

The LENINIST

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Afghan blood on opportunist hands

WHY are they leaving Kabul? read the headline of the *Morning Star's* editorial of February 1 1989. Unfortunately what the *Morning Star* was referring to was not the 115,000 strong Soviet army which had protected the Afghan Revolution but the few dozen who made up the embassy personnel of the western powers. Apparently their "sinister" flight was "a deliberate attempt to create a mood of crisis and depression and to provoke divisions within the government." Whatever the reason for the embassy exodus we know what was more likely to "create a mood of crisis and depression and to provoke division in the government". It was the Soviet withdrawal.

The *Morning Star* dares not admit this. Instead this artless practitioner of 'diplomatic internationalism' carries stories of the "growing confidence" in Kabul (eg Roger Trasks' stupid piece on December 22 1988). Frankly this is sick ... as sick as the *Morning Star's* call in 1979 for a Soviet withdrawal ... but that was when its editor, Tony Chater, was parroting Eurocommunism. The Afghan Revolution - what Gorbachev calls one of the "world's hot spots" which he wants to do deals on with imperialism - looks like it is about to be drowned in its own blood. This is no time for the *Morning Star's* lying 'official optimism'. No, what is needed is taking stock, drawing up a balance sheet on the performance of the left on this acid test of internationalism. That is what we intend to do.

Although Afghanistan has been an acid test of internationalism every trend in the left movement in Britain, apart from *The Leninist*, has failed the test miserably. We have seen 'official communism' excuse murder and treachery, Trotskyism has refused to see a living revolution and, worse, many who call themselves anti-imperialists have lined up with imperialism.

It gives us no pleasure to be proved right about Afghanistan. Some told us that the Soviet Union would never carry out its promise to imperialism to pull out ... if only it were so. Others said that a Soviet withdrawal would create a more healthy climate in the country and internationally ... again, if only it were so, but we see nothing healthy about a victory for imperialism and black reaction.

Soviet forces might have withdrawn in good order but as a result of Gorbachev's treachery the Afghan revolution faces the most agonising, lonely and barbaric of deaths. The appeasement of Najibullah and his fellow *Parcham* opportunists will do no good. Dropping Marxism-Leninism, giving "former opposition" forces the majority in the government and courting the counterrevolutionaries will only foster demoralisation and give the Mujahedin a sense of imminent victory.

It was to avoid the defeat that seems so near today, that we criti-

cised the opportunism of the *Parcham* wing of the PDPA and the form that the Soviet intervention took when we first wrote about Afghanistan in *The Leninist* No2. It was also why we condemned Gorbachev's decision to leave Afghanistan as soon as it was announced.

The Soviet intervention in December 1979 was profoundly contradictory and typically bureaucratic. It strengthened the armed power of the revolutionary government. This was good. But the Soviet Union did not act out of a sense of proletarian internationalist duty. *Izvestia* let it be known that "as a big power" the Soviet Union could not tolerate a hostile regime on its borders. (This did not lead it to send its armed forces into China, Turkey or Iran!)

In its treatment of the Afghan government the Soviet Union undoubtedly acted with big power arrogance and against all the principles of communism. Hafizullah Amin, the leader of the Afghan Party and state, was treated as a wayward satrap. He had requested large scale Soviet military assistance on numerous occasions. But when at last it came it was hardly fraternal.

Soviet troops were used to overthrow him; along with 97 of his comrades he was butchered in cold blood and the pliant *Parcham* regime of the now discredited Babrak Karmal was installed. This was an opportunist coup.

Amin - for all his centrist waverings a brave communist - was branded a 'fascist', a 'CIA agent'. And although it was said that there was proof of this none has been forthcoming. We are confident that history will absolve Amin and his 97 comrades! Those who were responsible for killing him should be brought to justice. The interests of the world revolution demand it.

There were, of course, some elements who hailed the Soviet intervention and the installation of the Karmal government. For instance the New Communist Party and the Trotskyite Spartacist League said it secured Afghanistan's path to socialism. How wrong can you be!

Linking the killing of comrade Amin and the withdrawal of Soviet troops there is a treacherous logic. As I wrote in *The Leninist* No2 "we consider the killing of Amin and the 97 other PDPA leaders as representing the extinguishing of the flame of the revolution". We added that unless this was recognised and rectified "the revolution will either have to suffer major amputations or face death."

Yet on Afghanistan the NCP and the SL have to be considered almost principled! The NCP was merely sycophantically singing for its supper; to get fed (and 15 paid full timers) it automatically followed every turn and twist of Soviet policy. The SL was more high minded. Blinded by dogma it refused to see the PDPA as any sort of a revolutionary party and thus, whatever life proved to the con-

trary, incapable of carrying out a revolution. Thus in its eyes Afghanistan became a 1945 Poland, socialism came with the Red Army's tanks.

On the other hand most left groups lined up with the Nato imperialists in demanding a Soviet withdrawal, or took to a 'neither the PDPA nor counterrevolution' neutrality. Both positions are criminal. Afghanistan is in the front line of the world revolution, a besieged outpost of socialism in desperate need of solidarity. Precious little has been forthcoming. The reason why this has been the case reveals everything about the theoretical poverty and spinelessness of the left in Britain.

Though the left does its best to ignore it the PDPA government was not introduced courtesy of the Soviet Army in December 1979. It was the work of Afghan communists organised in the *Khalq* wing of the PDPA. The *Khalq* won power in April 1978. They were not given it. A proletarian dictatorship was established through local daring and initiative. (Although it now looks near death this was a heroic attempt and will never be forgotten - its lessons will be learnt and live when the Afghan masses again rise.)

The Afghan Revolution was a great victory for the world's working class. If consolidated it would have acted as a beacon for all of central Asia, not least Iran and Pakistan. In spite of this almost across the board the Afghan Revolution has been derided, dismissed and despised. Labourites, Trotskyites and Eurocommunists have united in the claim that it was no more than a run-of-the-mill 'Third World' coup. This is a lie.

As any half educated student of politics will tell you, a military or palace coup reflects a struggle within the existing state, not a struggle against it. The term coup, in the scientific sense, should only be used when dealing with an insurrection launched by a narrow circle of conspirators or a bunch of stupid romantics. Such attempts leave the masses passive. The Afghan Revolution has drawn every class, stratum and section of the population into its vortex, nobody has been left unaffected by it.

A genuine revolution can, it is true, take the outward form of a coup. Obviously revolutionary ideas can gain considerable influence in say the army, from which certain elements can seize the leadership of a living revolution. This is what happened when in 1952 the Free Officer movement led the overthrow of the British backed king in Egypt and in Ethiopia, where the army struck the final blow against the tottering Haile Salassie regime. Although these revolutions took the form of army coups they were, for all their petty bourgeois limitations, genuine.

The revolution in Afghanistan, though, was not led by petty bourgeois forces. It was led by the PDPA which had its historical

roots in the short lived Communist Party of Afghanistan of the 1920s, its theory was based on "the epoch making working class ideology" and its fraternal links included the Tudeh Party of Iran and the Communist Party of India, as well as the CPSU. This is what separates the Afghan Revolution from those in Egypt and Ethiopia. Like the Mongolian Revolution of 1921 it must be put in the same category as the October Revolution (dismissed as a coup by philistine bourgeois historians, ultra leftists and renegades alike).

The true nature of the Afghan Revolution is easily proved.

1. In 1978 Afghanistan was gripped by a revolutionary situation. Instead of waiting for advanced countries like Britain to go socialist - as the Mensheviks of the SWP say they should have - the PDPA made revolution.

2. Like the October Revolution it might have used enemy army units as a striking force but the these were under Party direction and control, specifically Hafizullah Amin. The revolutionary government that came to power in April 1978 was overwhelmingly made up of civilian members of the PDPA, a proletarian party with a long record of leading mass struggles. That is why the revolution was greeted by large demonstrations across the country, particularly in Kabul.

3. The old feudal/bureaucratic state was smashed. The "government was not transferred from one stratum or group or element of the ruling class to another stratum, group or element, but from the exploiting strata and classes to the working class represented by the PDPA, the vanguard of the working class of the country, defender of all the interests of the toilers of Afghanistan." (Amin) The PDPA could not have held power for a week if it did not have a mass base which was prepared to defend and die for the revolution.

4. Because the Afghan Revolution was genuine and its effects profound it provoked the hatred of imperialism internationally and the feudalistic forces internally. No coup within the ruling class could do this.

To turn one's back on the living Afghan Revolution, to call it a coup, is to turn one's back on the October Revolution and call it a coup. Those who refuse to admit that there was a revolution in Afghanistan - ie, that the existing state was overthrown and that the PDPA was a proletarian party and no mere 'nationalist movement' - think of revolutions as textbook affairs where the working class lines up on one side and the bourgeoisie on the other, like the black and white pieces on a chessboard.

Those who wait for that to happen will wait for ever. Life is complicated. It is full of contradictions and confusions, ie real people. The Afghan Revolution was no textbook revolution, but then neither was the October Revolution or any other for that matter.

Those who cannot come to grips with the reality of living revolutions will obviously never lead one. But with most of the left we are not dealing with an intellectual blunder. We are dealing with political cowardice.

In the chill wind of Cold War, groups in Britain such as the SWP, the RCP, *Socialist Organiser* and the Eurocommunists used the self serving lie that the Afghan Revolution was nothing more than a coup in order to avoid defending a revolution, which unlike that of South Africa, Nicaragua or El Salvador was not popular among chic circles. Supposedly a Soviet withdrawal would create the best conditions for working class struggle to develop (sic!)

Well, you 'friends of the Afghan working class', you have now got your way. Soviet armed forces have gone. How long will the PDPA government survive? We are sure you'll agree its chances are slim. This is generally recognised as is what will happen if the counterrevolutionaries take over. Your textbook working class will be nowhere to be seen but real workers and progressives, all those who made and defended the Afghan Revolution, will face death. Yes, if the Mujahedin take over there will be a black reaction that will make Khomeini's regime look positively benign.

All the advances made since 1978, education for women, trade unions, the proletarian state, will be swept away. On past record women will be subject to the most appalling humiliations, trade unions will be crushed and those who object will be tortured and sent to an infidel's grave. The country will fall into the hands of Islamic warlords who consider the only good communist a hacked to death communist. Whatever our left groups say, once the Soviet armed forces pulled out Afghanistan's descent into this reactionary hell was more or less certain. Yet in spite of knowing this a Soviet pull out was precisely what you demanded.

There were always only two sides in Afghanistan; the PDPA revolution versus the counterrevolution and the Mujahedin. The revolution promised progress, the counterrevolution reaction, darkness and chaos. There was no middle ground and those who called for a Soviet withdrawal in the name of it objectively sided with the counterrevolution.

That is why we say that the blood of Afghan's progressives is not only on the hands of the bestial Mujahedin, the imperialists and the traitor Gorbachev. It is on the hands of the RCP! On the hands of the SWP! On the hands of the Eurocommunists and all those who refused to defend the Afghan Revolution! You are all guilty and we shall make sure that the working class never forgets your crime.

Jack Conrad



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

IN THE NAME of anti-Thatcherism the Eurocommunists have promised that they will commit electoral harikiri. The January 21 1989 edition of *7 Days* carried the following message from their general secretary, Gordon McLennan: "We ask all communists, Communist Party branches and organisations to discuss the issues of proportional representation and possible electoral agreement ... an electoral agreement will naturally encompass the withdrawal of communist candidates in the next general election." There are a number of points to be made about this.

1. **The Eurocommunists are now a strand in bourgeois politics within the working class.** Those around *Marxism Today* have set their sights on becoming a think tank for mainstream bourgeois politicians. This is the last stage of liquidationism. Certainly McLennan and his colleagues have no conception of fighting for working class political independence. For these born again Fabians this basic aim is as 'old hat' as socialism being the dictatorship of the proletariat. No genuine communist should respect their 'party discipline'. McLennan does not 'lead' a party but a Euro factional rump. Unfortunately as these opportunists can still call themselves the Communist Party their calls for tactical voting, buying 'acceptable' shares, charity mongering and electoral pacts carry a weight they would not do if they were advanced from another quarter. A grateful bourgeois media has used the Euro hair brained schemes to sow confusion in the working class.

2. **The Euros' politics reflect the collapse of Labour into being a party of crisis and the emergence of a dominant, one party system.** In purely electoral terms the withdrawal of Euro candidates would be irrelevant. In the last general election their combined vote was less than 0.1% of those cast. Nonetheless already we have seen 'popular' fronts, stretching from Robin Blackburn of the *New Left Review* to Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, come together in the form of Charter 88 and *Samizdat*. Although these groupings are not specifically committed to electoral pacts they provide a platform for those who are, and in a real sense their very existence embodies the idea.

Far from this coming together representing a sign of strength, it is plain to see that it is a consequence of the weakness of the opposition. Today, well before the next general election, the bourgeois opposition sees no hope whatsoever of beating the government. This is what gives the electoral pact argument a resonance way beyond the tiny, shrinking circles of Eurocommunism.

Not surprisingly however, electoral pacts have received short shrift from Labour's grandees. Bryan Gould has attacked the whole idea as a "recipe for paralysis" which would play into Tory hands. From a Labourite point of view this is indeed true. In the real world - as opposed to the mechanical one that exists in the heads of the editors of *Marxism Today* - voters do not automatically follow their leaders' advice.

It is quite possible that in the event of an electoral pact most Labour voters would loyally vote for centre parties. Yet those who normally vote for centre parties would just as likely vote Tory as they would Labour. This is a point made by many leading Labourites.

A fourth term for Thatcher would be hell for the working class. But the same applies if any of the bourgeois opposition parties get into office singly or in coalition. They are all committed to running a capitalism which demands yet more attacks on the working class.

What we need is not electoral pacts, nor automatic support for the bourgeois party of the working class, ie the Labour Party, as Monty Johnstone, the *Morning Star* and the SWP argue. No, what the working class needs is a fighting communist alternative in the form of a reformed Communist Party of Great Britain. This is the central task for anyone who calls themselves a communist and a working class partisan.

The Editor

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LETTERS

CPB

Tom Durkin, leading member of the Communist Party of Britain, told a public meeting of his party in Brent on February 8, that neglect of theoretical and ideological work in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was responsible for the stagnation years of the Soviet economy.

Of course, Tom is right to point to the decline of communist ideas in the CPSU but, as we made clear at the meeting, his criticism of Brezhnev comes a little late. He is dead! Unfortunately Tom has merely replaced his old faith in Brezhnev with faith in Gorbachev's 'new thinking'. This vicar of Bray did the same when Krushchev got the boot and when Stalin died. Isn't it time Tom learned from the past rather than simply repeating it. Tom, communists should think for themselves, not sycophantically repeat what the latest Soviet leader is saying.

International Brigader and Irish republican Bob Doyle demanded to know whether the Soviet leadership considered its armed intervention in Afghanistan was a mistake. Why are they not emphasising that they were invited in by the Afghan government, he asked. "Remember, it was a revolution!"

But apparently there is, as yet, no official Soviet view. *Soviet Weekly* deputy editor, Igor Kuzmin, gave his personal opinion that there had been no revolution, only a *coup d'etat*, in 1978, and that sending in the Soviet troops was "a tragic mistake, a crime" because the indigenous revolutionary forces were not strong enough to defend themselves.

Apart from the fact that this seems like a good reason for sending help, I wonder if Kuzmin thinks the Soviet army should withdraw from Eastern Europe? This is certainly the treacherous logic of Gorbachevism.

Stan Sumner

Irish nationalism

John Cable writes (letters, *The Leninist* No74) that Irish nationalism is not progressive and says that 'communists' in Ireland should arm themselves to fight the IRA. Perhaps Cable considers Marx and Engels died-in-the-wool reactionaries. After all they supported the Fenian cause, and it was undoubtedly the IRA of its day.

Instead of frothing against the supposed 'genocidal' intentions of the IRA Cable should study the theory and practice of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the Irish question. Unlike Cable they understood the difference between the nationalism of an oppressed nation and the nationalism of the oppressors.

Cable should certainly come down from his Trotskyite ivory tower. If anyone has attempted to commit genocide in Ireland it is Britain and its Loyalist agents, not the republican movement.

The nationalist masses in the Six Counties are fighting British imperialism. Communists in Britain must take sides: for the IRA, against the British Army. Branding Ireland's freedom fighters reactionaries as does Cable is typical of Trotskyism. It excuses them from taking sides in a living revolution.

Communists in Ireland will fight to overcome the present nationalist

limitations of the revolutionary struggle in Ireland. This will not only be done through ideological struggle but through taking the lead in the national liberation struggle. I am sure that a genuine Communist Party in Ireland will win to its ranks many fine IRA/Sinn Fein comrades who want to see not only a united Ireland, but a united socialist Ireland.

Steve Sands
Herts

Ireland

Much debate is going on in the jails at the moment on the national question and the way forward. Comrades in the League of Communist Republicans have raised many important contentious issues. Even though I disagree with their line I feel they have broken the mould to expose the ideological crisis facing republicans in general, and must be congratulated for starting this debate.

I believe nationalism has a continuing positive revolutionary role, and the armed struggle must remain at all times the axis of the revolutionary fight, the centre of gravity for national activity.

The consistent line of *The Leninist* particularly with regard to Ireland, is like a breath of fresh air to us in the jails. We see there are two tasks which go together; building the armed struggle and building a national united front. I believe it is not easy to estimate the political 'impact' of a military operation and in a war situation mistakes will be made.

I'm not suggesting we are above criticism, but one is confronted week after week by the politics of condemnation by the left opportunists who do untold damage to the work of genuine socialist republicans on the national united front. These so-called socialists distinguish themselves by opposing and/or condemning the struggle for national liberation rather than seeing it as part of the combined revolution which is necessary - a revolution which combines the fight for socialism and national revolution and puts neither on the long finger.

Eddie Hogan
Portlaoise Prison
Ireland

World Market

I enjoyed reading Jack Conrad's supplement to your January 23 1989 edition. In particular, I liked the way he faced up to unequal exchange of equal values between the imperialist powers and the backward and medium developed countries.

I should appreciate if Jack would let us know if he considers the socialist countries (except, perhaps Albania) now to be part of a single capitalist world market; and if so, what political conclusions we can draw from this.

Ivor Kenna
London

Jack Conrad replies:

There is a single world market still dominated by capitalism. The political conclusion we draw from this is the need to complete the world revolution begun in October 1917.

Dockers

Your articles on the question of the

dockers is most appropriate as it is obvious that the government is lining up this industry for its next assault on the working class in order to attempt to solve the crisis of the ruling class.

The letter from Alan Newman (*The Leninist* No74) highlights the problems which the dockers will meet in struggle; the old age problem of isolation in struggle which has assisted the government and employers to defeat the most powerful sections of the labour movement.

It is not enough for us to merely propagate the lessons of the past; as Newman declares, "the time to organise ... is now" and also that we need "action committees drawing in the class". Applying the lessons of the past, as Leninists we realise it is necessary to prepare for battle before the battle begins. I would therefore suggest to comrade Newman, that he and his fellow militants in the industry get together now and immediately - with the help of *The Leninist* paper - make contact with militants in other industries, and get together to form a coordinating committee for the development of rank and file action committees.

P Conlon
South London

Iran

This week the Islamic regime of Iran announced an amnesty for political prisoners on the tenth anniversary of the 1979 revolution. Accordingly all those who have 'repented', whose repentance is 'certain' and who have not indulged in armed activity will be freed. All others will remain incarcerated.

What is the meaning of an amnesty for 'repentants'?

1. Anyone, with whatever offence, provided they renounced their previous views will be freed. On the other hand those who have not expressed 'repentance', whatever their offence will remain in prison and may share the same fate as befell those found in the mass graves in La'nat Abad cemetery.

2. The regime explicitly declares that under its rule no one is permitted to hold different views! In order to save your skin you must commit ideological suicide.

It is therefore obvious that the amnesty is a manoeuvre, made under pressure of public opinion, and aimed at deflecting mounting internal and international pressure. But world public opinion is sufficiently aware to make this manoeuvre ineffective.

We warn all freedom loving and progressive people of the world of the imminent and grave danger that threatens the life of political prisoners in Iran. The true content of the recent 'amnesty' clearly points to a continuation of the killings. There must be no let up in the campaign to halt the executions and for international delegations to visit Iran's prisons.

Stop the bloodbath! Open the prison doors!

Neil Baker
Secretary Iranian Political Prisoners Action Committee

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.

As time goes by



Fighting to make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam

BETWEEN two and three thousand people attended the Bloody Sunday march on January 28, on the anniversary of the massacre of fourteen unarmed demonstrators by British troops in Derry in 1972. In contrast to the previous year the degree of effort put into mobilising for the march was extremely low. Leaflets seemed rarer than gold dust and posters for the march only went up a few days in advance. Little to nothing was heard about the event in the workers' movement. Unless you were aware well in advance that it was due, you could easily have missed it altogether.

Sadly, the approach of the organisers, primarily the Troops Out Movement and the Labour Committee on Ireland, is all too familiar. Irish solidarity work is seen as the property of a narrow circle. You may be forgiven for thinking that the events are by invitation only. The forums for their organisation most certainly are. Organisations such as ours and individuals who are not prepared to subordinate themselves to the opportunist politics and practice of the above are definitely not wanted.

And one can well understand why. Many of the organisers, who claim to oppose the political platform of the Labourite and reformist 'Time To Go' campaign because it does not raise the demand for troops out now, have in the Bloody Sunday demonstration organised an event whose politics are no different whatsoever. The publicity material, such as it was, did not call for troops out now, but just for the un-defined demand to 'withdraw'. This is identical to the platform of 'Time To Go'. Such a 'demand' (request?) goes further than taking a neutralist stand on the war, it actually implies that Britain can play a progressive role in the achievement of Irish freedom.

This was illustrated by the slate of speakers - or, to be more precise, one in particular: Communist Party of Britain member and self-propelled megaphone, Tom Durkin, who took the opportunity to trumpet the dubious virtues of 'Time To Go' which, he said, has been "the most important development of late" and to be supported. Of course, Tom took the opportunity to call for that old reformist nostrum, "a British declaration of intent to withdraw from Ireland".

The contingent from *The Leninist* put forward its opinion on the

sort of dangerous rubbish spouted by Durkin through its banners and militant slogans - 'Troops out now', 'Make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam' and 'For the IRA, against the British army'. The much larger contingent of the Socialist Workers Party - which supports 'Time To Go' - made consistent attempts to drown out our slogans with its more 'acceptable' ones before succumbing to despondency brought on by the sheets of rain. It need hardly be said that *The Leninist* contingent was not daunted by the adverse weather conditions, though some comrades later claimed to have soaked up most of the water in North West London.

To read the RCP's report of the march in the next step one would believe that their Irish Freedom Movement was the only contingent to keep up a barrage of slogans, which the report claimed. Let us just say that the RCP were somewhat creative with the truth.

We must also take issue when the report indicates that the morale of anti-imperialists would be in a better state if the demonstration had not taken place. Despite the half-cocked organisation this is blatantly wrong. The fact that over 2,000 people braved the elements to show solidarity with the cause of Irish freedom is hardly a bad thing. How the IFM/RCP made use of the event we cannot say. But *The Leninist* took the opportunity to loudly and militantly demonstrate its solidarity and distribute Hands Off Ireland! propaganda. For us, it certainly was not a waste of time.

But, while we were a very militant contingent, we certainly were not very large. In fact a good many of those who claim to identify with our paper and organisation were absent. Obviously, we have a political battle even with our own sympathisers. Too many people, it seems, regard *The Leninist* simply as a 'good read'. But as communists we constantly fight to relate our revolutionary theory to revolutionary practice. We must extend this understanding, this discipline and commitment throughout our sympathisers and to fresh people. A communist who retreats from action because it is somehow 'inconvenient' is no communist.

The point, though, is not merely to criticise comrades who did not show on the day. *The Leninist* must extend its organisation and its activities to make communists, to

equip militants with the theory, discipline and practical skills which we need to organise effective interventions on such events as the Bloody Sunday march.

Given the importance of Ireland to the British revolution and the necessity of challenging the 'Time To Go' charade, this is especially true of Irish solidarity work. Under the banners of Hands Off Ireland! *The Leninist* is committed to organising a mass anti-imperialist contingent on the 'Time To Go' march in August. This demands consistent commitment and a growth in the size and the effectiveness of our organisation. This we are certain we will do.

If an effective and principled movement is to be built we must defeat the pro-imperialist forces which have such a hold over the movement. The leftists who run this campaign tell us that we must break out of the ghetto that Irish solidarity is in by compromising further. This is not the case. It is their politics which have ghettoised Irish solidarity. We will break out by defeating them and establishing the issue of Ireland among workers in Britain on the demand for troops out now.

Some, such as the RCP, believe that it would be better to ignore 'Time To Go' altogether: to challenge it somehow gives it credence. The sad truth is that it has credence already; that is why it must be challenged. This is self evident. The RCP may want to boycott 'Time To Go', but on January 28 it organised a large contingent on the Bloody Sunday demo. What's the difference? The difference in reality is that the August 'Time To Go' demo will be much larger, much more politically significant and therefore much more important to present a genuine anti-imperialist alternative on.

The fight for this has started. Support Hands Off Ireland! and ensure its success.

Alan Merrik

Support Hands Off Ireland! Order Hands Off Ireland folders at £1 per 100, from HOI!, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX



Eamonn Mullen was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on February 6 in Manchester airport. Comrade Mullen was attempting to return to Ireland after speaking at the demonstration against the deportation of Viraj Mendis on behalf of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. At the time of writing, with Eamonn still held, it seems almost certain that he will be issued with an exclusion order by the authorities. This makes him the third member of the IRSP to be forcibly excluded from Britain in the last two years. The PTA has long been used to terrorise Irish people, so much so that for Irish revolutionaries it is a constant occupational hazard. Exclusion orders, on the other hand, are in essence directed against the British working class. Like Douglas Hurd's recent Act banning Sinn Fein, the IRSP and others from the TV and radio of the 'United Kingdom' such measures are directed at preventing British workers hearing the truth about the struggle in Ireland from Irish revolutionaries. The British state, taking advantage of the small number of IRSP cadres relative to Sinn Fein, is obviously attempting to silence the party completely in Britain.

Viraj Mendis' deportation provides important lessons for anti-racists. The flaw in the campaign was not *per se* that Viraj sought sanctuary in a church, but that the forces which it relied on were, in the last analysis, impotent. The fact that the clergy were seen as a major force against the racist state speaks volumes. In an interview Viraj described this as the shield and spear strategy; the liberal elements being the 'shield' and working class action the 'spear'. But the shield proved to be made of paper and the spear directionless. To ensure the presence of the ineffectual 'shield' the campaign focused in on Viraj as an individual, warning of the threat to his life in Sri Lanka. This was done at the expense of challenging the racist nature of all immigration laws under all circumstances. There was therefore no strategy which could mobilise workers against the racist state. The government was able to evade the key issue of state racism by merely attacking Viraj as an individual. The 'spear' was reduced to irrelevancy in a strategy which relied on imaginary establishment 'shields'. Well meaning bourgeois figures provide no protection from state attacks. The only defence is through the active mobilisation of the working class to smash such attacks and all racist laws.



Prayer is not an effective weapon against the racist state. Communists should expose religion not foster illusions in it. Working class action is the only way forward

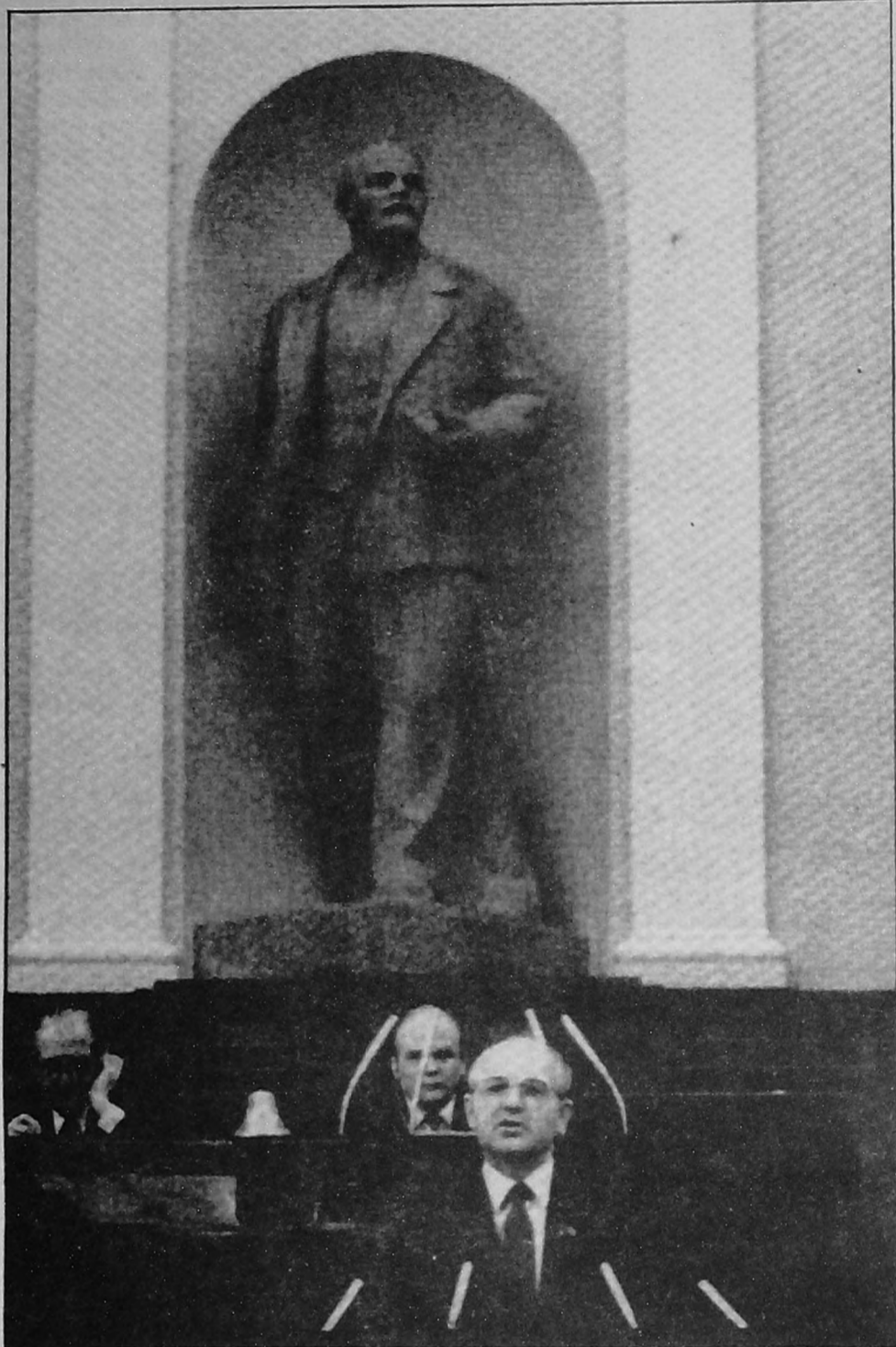
Independent television companies scrapped all union agreements on February 6. It need hardly be said that this is a major attack on the rights and living standards of workers in this industry who are, in the main, members of the ACTT, Beta and the NUJ. Last March, with the TV-am dispute in full swing, we warned that this was the beginning of an offensive against all workers in this industry. The TV-am bosses succeeded in purging their sector of ACTT members, and now all ITV companies are out for blood. The leaders of the trade unions involved have shown that they are prepared to bleed for the bosses. Activists in the industry must now prepare to take the struggle from their hands. The demands that we advanced last year are now more relevant than ever: workers need to act now. Form a joint action committee involving all workers in the broadcasting industry - spread action to the BBC. Alongside this, there must be a concerted campaign to organise workers in Murdoch's Sky channel. Hit the ITV companies where it hurts - in their advertising revenues. Occupy all ITV studios, stop all advertising, barricade the buildings which use the most expensive equipment. All out for victory!

Different politics



January's meeting of the Euro Executive Committee heard a dismal report on the future of *7 Days* from its former editor Chris Myant. In spite of (we would say because of) "reinforcing the paper's feminist and personal politics", the "concept of a weekly paper" will be considered in November. At the same meeting the Euro EC voted its full time officials a 7% wage rise! This is as good an example of opportunist politics as you'll find. It is diametrically opposed to the approach of Leninism. If the future of our paper were in doubt we would not dream of increasing our pay packets (if we got them). We would make sure our paper survived no matter what. We don't begin with what we can afford, we begin with what the class struggle demands and go all out to make it happen. The reason we succeed where the Euros fail is simple: communist politics. The proof - in January our £600 monthly fighting fund had a £46 surplus.

Politics, pri



Gorbachev's betrayal — crucial

Hasan Saraca was a member of the Central Committee of the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey. From 1981 to 1987 he was imprisoned. Now he is a member of the genuine Communist Party of Turkey. He spoke to Jack Conrad about Turkey, Gorbachevism, prison and his break with the opportunists

Could you begin by telling us something about the general economic situation in Turkey?

After the September 12 coup finance capital has been successful in its complete takeover of the government in Turkey. However this has not solved the problems of finance capital. The reason for this is that Turkey is not an imperialist country. Yet to survive it must become imperialist.

This is why there is a striving outwards, to gain new markets. In particular we see Turkey trying to penetrate backward capitalism in the Middle East.

As one can clearly see, possibilities for Turkey to become imperialist are limited to say the least; the existing imperialist countries have already effectively divided the world market. In defining Turkey one cannot say that Turkey falls into even the lowest rung of

imperialist powers. It is a medium developed capitalist country which can act as a mediator — particularly in the Middle East — for the imperialists. In order to facilitate this, Turkey is trying to strengthen its links with the European Community. Clearly this is insufficient to solve the country's crisis. Finance capital is at a dead end.

How does this effect the country's politics?

Of course, we are not saying to the bourgeoisie 'give us democracy'. But even if this were the case the bourgeoisie is, in reality, in no position to give it. The ruling class has very little in the way of crumbs to give away in concessions to the masses. We see in such countries such as Turkey that the only way forward for society is revolution.

Because Turkey cannot become imperialist, finance capital has to turn back in on its own people, to massively over exploit them. Obviously the people resist the effects of this — in

particular the working class. As a result the fight for democracy and the class struggle are particularly fierce. Certainly the class war is set to reach new heights.

It may look on the surface at the moment that the class struggle is lower than it was, say, in the 1970s. But in spite of all the bans and restrictions on trade unions and trade union activity brought about by the September 12 coup, workers are coming out on strike in record numbers.

Finance capital might be the ruling class but its ideas do not rule supreme. It has not been able to win working class support in its drive to become imperialist. It is because of this that it has used its 'left hand' to influence the masses.

Within the left movement — and this is true of many other countries — there are sections which act as 'left advisors' to the government; in Turkey in particular we would single out the United Communist Party of Turkey. It has openly declared that it is in support of Turkey's application to become a member of the European Community. It says this will result in gains for the people and allow the country to become democratic to boot. These statements understandably please finance capital. It is exactly what it wants to hear.

If we look at the social democrats we only see confusion; they have no worked out economic programme. Even if such a party as the SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) were to head the government there is not much that they could do. This party admits that it could not carry out any serious economic changes; all it can offer is a few minor democratic freedoms. This hardly worries finance capital.

There is no significant difference between the SHP and the UCPT — who we call the new social democrats. They might use different words but they are saying the same things.

I understand that in Turkey neither the social democrats nor the UCPT defend the right to self determination for Kurdistan. What is your attitude to this question?

Kurdistan is an integral colony of Turkey. In order to open it up to further exploitation the Turkish state has recently sent yet more forces to the area. The aim is to eliminate all opposition so as to further open it up for finance capital.

The way we see things it is a basic requirement for a democrat to stand by the right of the Kurds to self determination. Both the social democrats and the new social democrats have not and do not do this. Undoubtedly the struggle of the Kurdish people is tightly bound up with the revolutionary struggle of the working class. We defend the right of self determination for the Kurdish people and fully support the struggle they are waging.

In regard to the UCPT, there has been some considerable publicity in the media about the return of its leaders Kutlu and Sargin and the attempted return of Nafiz Bostanci who even had a BBC TV crew following him into Turkey. What impact in Turkey have these people had?

From reading the press in Turkey it is clear that these people haven't had a profound impact. Indeed, on the left the UCPT is suffering increasing isolation. Throughout the left press there has been criticism of the returnees. There is a general opinion that what the UCPT is doing is only benefitting finance capital.

We have from the beginning stated that there was an agreement between the UCPT and the bourgeoisie, and not just the bourgeoisie of Turkey but internationally. The BBC TV programme was no doubt part of this.

I also want to add something else. I can't stop myself from saying this. I was a Central Committee member of the then 'official' Communist Party of Turkey. During this period I did not know Bostanci as a personal friend, but I did work with him in the trade union movement.

On the TV programme he stated that he had been in prison and suffered torture. He claimed that this had left him disabled. None

of this is true. I know very well that Nafiz Bostanci was never arrested. When the coup occurred he was not in Turkey. He was not there when the trade unionists were rounded up. This show by Nafiz Bostanci and the UCPT is part of the agreement between these new social democrats and the state.

Why, if there has been a deal between the 'officials' and the bourgeoisie in Turkey and internationally, were Kutlu and Sargin arrested immediately they put foot on Turkish soil? And why did the Turkish state force Nafiz Bostanci to leave the country as soon as he arrived?

The Turkish bourgeoisie has a long history and plans well ahead. The arrest of Kutlu and Sargin does not mean that there has been no deal. If they were given a red carpet treatment they would be no good to the Turkish bourgeoisie.

What they are after is to create martyrs? That is exactly what I was going to say. The ruling class is very experienced. It is planning for the future, 10, 15 years. The turning away of Nafiz Bostanci was a comedy. His solicitors — who at one time acted for me — had accepted an arrest warrant for him. Yet in spite of this he was not arrested.

Every state, even if it had stripped someone of citizenship, whether that person enters the country legally or illegally, that state will want to capture that person if they are accused of breaking the country's laws. Turkey demands the extradition of common criminals living abroad.

But Bostanci goes in of his own accord but he is not arrested. The reason behind this is clear. The state wants to build up the UCPT in the estimation of the people. By not arresting Bostanci they are breaking their own laws. Three of those who came in with Nafiz Bostanci were arrested, it is true. But two days later they were released. All of this taken together shows that there is a deal.

We are not calling upon the state to arrest these people. Of course not. We are against these people being branded criminals and made into outlaws because of political activity. But one must not disregard the fact that in Turkey today there are thousands of people who have committed lesser 'crimes' who are in prison. They should all be released.

What impact have developments in the Soviet Union, particularly what we would call Gorbachevism, had on the left in Turkey, including the UCPT?

Firstly, in relation to perestroika and glasnost, these policies have not had a huge impact on the working class in Turkey. But one can say that it has affected the petty bourgeois revolutionaries in Turkey. Those who have not fully understood what socialism and proletarian dictatorship are have looked upon Gorbachev's policies sympathetically. They have applauded his policies — which are trying to uproot socialism from its foundations — claiming that it is the introduction of democracy.

For example, when defining socialism one immediately thinks of central planning. Yet they have even praised Gorbachev's erosion of this. As to the UCPT, they follow everything and anything the Soviet Union does, whoever is leading it. On the other hand there are anti-Soviets who damn whatever the Soviet Union has done.

Although the UCPT is following everything Gorbachev is doing, this poison will not enter the bloodstream of the working class in Turkey because its situation is very different from that of the working class in countries such as the USA, Japan, Federal Germany and the other advanced capitalist countries where the bourgeoisie and the working class are living through a period of peace.

If Turkey was living through such a period then maybe the politics of the UCPT would have some effect. However, although it is very difficult to see when the situation in Turkey will explode, it is quite clear that this is on the agenda. The political and economic reasons for this I have already gone into. Under such circumstances, we of the Communist

son and principle

ISCININ SESI BOOKS

Party of Turkey must be permanently prepared for the emergence of a revolutionary situation. Even the most minor problem is a problem which can only be solved by revolution.

With the September 12 coup, finance capital tried to solve the countries' problems in a negative way. But it failed. Finance capital in Turkey does not have the room for manoeuvre of the imperialist countries. This situation means that class conflicts become sharper and clearer. Because of this, new sections have come over to support the working class in its struggle.

In this situation it is very difficult for finance capital to create social stability. This does not mean that we can afford to ignore or belittle the activities of the UCTP. Turkey is a country where the petty bourgeoisie is extremely numerous. Reformist policies can gain a genuine mass base in the petty bourgeoisie. This sets upon us the task of explaining our Leninist ideology in a popular way to the people. And fighting against opportunism and reformism in all its forms.

What are the main developments in the left in Turkey today? Are petty bourgeois revolutionary movements like Dev Sol and Dev Yol still strong?

Both Dev Sol and Dev Yol have not been able to find organisational and political coherence since the September 12 coup. For example, they have no clear cut view on Gorbachevism. These two organisations are trying to regain their ideological positions around various journals which one day criticise Gorbachev and on another praise him.

This situation is characteristic of many left organisations. Most of them have not been able to digest, let alone understand, Gorbachev's politics. The clear views we have on Gorbachev have not been equalled by other left organisations.

We are certain that Gorbachevism will not have a profound impact on the revolutionary left in Turkey. Gorbachev is openly saying that he opposes the revolutionary struggle, that on the contrary he wants to resolve "hot-spots" in cooperation with imperialism.

The working class of Turkey is fresh and alive. When evaluating the working class it is not very much affected by the petty bourgeois groupings and their confusion. The working class is much more experienced and in a much better position than it was before September 12 1980. Gorbachevism affects only the intellectuals, not the working class. The petty bourgeoisie has no clear views on anything. Ineffectual discussion is characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie: not the working class. At the moment there is no left organisation that is winning the working class behind it.

You have indicated that no organisation exercises political hegemony over the working class movement. How does the CPT aim to rectify this situation and ensure that the working class can strike decisively as one in the revolution?

For the CPT to lead the working class depends on its strength. This is very closely linked to the ideology of the CPT. We have never said to the people that reformism and reforms that are gained will solve the situation. We have always argued that Turkey's problems can only be solved through revolution.

Without a doubt there is a difficult path in front of us before we can gain hegemony over the working class and the working class itself exercises hegemony over the revolutionary movement. First and foremost the unity of the working class must be gained.

We have always argued for trade union unity. Of course, when we say trade union unity we do not mean the unity of the working class. It is a means to an end. When we talk of the unity of the working class we mean the political unity of the working class. In order to achieve this we are continually striving to spread our views among the workers. We must overcome not only the bourgeois views but the petty bourgeois views of reformism. We cannot become the leaders of the working class by declaring it or merely just wanting it.

We are continuously putting forward to the working class in a very clear way what correct views are and what the future of Turkey should be.

By saying that everything will be solved by revolution does not mean we are sitting back and waiting for it. We struggle for reforms but in a revolutionary way. The CPT firmly believes that the working class understands that reforms do not represent long term solutions. We are preparing the working class for revolution.

What legal possibilities do you see in the preparation of the working class for revolution?

The CPT is benefiting from all legal possibilities open before us. Being illegal does not stop us doing this. Within Turkey we are developing our influence daily because of this. We have been far more successful in doing this than many left groups. The CPT is not courting legality like the UCPT. But naturally it is not possible for me to disclose what legal possibilities we are benefiting from.

Do cadres in Turkey have problems combining legal and illegal work? How does the Party approach this ideologically? In Britain, because we have a long history of legalism we have a problem convincing communists to take illegal work seriously. The fact that we argue that communists must be prepared to break the law provokes mirth among our 'official communists'. Do you have to overcome the opposite problem? The problem of considering legal work with contempt?

Our understanding of illegality is not to hide away from the masses, ostrich fashion. The organisation of the CPT is illegal but its activities are open. Our comrades are working in all sorts of different places and are in continuous contact with the masses.

For us what is important is to keep the structure of the organisation secret, not its activities. These comrades are there to support and lead the working class and the masses in their struggles. They do not say 'we are members of the CPT, follow us', that would be stupid. What they are doing is spreading and defending the correct views of the Party. Because what they are saying is correct, they become the leaders.

The CPT will benefit from legal possibilities. But benefiting from legal possibilities does not entail our organisation seeking to become legal. If we made legal activities our major area of work we would be little different from the UCPT. Benefiting from legal work is not the same as legalism. One means declaring open war against the bourgeoisie, the other means supporting the bourgeoisie. We use and extend legal work to reach the masses. But we must be illegal in order to be free to make revolution.

The fact that the Party is illegal means that there are a number of comrades in prison. What sort of political life is there in the prisons in Turkey? Are they universities of the revolution?

The idea that every revolutionary should have served in prison is of course nonsense. But the situation sometimes arrives.

No revolutionary is afraid of going to prison. For a revolutionary to completely cut themselves off from daily life outside and completely adapt to prison life means the beginning of the end of that revolutionary. A revolutionary who is inside should be constantly striving, have a thirst to know what is going on outside with the working class and the revolutionary movement.

It is not correct to say that 'I've been caught' and simply serve one's sentence. That once you've got out you can begin from where you left off. This is impossible. Life moves on.

One has ample time in prison to go over past activities, to evaluate where he or she has gone wrong, where the organisation has gone wrong. No matter which prison you are in - I don't know of Britain's prisons - there must be something you can do.

For example, when we were in Mamak prison we made countless demands, if we were given one blanket we demanded two, we de-

manded improved food and more exercise. We constantly struggled. Any, even basic struggle, that is waged keeps that person alive.

When we were outside we were struggling against the bourgeoisie. When we are inside our comrades continue this struggle outside. So we inside should continue to struggle - this time with the bourgeoisie's watch dogs.

Without a doubt a struggle must be conducted by a grouping. An isolated individual cannot do it. Revolutionaries must organise in prison. Inside or outside, a one person struggle does not result in anything.

When I was in Mamak prison there were people from all left groups. When we went on hunger strike demanding rights, all the different fractions acted together. Our hunger strike lasted 42 days and no one dropped out. As a result of this hunger strike we slightly improved the conditions. Of course, the prison authorities are constantly trying to take back what they gave.

You were on the leadership of the 'official' Communist Party. How did you come to your decision to break from them?

As I said earlier, I was a Central Committee member of the 'official' Communist Party and a regional secretary up until the point that I was arrested in 1981.

I knew of the split which occurred with *Iscinin Sesi* in 1979, I was very much involved in all of it. After I was imprisoned I followed world wide developments in various newspapers. I came to the view that Gorbachevism was not correct. And in relation to this a debate opened with some of my comrades who had been sentenced along with me. This naturally brought about an ideological break with them.

I knew *Iscinin Sesi's* views very closely. After *Iscinin Sesi* separated from the 'officials', we on the Central Committee had become the main targets.

Could you explain that?

Before, there had been a struggle going on between the Leninists and the right wing. After the split, the views of myself and other like minded comrades came under fire. After *Iscinin Sesi* had gone, there was a constant debate on the Central Committee as to whether the party faced the biggest danger from left or right opportunism.

I supported the view that right opportunism was the danger. The people who have now formed the UCPT said the opposite. Before this debate could become fully developed the coup occurred. With the coming of Gorbachevism I broke with the opportunists and joined *Iscinin Sesi*. Their views and mine had always been close.

Was this a big wrench? You had been working with them for a long time. Or was your break a liberation?

The comrades in *Iscinin Sesi* were old friends and comrades. I knew them and struggled a long time with them. To talk about *Iscinin Sesi* splitting is not a good idea, it was more a separation.

Anyway, when *Iscinin Sesi* organised separately this was a time of sadness for me. I was saying almost the same things as they were. I want to say frankly that I was wrong, I went with what I thought was 'party discipline'.

In relation to my eventual break with the 'officials', it was not a cause for sadness. I was pleased. I had started to disagree with the 'officials' over Gorbachev while I was still in prison. Once I came out of prison I called for an open discussion to take place.

A political struggle, though, is not something that can be waged by oneself. An ideological struggle is the same. I therefore was very pleased to join the Communist Party of Turkey, the genuine Communist Party of Turkey.

Those who are within the UCPT might be my old comrades but our paths have definitely separated. They are trying to work together with the bourgeoisie, we are working for revolution. There is no middle path. They are taking the side of the class enemy: therefore they are my enemy.



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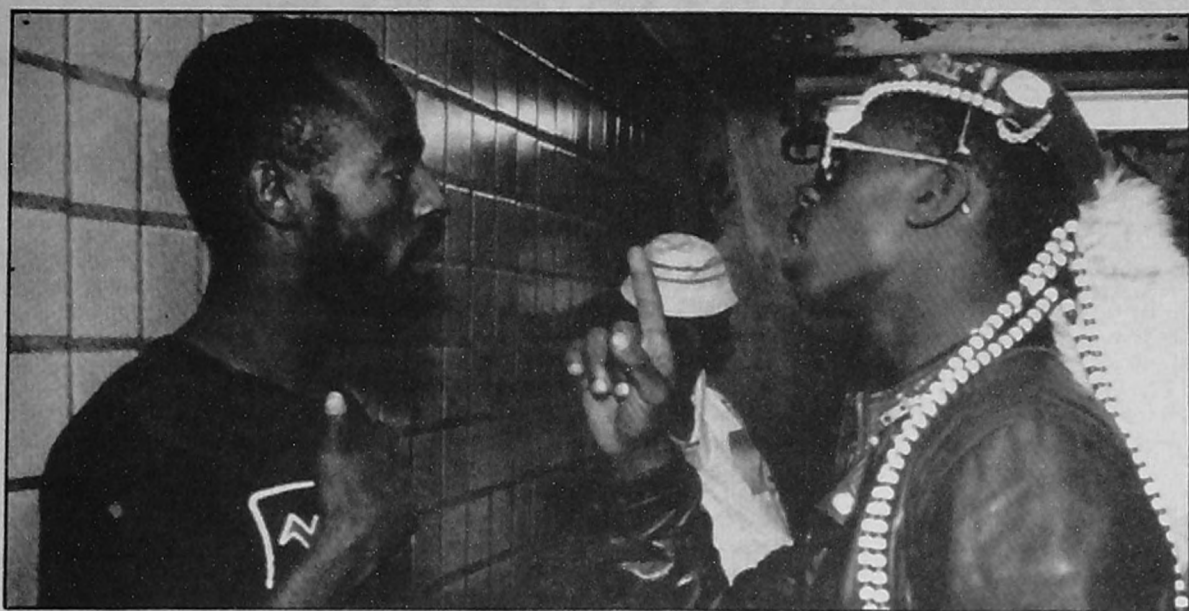
Someone to watch over me?

A little snippet from a recent document by the Hungarian historical commission of the party's central committee: "This commission regards what took place in 1956 as a popular uprising - an uprising against an oligarchic system of power which had humiliated the nation ... The summary verdict which used the single word of counterrevolution to describe what happened in '56 does not stand up." *The shattering of the old tablets of stone in Eastern Europe and the USSR must be causing some agonised wincing from the British centrists. No doubt they will ease into their paymasters' marching chant: 'right, right, right ...'*

"Presents should only be purchased in the spirit of Christmas ... We should encourage [the purchase of] foods which don't contain preservatives or additives ... We should support all efforts to reduce drinking, and encourage the police to crack down hard on those who drink and drive." *That, and many more ideas, come from the Wellingborough Euro CPGB's Nine Point Plan for Christmas. It is reprinted in full in the CPGB Executive Committee's February edition of News And Views. It asks for opinions and comments on this. How about 'wacko'.*

The New Worker of February 3 says that attacks on "Time To Go" at its South London launch over the "liberal, wet and reformist nature" of the campaign were answered by a "powerful contribution from the floor by writer Naomi Wayne." *The article omits to mention that Ms Wayne is a hardline Euro and viciously hostile to the armed struggle. It approvingly quotes another contributor to debate: "Yes it is wet and soggy and liberal and reformist but good luck to it." Well, that's the wet, soggy, liberal and reformist New [sic] Communist [sic] Party [sic] for you.*

And once more on soggy, reformist 'communists'. The Morning Star of February 6 carries an interview with John Bowden, lawyer for the two self styled communists and unsuccessful martyrs, Kutlu and Sargin, who head the United Communist Party of Turkey. *We read: "They have a new found courage, a recognition that they are not doing anything illegal." Enough said.*



Angels do not defend the working class!

While we oppose the bourgeoisie's hypocritical attacks on the Angels, there can be no question of supporting them in any way

EVERYONE now must be familiar with the Guardian Angels. If you had not heard of them via some British journalist's New York travelogue you cannot have missed their appearance (and their disappearance?) in London, such has been the coverage on British TV, radio and newspapers.

In the US there have long been 'chapters' of Angels, consisting of groups of inner city youth, predominantly male and often black, patrolling the subways and drug districts. Kitted-out in Guardian Angels' sweat shirts and red berets adorned with studs and badges, these youth have been portrayed by the bourgeois media as the swashbucklers of the subways, a tribe of rakish dead end kids.

But obviously the Angels are not just some kind youth cult like Acid or Rap. They were set up by a certain Curtis Sliwa to fulfil a function other than method acting your favourite characters from *Marvel* comics. They are a sort of - very - irregular police squad, labelled by the regular filth and others as vigilantes.

Sliwa has built this project up quite effectively, from a small basis in New York in 1979 through to 60 cities in the US. And now, of course, we are to be treated to our very own London chapter, when three young gents named Tut, Terminator and Ultimate Warrior (what must their mothers have been thinking of?) turned up in early January to do a reconnaissance job on the London Underground.

This has certainly captured the imagination of the British media, especially given the Angels' ambassador, Curtis' wife, model Lisa Sliwa. They even made the Terry Wogan show. It is quite likely that they will catch the imagination of a section of working class youth in precisely the same way, just as they have with many working class youth in the US.

So what should be the attitude of communists to this? We certainly should not take the line that many reformists have done: to take it as an opportunity for some cheap anti-American jibes and to defend the 'right' of the British police to maintain a monopoly of 'legitimate' force on the streets (and

underground) of Britain. The fact that the 'boys in blue' may have to be put up against a more 'hip' irregular group does not exactly choke us with concern for the 'British tradition' founded by Robert Peel.

We oppose any attempt by the British state to beef up the Public Order Act for use against the Angels. The police have threatened that they may be lifted for behaviour that is "threatening, abusive, or insulting and likely to cause harm or distress to others"; that is, doing the filth's job for it. Any strengthening of state powers will ultimately be used against the working class. The monopoly of bourgeois state force is one monopoly to which communists are resolutely opposed.

But let us not kid ourselves that the Guardian Angels are some kind of workers' militia. They are in their own way organised to defend the institutions of capitalist society. An article in the *Independent Magazine* of January 14 details how the Angels were used to 'clean up' one area of Manhattan, Hell's Kitchen, attacking "drug dealers, crack heads, prostitutes and vagrants." The paradoxical nature of this did not escape the journalist: "It may seem ironic that a group of poor, mostly black and Hispanic teenagers should be making Hell's Kitchen safe for affluent theatre goers ... they exist to preserve the property of the haves from the have nots. Sliwa's mob can be hired, if only for the price of free publicity and a few lobster dinners, as protection."

The Angels have been used to harass the homeless, squatters and anyone else that may offend the sensibilities of their property owning patrons. The US left has also felt their muscle, with paper sellers on the subways receiving unwelcome attention from the Angels.

Sliwa is no Robin Hood and there is precious little for workers to get merry about with his men. They see themselves not as a challenge to the state, but as a subsidiary, as something to plaster over the cracks where the police are unable to do so.

They also play a part in fuelling the state endorsed panic about violent crime. To the moral right's list of lager lout and football hooli-

gan we can now add the Guardian Angel. Let the forces of the state argue with Sliwa and Co as to how they fit into this reactionary view; the point is that they do. To justify their attacks on drunks, addicts or whoever, the Angels have to join in with the reactionary chorus that such people represent a threat to 'civilised society'.

While we oppose the bourgeoisie's hypocritical attacks on the Angels, there can be no question of supporting them in any way. Instead we pose the traditions and forms of organisation that the workers' movement internationally has developed through its history.

Attempts by workers to organise in their defence, such as the hit squads in the miners' Great Strike, point the way to workers' militias. This, as Lenin emphasised, is no luxury or leftist pipe dream: "Wherever there are oppressed classes struggling against exploitation, the doctrine of the socialist, from the very start, and in the first place, arms them with a sense of the burning necessity to arm" (CW, Vol 9, p432).

What was intended here was not some more 'streetwise' and proletarian force to protect the men of property, like a macro version of the Angels, but the spearhead against this class. The intention of the Bolsheviks was "to create a real proletarian militia that will enjoy the confidence of all the poor strata of the population, and they constitute the vast majority, and will help them to organise, help them to fight for bread, peace and freedom." (*Ibid*, Vol 23, p321)

Throughout the twenties workers' struggles threw up many such organisations, in Italy, Austria, Germany and even in sleepy old Britain. Before that, Ireland had produced what Trotsky called western Europe's first ever workers militia - the Irish Citizen Army of James Connolly.

It does not need grandiose schemes from armchair revolutionaries to provoke workers in conditions of heightened struggle to organise for their own defence, to create their own military, their own police. The task of communists is to lead and develop these fighting organisations, to weld them into schools of revolutionary struggle and the insti-

tutions of the future proletarian state.

This is light years away from the wet dream of the meat-headed mercenary Sliwa that has been realised in the Guardian Angels. But many of the youth who don the red berets of the Angels are people that should be organised by the working class, motivated to defend the workers, not affluent restaurant proprietors. The rewards for such service ultimately far outweigh the cheap thrills, self publicity and lobster dinners of the Angels.

Working class life, you may have noticed, is not like a Soviet wall mural. Workers' defence formations do not emerge squeaky clean with golden haired, blue eyed and square jawed proletarians trooping majestically from bench to barricade. The best example in real life of a Western European mass workers militia was provided by the Communist Party of Germany and its fighting formations such as the Red Front Fighters' League. The KPD was able to recruit its fighters from the ranks of gangs of street fighters, from the unemployed, from the youth - indeed, from precisely the same social basis which the Angels appeal to.

The KPD was able to absorb many thousands like these, utilising their skills and experiences on the streets, and turn them into soldiers in the struggle for communism. Contrast the defence of high class restaurants by the Angels to the 'expropriations' of food by the fighting units under communist leadership. Where the Angels defend capitalism from its own victims - the drug addicts, homeless and prostitutes - the communist street fighters in Germany directed their attacks against the system.

Such action gave confidence to the entire working class. Through their action against the capitalist system - the source of crime and degradation - they were able to give the working class communities a cohesion and a consciousness of their own power which fought crime, a symptom of the disease of capitalism, in a proletarian way. This the forces of the bourgeoisie - overt, like the police or unconscious, like the Angels - cannot do because they sustain this disease.

There is an inseparable connection between the sort of proletarian street fighting formations we contrast with the Angels - hit squads cum militias thrown forward by strikes - and the forging of a genuine communist party. But the latter is the crucial factor. It is only such an organisation as this which can weld the resistance of the working class in all its forms into a coherent revolutionary force. In this way the general staff of the revolution - the Communist Party - steels itself and increases and develops its forces, the basis of a future revolutionary state. In this struggle for the streets - and the Underground - the Angels are in no way on our side.

We do not need anyone to watch over us but, as communists, our task is to train the working class to defend its own interests right the way across the board. In this way we can look forward to the day that the London Underground is patrolled by a workers' militia of the Soviet Republic of Great Britain.

Their dress is of no real concern to this writer, but hopefully none of them will be called Terminator or Ultimate Warrior.

Sean Quinn

POLEMIC



SWP with hair gel

Revolutionary Communist Party, *Living Marxism* nos 1-4, £1.50.

YOU CAN now pick up a new left wing 'glossy' on the news-stands of WH Smith. What it took the Euros' *Marxism Today* years to do the RCP have pulled off in a matter of a few short months with their new magazine *Living Marxism*.

The *Media Guardian* of January 16 was certainly impressed: "as befits the magazine of the RCP, the party cruelly dubbed 'the SWP with hair gel' it's sharply printed, competently designed and wrapped in a glossy, three-colour cover." The 'hair gel' label was first coined in this paper, way, way back in 1984. For a one liner to be so enduring it must contain a fair amount of truth. Perhaps we should have copyrighted it.

How different this is from the position of the next step's editors soon after its launch: "We want to break with the tradition of British left publications: flashy graphics, vulgar style and endless photos of demonstrations." (March 1980). The above sounds like a description of the RCP's current publications.

Its weekly paper *the next step* has been reduced from 16 pages to something that is now little more than an eight page plug for *Living Marxism*. The 'meat' from *ins* has been channelled into *LM*, along with interviews with Gerry Adams, West German Greens and football fanzine editors.

The resulting publication has certainly created something of a splash, being presented as a sort of 'Not' *Marxism Today*. This seems to be something the magazine courts. *Living Marxism* has also taken up much of the subject matter of its rightwing precursor edited by Martin Jacques. Many of the arguments on 'post-Fordism' and 'New Times' put forward by the gucci socialists of *Marxism Today* have been critiqued. This is all well and good. But the RCP's new journal carries over all the old problems of its organisation, combining them with some new problems produced by the nature of this new publication.

What, one asks, is *Living Marxism* designed to do? Despite pretentious claims by the RCP it is hardly theoretically profound or ideologically challenging - certainly no more so than the old *ins*. What theory there is in the journal is seldom linked to practice. The answer, as always with the RCP, is 'join the RCP'. Hardly a convincing action programme.

Given the journal's orientation, this is not surprising. Editor Mick Hume, talking to *The Guardian*, explained that they were hoping to pick up "young, angry, thinking

people ... *Living Marxism* offers an intellectual alternative to both Bennite views and *Marxism Today*." Obviously it is vital to break the hold of reformist ideas on the working class. But implicit in the above statement - and explicitly stated by RCPers we have talked to - is that the RCP is angling for the same sort of people as *Marxism Today*. The RCP has abandoned in theory what it never truly had in practice - an orientation to advanced workers.

The constituency that *Marxism Today* appeals to is in no way young, militant and working class. *MT*'s brand of coffee table liberalism sells over the news-stands precisely because it gives a radical veneer to preserving the status quo, indulging in a little 'icon smashing' along the way. And all under the guise of 'Marxism' and the CPGB. Unless the RCP wants to furnish us with a 'proof' that the working class does not exist or print a lengthy interview with some rightist *bete noir* (West German Greens do not count) they will have considerable difficulty in reaching out to *MT* orientated readers.



New mag, same old pretensions

With the partial exception of Ireland, the RCP shares *Marxism Today*'s disdain for genuine internationalism. This is illustrated by an article on Iran in number 4 in which Daniel Nassim goes no further than furnishing minimal factual text, tells us that imperialism is the enemy (true, but...) and then states: "It is unclear what will happen in Iran." Isn't it miraculous how the RCP's brand of 'Marxism' unravels the complexities of the world? Of course this is a miserable apology for analysis, let alone internationalism.

The Iranian regime is riven with contradictions, Iranian society is showing signs of exploding once more as in the late seventies and political prisoners in Khomeini's jails have been victims of a wholesale massacre. This, though, is of scant concern to the RCP.

The Leninist has campaigned, alongside revolutionaries from Iran, on the issue of the massacres. We have fought to strengthen links with Iranian communists. Unlike the RCP we recognise that these events have an important bearing on the world revolution. This, in contrast to the RCP, is genuine internationalism.

We have said that the 'theory' of *Living Marxism* is both speculative and mediocre. This is borne out by Frank Richards' article in number one, 'Revolutions don't come from above' on Gorbachev and the Soviet Union. Richards' thesis, more roundly developed in Furedi's *The Soviet Union Demystified* is that the Soviet Union is a unique social formation, stagnant and at a dead end. In the book tenuous theories are constructed on the basis of some useful empirical evidence. The *Living Marxism* article lacks

the book's statistics, but retains the dubious theories. In effect we have little more than generalities, truisms and an opinion. For all the RCP's bragging that they have a 'new' theory of the Soviet Union, all they have done is to acquire a second hand dogma from Glasgow University professor, Hillel Ticktin.

The article finishes with the statement: "We were right in the thirties when the European left was convinced that Stalin had all the answers. We were right in the sixties when Mao was the left's man of the moment. We are right in the eighties when Gorbachev is installed as the left's new icon." (p10).

Who, pray, is this 'we'? The RCP makes big of its claim of being oh-so new and unblemished. Yet now we find that it fought Stalin's opportunism in the thirties and challenged Maoism in the sixties. What dishonest rubbish. The conclusion of Richards' article on the Soviet Union is less of an analysis, more slipshod sleight of hand.

Living Marxism's method of polemic, in keeping with other RCP publications, is dishonest. Unlike the RCP, we are told, 'the left' supports Gorbachev, has illusions in the Labour Party, and so on and so forth. This may be an effective form of packaging and of insulating your periphery, but it is hardly honest. We, on the other hand, have always believed that dealing with organisation's real positions is the only way to defeat them and to forge a genuine Communist Party. Nice design and glossy packaging, while no doubt an asset, are no substitute.

The more that the RCP goes into print, the more these glaring contradictions will come to light. We trust that the *Living Marxism* team, feet firmly inserted in mouths, will give us much more ammunition in future issues.

Revolutionaries who are not looking for a left *Marxism Today*, but for a paper which combines genuine Marxist theory with revolutionary practice know where to find us. We have every confidence that they will.

Sean Quinn

Malaise

Ben Pimlot (ed), *Samizdat*, No1, November 1988, pp24, £2.50
New Statesman and Society, *Charter 88*, 1988, unpriced

THESE two recent publications graphically illustrate the malaise of the British left. The inability of the bourgeois opposition to present an effective challenge to the single-minded class war administration of the Tories has precipitated a desperate search for an initiative that will give it political relevance.

Rather than any sort of programme for practical action that could galvanise and direct mass discontent against the Tories, however, these forces collapse into the hopeless search for electoral alliances and other reformist shibboleths that can unseat the boggy woman - Thatcher.

The Charter 88 initiative was launched late last year by the magazine *New Statesman and Society*, claiming support "far beyond the ranks of the 'left', however broadly defined." The Charter thus includes in its orbit 'lefty' academics like Perry Anderson and Ralph Milliband through to avowed bourgeois politicians like Roy Jenkins and Michael Meadowcroft. It is thus a living embo-

diment of the politics of electoral pacts and the search for consensus that is coming to dominate the discussions within the bourgeois opposition.

Such a project can only 'gel' of course, on the basis of generalities and banal assertions about 'democracy' in general. Thus the Charter pontificates about the need for a Bill of Rights to: "Enshrine ... such civil liberties as the right to peaceful assembly, to freedom of association, to freedom from discrimination, to freedom from detention without trial, to trial by jury, to privacy and to freedom of expression."

Yes, that would be nice, wouldn't it? Unfortunately, it is only necessary to utter a single word in order to explode the cosily vague alliance of these left and right liberals of various hues: *Ireland*.

The paper commitments to 'democracy' of people like Roy Jenkins ring a little hollow when that embarrassing subject crops up. For example, what worth should we put on Charter 88's opposition to "detention without trial", given that one of its most famous signatories - Roy Jenkins, in fact - actually introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act when he was Labour Home Secretary?

Or on the "right to peaceful assembly" - as when Irish republicans seek to bury their dead with some dignity, only to be repeatedly attacked by the thugs of the RUC and British security forces? Or on "freedom of association"? Tell that to Sinn Fein activists, constantly harassed as they carry on their legitimate political agitation. Or on "freedom from detention without trial"? In the land of internment and Diplock courts, such hypocritical crap, coming from the mouths of the likes of Jenkins and other explicitly pro-imperialist pundits who feel themselves qualified to put their names to the Charter's coy bleatings, can only raise a cynical laugh.

The abstract platitudes of such forces about 'democracy' and 'inalienable rights' tend to evaporate when related to the concrete rights of real people in a real struggle.

Samizdat attempts to avoid this type of problem by saying as little as it possibly can. According to its preamble: "*Samizdat* is not a party or an alliance or an ideology or a conspiracy." Oh, well, that doesn't really leave a lot, does it? "It is, very modestly, a newsletter".

Samizdat's editorial attempts to have it both ways as far as electoral pacts and alliances are concerned: [*Samizdat*] "does not seek to erect imaginary coalitions or fanciful electoral pacts. The recent experience of 'alliance' in British politics

has not been particularly hopeful. But *Samizdat* is also concerned that the present divisions within the opposition ... keep the government in power".

Yet further in the same piece it admits the "irony" that "many of the ideas in the various party policy reviews come from a common pool." In practice, therefore, publications like *Samizdat* are an expression of the move towards convergence of the politics of the 'official' opposition and the impetus, whether conscious or not, to electoral alliance and cooperation.

For instance, Christopher Huhne - a weekly columnist in *The Guardian* and a member of the Democrats - headlines his article on non-Tory economic policy "Spot the difference competition" and points out that "hunting for specific disagreements on economic policy among the opposition parties becomes almost embarrassing."

It is particularly 'embarrassing' given the fact that these parties not only have few specific differences between each other, but there really is not that much that separates them from the Tories anymore. Flicking through the journal, the reader's eye is drawn to various highlighted passages which illustrate this: "Many of the left are trapped in a cultural ghetto which is hostile to economic success"; "The welfare state should not impose dependency on people as the price of supporting them"; "The non-right knows that they oppose inequality, but they are no longer sure why", etc.

Elsewhere in *Samizdat* we get the inane and slightly bizarre ramblings of the likes of writer Margaret Drabble: "Enough of this ancient regime of prawn cocktail eaters and prawn cocktail wiper-uppers: let us all wipe up our own mess and clean our own baths (except when on holiday)."

Now there's a rallying cry that can surely move masses. Yet we should not be too hard on the likes of Drabble. The middle class desperation she expresses is only a more hysterical and less political version of the despair that underpins the existence of *Samizdat* in the first place.

What we are witnessing is a convergence of the main opposition parties around a tacit 'Thatcherite' consensus. The consequent loss of political identity inevitably leads to the desperate scramble for the search for relevance through alliance and pacts. That miserable enterprise is the hidden agenda of the likes of Charter 88 and *Samizdat*. And that is why they should be looked on with total contempt by all genuine working class partisans.

Alec Long

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NHS: Organise for action

HEALTH Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, claims that his *Working for patients* white paper on the NHS represents: "A change of pace rather than a fundamental change of direction ... to make the health service a place where patients come first." Leaving aside Clarke's hypercritical cant about patient care, he does have a point. Labourite critics who have rushed to defend 'our' NHS, which apparently is 'the envy of the world', have conveniently forgotten its squalid run down state, growing waiting lists and how its decline has been taking place over the last 15 to 20 years (ie under both Tory and Labour governments).

The NHS was a sop to the post-World War II working class. And like any reform under capitalism always liable to be taken away given the changing needs of profit. Clarke's proposals do not come out of thin air. They are a result of capitalism's inability to meet the increasing health needs of a more mature and rightly far more demanding population.

Nevertheless the white paper represents a *qualitative* development. The Tories have dramatically upped the stakes and now have a major advantage over the health workers - a political strategy. They initially suffered badly from their lack of a coherent alternative to the health industry as presently constituted. Last year's heroic strike action of nurses and other health workers, with a growing swell of working class solidarity behind them, threw the government off balance.

Evidently, Thatcher had intended to wait for a fourth term in order to unleash a full blooded assault on health care provision for the working class and the pay and conditions of the workers in the industry. The spontaneous upsurge by rank and file workers found the Tories ill-prepared and disorientated.

This opened up cracks in their ranks. John Biffen, a leading Tory MP, went on record as deploring the "macho-politics" approach of the government on this issue. What in essence he was highlighting was the lack of an ideological platform; the government simply appeared to be running down the health service out of callous indifference.

Clarke's 'internal market' proposals are meant to recapture the high ground for the Tories on this politically sensitive issue. Thatcher herself has drawn parallels between the Tories' previous shifting of the ideological goal posts in order to attack housing, education and local government finance and what they hope now to do in the field of health. Obviously, key areas of the health industry are being 'softened up' for Thatcherisation, leaving the NHS itself as a cash strapped safety net shorn up by do-gooding charity mongers.

If we look at Clarke's proposals, we can see the main thrust of the Tories' offensive centres on how hospitals are financed and the way that GPs operate. Self-governing trusts are to be created to run bigger hospitals independently of district health authorities and in competition with each other. GP group practices with at least 11,000

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patients (there are some 1,000 nationally) are effectively to become limited companies with their own 'indicative budgets' for drugs and allocations of about £500,000 a year to pay for in patients, out patients and day care at hospitals.

In effect, these 'mixed economy' proposals will, when they come into effect in April 1991, create a two tier system of health care. There will be production line hospital treatment and cost cutting GPs for the proletariat and high tech, high service luxury for the upper middle class and the bourgeoisie itself. Those hospitals that are most 'successful', ie those that have succeeded in terms of profit, will operate on strictly segregated lines - an up market pay bed service for those who can afford it, with the rest of us stuck in overcrowded wards, receiving shoddy and substandard care at the mercy of some 'go getting' hospital manager on an bonus scheme. In order to lessen opposition to this the Tories have attempted to give the health establishment a material stake in reorganising the system.

By encouraging 320 of the country's major hospitals to 'opt out' the government hopes to cultivate a managerial/medical elite which will be able to pocket huge salaries if they successfully compete in the 'market for health care'. Similarly, scrooge GPs who do not 'overspend' on their fixed hospital care/prescription costs are to be allowed to keep half of any 'saving' they make during the year. The slimy Clarke mused in the Commons a few weeks ago that any money GPs make might be invested in a local cottage hospital. Labour's health spokeswoman, Harriet Harman, cuttingly replied that they were far more likely to simply invest it in a cottage for themselves.

The Tories want to create a financial *incentive* for cost cutting, not giving prescriptions and not keeping patients in hospital. And for GPs to take on particularly vulnerable patients - the chronically sick, the elderly - who may need frequent and extended hospital care, is hardly going to be an 'earner'.

Obviously these Tory 'reforms' will lead to a dramatic deterioration in the standards of working class health (which is already appalling compared with the rich). Undoubtedly, the white paper is a prescription for misery and suffering for millions of working class people. Its attacks *must* be fought: they *must* be defeated.

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about reorganising the NHS and attacking the workers in the industry in a crude, 'hatchet job' manner. They have applied their cuts with the precision of a surgeon's scalpel because they now have an overall strategy. Health workers must respond with their own *working class* strategy.

The last two waves of health-workers' action against low pay and poor conditions and the continued run down of the industry have been an inspiration to all workers. Yet they have had important limitations, not least that protests were often headed by figures from the health establishment.

This situation was actively *encouraged* by the spineless leaders of the health unions, who were more anxious to court respectability than strike out for victory. On their insistence the TUC - whose NHS Day Rally in Hyde Park had not one health worker on its platform - was always desperate to dampen down the militant solidarity protests for fear of frightening away middle class sympathy. Yet, as we have seen, the proposals outlined in the white paper attempt to give precisely these type of people a *financial stake* in restructuring the industry.

The middle class elements in the health industry were always unreliable and should never have been seen as firm allies of the health-workers. They should never have been elevated by the treacherous union bureaucracies to spokespersons against the Tories.

This underlines the need for the rank and file of the health unions to dump the defeatist policies of their misleaderships - not only in the RCN but Cohse, Nupe etc - and take command as a force which has an undeviating interest in fighting the government's attacks. The health workers still need allies, of course. But the allies they should be looking for are *other workers*, the very people who rely on the NHS for their already inadequate health care and who are itching to take on the Tories as *class enemies*.

The health workers are potentially one of the most powerful sections of the working class in Britain. The NHS employs over one million workers. The danger of them being fused into a militant fighting army - around which the rest of the proletariat would rally - is the stuff Tory nightmares are made of.

Last October, Clarke claimed to have finally solved the long running dispute with nurses when he

threw an extra £138.5m into the pot to fund a new pay structure. The resulting 'regrading' exercise was a crude attempt to buy off a thin layer of 'top' nurses while comprehensively leaving the mass of nurses *degraded* and super exploited with pay way below the value of their labour power.

Some of Clarke's central proposals are designed to reinforce sectional divisions among the nurses and other health workers. In the new 'opted out' hospitals, management would be free to set pay and conditions for 'their' workers. Those in London and the South East with scarce skills will no doubt receive higher pay. But the bulk of workers will face cost cutting pressures to reduce their already appallingly low living standards. Sectionalism, along with the anti-union laws against 'secondary action', will the government hopes, prevent any united front by health workers on wages and conditions.

This attempt to undermine health workers' unity is objectively aided by the union bureaucrats who have been far more concerned to 'poach' members rather build a fighting united front. There are currently over a dozen different unions in the health industry. Apart from providing jobs for more bureaucrats, what is the *point* of this? Health workers work in one industry, they all face the similar problems and have the same bosses - they should all be in the same union, they should all *strike* as one!

The union fat cats can never build this type of fighting unity. So there is a pressing need for the militant minority of health workers to take the lead and form joint rank and file action committees to take the running of the fightback into their own hands and to link up these unofficial bodies nationally.

Action committees would:

- Consist of elected and recallable delegates.
- Break down the isolation of militants in different hospitals and regions through coming together in a National Health Workers' Militant Movement. This would coordinate overall strategy and tactics, pool resources and experience.
- Cut across the divisive sectional union divides and lay the basis for one union for health workers.

This is the only effective organisational reply to the Tories' attempt to further divide the health workers. It is therefore more than a pity that the SWP - which has an important layer of sympathisers in the health industry - have con-

stantly opposed all proposals to organise rank and file militants (whatever its 'what we stand for' column in *Socialist Worker* says). Militant health workers must bury the downturn defeatism of the SWP and turn to the politics of communism.

After all the key to constructing any effective battle plan does not rely primarily on organisational questions. Health workers and their allies must build their fightback around genuinely *anti-capitalist* politics.

- Fight for the health care that the working class needs not what the system can afford. Workers must have the best health care available.
- No faith in Labourism or its left apologists. What we need is socialist revolution.

The attacks of the Tories are not precipitated by their inability to make a column of figures add. They are a result of the crisis of profitability of British capitalism. If workers in the health industry limit themselves to trying to balance capitalism's books better than Thatcher, then they have lost the fight.

The result of this approach was illustrated by the Labour Party when it was in government. It ran down the public health industry. The NHS was certainly not safe in its hands. The NHS obviously failed to keep up with what the population needed. In a parliamentary exchange on this on January 26 of last year, Thatcher taunted Kinnock with Labour's dismal record. Tory MPs noisily demanded he get to his feet and respond. The windbag stayed emphatically seated.

We, unlike the Labour Party, take as our starting point the health of *the whole population* and the living standards of nurses and other health workers, not the solvency of capitalism.

That should be the central core of a working class strategy for a health workers' victory. If we tie our livelihoods and working class health care provision to arguments about resource allocation, spare money here, hidden resources there, then we are tying our interests as workers to a leaky capitalist ship.

With such an understanding, the health industry rank and file could strike out to achieve unity and all out action both in their own ranks *and* with other workers. The health workers' fight in March of last year provoked solidarity action from, amongst others, Frickley miners, workers from Vauxhall Ellesmere Port, Halewood Ford, Thorn EMI, Lucas, UCW members and local government workers. This type of solidarity multiplied ten thousand fold is *crucial* in any serious confrontation with the government ... and it can only be won on the basis of the political approach we have outlined.

Clarke's new proposals and his lies about maintaining health care are easy to see through. This vicious Tory government can be taken on and beaten. But we can no longer rely on spontaneity to carry us forward in the fight. We need a battle plan: we need one *now!*

Ian Mahoney