli Jews to its reactionary and expansionist aims. That *SO* does not confront this is par for the course.

It will not admit that Israel's much vaunted democracy concretely rests on the fact that it is a junior imperialist power and acts as an arm of US imperialism in the Middle East (it is its biggest recipient of foreign aid); that Israel is a bourgeois democracy based on the denial of the democratic rights of the Palestinian people.

In the same way *SO* deliberately confuses the question of nationalism. Matgamna argues that "it is wrong to equate Israeli nationalism ... with racism. Otherwise every people on earth has to be called racist." *SO* seeks refuge in a mist of abstraction. Lenin always made a distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed and of the oppressor.

Zionism was a sectionalist ideology of the oppressed once. It was broadly similar to the nationalism of Ireland or feminism or black separatism. But today it is an ideology of oppressors.

The nationalism of the oppressed, directed against their oppressors, has a progressive character. This does not mean that communists tail the nationalism of the oppressed - in fact we oppose sectionalism in all its manifestations - but we should in general support the democratic demands of the oppressed. In contrast the nationalism of oppressing nations is indeed reactionary and certainly chauvinistic. It provides the ideological cohesion to create a cross-class alliance in the oppressor country against the oppressed.

A simple question, Mr Matgamna: is Israel an oppressed or an oppressor nation? To any democrat, nay objective observer, Israel is obviously an oppressor ... yet not for *SO*. It tries to side step the question by painting Israel as an island of civilization amid a sea of Arab barbarism, a state which is not imperialist; oh dear me no. For example: "Israel was given its character by the Zionists' resolute refusal to exploit Arab labour and their drive instead to replace it." This is a miserable apology for Zionism.

Of course, it is not true that Jewish workers have displaced Arab workers within Israel since 1948. Israeli agriculture and industry have thrived not only on the basis of the migration of Jews and the massive injections of overseas (mainly US) aid, but through the existence of a reserve army of Arab labour in Israel and the post 1967 occupied territories. It would be novel indeed if the Israeli ruling class had decided to forego the exploitation of cheap Arab labour. They would be strange capitalists

indeed.

As the *Financial Times* explained on January 13 1988, "the [occupied] territories are now Israel's second largest export market after the US, absorbing an estimated 780m dollars worth of goods in 1986 and producing a surplus for Israel of 491m dollars," moreover it also reports that Palestinians in the occupied territories working in Israel "pay taxes and social security contributions in Israel but are not entitled to the same welfare benefits as Israelis, thus generating a net surplus for the exchequer." The *FT* article in fact outlines the colonial relations between Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. What the Palestinians suffer, in other words, is not just exploitation but *superexploitation*.

But *SO* parries this by saying that: "To identify Israel as the arch imperialist, or as the prime tool of imperialism, in the area, is to be an apologist for the Arab bourgeoisies." This is false logic. Israel is the "prime tool of imperialism" in the Middle East, fact! To say this means that we line up with the Arab bourgeoisies is to say that one plus one equals three.

Yet such is the arithmetic *SO* is impelled to adopt, for it also says that those who support the republican movement in Ireland must be anti-Protestant and an apologist for the Twenty-six Counties bourgeoisie. It seems that it can only be a matter of time before this despicable group comes out with a defence of apartheid. After all, according to its logic, to be against apartheid is to be an apologist for the black African bourgeoisie. Such arguments should be laughed out of court by any genuine socialist.

*SO*'s call for the right of self determination for Israel is a complete caricature of the Marxist position on such matters. It is a red herring. Denying Israel's right to self determination is not on the agenda. It is a diversion. Israel has just invaded Lebanon (yet again), and still occupies Syria's Golan Heights as well as the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Indeed, Israel is what it is today only through a series of conquests.

We are in favour of winning Jewish workers in Israel over to socialism. This will not be done through tailing the Palestinian bourgeoisie, only a genuine Communist Party can carry out this task and even then most successfully with a programme which includes the aim of a socialist federation in the area. But nothing will be achieved through making everything hinge on the rights of Israel when this means in practice denying the national rights of the oppressed Palestinians. It is like saying the main question in South Africa today is defending the rights of Afrikaanerdom. Championing the right of self determination of the oppressors has nothing to do with the tactics or strategy of Marxism.

Yet this is exactly what *SO* does.

But it can only do so through breaking the dialectical link between the truth and the concrete. Our "consistent democrats", as they call themselves, warn of the danger of external attack on Israel resulting in the genocide of the Jewish people. This is the argument of Zionism which cannot countenance the possibility of Jews and Arabs living peaceably side by side in a secular democratic state.

All the major groupings in the PLO argue, at least formally, for winning ordinary Israelis against their own regime; ie, for a united assault on the Israeli state. And as their Clive Bradley admits: "Neither in 1967 nor since have the Arab states been in any position to seriously threaten Israel, which is immensely powerful militarily." (*Socialist Organiser* February 18 1988) So all *SO*'s talk about the massacre of the Jews in Israel is a lifeless, metaphysical abstraction, with very little to do with the real world you and I live in.

The destruction of a state by no means implies the forcible destruction of the people who live within it. For communists, who fight for the abolition of all states, this should be ABC, and it is equally true in the context of the PLO's programme for a secular democratic Palestine to replace the Israeli state.

*SO* argues: "the 'secular democratic state' is a proposal to destroy the existing Jewish nation and at best to grant equal citizenship rights to those Jews who survived being conquered [sic] and wanted to remain in the Arab state." (*SO*, December 3 1988) In this way *SO* joins hands with the most reactionary of the Zionist propagandists, implying that the PLO is fighting to "drive the Jews into the sea", or at the very least enslave them.

Similar dire backs against the wall warnings are made by the AWB in South Africa. The PLO has no single view of the Jewish people, but even Fatah - which broadly represents the Palestinian national bourgeoisie - has no such demand in its programme. Like the ANC it says it wants a multi-cultural democratic state.

*SO* deliberately tries to equate state and nation and through making the right of nations to self determination into an absolute principle it lines up with Loyalism in Northern Ireland and Zionism in Israel. This is totally alien to Marxism. For Lenin the right of nations to self determination was a relative principle, subordinate to the world revolution, its content to be viewed in the context of whether it served or diverted the struggles of the workers and oppressed.

The Israeli state is one which, of necessity, is imperialistic and oppressive. Like the petty bourgeois radicals they are, naturally *SO* wants Israel to reform itself, to withdraw from the occupied territories, settle down and behave itself. For them imperialism, instead of being a necessary stage

of capitalist development, becomes a policy which can be dropped. This is reformist rubbish!

The only thing that will make Israel 'behave itself' is the same cure that will make imperialist states and rabid dogs everywhere 'behave themselves': kill the beast. Likewise the Bolsheviks fought to smash the Tsarist Russian empire. In this, championing the rights of the oppressed peoples in the Tsars prison house of nations played a vital auxiliary role. This was no denial of the rights of the Great Russians but the result of a correct scientific programme. *SO* have no such programme, its starting point is what is acceptable to the oppressors not what serves the world revolution.

Certainly Israel will not meekly submit to having its claws pulled. The Israeli state survives only because it has massive US assistance. The smashing of the Israeli state is a precondition to any consideration of the rights of the Jewish people: otherwise, the question does not arise; the existing Israeli state is able to take care of such rights, as the Palestinian people have found to their cost.

Imagine a Palestinian state as *SO* envisages it: the Gaza strip and the West Bank, a Bantustan sandwiched between reactionary Jordan and imperialist Israel. Its "two nations, two states" formulation means, in the real world, the continued oppression of the Palestinian people. Little wonder that such a state - if staffed by Palestinian collaborators - is entirely acceptable to the Israeli state. In practice *SO* stands for the continued privilege of Israel, a privilege which is founded on bloody oppression. This is seen most clearly when the question of the right of Palestinians to return to Israel is raised.

No objection is raised to the right to 'return' to Israel of any Jewish person with no link with Israel for the last 2,000 years. But when it comes to displaced Palestinians, the story is somewhat different:

"If the Palestinians win the right to have their own state, any socialist would favour the free movement of individuals between that state and Israel. But that is a different matter from a 'right of return' of four million Palestinians en masse. Mass Palestinian Arab return to Israel would mean the surrender of the Jewish nation of its desire to be a nation".

So, for its continued existence, the Israeli state necessitates the exclusion of the oppressed masses of Palestinian Arabs. *SO* lends self determination a meaning that it never had to Lenin - its foundation on privilege, an anathema to communists. Israel has no 'right' to exist on oppression and privilege. If it cannot survive without such oppression and privilege, then it is hardly the business of communists to defend it.

Alan Merrik