

# The LENINIST

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## Unemployed fight back!



**L**AWSON boasts that his high interest rates policies are slowing the economy down. Because of this the prospect for the unemployed looks set to get worse still. Even after fiddling unemployment figures (downwards, of course) over 20 times the Tories admit that the numbers without work will soon be rising back towards two million.

While the Labourites can only offer the working class in general and the unemployed in particular hot air the Unemployed Workers Charter has been actively campaigning to end trade union collaboration with the Tory government's so called 'Employment Training' scheme, along with YTS and all the other cheap labour schemes used to manipulate the unemployment figures and harass the unemployed.

The UWC's campaign was taken to the very door of the 1989 Trades Union Congress on September 4. Its lobby of the TUC was by far the largest, loudest and most militant, it was also the high point of a four day march from Manchester.

Over 20 marchers took part in the trek, setting off from Manchester Town Hall on the evening of Thursday August 31 after a lightning occupation of the Aytoun Street Job Centre, where a performance by the Workers Theatre Movement - which sent a contingent of marchers - put across to both workers and claimants the UWC's case for organisation of the unemployed, before the Manches-

ter constabulary arrived to evict along with Picadilly local radio station looking for an interview.

The march was only possible in the first place because of the generous support given to it by rank and file workers. Manchester UWC won support from numerous local labour movement organisations, with especial thanks having to go to the T&G 6/389 branch, health workers at Prestwich hospital and the Central Manchester CPSA branch. Equally generous was the help received along the route. Marchers were hosted by the students of Salford Tech, Bolton Trades Council, Bolton Socialist Club and Unemployed Centre and local activists in Horwich.

The situation in Preston, however, was different. Preston Trades Council had agreed to provide accommodation, but on the day before the march started a message was received withdrawing all support on the grounds that the march was 'political'. This, of course, is true. Harassing unemployed workers and intimidating employed workers through 'workfare' is political. Fighting back is political. Sabotaging an unemployed march by last minute withdrawal of facilities is also political, but it is the politics of the capitalist class, which loves passive 'innocent victims' and charity but hates workers who organise to fight for their rights.

Nevertheless, the marchers went on to Preston, where the UWC organised a public meeting and

publicly challenged those in the Trades Council who talk about workers' rights and the evils of sectarianism but in practice in effect tried to sabotage a militant action by unemployed workers and their supporters.

Along the route over £200 was collected from ordinary men and women who know full well that unemployment is still a burning issue and that the unemployed deserve support. Many TUC delegates were also very supportive. Most outstanding was the £40 collection at the NGA social. The tops were not so welcoming. Unemployed workers were given the cold shoulder at the official TUC social at the Savoy. Marchers were not allowed to even meet the all-expenses-paid guests (who were given free drink) let alone appeal to them for support.

During the course of the lobby itself UWC leaders attempted, yet again, to present TUC representatives with the petition the UWC has been collecting over the last year demanding that the TUC fight unemployment on the basis of the UWC's fighting charter of demands.

The petition contains 20,000 signatures collected in workplaces, union branches, dole offices and on the street from both unemployed and employed workers, including members of many different trade unions, who want the TUC to recognise its responsibility to all workers, to the working class as a whole, including unemployed

workers.

As the UWC's Honorary President Ernie Roberts pointed out at the lunchtime fringe meeting, the millions of unemployed in Britain today include in their number the sacked victims of numerous defeats - miners, printers and seamen, to name but a few - of struggles fought and lost on the basis of sectionalism. Victory requires fighting back as a class, and the TUC ought to accept its responsibility to the unemployed.

The UWC wrote to the TUC asking that the petition be officially received at Congress. The official TUC reply dated August 14 1989 states that the TUC is "not able to accept petitions." However, Mike Smith, Head of the Press and Information Department, was evidently so embarrassed by the crass indifference to the needs of unemployed workers which this bureaucratic answer represented that he scribbled his own handwritten message to the effect that the petition could be handed in at the information desk. We understand your embarrassment, Brother Smith, but the UWC will not demean the unemployed and the thousands of employed workers who have signed it by delivering their petition to an 'information desk'. The TUC should show respect for the unemployed. It should show elementary working class solidarity by getting an official to publicly receive the UWC petition!

The spontaneous rank and file

support enjoyed by the marchers along their route contrasts sharply with the cold shoulder from the TUC 'leadership'. And no wonder. Desperate for 'new realist' respectability it does not want anything to do with class struggle. Because of this it is prepared to shun the unemployed and undermine every trade union struggle. And not only has the TUC gone against its own resolution passed last year to boycott the work-for-dole ET scheme it now actively collaborates with it. In practice if not in words, it has also capitulated to the idea of an 'acceptable level of unemployment', levels far in excess of those which gave rise to its first 'Peoples March for Jobs'. Kinnoek is not even promising to fight for full employment, but merely one million less jobless ... and that through its own version of the Tories hated ET and YTS!

The fight to end trade union collaboration with all the government's slave labour schemes must be taken up systematically within each trade union and through resolutions to next year's TUC. At the same time the unemployed must organise themselves to fight for their own rights, and look to rank and file trade unionists for support. It is to that task the UWC sets itself.

- Build the Unemployed Workers Charter!
- Smash ET and all slave labour schemes!
- Organise the Unemployed!

Stan Kelsey



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:  
for a genuine Communist Party

DRUGS are being heavily hyped by the bourgeoisie at the moment. In Britain the state is going wild against innocuous acid house parties, launching heavily armed police at the unsuspecting merry-makers. In America US president George Bush threatens to do the same on a grand scale over Colombia.

We are told that drugs are undermining the very foundations of civilisation. A bleak picture is painted of drug crazed degenerates roaming the streets preying on little old ladies to finance their habit.

This is just so much crap.

In the last century the use of opium based drugs, among others, was commonplace among the ruling classes. Literary treasures such as Taylor Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* were produced as a result of their influence.

It was not until well into this century that prohibitive legislation on drugs was introduced, that is after the 'lower orders' caught on to the habits of their 'betters'. Even then, various substances at various times have achieved a certain tolerance, with Hunter S Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* emerging as the latterday equivalent of the work of its Victorian dope head predecessors.

Of course, the illicit trade in drugs has created problems for the bourgeoisie and its state. The crime and general anarchic effect of this underground trade on social stability has prompted the *Economist* and a number of Friedmanite free traders to lobby for the legalisation of drugs, so that it can be regulated and revenue gained from it.

We do not make it a habit of agreeing with the *Economist*, but on this occasion its conclusions are correct, if for the wrong reasons. The profits of the capitalists are of no concern to us. The way in which drugs are used against the working class are.

Many drugs, after all, are legal - for instance, tobacco and alcohol, which bring premature death to millions. It is no surprise that in this society people resort to drugs, legal and illegal, as an escape. The problem is not with drugs *per se* but capitalist society.

Driving the drug trade underground makes it all the more insidious. It also leads to the criminalisation of a whole layer of the working class. If large numbers of people under capitalism need such an escape then the only genuine way we can deal with this is by destroying this society and building one where all such drugs, whether smack or alcohol, are superfluous.

The bosses' drug scare plays an important role in the ideological armoury of the ruling class. In the US it has been used to encourage revanchist sentiment, with a recent poll showing that 53% of the US would support sending in US soldiers to Colombia to deal with the drug traders in their own inimitable style. It has also been used as an overtly racist way, with the black community lined up for attack as harbourers of drug dealers. Such racism is not just confined to the 'moral right', but also taps into the prejudices of opportunism.

The *Morning Star* of September 1 fails right into step with the beat of the imperialist drum. Shrieking of the 'epidemic proportions' of drug abuse, its editorial calls for 'international cooperation, preferably under the aegis of the UN, rather than by individual states' military adventurism'. The 'nice' soldiers of the UN should replace those of the 'nasty' US. In no way would real communists support any military intervention. Such 'official communists' cannot see the question of drugs as a class question, one which only our class can deal with. Relying on capitalism in any form to deal with it assists only its fight against workers at home, particularly black workers.

We do not support reactionary 'solutions' to drug abuse through greater powers to the capitalist state. All drugs should be legalised and available on the NHS. Drugs are not the main enemy; the society which turns people to them is.

Deputy Editor

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## LETTERS

### HOI and the IRSP

The following is the position of the Republican Socialist Movement in relation to recent developments within Hands Off Ireland!

As a movement involved in the revolutionary struggle in Ireland, our participation in relation to events in Britain is at all times geared towards the eventual building of a unified anti-imperialist solidarity movement.

It was with this aim in mind that we sponsored the Hands Off Ireland! contingent on the 'Time To Go' march in London on August 12 1989. Our view then, as now is that intervention on the march was the sole role for Hands Off Ireland!. Any discussions on the building of a solidarity movement were hopefully to follow from the coming together of the various groups supporting the Hands Off Ireland! intervention.

As I am sure you will recall we were extremely concerned at both the premature and presumptuous manner in which Hands Off Ireland! was founded. We made our feelings known both to yourselves and through the columns of *An Cancheachta [Starry Plough]* at the time. Nevertheless, in the absence of any other avowedly anti-imperialist initiative, we felt that Hands Off Ireland! warranted our support.

We now find that hardly had the 'Time To Go' march ended, than criticisms remarkably similar to those levelled over *The Leninist's* handling of the founding of Hands Off Ireland! were raised in connection with your actions at the August 13 meeting.

There can be no doubt, after studying the report of the meeting of the 13th sent by our support group representative, that it was the premeditated intention of *The Leninist* to railroad through a predetermined agenda. The whole affair was conducted in a very clinical and arrogantly cynical manner, with the meeting being stacked to ensure an inbuilt *Leninist* majority.

Comrades, it says very little for the strength of belief in the logic of the position put forward in relation to Hands Off Ireland! by *The Leninist*, when such shabby tactics have to be resorted to.

We view this latest development with serious concern. Hands Off Ireland!, which at its inception, appeared to make an attempt to involve other groups, has now manifested itself as a front for *The Leninist*, and this is as reprehensible as the IFM being a front for the RCP. If the Hands Off Ireland! initiative is allowed to proceed unhindered as you propose, it too will end up in the same political backwater as the IFM.

We in the Republican Socialist Movement are committed to the construction of an anti-imperialist solidarity movement in Britain. To that end we will meet and discuss the formation, on a principled basis of such a movement, with groups genuinely interested in such.

Given the lamentable conduct of *The Leninist* in relation to what had the potential to become a working solidarity movement, the IRSP therefore refuses to be used to give spurious legitimacy to Hands Off Ireland! and having said this, our endorsement is formally withdrawn.

We hope that the comrades of *The Leninist* will reconsider the isolated position that they have managed to put themselves into,

and together with others bring about the development of a solidarity movement, the only movement with any hope of winning the allegiance of the British working class to the demands 'Troops Out Now' and 'Self Determination for the Irish Nation'.

Kevin McQuillan  
Central Committee, IRSP

Alan Merrick replies:

I have addressed the political questions relating to this in the centre pages. However, the information which the comrades have on the conference is misleading, and I will correct some of the most significant errors here.

Firstly, we did not "railroad through a predetermined agenda". The content of the conference was presented by the HOI! secretary over a month in advance. All HOI! affiliates were entitled to attend the conference and submit resolutions and amendments even on the conference floor.

We do not deny that supporters of *The Leninist* were in a majority - just, for that matter, as they were the majority of activists building for the contingent. Red Action mustered a contingent of one, despite a commitment to provide numbers to ensure the security of the HOI! contingent. Red Action also saw fit to send only one person to the conference, though no restriction was placed on individual affiliates. Were we to exclude HOI! activists because they are supporters of *The Leninist*? What goes for Red Action unfortunately also goes for the IRSP support group. It promised to provide both a banner and a colour party on the contingent. No one turned up, and only one comrade came to the conference. Both comrades, incidentally, arrived at the conference one and a half hours late! How do you 'railroad' two people who are not even there for the bulk of the time?

The organising committee was elected from comrades who had provided the backbone of activity to build the HOI! contingent. Despite the fact that the IRSP support group and Red Action had provided between them exactly one person two seats were reserved for them on this committee. It is also despite the fact that the IRSP representative voted against the main resolution on the basis that the slogans were inadequate - slogans which comrade McQuillan states support for. The fact that the IRSP chooses to withdraw and then turn round and accuse HOI! of being a front for *The Leninist* is most paradoxical.

We earnestly hope the IRSP reconsiders its position and continues to support the only campaign capable of building an anti-imperialist solidarity movement - Hands Off Ireland!

### HOI! Lies

Comrades from Hands Off Ireland! will be amused by a rumour currently doing the rounds in certain political circles.

At the recent HOI! conference, two representatives from other political organisations turned up over one and a half hours late, missing the main bulk of the conference. These two comrades were full of apologies for their absence, which they put down to a silly mistake on their part. After turning up at the wrong venue on the other side of London, they'd hightailed it home, unearthed the HOI! conference notification with the venue prominently advertised and eventually had made it to the meet-

ing. This was a shame, but these things sometimes happen.

A month or so ago, however, I was confidently informed by a Red Action member that these two comrades had been deliberately told the wrong venue as part of a sordid political con-trick organised by *The Leninist*!

This type of bullshit is almost beneath comment. Simple logic should suffice to tell people that this is not true: the two comrades eventually showed up after re-reading the conference notification sent to them and everyone else by HOI!. Evidently they screwed up.

But I wonder if other Leninist and HOI! comrades are as weary as I am of all this crap. The British left has revealed its stupid, blinkered sectarianism over the HOI! initiative. It has responded to HOI!'s principled calls for unity, not with open argument ad polemic, but crude rumour-mongering and lies. The example I cite in this letter is simply the latest and the most petty pernicious.

If other left organisations have to stoop to such dirty tactics in order to attempt to stain the reputation of HOI! it must place a question mark the size of an airfield over not simply their morals, but their politics in general.

Mark Fischer  
Manchester

### Opportunist

Seeing members of the Communist Party of Britain selling the *Morning Star* the other Saturday, I offered them a copy of *The Leninist*, plugging the supplement on the *British Road to Socialism*.

Being active members of the CPB I thought they might be open to critical polemic; after all, if the *BRS* is the programme of the British working class for socialism, they would have the confidence to read a few words from what is in their opinion an 'inferior' organisation.

The response was no. *The Leninist* is irrelevant, sectarian and far removed from the masses. Anyway, they asked, what were we doing about the poll tax. I responded by asking what they were doing about it; how effective were they and just how were they going to fight it? The reply was 'by non payment'. Inspiring. So how were the masses going to be organised in a campaign of non payment? No reply.

And what is the CPB doing about unemployment? To which was said, 'we are working through the TUC unemployed workers centres'. But not to smash ET, obviously. Not to do anything, given the rate at which these non political tea and sympathy centres are being shut down. No response: end of conversation, and the CPBers turned to make friendly noises to the nearby *Socialist Worker* sellers. Opportunists of the world unite!

Nita Patel  
Wembley

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.

# Honing the weapon

The Workers Theatre Movement has rightly been acclaimed for its work. Jack Conrad spoke to its director Tom MacCormack about its origins and what the future has in store

**When was the Workers Theatre Movement first set up and where did the idea for it come from?**

The idea for a new Workers Theatre Movement came through my own development in theatre and politics. I always wanted to be involved in theatre with a revolutionary purpose. Various tentative attempts were made, some quite successful. But it was the discovery through Raphael Samuel's book about the original Workers Theatre Movement, which existed in the 1920s and early 30s, that really sparked things off. Reading the original scripts with their fusion of theatre and politics, the razor sharp use of theatre as a weapon in the class struggle, pointed the way forward.

In 1987 I worked with various actor friends to try and see what we could do. But this ran into difficulties, both political and personal. I realised that something more was needed - the link with a vanguard organisation was vital: for me that organisation was *The Leninist* and time has proved it.

**When did things first come together?**

Things really came together in 1988. We got an initial core together which we called the Workers Theatre Movement, both in recognition of the past and as a promise of what we were going to create. Its first action was to perform at the send off concert of the Unemployed Workers Charter lobby of the TUC and to support the actual lobby itself. This proved hugely successful.

Since then there have been people who have come and gone but the WTM has gone from strength to strength, and has now, a year later, come of age. It is now firmly established.

**There must have been all sorts of difficulties along the road. What comes to mind?**

There have been difficulties aplenty but we have learnt from them all. We started off by performing pieces from the 1930s and trying to master the necessary techniques. It was, however, relatively easy to work out how they should be performed; they had their own dynamism, their own structure. In terms of projection there was a bigger problem though. Too often we were simply drowned out by modern traffic. We have overcome this with the use of megaphones, a qualitative leap for us.

In terms of politics, we have had people from different political groups involved. But those organised in various petty bourgeois left factions like the SWP and *Militant* haven't proved to be a major problem. Most have been rather badly equipped ideologically.

As for the group as a whole the sharpest arguments have been over Ireland. The *Twenty years* piece



Agitprop for the vanguard party

really set the cat among the pigeons ideologically. Not surprisingly. Abstractly Ireland might have many similarities with South Africa, Nicaragua or any other struggle for national self determination. But, and it's a big but, it's our soldiers who are being killed and it is our ruling class which feels its 'United Kingdom' directly threatened.

**So politically working on new pieces has caused more political problems than the old ones from the 1930s?**

Yes. Again not surprisingly. The first new piece we put on was *May Day '89*, an adaptation from the 1930s. Few had difficulty with the original's glowing references to the first five year plan in the USSR and attacks on Ramsay MacDonald. That all seemed to be in the dim and distant past. Yet the mere mention of Ireland as well as giving our own day's class traitors, Gorbachev and Kinnock, the same drubbing the 1930s WTM reserved for MacDonald caused some heated discussion: no bad thing. Because of the strength of our argument we won.

We also won because of the powerful impact our new pieces had on those we performed it to, not least dockers with *Dockers '89*. The audience has convinced many a performer.

We went down with militant dockers to their lobby of the T&G conference in Brighton. Some of them might have thought we were only well meaning theatrical types. The piece itself disabused any who might have entertained any such notion. It had the answers to their problems and centred around a no holds barred attack on Ron Todd's misleadership. We got an extremely warm response ... Vic Turner, one of the Pentonville 5, in particular came forward with praise.

**Have you had many 'difficult' audiences?**

A few. Political theatre is only just being recreated in Britain. Some don't know quite how to react. For

example, when we performed *Twenty years* for the first time, members of Red Action felt very threatened by it. Not its politics but the mere fact of theatre. They got embarrassed and childishly giggled. In contrast when we took it to the IFM demo which was 1,000 plus strong...

**They claim 3,000.**

Well the RCP has problems that way. But the response was really fantastic. Not only in their applause but their concentration on it. They certainly didn't dismiss it as just "*The Leninist's* theatre group". They liked its politics and showed their solidarity with a splendid collection ... something we can't say for the organisers of the 'Time to Go' demonstration who tried to stop us performing. Though because of the positive response from the audience they 'thanked' and 'congratulated' us when we'd finished.

**How did the WTM go down on the Unemployed Workers Charter march on this year's TUC in Blackpool?**

The UWC march really brought the group together and the WTM proved very effective at meetings and keeping morale up. However we still need to learn how to get over to the man and women in the street. Many suggestions have been made from below here about how we hone our techniques and improve our presentation. Of course, the main problem is the political mood in the working class. It's changing, but only slowly. In essence we all agree that what we are doing at the moment is learning and preparing for the future.

**Talking about the future, what immediate plans are there for the WTM? Obviously it does not believe in just waiting around for things to happen but making things happen.**

That's right. As readers will see in this edition of *The Leninist* we have produced a paper, *Workers Theatre*. This is a big step forward for the WTM. It opens up all sorts of possibilities for spreading our roots in the class and sets us up to really consolidate ourselves organisationally.

So far the WTM has basically been a one man dictatorship, a one man show if you like. This was necessary, but no longer.

After our first Annual General Meeting in October the WTM will be run by a democratically elected committee which will have prime responsibility for commissioning new pieces and deciding what direction we take. This is not democracy for democracy's sake. Rather it gives us the means to up the stakes for all those involved and will I'm sure really take the whole thing forward to a far higher level.

After a summer of struggles across the public sector, Fowler, the 'Employment' Secretary has announced another round of attacks on our class. In proposed legislation the government hopes to outlaw strikes in "essential services". Likely targets are electricity, water and gas. The proposed legislation also demands that before 'endorsing' industrial action, union tops consider several factors including the size of the majority, the possibility of using arbitration and reconsidering the need for action as a result of any "changed circumstances". In other words 51% will no longer be a majority. What does the *Morning Star* have to say about the renewed attacks on the class? In its editorial of September 9, the *Star* calls for support of a token TUC lobby of parliament, arguing that a "lobby of parliament could be part of a TUC-organised day of action." We must place no faith in the TUC to fight state attacks on our class. Militants must instead look to themselves and the lessons of the Pentonville 5, who were imprisoned in 1972 for breaking Heath's Industrial Relations Act. Sustained rank and file action forced the TUC to threaten a general strike, which resulted in the release of the five and the effective smashing of the Industrial Relations Act. CA

Supporters of *The Leninist* were pleased to join hundreds of Turkish and Kurdish comrades in the Camden Centre recently to celebrate the 69th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Turkey and the successful conclusion of their biggest ever fundraising campaign - the 13th "Summer Attack". Building on the tradition of self-sacrifice and commitment established in the days of the first Summer Attacks a total of £102,000 was raised by 165 comrades in Britain (this will be added to what the Party has raised in Germany, France etc and, of course, Turkey itself). The highest individual figure was £2,300 and a string of comrades topped £1,000. Among the militant banners around the hall was a portrait of the late Bedir Aydemir, who was incidentally a great friend of *The Leninist*. An appeal from the floor not to leave comrade Bedir out of the proceedings invoked an impromptu collection of £2,006 in his name. Following a number of Turkish language sketches, the Workers Theatre Movement performed *Twenty years* and was rapturously received, especially the delivery of the slogan "smash the prison bars" in Turkish and Kurdish. IF



Communists in Britain can learn much from the commitment and revolutionary struggle of the Communist Party of Turkey

National Union of Teachers members will soon be voting for a new deputy general secretary Rightwinger Doug McAvooy, who was backed by the Broad 'Left', has moved onwards and upwards. But with the transparent rightism of the BL shown up through its conservative use of its majority on the union's executive many of its supporters have become unhappy. In fact disunity has broken out, with various factions nominating their own candidates; through packing one BL meeting members of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) got their executive member Ken Bore nominated. Bore is disliked not only on the left of the union but also by large sections of the BL. The Euros want someone with a more moderate image! Jim Ferguson is their man. Within weeks of Bore announcing that he was the BL candidate, fellow BL member and ex-CPGB member Ferguson stated that he would stand. However NUT president and Euro CP member, June Fischer, says she will back someone even more right wing. Who supporters of the *Morning Star* and NCP will back is not clear, though in the past they have always lined up behind the official BL candidate. These divisions in the BL have also surfaced in elections for an executive member for outer London, where BL supporters John Pool and Euro Marion Darke are fighting each other. The left has one candidate, Mary Hufford, who will benefit from the BL split and stands a chance of winning. TC

## Price increase



When *The Leninist* was first published as a paper in 1984 its price was 30p. Costs have obviously risen steadily since then ... and the Tories failure to keep inflation down has only added to what we have to pay out in order to publish. As a result of inflation and the relatively consistent shortfall in our £600 monthly fighting fund we have decided to increase our cover price by 20p (this will not affect existing subscribers). We know that the price increase will not particularly effect our circulation. The vast majority of existing readers will pay 50p just as readily as they paid 30p for the paper of the *Leninists*. Of course, this does not mean that we can afford to let up on our instance that the monthly fund must be met. In July we were £125 down, in August £107. We can't afford a similar shortfall in September. Many comrades realise that ... but nowhere near enough.

# Internationalism and revolution



Marching against the British state

**Communists stand for the abolition of nations, which are themselves nothing but a product of capitalist society. But we understand that only by combatting national oppression can we hope to achieve this**

**H**ANDS OFF Ireland! caused much disension on the left when it was established last year to challenge the chauvinist 'Time To Go' campaign. The decision to continue fighting for a mass working class solidarity movement seems to have stirred the dust up even more. We are hardly grief stricken by such a hostile reaction. In fact we welcome it; if nothing else, the very existence of HOI! has stimulated debate on how we build such a movement, and in the course of the debate — or in some cases, its conspicuous absence — has gone some way to clearing the ground.

The ideological struggle, which is far from over, is a vital and inescapable component in the political fight for such a movement. Political clarity and theoretical precision is needed. Twenty years of failure on this front testify to its absence in other attempts, past and present. So it is therefore imperative that we understand precisely what we are fighting for and why we are fighting for it. That isn't half so strange as it sounds, given that the majority of the left who claim to be committed are victims of errors, if not a vacuum, in their theory.

On what basis are we building a solidarity movement? Should it be the duty of such a movement to follow the line put forward by those we are striving to build solidarity with?

Many on the left would denounce as presumptuous and chauvinist any attempt to do otherwise, whether it be to cut across the wishes of the ANC, PLO or, in this context, Sinn Fein. But communists have a duty to think for themselves, to establish an independent proletarian line. This excludes following the line of petty bourgeois national liberation movements, no matter how heroic their struggles. We are not tailists. Communists are opposed to every form of nationalism, as Lenin recognised: "class conscious workers fight hard against every kind of nationalism" (CW, Vol 20, p289).

Our principles are irreconcilable with every form of nationalism, no matter how red it may choose to paint itself. The nationalism of the oppressed and their organisations, such as Sinn Fein, has a general democratic content, but it is that democratic content to which we give our unconditional support, not nationalism itself or the overall programme of

the organisation.

Lenin stressed this in *The Right of Nations to Self Determination*: "the proletariat's policy on the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie's policy. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only in order to secure national peace ... in order to secure equal rights and to create the best conditions for the class struggle. Therefore, it is in opposition to the practicality of the bourgeoisie that the proletarians advance their principles in the national question; they always give the bourgeoisie only conditional support." (*Ibid*, Vol 20, p409).

Communists stand for the abolition of nations, which are themselves nothing but a product of capitalist society. But we understand that only by combatting national oppression can we hope to achieve this.

Again, Lenin made this point in his article *Critical remarks on the national question*, where he stated: "The proletariat cannot support any consecration of nationalism; on the contrary, it supports everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers; it supports everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations. To act differently means siding with reactionary nationalist philistinism." (*Ibid*, pp35-6).

The genuine unity of nations — and in particular their working classes — was Lenin's starting point, as it had been Marx's. This can only be achieved through defeating the denial of rights to the oppressed nations, in particular the right to secede, by the imperialist oppressor nations. Such oppression, unless combatted and smashed, seals the separation of different national working classes. This was and is a fundamentally political question.

The Bolsheviks' policy on the national question was to break the ties of political oppression of nations by imperialism precisely to strengthen the voluntary economic, cultural etc, ties between all nations, not to have them hermetically sealed off.

It is worth noting this with regard to those who advocate on principle discrete national workers' organisations (eg, trade unions) on national terrain, especially with regard to Ireland. Lenin polemicised in the above quoted article against a Ukrainian nationalist who, he said, "acts like a real bourgeois, and a short sighted, narrow minded, obtuse bourgeois at that, ie, like a philistine, when he dismisses the benefits to be gained from the intercourse, amalgamation and assimilation of the proletariat of the two nations, for the sake of the momentary successes of the Ukrainian national cause" (*Ibid*, pp31-2).

He strenuously warned against this "most refined form of nationalism which preaches the equality of nations together with ... the splitting up of the workers' organisations and the working class movement according to nationality." (*Ibid*, p289).

Raising the slogan of the right of nations to self determination in no way entails tailism of those forces within the oppressed nation fighting for it. Lenin warned against 'painting red' bourgeois liberation forces, advocating unconditional support for the democratic content of this struggle but only conditional support for the struggle as a whole.

In fact, unlike 'anti-imperialists' such as the Revolutionary Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party, who supported the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Gulf conflict, he urged support for revolts "against our chief enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states" only on the condition that "it is not the revolt of a reactionary class" (CW, Vol 22, p333). Genuine anti-imperialism means a little more than being able to muster enough strength than to set light to the red, white and blue. It must have a revolutionary democratic content.

And there is a big difference between defending the right to secede and advocating secession. We defend unconditionally the right to divorce, yet we do not advocate that all couples avail themselves of that right. It is just so with the relation between nations. We are for the unity of nations. This can only be achieved through the guarantee of political equality through having the right to self determination. It would be criminal to take secession itself as a principle.

The fight for such democratic rights is inseparably bound up with the fight for socialist revolution. This being so, the question arises of not just what principles we fight for but how we fight for them. Various organisations in Britain have at various times sought to assert Ireland's right to self determination through constitutional means, whether it be the Independent Labour Party during the Tan War or the 'official communists', Troops Out Movement and 'Time To Go' over the last twenty years.

This is not the Marxist approach. For us, the democratic struggle in all its forms can only be the struggle for revolution. Pursuing a constitutionalist strategy with regard to Irish self determination is objectively reactionary, reinforcing illusions in the British state.

Lenin argued that the struggle for the right of self determination "must be formulated and put forward in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, ie, up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie." (*Ibid*, Vol 22, p145).

Lenin and the Communist International fought for a vindication in practice of Marx's belief that the successful and revolutionary culmination of Ireland's fight for freedom was a precondition for the freedom of the working class in Britain. The Comintern therefore demanded from the communists in Britain the fullest and most active support for this struggle. 'Socialists' in Britain who failed in this support not only betrayed the Irish people but also the working class in Britain. As the oft-quoted phrase from the Comintern goes, they deserved to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet.

Communists from Marx onwards have understood the main function of solidarity in the oppressor nation with the oppressed as being training the working class of that nation to take on and smash 'their own' state: "the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition of their own social emancipation." (Marx, from Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p408).

The founders of the scientific communism battled hard and long to take the issue of Irish freedom to the very heart of the working class in Britain, mobilising many tens of thousands around a revolutionary platform directed against the state. It makes 'TTG's few thousand mobilised on a 'broad' reformist platform all seem rather pathetic, doesn't it? A century on, these achievements tower over the failures of the left in this phase of the Irish struggle for liberation as a monument to the failure of opportunists and as an inspiration for communists.

It is not the point that campaigns like 'Time To Go' do not go far enough. The truth is that they go in entirely the wrong direction. Irish self determination is a class question. Any 'solidarity movement' must be judged on its attitude to the state. Presenting British workers with facts on plastic bullets, internment and what-have-you has to be linked to the struggle to win workers away from

acceptance of the legitimacy of 'their' state to be in Ireland. They can only be won over by campaigning on the common enemy of the Irish people and British working class - British imperialism.

The primary concern in fighting for Irish freedom in Britain is to win the working class to support Irish self determination, to break the grip of reformism over them and to lead them into action against the state here. Ireland has a very special significance here because, unlike South Africa or El Salvador, building support for this cause directly challenges our own state and hence reformist illusions in it.

Trying to build a solidarity movement with Ireland on the basis of liberal sympathy, appeals to 'common sense', etc, are objectively reactionary. Instead of confronting the state they try and win it over. This view has crippled the solidarity movement - no, the entire working class.

Confronting opportunism within our class and taking on the British state is the crux of the matter. Any Irish solidarity movement must raise a clear challenge to reformist 'solutions' within the working class in Britain.

What, then, can we make of organisations such as the TOM whose main activity is organising an annual tour over to Belfast so as to take a peek around and march down the Falls with a banner on the anti-internment demo? It would not be half so bad if, after around 15 years campaigning, TOM had won a significant base within the working class. It hasn't, and furthermore shows no likelihood of doing so.

Likewise what can we make of an organisation which gave its support to the Hands Off Ireland! contingent on the 'TTG' demo, with this anti-imperialist perspective, and on the day turned out one person? It's a rather strange concept of support, yet this is just what a group called Red Action did, as it had most of its people over in Belfast.

We have been criticised for calling this 'revolutionary tourism'. But what else can you call it when an opportunity is missed to present a political challenge to your own state and to its agents in the ranks of our class?

When the Labourites take to the streets to peddle their Irish recipe we must be there to take them on. Revolutionaries only merit such a title when waging a consistent struggle for revolution in 'their own' country: "There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is - working whole heartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in *in one's own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line, in every country without exception.*" (Lenin, *Ibid*, Vol 24, p75). That is the real purpose of proletarian internationalism.

The 'service' of cheerleading, of evading opportunities for a major intervention on an anti-imperialist basis, is no service at all. Organisations such as the RCP, which boycotted the 'TTG' demo, and Red Action, which in effect did the same, do the cause of Irish freedom and revolution here no service whatsoever because they fail to challenge reformism's fake 'solutions' in practice.

The RCP's Irish Freedom Movement has done a lot of good campaigning, yet it cannot take on the task of building a *genuine* Irish freedom movement. After all, when one myopically views the organisational forms of reformism - the trade unions and Labour Party - as being 'dead' how can they be effectively challenged? Just how *do* you challenge a corpse?

The RCP tries to wish HOI! away in its comments on the 'TTG' demo (*the next step*, September 8): "Another section, indistinguishable from the rest of the march on the day, was the 'anti-imperialist' contingent organised by a number of far left fragments." At the initial meetings of HOI! the IFM reps strangely raised no objection to the platform of HOI! which their organisation now smears as "pathetic attempts of the far left to organise 'anti-imperialist' contingents". Instead they waited and denounced it from afar.

After being challenged numerous times on their puerile boycott position they supply an equally puerile 'defence'. It was obviously far more 'principled' to ignore the whole thing, hoping that the reformist corpse would do the decent thing and lie down and be still. This is justified through the lies and falsifications we have come to expect from the RCP. Fortunately, it is not HOI!'s contingent which was pathetic, but the RCP's shabby slanders to cover for its shabbier lack of practice on the day. HOI! was certainly distinguishable from the rest of the march, with its placards, tightly organised contingent and slogans of 'For the

IRA, Against the British Army' and 'Britain's defeat, Our victory' - slogans which the RCP have attempted to drown out on IFM marches.

On the other hand, the Troops Out Movement sees no reason to challenge reformism. Indeed, its whole history has been one of playing to it right up to its deliberately non-committal attitude to 'TTG'.

## Our demands

An effective solidarity movement is one which is based four square on the working class. The only way this can be achieved is to battle within our class to break the stranglehold of reformism, not accommodating to it or pretending it is 'dead'.

This movement must be based on the working class armed with a platform which clearly establishes its independence from the bourgeoisie. This position is encapsulated in the two demands 'Troops Out Now!' and 'Self determination for the Irish nation!'.

The former stresses the unequivocally reactionary role that imperialism plays. It is no coincidence that this demand has been consistently eroded from within, with 'now' being shelved and nebulous calls for 'withdrawal' substituted. This indicates the unwillingness of fake revolutionaries to confront imperialism, to state openly that it has absolutely no progressive content. Because, if it doesn't, why *not* call for troops out now? In failing to do so the various leftists involved in taking up 'the Irish question' here have in reality fallen prey to the same illusions in the British state as the majority of workers. Instead of being an asset to the formation of an anti-imperialist movement they come to be a block on it through their 'leftist' organisational and political codification of illusions in imperialism. It is necessary to defeat these organisations and their ideas in the course of struggle.

Because we do not look to occupy any illusory neutral ground on the war in Ireland we demand self determination. As *The Leninist* has argued many times in the past, this means the right of the Irish people to fight for it in whatever way they so choose. Without such an implication the slogan is meaningless. We therefore stand opposed to all chauvinist condemnation of the application of this right: the IRA and Inla are 'guilty' only of resisting British imperialism.

Some on the left regard the two slogans inadequate, almost as being 'corrupted' in the hands of those who claim them for their own, for instance the TOM. The Irish Republican Socialist Party representative at the HOI! conference *voted against* the main statement precisely because it was based on only these demands. Both he and Red Action at the conference - and at HOI! meetings last year others, such as the Revolutionary Communist Group - advocated the addition of other slogans.

One of the favourites here was to put in one supporting the armed struggle. This seems a little confused. The basic slogans of any organisation should express its principles. What is acknowledged by all participants in this struggle as a *tactic* has been transformed into a principle in the hands of some of its defenders in Britain.

Such a muddle can only lead to sterile sloganeering, divorced from the struggle to build a movement on the basis of hard fought for principles. It is not the job of a solidarity movement to tell the liberation movement what tactics to use but to break the working class from support for British imperialism, indeed to take sides with the fight against it *in all its forms*.

Unlike those who reject this perspective in favour of ostensibly 'harder' slogans, we have no doubt about our ability to distinguish ourselves from those who adhere to the two slogans *in form* only, while abandoning their *content*. We challenge anyone to illustrate the inadequacy of these slogans to chart a clear proletarian line in Britain on the war in Ireland.

## The fight for the Party

We Leninists have never tried to hide in our paper and in action our position and aims with regard to HOI!. Communists in Britain know that the working class cannot take power without being won to support Ireland against British imperialism. Neither is it possible for the class to take power without a Communist Party.

The fight for the two are indivisible - for a

solidarity movement to be able to deliver the goods it must be guided by the collective memory and general staff of the working class, the Communist Party. Both are built through ideological and political struggle, by defeating the ideas of the bourgeoisie within the proletariat in theory and in practice. Both are built by communists.

Comrade Francis Glenn in the latest edition of the IRSP's *Starry Plough* is quite right to point to the "principled solidarity movement such as that organised by communists in the 1920s" (the original Hands Off Ireland!) as an example for today. It is no coincidence that it should be the young CPGB which was behind the development of this movement, just as with its agitation for the freedom of all Britain's colonies. The Comintern demanded this as a condition of membership from its section in Britain.

The blueprint for this campaign was the Hands Off Russia! campaign. Under the guidance of the Comintern, revolutionaries in Britain took the question of defence of Soviet Russia to the class; into the trade unions, even into the armed forces. Communist politics were tested in practice against imperialism in defence of the Russian revolution. In many areas it fused with the emerging Councils of Action, organisations of the working class which Lenin termed embryonic soviets. Through the resolute intervention of revolutionaries Hands Off Russia! was to play a significant role in the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in August 1920, the greatest organisational achievement of our working class to date.

The forging of the vanguard and the Communist Party is a profoundly dialectical process. The unified vanguard only emerges through the struggle for the Party. Without such a Party the advanced workers are, as today, fragmented and without unified guidance. It is of no surprise then that the state of the solidarity movement - if it even merits such a title - should be equally sorry. Searches for short cuts, ready made vanguards, have inevitably foundered. The clearest example of this is the now defunct Irish Solidarity Movement of the RCG.

In the wake of the heroic Hunger Strike and the uprisings in Britain's inner cities in 1981, the ISM was launched, on the basis that the above struggles of the oppressed proved that many "Irish workers alongside the oppressed black and white working class youth of Britain will be the driving force in an anti-imperialist Irish solidarity movement" because, it was maintained, these forces had "been forced to take the revolutionary and insurrectionary road" (quoted from David Reed's *Building an Irish Solidarity Movement*, p10, November 1982).

This proved to be a grave misconception, as the degeneration of the RCG and its abandonment of not only the ISM but any serious Irish work testifies to. There is no ready made force capable of taking the lead in building revolutionary solidarity with the struggle in Ireland. It can only be created within the class through the struggle for the Party of that class, through the ideological and political struggle of communists. Class consciousness does not emerge spontaneously. And the building of an anti-imperialist movement demands clear sighted class consciousness.

It was only in struggle that both the CPGB, alongside Hands Off Russia! and Hands Off Ireland!, was forged; by confronting not only the state but also opportunists within the workers' movement. One can only wonder then, given comrade Glenn's comments, that in the same issue comrade Seamus Morgan, after rightly attacking the small numbers mobilised on the question of Ireland in Britain, puts this down to the fact that "British socialists" are "more concerned with scoring points off one another".

What exactly is meant by this? Was the CPGB guilty of 'scoring points' off the rest of the workers' movement for their failure to support Irish self determination? Could the original Hands Off Ireland! have been built without such a struggle? The Comintern was a thousand times right to demand such a confrontation with opportunist elements.

It is the principles of any organisation which are the starting point for communists. We will not compromise on them for the sake of 'unity'. As Lenin many times stressed, all this means at the end of the day is unity with the bourgeoisie. *Genuine* unity within the working class can only be unity around the principles of Marxism-Leninism, through the triumph of communist hegemony.

It is with this in mind that we come to the formal letter of withdrawal of the IRSP from HOI!, written by comrade Kevin McQuillan (see letters page). Factually, we find accusa-

tions of *The Leninist's* "arrogantly cynical ... shabby tactics" in 'stacking' and 'railing' the HOI! conference to be incorrect. We have taken this up in the letters page and with the comrades directly, and hope that they accept our account of the proceedings. However, having said this, it is clear that we do not only have a technical misunderstanding here but a political disagreement.

First, let us say that *The Leninist* has never excluded any organisation or individual from HOI!. The campaign is open to all who accept its principles - in short, the two demands: Troops out now! and Self determination for the Irish nation. Yes, we believe that an Irish solidarity movement (just like the TUC, trade unions, workers' councils etc) must be led by communists - and that means by *The Leninist*. But *in no way* does that imply that this leadership is bureaucratically imposed.

We have the confidence in our ideas and the ability of our comrades to believe that we can win it politically, in struggle. Far from exclusion of any forces, this means attracting the widest possible forces within our class to these two demands and to HOI!.

But we have not made unity with other organisations within the workers' movement a *precondition* for carrying out the anti-imperialist work necessary to advance the struggle in solidarity with the Irish people and to advance our own class. Comrade McQuillan states that "discussions on the building of a solidarity movement were hopefully to follow on from the coming together of the various groups". This did not happen to the extent which the IRSP - or for that matter *The Leninist* - would wish. The reason, according to the comrade, is due, in part if not in its entirety, to "the premature and presumptuous manner" of ourselves. This, remember, is at a time when HOI! was fighting for an anti-imperialist contingent on the 'TTG' demo.

While 'TTG' was up and running we spent *two months* kicking our heels in rooms above pubs trying to reach agreement between organisations with whom no agreement, even on such a minimal basis, was possible. After two months of chasing our tails, could it be considered "premature and presumptuous" to then enter the fray, challenge 'TTG' and make further discussion conditional on *action*? Theory without practice is sterile; comrades, those initial meetings were becoming unbearably sterile, don't you agree?

Principled unity in action cannot be achieved through cobbling together various groups around an unprincipled platform. Had we carried on discussions we would still be there today. Had we compromised on what we saw as principles we would have ended up with a hopelessly eclectic platform and a Frankenstein's monster of a campaign, ready to shatter at the first test.

If the comrades of the IRSP disagree then they should explain to us what it was possible, without loss of principle, to compromise on with groups like Workers Power, the RDG and RCG at these meetings, instead of criticising our supposed psychological traits.

The point that comrade McQuillan makes about HOI! being to *The Leninist* what the IFM is to the RCP is very revealing. Again, it is a technical point which we believe reveals a profound political weakness. The problem with the IFM, surely, is not the fact that it only has one political organisation behind it, but the politics of that organisation. After all, how many organisations were behind the "principled solidarity movement organised by communists in the 1920s" that comrade Glenn so rightly praises? To the best of our knowledge, just one - the CPGB.

Though we will continue to attempt to draw in other organisations on the left, we see no problem in continuing HOI! even if we were the sole organisation involved. If the IRSP does see a problem here, it must give a *political* justification as to why *The Leninist's* political platform is incapable of building such a movement. Making a self-fulfilling prophesy of this supposed 'problem' by withdrawing can only be counterproductive. The IRSP is absolutely right to demand that workers in Britain take sides in the Irish war with the fight for liberation. In the spirit of internationalism, it must in turn take sides on the disagreements within the left in Britain as to how such a movement can be built, instead of ducking the issue in the interest of ill conceived 'unity'.

Hands Off Ireland! has only just begun to assert itself within the workers movement in this country. Leninists, armed with communist theory, will fight to build it into the mass movement which will culminate not just in mass proletarian solidarity with the revolution in Ireland, but by laying the basis for the revolution in Britain.

Alan Merrick



## SOVIET WOMEN

# No to Gorbachevite domestic slavery

Shout 'hurrah!' and throw your hats in the air! It's the Trotskyite name changing game again. Workers Power's very own Fourth International in waiting, the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International has strode forward to become the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, no less (gosh, a league!). Is this because it has just adopted a "re-elaborated transitional programme", as it claims, or to keep up with its Spartacist sparring partners, who recently went from being the international Spartacist tendency to become the International Communist League?

Following the lead of the GDR, Cuba has started to ban certain Soviet publications on the basis that they are guilty of distorting Soviet history (which they undoubtedly do, but then when haven't they?). The Cuban comrades are rightly worried about the direction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. But are bans the way to combat it? After 30 years of socialism, surely the Cuban people should be trusted to read freely. Gorbachevism cannot be defeated by such bureaucratic administrative methods. What is needed is full publicity of all views and open ideological struggle.

Dirty deeds done dirt cheap: part 105. Rumours abound concerning the Mersy-side Trade Union and Unemployed Centre, the base of the National Unemployed Centres Combine, set up to rival the Unemployed Workers Charter. On July 14 staff at the Centre struck against what they saw as patronage in job appointments. In the past, these NUCC management types have refused to attend broad conferences because of the very presence of the UWC. Many activists are convinced that the NUCC were behind last minute attempts to sabotage the UWC's march on the TUC. In an attempt to add insult to injury on the day of the UWC lobby the Morning Star carried a full page advert from the NUCC, pushing their "Charter". Heard the phrase 'on another man's wound'? A recent grant for £370,000 from Liverpool city council seems to have secured the Centre's immediate future. But if it is simply to act as a base to dispense privilege, organise sabotage of unemployed protests and sow confusion, we really don't advocate the unemployed throw backflips of delight.



Raisa Gorbachev gives Soviet working class women nothing to celebrate

**M**IKHAIL has let it be known to all and sundry that he discusses everything with Raisa. As a result she is not only followed in and out and all around Bloomingdales by the western media but no doubt enjoys considerable status within the upper echelons of the Soviet technocracy. But this has the same significance for the liberation of Soviet women as Elizabeth Windsor's position as monarch and Margaret Thatcher's premiership has for working class women in Britain. None!

Marx once remarked that the development of a society can be judged by the lot of women (and "not just the pretty ones"). In the light of this it is clear that Soviet society under Gorbachev is moving backwards.

Through the 'market socialism' of perestroika there is a growing pressure on each enterprise to make a profit. As perestroika takes effect it is either that or go bust (which many will). This raises the spectre of mass unemployment.

Yes, perestroika means that for the first time since the mid 1920s Soviet workers face the prospect of being thrown out of work. Soviet women will bear the brunt of the reactionary consequences of this. Bluntly, perestroika threatens to throw them into the role of a reserve army of labour, kept in domestic servitude till profit again requires them in the workplace.

Marx identified women's role as part of this 'reserve army of labour' as the material basis of women's oppression under capitalism. As socialism is by definition a mix of commodity production (capitalism) and planning (communism), the concept is appropriate to the extent that capitalism continues to exist within socialism. And the fact of the matter is that perestroika is strengthening capitalist forces in a vain attempt to overcome the economic stagnation of bureaucratic socialism. The strengthening of women's oppression is a logical consequence.

For the Gorbachevite bureaucracy, of course, concerned as it is to preserve itself through turning back towards the mechanisms of capitalism rather than to push socialist society forward towards communism, theory is not a guide to practice. Hence it dredges up all sorts of reactionary crap to lay the

ideological foundations for its expedient malpractices.

Here is a piece of typical (if particularly revolting) Gorbachevite sociology: "Soviet society has been damaged by the entry of almost all women into paid work. Children grow up unsupervised and delinquent. The elderly, the ill and husbands have been cheated of a woman's care."

Responding to the pseudo scientific research which it has commissioned the technocracy proposes to strengthen the family unit and Gorbachev himself speaks of "making it possible for women to return to their purely womanly function." (both quotes from *Marxism Today* July 1989)

To give a focus for his reactionary project Gorbachev has launched the "mummy, daddy and me" campaign which seeks to overcome the social problems of bureaucratic socialism - alcoholism, delinquency, alienation - by 'encouraging' women to return to home and family. Sickening, isn't it? Women are to be blamed for the ills the stagnation years of bureaucratic socialism have produced!

But while many women will be kicked out of their jobs and forced to return to the pre-October male chauvinist perception of the "purely womanly function", ie, housewife, mother, carer and whore, most will remain in paid employment as well, whether full-time or part-time. Their resulting 'double burden' will be facilitated by the carrot of maternity provisions, ie extra leave for female parents, not male ones, and the stick of extending (discriminatory) protective legislation for women workers.

Instead of placing the emphasis on high quality nursery and creche facilities the Gorbachevites want to 'encourage' women to stay at home and in the lowest paid work (and therefore be less economically important to the economic unit of Soviet society - the family). After 112 days fully paid maternity leave, followed by part-pay until the child is 12 months women have an optional six months further unpaid leave... the decay of public facilities through neglect and lack of finance is a good 'persuader'.

Women are already forbidden to work in well paid jobs involving heavy lifting, handling toxic substances and underground work. Now, women may be removed from night shifts. Part-time work-

ing and home-working are to be more common and there is even a proposal to reduce women's working week to four days (it is said without loss of pay) to enable them to "attend to domestic responsibilities". All this guarantees rotten wages.

We call such Gorbachevite measures rank male chauvinism. There is no physical reason why women cannot do work which involves heavy lifting, handling toxic substances or work underground. They have been doing heavy lifting and handling toxic substances for thousands of years, and even in the US, the bastion of capitalism, there are women miners (good!). Modern technology allows all such work to be increasingly safe and increasingly automated. We say extend women's work, not restrict it!

Marx always argued that the key factor in raising women's social standing is their full entry into social production. 'Protective' legislation has the effect of limiting their participation in the economy and hence social life, it thus widens the big pay gap that already exists between men and women.

And things are set to get much worse under Gorbachev. His 'concern' for women's health is hypocritical. It is a way to hide the unemployment perestroika will produce. Already through extending the list of industries and occupations forbidden to women tens of thousands of women are actually thrown out from jobs they have been carrying out perfectly effectively for years. Many more will follow.

Fortunately the Soviet masses still have a deep commitment to the heritage of October and the goal of equality between the sexes. And, at the moment at least, the sectionalist ideology of feminism has no significant influence. Cynthia Coburn very much regrets this.

She recently interviewed three Soviet women social scientists for *Marxism Today* under the title *Second Among Equals*. They had jointly penned a hard hitting article against sex stereotyping in the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *Communist* (March 1989).

It is pleasing (for us Leninists, not for Coburn) to learn that feminism is still "widely castigated as the kind of self-seeking you would expect from bourgeois women"

and that Coburn's call to blame men was firmly rejected. "Don't you see men as exploiting women's labour in the home?" she asked. "The inequality is a humiliation for both sexes," was the answer. "The only way to achieve dignity for women is to ensure it for men" they insisted. Quite right, comrades!

Coburn might not like it (and she doesn't) but that's orthodox communism. To muddy the waters though she tries to rewrite history. As background misinformation to her interview Coburn tries to tell us that feminism was somehow a trend within Bolshevism. "Feminists of course were active before and during the Bolshevik revolution. On women's issues however, the relationship between Lenin and Alexandra Kollontai was tense".

What Coburn wants to do is to create the impression that Kollontai, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution and the only female member of Lenin's Central Committee, was a feminist. She certainly had differences with Lenin, but she was no feminist!

Coburn knows it but does not want to admit it. We could quote almost any authoritative source to prove it, but perhaps a feminist partisan will make our point most effectively. In her (academically) excellent *Feminism in Russia 1900-1917* Linda Harriet Edmondson tells the story of the Bolsheviks' struggle against feminism, and says: "Not for nothing did Kollontai devote so many pages of her 400 page polemic, *The Social Foundations of the Woman Question*, to a demolition of the feminists".

In that polemic, Kollontai castigated feminism as "the attempt of bourgeois women to stand together and pit their common strength against the enemy, against men." She also characterised feminism as being anti-working class women. As the support offered by the very pro-feminist *Marxism Today* for Gorbachev shows it is quite clear that it still is. If you support women's liberation you must oppose Gorbachev.

Gorbachev's reactionary treatment of women is presented as some sort of aberration by Cynthia Coburn and her Eurofeminist ilk. That's their problem, not ours. As we have shown, his reactionary attitude towards women flows directly from his 'market socialism' perestroika. For Leninists Gorbachev is an all round reactionary, the chief representative of a parasitic bureaucracy which has become an absolute fetter on the development of the Soviet Union's productive forces.

The liberation of women, like the liberation of the working class, is only begun by the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state and the commencement of the socialism. It will be further advanced by the completion of the world revolution and the establishment of the World Union of Socialist Republics. But it will only be completed with the achievement of world communism. The link between the liberation of women and the working class is indissoluble.

The resumption of this progressive course requires the revolutionary overthrow of Gorbachev by the Soviet working class, and it is to this task that we commend Soviet women workers. They will not easily give up the gains made in the wake of October. We are sure they will take the lead in the coming political revolution just as they did in the overthrow of the hated Tsar in February 1917. Forward with the women!

Ian Farrell

## Battle lost

Will Thorne, *My Life's Battles*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1989, pp221, £6.95

FOR militants, this book is an absolute must. Not only is the book a gripping read, but it also provides a good overview of the socio-economic and political situation of Britain in the 1880s, as well as important insights into the emergence of the labour bureaucracy and the eclipse of the labour aristocracy.

Thorne, who was educated by Eleanor Marx, spent much of his early life, like that of so many militants of his time, fighting to secure 'labour representation' in parliament, pushing to unionise the unorganised sections of the working class and carrying out work for the Social Democratic Federation, which he was a member of.

The SDF, throughout the 1880s pursued parliamentary and trade union boycottism as principles, seeing these realms of activity as a distraction from its rather narrow understanding of the 'class struggle'. As to those sections of the working class already organised in the 'craft' or 'trade' unions, the extension of trade unionism among the unskilled, unorganised, manual workers was perceived to be a threat to their existing pay and conditions, but more importantly, to their relationship with the employers. This section of the working class also saw grave dangers in the push for 'labour representation' in parliament, stating that this would lead to greater state intervention, through 'positive' employment legislation which would undermine their 'voluntary' bargaining structures with the employers.

So although there were great upheavals, particularly around unemployment, in the 1880s and 1890s, the working class in Britain was deeply divided and lacked any form of clear leadership. The existence of a very strong and privileged labour aristocracy, tied hand and foot to late Victorian British imperialism, acted as a divisive and reactionary force in the workers movement.

Returning to Thorne's book, one finds numerous examples of how 'New Unionism', as it was termed, differed from the traditional unions. First, the new unions were comprised of unskilled, low paid manual workers. Secondly, their union dues were very low. Thirdly, they did not provide extensive welfare provisions. Fourthly, they maintained strike funds. And fifthly, they had few, if any, full-time union officials.

But by 1893 the traditional unions, such as the Amalgamated Union of Engineers had begun to relax their membership criteria to allow for semi-skilled workers. The earlier hostility of the TUC affiliates to 'New Unionism' gave way to accommodation. This improved relationship between the 'old' and the 'new' was partly facilitated by the realisation of the old unions that the new unions did not pose any direct threat to their membership.

The 'New Unionism' of the 1880s, which had prided itself on its bitter struggles for recognition from the employers, the state and the existing trade union movement, quickly developed the bureaucratic structures of the older unions. As Thorne notes, his income as general secretary of the NUGGL increased from £156 a year in 1920 to £700 a year in 1921! By the early years of this century, 'New Unionism' had joined the

fold of mainstream trade unionism. It was only a matter of years before the new unions were incorporated into bourgeois society through the expansion of their bureaucracies.

A quote from Thorne highlights how far the leaderships of the new unions had been incorporated. At a meeting that Thorne had with the King, he was asked: "Do you think any ill will come from this conference" [the Leeds conference that called for the setting up of soviets in Britain - CA] ... "No," I said; "I've seen these things happen before many times in days gone by, and in my humble judgement there will never be a physical violent revolution in this country" ... This seemed to relieve his mind." (p195).

In little over twenty years the militants who forged the new unions of the 1880s had become left advisers to the bourgeoisie. During the course of the first imperialist war many militants of 1880s were drawn into open class collaboration through wartime quangos. The challenge to traditional forms of union organisation posed by the new unions and a generation of militants had been defused. The rise of 'New Unionism' and its absorption into mainstream trade unionism represented the emerging dominance of the labour bureaucracy over the labour aristocracy, with the rise of the Labour Party completing the political manifestation of this process.

Charles Anderson

## Ploughing a rut?

Irish Republican Socialist Party, *The Starry Plough*, No6, (no date), 40p from: 392, Falls Road, Belfast

THE IRISH Republican Socialist Party has the declared intention of establishing itself as a communist party. In 1987 it began to republish the *Starry Plough*. In *The Leninist* comrade Jack Conrad said its publication was "an important step forward [but not] a decisive step forward, it does not represent a qualitative break from left nationalism or a qualitative shift forwards towards the ideas of Marxism-Leninism ... The hammer and sickle is wrapped in the Irish tricolour" (January 21 1988).

The fact that the paper has only appeared five times since is no excuse for the continued eclecticism of the paper. The IRSP has correctly defined Ireland as a medium developed capitalist country, though there has been little theoretical work on this question since the supplement by comrade Seamus Morgan in issue two. Many other questions remain confused - certainly confusing to the reader.

A case in point here is the IRSP's attitude to the socialist countries. In past issues comrade Robert Lake has dismissively and erroneously referred to the Soviet Union as "Russia" and indicated that it is in no way socialist, though what he thought it was is anyone's guess. Comrade Francis Glenn attacked this line, defending the Soviet Union. In issue five he used the incorrect and contradictory formulation that it was the dictatorship of the proletariat with *no classes!* But despite his confused formulation he quite clearly stood on the right side of the class line.

In the current edition comrade Dermot McBride pens two articles which relate to the socialist countries. In an article on the Workers Party they are referred to with

'ironic' quote marks. He also writes on China and the Tiananmen Square clampdown. Here the writer bluntly states that China is not socialist, yet refrains, throughout the article, from telling his bemused readers what China actually is (although he does call for a political revolution). He states: "Time has run out for fudging such questions as the nature of the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, etc", after providing enough fudge to keep a coachload of school children sated.

To damn the opportunist leadership in China is one thing: to damn the whole Chinese revolution along with it is inexcusable. Comrade McBride should remember that those who cannot defend the existing gains of the working class will never conquer new ones.

We can make a stab at what comrades Lake, Glenn and McBride believe (a colourful diversity!) but what of their party?

Eclecticism remains, too, when one views the IRSP's break from left nationalism. If it is going anywhere it is back to the past. The editorial may rightly state that "it's not enough to say Brits out" and go on to call for a genuine communist party, but in spite of this and the hammer and sickle symbols it is still left nationalism we find in its columns. For instance, the front cover is a reproduction of a poster which predates the IRSP's formal commitment to Marxism-Leninism in 1984, bearing the slogan "Brits Out" (which remember is "not enough").

Comrades D McBride and P Doyle, in the letters columns, applaud the closure of the Harland and Wolff shipyards as "the loyalist-protestant workers' right to work in institutions such as these is a denial of the same right for nationalist-catholic workers" (D McBride). Doyle accuses any who disagree with this as "accommodating to pro-imperialist elements".

Such views are poisonous nationalism. Let us use an analogy in Britain. Should communists have refused to support the miners' right to work in the Great Strike because they were a relatively highly paid section of the working class, 'benefiting' from imperialist robbery? How the hell do you propose to win over protestant workers if through such blinkered nationalism you cheerlead attacks on them by the ruling class? The only proletarian position is to fight for the right to work for all workers.

Comrade Glenn, however, mirrors the same problem with his article "Brits out now!", presenting a pocket sized history of the war - which I'm sure his readers will be all too familiar with - and finishes with the message that the "nationalist working class has shown that it is capable of enduring, now it must be given the opportunity of achieving victory." But the 'nationalist working class' cannot win alone. And it cannot break out of its isolation precisely as long as it remains nationalist. It needs to become internationalist through communist leadership.

The IRSP relaunched itself in 1987 in an inevitable state of flux, caught between nationalism and communism. But instead of a speedy evolution to the latter it remains trapped in left nationalism. Unless the politics of genuine communism are fought for and accounts are settled with nationalism and neo-Trotskyism there is a real danger that the IRSP will bust apart at the first serious test. Certainly an organisation based on eclecticism has no chance of leading the working class in Ireland to socialism.

Alan Merrick

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# Gorbachev must go

ALL SERIOUS observers now admit that perestroika has abysmally failed. Its only achievements have been creeping economic paralysis, the rise in Popular Front nationalism, disruption of the unity of the socialist community and a marked strengthening of the forces of revisionism in the world communist movement. No wonder Bush, Thatcher, Kohl, Mitterand and the capitalist plutocracy sing hallelujah for the 'miracle' of Gorbachev taking over in the Kremlin. No wonder they earnestly pray in the name of dollar, pound, mark, franc and yen for his continued good health.

Truly for capitalism's high priests Gorbachev is a heaven sent convert. With him running the USSR (into the ground) they can enjoy a second childhood in their ideological senility. Gorbachev's doings and sayings are used to promote the lie that moribund capitalism with its mass unemployment, exploitation, vast inequalities of wealth and systematic pillage of the so-called 'Third World' is the natural, indeed the only, order of things.

Against the media manufactured flood tide of Gorbomania, however, which 'official communism' as well as every other variety of right opportunism has willingly gone along with, genuine communists, in the name of unconditional defence of the gains of the world revolution, defiantly cry Gorbachev must go! And not through some palace coup, but through what Marx called a political revolution!

Our position is based on a dialectical understanding of necessity, and we confidently predict that as soon as the Soviet working class is reorganised into a class for itself by genuine communists it will again shake the world. Neither a GDR style attempt to maintain the status quo of bureaucratic socialism nor a Gorbachevite return to capitalism offers any sort of positive resolution to the contradiction between the socialised production and the undemocratic form of administration that characterises existing socialism — a contradiction that today cripples the USSR and which became acute during what is now called the Brezhnev period, but which in fact pre-dates it.

It is quite clear that the task of making a political revolution is firmly on the agenda. To Marxist-Leninists the facts speak for themselves. From the 1920s till the 1950s, in spite of a historically backward base, in spite of isolation, in spite of devastating war — civil, imperialist and cold — and in spite of terrible bureaucratic deformations, the Soviet economy grew at a rate that compared very favourably with the best that the advanced capitalist world could manage. Not so in the 1980s.

To hide abject failure the Gorbachevite authorities have felt compelled to replace statistics with lies and damned lies. For the first time since 1932 population statistics have ceased to be published; the last figures revealed that the Soviet Union had a higher infant

mortality rate than Panama! Statistics on electrical motors, turbines, industrial robots, harvesters, ferro-concrete parts, window glass, synthetic resins and plastics have suddenly disappeared. Not surprisingly such gaps make it "almost impossible" to come to an accurate assessment of major industries and thus the economy as a whole (GI Khanin, *Soviet Weekly*, July 1 1989). So much for glasnost!

It is true that Goscomstat, the State Statistics Committee, claims that: "The decline in growth rates of social production has almost been halted, and the development of some branches of the national economy has been accelerated." Unfortunately though such 'achievements' have produced nothing for the hard pressed average Soviet citizen who has only seen queues get longer, supplies get shorter and prices get higher.

As part and parcel of the turn towards 'market socialism' managers have shifted production to 'higher quality and fashion goods'. This boosts profits and output in terms of retail prices but not people's well being. In other words the claim that there has been a turnaround in the economy is based on inflated prices, not actual products. Goscomstat admits that output of some commodities fell in quantity and Khanin calculates that Soviet national income growth actually slowed from a "pretty poor 1% in 1987" — which barely matched the population increase — to a paltry 0.3% in 1988.

So while some 'market socialist' enterprises and neo-capitalist cooperatives "made enormous profits" (in 1988 savings deposits increased by about £30bn — more than double the annual increase in 1981-5), there has been, if we take account of the natural rise in population, a real decline in the economy.

To stave off collapse a massive budgetary deficit has been run up, already four times that of the US in relation to GNP. If the deficit continues to soar there is the distinct danger of hyperinflation. Even without that, so dire has the situation become that "Soviet economists now talk openly of the prospect of famine over the next year or so." (*Financial Times* September 13 1989)

Faced with such palpably bad results it would be logical to conclude that perestroika should be junked and another direction chosen. But what are the Gorbachevites and their western cheerleaders calling for? Like some pathetically hooked drug addict they are demanding that the Soviet economy is given more of the same capitalist 'medicine' that has already laid it low.

Indeed some of the most extreme elements in the pro-capitalist wing of the Soviet bureaucracy, ie, the more honest Gorbachevites, are openly advocating full scale capitalist restoration in all but name. *Soviet Weekly* reports their views with a hardly restrained glee. (Yes, like the Vicar of Bray this publication has changed denomination yet again: to me, a no

longer youthful regular reader, it seems like only yesterday that it was an unimaginative mouthpiece of Brezhnevite official optimism).

The July 8 edition carried a speech by Gavril Popov, editor in chief of the magazine *Voprosi Ekonomiki*, to the first session of the Congress of People's Deputies, of which he is a member. (Stalin would have shot him if he'd said the same sort of things in his day. As to the editor of *Soviet Weekly* ...) Bullets deserved or otherwise, Popov insisted that "existing production relationships" be overturned. He argued that as long as the Soviet Union has "the existing economic basis, as long as we have the existing economic mechanism and as long as we have the existing political superstructure, we will not have an efficient economy."

For Popov an "efficient economy" is capitalism, not the forward march to communism through genuine mass proletarian democracy. Hence, after dismissing Marx's political economy as only relevant to the nineteenth century, he advocated returning agriculture to petty commodity production, ie "family farms" and handing over 50% of the rest of the economy to the "cooperative and private sectors."

Professor A Denisov, another congress member, is perhaps even more transparently counterrevolutionary. For him a "nationalised economy inevitably leads any society towards stagnation and non-competitiveness". (*Soviet Weekly* July 17 1989) In contrast capitalism, or what he revealingly calls the "free enterprise system", has been "proved to be the most effective tonic for the economy" — shades of Thatcher here.

Why are such leading members of the Soviet bureaucracy so 'irrational', so determined to see economic measures carried out which will without doubt produce a risk of chaos? Frankly it has nothing to do with defective logic. It is narrow self interest.

As we have argued in *The Leninist*, the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is no longer a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces. Now it is an absolute fetter. As the figures we have quoted above show, life proves our contention to be correct. Unwilling and unable to abolish itself, as historical progress demands, the economically and socially privileged bureaucracy, or at least its technocratic wing, is seeking salvation for itself through turning towards capitalism and transforming itself into a fully fledged capitalist class. Such is the real significance of Gorbachevism.

Of course, there are some who refuse to defend the gains the USSR and the other socialist countries represent. All sorts of devices are used, but perhaps none so miserable as the RCP. Even after publishing a 271 page book in 1986, claiming to "demystify" the Soviet Union, the RCP's leading theoretician, Frank Furedi, insists in 1989 that the USSR "cannot be understood in terms of any inherent trends of development con-

tained within it", that there is an "insufficient surplus for the creation of a class" and that it is only "dogmatism" to suggest that it has anything in common with Vietnam — which is "basically still capitalist". (*Workers' Liberty* Nos 12 and 13)

Such empiricism enables the RCP to join the "neither Washington nor Moscow" camp of the SWP and the Labourite *Socialist Organiser* who support Solidarnosc "unconditionally irrespective of what political ideas it comes forward with". But the RCP's empiricism has an advantage. It saves it from having to advance or defend any sort of definite analysis.

Little better are those who seek refuge in blindness out of fear that the truth about Gorbachevism will shatter their comfy mechanical world view. First and foremost among these are the one foot in the grave political prostitutes of the New Communist Party and the part-time reformists of the Communist Party of Britain. But there are others. According to Peter Taffe, *Militant* editor, talk of "capitalist restoration" in the socialist countries is a "chimera" (July 21 1989). But as we have shown, far from being some fairy tail the restoration of capitalism is the next step for leading elements in the USSR ... and in Poland and Hungary the film is already running backwards.

Not only do we now have a government in Poland dominated by Solidarnosc, which is openly counterrevolutionary and pro-capitalist, but as we have reported in *The Leninist* a whole upper layer of the Polish United Workers Party has conducted an "experiment" with ownership, ie it has transformed itself into a proto capitalist class.

The watershed came back in February when the then prime minister, Mieczyslaw Rakowski — now PUWP general secretary — rushed through his National Consolidation Plan. This allows rich bureaucrats to purchase state assets on the cheap and set up new joint stock companies in place of old nationalised enterprises, but with the old management as owners. In other words classic primitive capital accumulation, or organised plunder on a truly massive scale.

Hungary's 'communist' leaders are not far behind. The new Conversion Law allows well placed bureaucrats to "snap up some of the country's 200-300 largest state firms on bargain basement terms." As long as they can find enough capital — foreign or home grown — to purchase over 20% of the 'market' value of an enterprise they would have voting control and would be free to sell the remaining share of the business to their friends and relatives on the most generous terms: sales can be made over a three year period and with no more than 10% up front. (*The Economist* August 26 1989)

We have always argued that socialism in the socialist countries was reversible. It is, after all, a transitional form of society between capitalism and com-

munist, containing features of both, and until the world revolution has been completed in the form of the World Union of Socialist States, and the threshold of communism is reached, all gains can only be considered temporary. More, the socialist states have been built on the foundations of what were in the main backward capitalist countries, and socialist democracy has been purely formal because of the state bureaucracy's position as master of society, rather than being its servant. This has left existing socialism particularly vulnerable to counterrevolution — not only from without but also from within — and not only from below but, as we now see, also from above.

Some addle brained centrists tell us that all is well in Poland and Hungary — and by implication in the USSR — because the state machine remains in the hands of communists. What a complacent and patently absurd position! Who really thinks that the Polish police and army will not defend the new capitalist property relations? Those at the top of these 'socialist' institutions are itching to shove their bureaucratic snouts deep into the capitalist trough. As to the masses defending socialism, the counterrevolution can be 'democratic' as well as 'peaceful' because, as shown by elections in the USSR, Poland and Hungary and by the voting with feet from Bulgaria and the GDR, there is widespread, nay massive, alienation from the existing order.

The prospect of counterrevolution in the socialist countries might depress those armchair 'communists' who learnt their passive brand of politics at the knee of Harry Pollitt, but it only stiffens our resolve to learn from past mistakes in order to come back doubly strengthened in the fight for new victories.

World history is at a great crossroads. The capitalist road points to the nemesis of a new general crisis and the prospect of a World War III. The other road is the completion of the world revolution, begun in what was Russia and is still the world's revolutionary centre. Such a revolution would transform not only the USSR and the existing socialist countries, but the whole world order.

Sensing this, concerned pro-capitalist voices have been raised. Jesus College academic, John Gray, warns bourgeoisdom that "what we are now witnessing in the Soviet Union is not the middle of a reform, but the beginning of a revolution whose course no one can foretell". And during his chummy chat with No1 world imperialist, George Bush, ultra revisionist Yeltsin expressed his fears "not just to the Soviet Union but to the US as well" of "a revolution from below." (*Financial Times* September 13 1989)

Let the bourgeoisie and proto bourgeoisie tremble! We workers have a world to win! Forward to the completion of the world revolution!

Jack Conrad



# Which Road?

## A critique of the *British Road to Socialism*

## Part 3

**H**AVING dealt with the Euro document *Facing up to the future* in our first *Which Road?* supplement and the first section of the *British Road to Socialism* in Part 2, we will now turn to the second section of the *British Road*.

### 2. The forces for change in Britain

Section two of the *BRS* is devoted to the various classes, strata and movements in Britain today and their relationship to *social progress*, something we would at our stage of historical development in Britain only define as progress from capitalism to *communism*.

The 'progressive' forces would, according to the *BRS*, be united into something called the "broad democratic alliance", the Euro replacement for the "anti-monopoly alliance" of previous editions. The *BRS* assures us that the broad democratic alliance "would embrace the great majority of the people and would be overwhelmingly superior in number and strength to the forces which want to maintain the status quo." Why? Because "those who own and control the monopolies which dominate the economic and political system in Britain are only a tiny minority of the people" (p17). It is clear that the *BRS* bases its comforting picture of the future on population statistics, not politics (which is crystallised economics).

In bourgeois society bourgeois ideas are the ruling ideas. Those who "dominate the economic and political system in Britain" might be a "tiny minority"; they are, though, because of ideas and money (economics), able to count on the middle class and, through the Labour Party, the overwhelming majority of the working class.

Even the Tory Party, which is the *most open* champion of those who "dominate the economic and political system in Britain", is able to command the votes of a sizeable swathe of the working class. Not surprisingly the authors of the *BRS* make no reference to the political problems that imperialism has produced in our class. This is more than an oversight if we agree with Lenin that the upper section of the working class in countries like Britain constitutes the main social support for bourgeois rule.

Only in the midst of the most profound socio-political crisis, where the ruling class is suffering the deepest internal divisions and the masses are unwilling to be ruled in the old way, would it be possible for the forces of revolution to achieve anything like an arithmetic majority (even though objectively speaking they are acting on behalf of the vast majority - indeed, in the last analysis, the whole of humanity). The *BRS's* parliamentarianist embrace of the "great majority of the people" will never be required.

### 2.1. Classes in capitalist society

The *BRS* says: "Building the broad democratic alliance involves an understanding of the class forces in capitalist society in Bri-

tain." Of course, the broad democratic alliance is a reformist utopia, it is therefore *broad* to the point of disappearing up its own backside.

But what is our attitude towards democracy and alliances? Communists do not dismiss the struggle for reforms in the least but we fight for them in a revolutionary fashion. Neither do we on principle shun alliances with other classes and political forces. For us though, unlike the *BRS*, reforms and alliances are means to an end, not an end in themselves. For us they are considered in the light of the aim of enabling the revolutionary vanguard of the working class to exercise dominance over the working class and society as a whole so as to make revolution.

#### 2.1.1. The working class

The *BRS* announces that the "leading force in the [broad democratic] alliance will be the working class". The *BRS* advances two reasons as to why this should be. Firstly, its "interests are most directly opposed to those of the capitalist ruling class" and secondly, because it is "the great majority of the population".

For those concerned with winning reformist parliamentary majorities the last question is of prime importance and obviously the authors of the *BRS* like to believe that their "broad democratic alliance" articulates the interests of those who are "most directly opposed" to the capitalist ruling class, rather than the labour bureaucracy.

What makes the working class crucial for us though is not simply the antagonistic contradiction which exists between it and the capitalists, nor its size. The slaves of the ancient world made up a majority of the population and there was an antagonistic contradiction between them and the tiny minority of slave owners. Likewise the serfs made up the majority under feudal society and had interests which were antagonistic to those of the landowners. In spite of numerous revolts the popular classes of ancient and feudal society were not *revolutionary* classes. Their interests did not transcend existing society. Those of the working class do. It is the first oppressed class to be at the same time a truly revolutionary class.

Of course, left to itself, left to its spontaneous struggle, the working class exists merely as a class in itself. Trade union struggles over wages, conditions and against this or that law leave the working class as a slave or serf class. But through the intervention of communists the working class can be transformed into a class for itself. A class which sees itself as a future ruling class which has an undeviating interest in social progress because its self liberation lies in the triumph of the communist mode of production (a society where production is not fettered by social restraints).

While the size of the working class is important it is not the key to this role. In the Russia of 1917 the working class only constituted roughly 10% of the population. Because it was concentrated in the cities and big towns, because of the collective nature of its labour, it was able to exercise considerably greater social weight than its numbers would suggest. More, because it was led by a party guided by

Marxism and based on the principles of proletarian internationalism it was able to exercise hegemony over all oppressed classes and strata in the country - in particular the peasantry with which it formed a revolutionary alliance. It was thus able to place itself in the van of the struggle against the Tsarist state and, in turn, at the forefront of the world revolution.

Having established that size is not the crucial question let us move on. The *BRS* rightly takes a wider view of the composition of the working class than bourgeois sociology. As well as industrial manual workers it considers that the working class also consists of "non-manual workers in industry and distribution such as technicians, clerical and sales workers" and "workers in the health service, the civil service and local government." Their interests "broadly coincide with those of the workers in manual occupations, and indeed the distinction between manual and non-manual work is more and more being broken down by modern processes of production."

In fact, the interests of "manual and non-manual workers" do not "broadly coincide", they *do* coincide in the form of the class interest in communism. Of course, if the working class operates only at the level of a class in itself, it is riven by opposing interests which pit not only blue and white collar workers against each other but every section against every other section.

A further difference we have with the *BRS* is a passing, but very revealing, reference to black workers (who might also be interested in knowing that the *BRS* does *not* oppose all immigration laws). It is erroneously implied that black workers are less unionised than other workers. "Winning black workers, who often find themselves in unorganised factories, for active participation in the trade union movement, and giving them its full support is vital" says the *BRS* (p19).

This is a patronising attitude. In actual fact black workers are more organised than on average. On occasions they might find themselves "in small unorganised factories" but more likely they would work in industries with large concentrations of workers, such as health, transport and car manufacture.

#### 2.1.2. The capitalist class

We agree in broad terms that: "The capitalist class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution, and exchange - the factories, banks, shops, land etc. - and their agents. People in higher management positions and in the higher echelons of the civil service and the state apparatus, although they sell their labour power, are part of the ruling class because they act directly on behalf of the capitalists, identify with them, and own substantial amounts of company shares". (p20)

Also that: "Within it there is a minority exercising the dominant power - those who control the very big firms, which not only exploit the workers, but also operate at the expense of many smaller businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers." (p20)

But then it is claimed: "There is ... an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in those sections of

the capitalist class [the non-monopoly bourgeoisie - JC] against the common enemy - the big British and international capitalists." (p20)

We have a number of objections to this. The "big British" capitalists - the monopoly capitalist imperialist bourgeoisie - are our *main enemy*. Lumping in "international capitalists" is dangerous. After all, in two world wars big British capitalists succeeded in lining up the mass of the population behind its fight against German 'international' capital, its bitter rival. For us the main enemy is at home.

In Britain, as in any capitalist country, there are contradictions between the monopoly and non-monopoly bourgeoisie. But this is a secondary contradiction. All capitalists are pitted against each other in the market, are engaged in a fight for survival against each other. This is also a secondary contradiction, for all capitalists are interested in the continuation of the capitalist system. All are united in wanting the working class to continue for ever as wage slaves.

The capitalist system in Britain may be dominated by monopoly capital. But although the non-monopoly bourgeoisie suffers because of this, it also benefits from monopoly capitalism's exploitation of the world through imperialism and its ability to keep the working class passive. So as well as contradiction there is also benefit, which is the *main* feature of the relationship of non-monopoly capital to monopoly capital.

This is reflected politically. The non-monopoly bourgeoisie is politically united behind the monopoly bourgeoisie. It has no real independent voice. It supports organisations like the Freemasons, the Tory Party and the Confederation of British Industry, which are undoubtedly dominated by the monopoly bourgeoisie. So while monopoly capital does operate at the expense of small capitals, the small capitalists are tied to the coat-tails of imperialism. Naturally, like the monopoly bourgeoisie, the non-monopoly bourgeoisie is opposed to working class revolution and, as we know from countless examples, it is most decidedly not democratic or anti-imperialist.

Ideologically this section of the capitalist class is narrow-minded, irrational and violently anti-working class. It champions 'stand on your own feet old-fashioned capitalism' and hates trade unions with a vehemence that puts Norman Tebbit to shame. In times of acute crisis those capitalist forces which the *BRS* wants to win to the broad democratic alliance find themselves drawn to the fascist solution, not revolution. In short, the non-monopoly bourgeoisie is a reactionary section of society.

If the non-monopoly bourgeoisie were to organise itself independently of the monopoly bourgeoisie, a reformist alliance would be possible. But as the Euros' latest proposal for an electoral pact between themselves, Labour (which is a *monopoly* bourgeois workers' party) and the former Alliance parties (which are politically also parties of the *monopoly* bourgeoisie) shows, such an alliance could be formed with any section of the capitalist class. Any such reformist alliance would be within the confines of bourgeois politics and would, for all the hype, simply be a case of the working class subordinating itself to bourgeois interests.

Our task is to break the influence of the

bourgeoisie over our class, not to blur the class contradictions. We must fight for working class political independence from the bourgeoisie – big, medium and small. In today's Britain a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, even a disaffected section of it, is an utter impossibility because no section of the bourgeoisie has been revolutionary for well over a century.

This does not mean we close our eyes to the likelihood of *individuals* from this class defecting to the proletariat – many fine communists have come from the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Nor do we close our eyes to fissures opening up between sections of the bourgeoisie.

Even in peaceful times divisions between various sections of the the monopoly bourgeoisie and non-monopoly bourgeoisie play an important part in the life of society; in a revolutionary situation even more so. Hence during the run up to insurrection communists pay particular attention to divisions in the ruling class so as to take advantage of the political openings they create. All sorts of tactics can be used. We can even attempt to politically neutralise the non-monopoly bourgeoisie by offering it big concessions so as to weaken our main enemy. But this hardly constitutes "an objective basis for an alliance" between the non-monopoly bourgeoisie and the working class.

### 2.1.3. Intermediate strata

The *BRS* says that "in contemporary capitalist society the great majority of people are either members of the working class or the capitalist class" (p21). This is a typically sloppy formulation. The "great majority of people" in Britain are working class. The capitalist class is – as the *BRS* has already stated – in terms of numbers, minute. Presumably what the authors of the *BRS* are trying to say is that the working class and the capitalist class are the two basic classes in capitalist society. But we will not put words into their mouths. Let them stand exposed as the bumbleheads they are.

Anyway, in between the two basic classes are the middle strata, including the petty-bourgeoisie, which consists of "middle-grade management and the middle ranks of the state apparatus ... Members of family businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers who employ little or no labour ... professional sections like lawyers, doctors, writers and artists who are self-employed". (p21)

The *BRS* says these strata are "affected by the social and economic crisis of capitalism" and calls for "policies" to win "as many as possible among these sections for the broad democratic alliance". We too look to winning "as many as possible" from the middle classes but not to reformism but to revolution.

We would certainly be prepared to enter into alliances with revolutionary organisations of the middle class. However, given the unlikely possibility of the intermediate strata in Britain producing serious revolutionary organisations, our main strategy towards this section of the population as a whole should be to neutralise them as allies of monopoly capital.

In Britain, even with the petty bourgeoisification of the upper section of the working class, the intermediate strata are a comparatively small, historically declining sector of the population, due to the development of capitalist production and the consequent effect of the dominant process of proletarianisation. Having said this though, it is important not to dismiss these strata.

The impact of a capitalist crash will plunge the now prosperous middle class into financial crisis and into violent political action. Although the intermediate strata constitute no more than 20% of the population, prising sections of them away from loyalty to the imperialist bourgeoisie would represent an important victory for the forces of the revolution.

Not surprisingly the *BRS* has no understanding of the two sided and wavering nature of the middle classes, how they are tied to imperialism through jobs as its well paid servants and yet capable of being drawn to the working class. For the *BRS* it is enough to say that the middle classes have interests opposed to monopoly capital.

For us the intermediate strata cannot under any circumstances be considered consistent allies of the working class, even in the struggle for democratic rights (see subsection 2.8.). They will only want to be friends of the working class when the working class is strong enough to impose its leadership and looks like a future ruling class.

## 2.2. The labour movement

According to the *BRS* the "main influence of the working class on society is expressed through the labour movement". This is true for the working class that is merely the class in itself. But for the class for itself the "main influence of the working class on society is expressed through" a genuine Communist Party.

The term "labour movement" is used in the *BRS* as an alternative for the working class as a whole, although it admits "it does not yet comprise the whole of the working class". The *BRS* says the labour movement includes the "trade unions, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the co-operative movement, and such organisations as the shop stewards committees and trades councils." (p21)

We consider the term *working class movement* is a more appropriate term to use when dealing with the politics and organisations of our class. In spite of this, reformism is rightly said to be the "dominant outlook" in the "labour movement".

The *BRS* provides us with the following definition of that outlook: "Its main features include class collaboration rather than class struggle; the view that the state is neutral and can serve the interests of a Labour government as well as Tory or Liberal governments; and the belief that the industrial power of the workers should not be used for political, but only for economic ends." (p22)

Here, let us clear up one point. If we take as our starting point the *BRS*'s understanding of the state, there can be no question whatsoever that it has in practice been used in the interests of governments – Liberal, Tory and, yes, Labour. This is not a naive 'reformist' illusion, but a bald statement of fact. The *BRS* insinuates that Labour governments are in some way different, and that their good intentions are foiled by the nasty capitalist state. This is not true. The Labour Party (and the Tory and Liberal parties) have willingly and enthusiastically served the capitalist bureaucratic-military state.

More damning of the *BRS*, though, is its definition of reformism.

### 2.2.1. What is reformism?

According to the *BRS* reformism is "class collaboration rather than class struggle", a "belief that the state is neutral", and a "belief that the industrial strength of the working class should not be used for political, only economic ends". This is a deliberately selective and indeed distorted definition. Right wing reformism undoubtedly fits the bill. But what of left reformism?

It most certainly believes it pursues the class struggle. It does not in the main think the state is neutral and certainly is prepared to use industrial strength for political ends. We have heard calls on more than one occasion for the use of industrial action to bring down Thatcher from the likes of Scargill, Benn, Hatton, Livingstone and Skinner. Aren't they reformists? Not, it would seem, according to the *BRS*.

By defining reformism in such a way that excludes left reformism the little matter of revolution is cynically slipped under the carpet. This is contemptible but understandable. After all, the *BRS* wants to avoid defining itself reformist!

Falschod has to be relentlessly added to falsehood. The *BRS* goes on to maintain that: "The reformist strategy is based entirely on the ballot box" (our emphasis p35). This is a whopper! It is because the *BRS* has completely embraced reformism that it employs such blunderingly crass formulations. Instead of being honest, the authors of the *BRS* try to hide their reformist shame with a linguistic fig leaf.

It is all too transparent. The truth is easily seen. Let us quote four reasonably well known left and not so left reformists, so they can speak for themselves on extra-parliamentary action. (Revealingly their views are, if anything, to the left of the *BRS*).

"We cannot achieve socialism through parliamentary channels alone" – Peter Hain, in the Morning Star of April 27 1981. "A defeat of the Tory government will be brought about by a series of disputes, of which parliament is only part" – Jeremy Corbyn, in *Socialist Action*, February 1985. "Arm the workers if necessary" – Valerie Veness, in *Socialist Worker*, January 15 1983. "I am not in favour of the army. I am in favour of replacing it with armed workers' brigades in the factories" – Ken Livingstone, *Willesden & Brent Chronicle*, February 20 1987.

Do such statements actually put these left reformists beyond reformism? In a word, no. None of them fight for the liberation of the working class through revolution and working class dictatorship. They all look – sincerely perhaps – to parliament being transformed into an organ of genuine democracy, using among other tactics extra-parliamentary pressure.

Few except the *Sun* would seriously suggest these Labourites have embraced revolutionary politics. Neither has the *BRS*. No matter how it twists and turns, crudely redefines reformism and calls it revolution, reformism remains reformism.

Reformism in the workers' movement is the denial of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state. This is not a full, rounded definition of reformism; it does not tackle the knotty question of reformism's mass support nor the possibility of centrist currents developing from the reformist milieu, but it is its essence, its kernel, and this should be the starting point from which any serious attempt to analyse reformism should begin.

### 2.2.2. Left and right reformism

Running through the *BRS* is the congenial left reformist shibboleth that what lies at the heart of the labour movement is the struggle between 'left and right'. The *BRS* says that the labour movement is a "battleground between a right wing trend, composed of the most consistent exponents of reformist policies, and a left wing trend, which has often challenged the practical policies resulting from reformism." It goes on to say that: "The issues on which this right-left conflict has been fought out have constantly changed, and the political positions of individuals have shifted, but the clash has been constant and will continue." (p23)

In this way – yes, using yet another sleight of hand – the *BRS* tries to obscure the basic contradiction in the working class movement: that of revolution or reform.

There are differences between left and right reformism. This cannot be denied. But these differences do not, like reform and revolution, make up dialectical opposites, the struggle between which results in a positive outcome on a higher level. On the other hand the contradiction between revolutionary and reformist politics will be resolved through the victory of revolutionary politics in the form of the socialist revolution and the building of communism.

The struggle between left and right reformist politics leads nowhere. The two wings of reformism play complementary roles, the struggle between them is secondary to their unity and till revolution intervenes never ending. The reformist left and right are in the last analysis symbiotic and on the same side against revolution.

When in office the reformists carry out bourgeois policies and when in opposition 'realistic' alternatives are offered. Right reformism shoulders the main burden here. But whether in office or in loyal opposition, working class support must be maintained. It is onto the shoulders of the left that this task falls.

The left reformists 'insist' on 'genuine socialist policies' while calling for the masses to keep their faith in the 'movement'. To do this some sort of a coherent ideology is needed. This is where the left's ideas of transforming capitalism into socialism through the medium of the capitalist state come in.

While the left argues itself into knots over the way to square its reformist dream with reality, the right presents all along a 'realistic' reformist face to the capitalist class. Part and parcel of this is keeping the left in line, preventing it from 'going too far', when necessary with hunting, purging and expelling elements of it.

It is for this reason that the left/right reformist conflict is never ending. And yet although it is never ending the left is always doomed to defeat, doomed to apologise for the disappointing last Labour government while prattling on about the marvels of the next Labour government. The 'next Labour government' must be bold and audacious. It must not, they say, settle once again for propping up the capitalist system, but, in the words of Eric Heffer, from the start "carry out fundamental changes so that stage-by-stage the capitalist system is eliminated." (*The Guardian*, April 7 1980)

Heffer, an ex-minister of the crown, like other left and former left reformist leaders

such as Kinnock and MacDonald, Livingstone and Bevan, Benn and Wilson, personifies the contradictions of reformism. They are thrown from left to right by the contradictory demands of governing a capitalist state – or presenting themselves as fit for the job of government – and the need to maintain the allegiance of the working class.

The kaleidoscopic shifting factional alignments in the Labour Party, the moves to the left and then to the right by this or that individual, the socialist promises and treacherous sellouts should not be interpreted as being at the heart of the struggle for socialism. As we have seen, nothing could be further from the truth. The war inside reformism is permanent but secondary. Only the successful war against reformism (of all varieties) by a genuine Communist Party will take the workers' struggle for socialism forward.

### 2.3. Trade unions

#### The labour bureaucracy

The danger of the *BRS* painting pale pink left reformists revolutionary red can be seen in the following passage in the subsection on trade unions. It says: "To win workers to a socialist, and not only a militant, class outlook, increased political activity by the Communist Party and the Labour left in the workplace is essential." (our emphasis, p24)

This is to give the Labour left a progressive, nay, communist role. Yet, as we know from the theory of Lenin and life's rich lessons, only a Communist Party can win workers to understand their historic mission of making the socialist revolution and building communism. (We would call this communist consciousness, as opposed to the catch all "socialist world outlook" in the *BRS*).

The Labour left is in fact part of the problem; the Communist Party is the solution. One of the key tasks of the Communist Party is to split away the rank and file of the Labour Party. This might or might not be done using the tactic of forming a united front (an alliance) with Labourites. Nonetheless at the end of the day to win workers to communist consciousness the ideas of reformism in all their varieties must be defeated, the Communist Party must triumph in the minds of the working class.

Only through being won to the leadership of the Communist Party – guided as it is by the scientific world outlook of Marxism – can the working class transcend trade union and left Labourite consciousness (a form of bourgeois consciousness) and realise itself as a class for itself as opposed to a class merely in itself. In this way the workplaces will become the fortresses of communism.

Here we will touch upon the question of economism. According to the *BRS* it is necessary for the Communist Party to break the "grip" "economism" has over the labour movement. (p23)

What the authors of the *BRS* mean by 'economism' is "the trade union struggle on economic issues as sufficient in itself." This is not economism. Economism is a variety of revisionism affecting socialists and communists. It not something emanating from trade unions as such.

Economism is the doctrine which states that before political issues like Ireland, gay rights or making revolution can be put before the working class it is essential for workers to first fight round economic issues. Economism therefore erroneously states that politics loyally follows economics. If the "grip" of economism is to be broken then, the ideological positions we need to take on are not those of the trade unions as such but those of the likes of the SWP.

Let us now turn our attention to the trade union movement itself and its leaders. The *BRS* explains the trade union leadership's commitment to the continuation of capitalism, its reformism, its treachery etc, in the following way: "Over many years, leaders of the working class movement have been drawn into the practice of class collaboration, as part of the capitalist power structure, and have enjoyed some of its rewards, including company directorships. This has made reformism particularly strong at the higher levels of the movement." (p22) This is only part of the story.

The *BRS* refuses to recognise that the class collaborationism of trade union officialdom stems from the fact that it constitutes a social caste resting on the working class but with sectional interests which run counter to the

long term interests of the class as a whole. Trade union officialdom, in point of fact, is a key part of the labour bureaucracy which also embraces Labour MPs and MEPs, along with research assistants, journalists, Labour JPs, councillors and assorted full time hangers on.

In spite of Thatcher booting trade union officials out from the corridors of power and a decline in trade union membership, the trade union part of the labour bureaucracy still consists of many thousands of full time functionaries, 100% time off convenors and branch officers. It employs an estimated 10,000 people, controls £ millions in property and shares and at its top there exists a stratum consisting of several hundreds which enjoys a chauffeur driven life-style similar to that of middle to top management.

Not surprisingly, as the *BRS* does not want to locate the treachery of trade union officialdom in its narrow sectional interests, the term labour bureaucracy is never used, although it is a perfectly orthodox one in communist circles. Given the prominence of the labour bureaucracy, and its despicable history in Britain, refusal – and that is what it is – to call things by their real names is a direct result of the desire by the authors of the *BRS* not to face up to the *material* reasons why all reformist trade union functionaries (left and right) end up practising class collaboration.

For all its pretensions the trade union bureaucracy does not work to end the capitalist system. As we have indicated this is not because of a lack of moral backbone, though with few exceptions trade union officials are notorious for their spinelessness. Neither is it £45,000 salaries, chauffeur driven cars and expense account meals by themselves which have made "reformism particularly strong at the higher levels" of the trade union movement. Nor is it direct bribery. The company directorships, peerages, knighthoods, OBEs, seats on the remaining 'quangos' and commissions of enquiry, coupled with lavish wining and dining mentioned in the *BRS* in fact result from the social position of the labour bureaucracy as an *intermediary* between labour and capital.

Because of this, trade union officialdom is ideologically bound hand and foot to the existing system: a system which is, as the working class has no commodity to sell other than its ability to labour, a system of wage slavery. Trade union officials bargain for higher wages for workers' labour power. This is their function, which even those compromised by single union/no strike deals have to fulfil at least to some extent.

Marxists do not let themselves be overwhelmed by the stench of bribery and corruption. This is only a symptom of the basic problem with the labour bureaucracy. While we will fight corruption in the workers' movement – by demanding that officials are paid only the average wage of their members, that they are all electable and recallable and that all negotiations with the bosses should be open – at the end of the day the difference between one reformist trade union leader, who is transparently corrupt, and another, who is not, is one of degree not substance.

Under capitalism labour power is sold on the market like any other commodity. Although commodities on *average* exchange for commodities (eg money) of equivalent value, equivalence is not necessarily the case with every exchange, indeed it invariably is not the case. If we understand this we can understand both the importance and limitation of trade unions.

Trade unions represent a tremendous gain for the working class (even under the domination of a bureaucratic caste). Just like the oil producers, getting the best price for their commodity through the Opec cartel, workers form cartels (trade unions) to get the best price for their labour power on the market. Yet although the constant efforts by the capitalists to pay for labour power below its value can be combatted, even the most militant strikes, factory occupations, mass demonstrations and agitation for social reform cannot by themselves end the system of wage slavery.

The bureaucrats are attached to the 'common sense' idea of a fair days work for a fair days pay. As a result even the most militant, most intransigent reformist trade unionist cannot escape the confines of bourgeois political practice, even though it is the bourgeois politics of the working class. British bosses might not like Opec or the TUC but they can learn to live with them.

Without being won to accept the leadership of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party trade unions are inevitably dominated by officials who tend to have the role, outlook and social position of the merchant rather than the class fighter. Trade union officialdom

owes its position in society through specialising in the bargaining process over the price for the sale of labour power. This enables it to accrue for itself privileges, it also leads to a sectional outlook which at the end of the day seeks to perpetuate wage slavery rather than fight for its abolition. After all, without the wages system there would be no bargaining over wages.

Hence, where it is in the interests of the working class as a whole to abolish the wages system, leave behind class society and build communism, the labour bureaucracy is ideologically and materially committed to working within the capitalist system. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that the bureaucratic stratum has to all intents and purposes become the labour lieutenants of capital.

The authors of the *BRS* obviously have much in common with the labour bureaucracy. Like the labour bureaucracy, the *BRS* is totally lacking in any conception of how to fuse the day to day struggles of trade unionists with the struggle for revolution. Neither is there any perspective as to how trade unionists should formulate their demands in a revolutionary as opposed to a reformist way. Without a revolutionary perspective the *BRS* cannot offer any serious guidelines for communists working in trade unions. All that is served up is prosaic platitudes about "mass action".

Given its affinity to the trade union bureaucracy, the *BRS* is afraid to call for trade unions to become politically dependent on the Communist Party, afraid to say that communists should fearlessly fight for democracy in the trade unions and seek to replace reformist leaders with communist ones (who would work under the iron discipline of the Party), afraid to call for trade unions to be made into schools for revolution. None of this is excusable in a communist programme. But then the *BRS* is no communist programme.

We take a very different perspective to that of the *BRS*. Leninists have always argued that workers in trade unions should not struggle for merely a bigger slice of the cake under capitalism. This does not mean demanding 'socialism now' or some such nonsense. But it does mean linking where we are in the here and now to the fight for revolution.

Communists do this by winning workers to fight for what they need not simply what capitalism can afford. Whether a company is in profit or loss (books, especially those of transnationals, are easily cooked by accountants) is not our concern.

What workers need, of course, is determined socially, by the level of *subsistence* in society. In Britain this means that wages for unskilled work should be able to purchase enough to properly house, feed, cloth, transport and culturally develop a family of four at the present level of social development; at today's prices this amounts to a minimum of £200 per week (and this, incidentally, should also be the level of unemployment benefit). If capitalism cannot afford such a basic demand then it must go. This is how communists approach trade union demands.

## 2.4. The cooperative movement

As with the section on trade unions, no *revolutionary* tasks are posed for communists in the co-operative movement. The *BRS* limits itself to vague calls for increased sales and liaison with the trade unions.

## 2.5. The Labour Party

The Labour Party is, we are told, "the mass party of the working class." Not only that, but "changing the politics of the Labour Party is bound up with changing the politics of the working class." And in an attempt to further muddy the waters, the *BRS* states that: "The Communist Party does not seek to replace the Labour Party as the *federal* party of the working class." (our emphasis, p28)

First, let us deal with the *BRS* on not replacing the Labour Party as the "federal" party of the working class. This is sheer sophistry. Of course, the Communist Party should not seek to replace the Labour Party as the "federal" party of the working class. How can it, it is not a federal party and should have no aim of becoming one.

What the *BRS* is trying to do is excuse its liquidationist retreat from the necessary and vital task of replacing the Labour Party as the 'natural' party of the working class. Doing this is "bound up with changing the policies of the

working class", indeed it is a precondition for socialism.

Now let us turn to the nature of the Labour Party itself. Frankly, we do not consider the Labour Party "the mass party of the working class". This is a one sided definition which fails to go to the heart of the matter and leads to all sorts of erroneous conclusions. The Labour Party should be defined first and foremost as a bourgeois workers' party. Although it is based on the working class (on its trade union affiliates in particular), its leaders, its programme, are thoroughly reactionary.

Lenin thought likewise. In his famous polemic with Willie Gallagher, Silvia Pankhurst, John MacLean and other British communists over the Labour Party (note that international polemic was then considered healthy and normal, even the duty of communists in those days) he criticised MacLean for calling the Labour Party the "political organisation of the trade union movement" and "the political expression of the workers organised in trade unions".

Here is Lenin's argument:

"I have met the same view several times in the paper of the British Socialist Party [an organisation which went on to help form the CPGB - JC]. It is erroneous, and is partly the cause of the opposition, fully justified in some measure, coming from British revolutionary workers [ie. opposition to parliamentary activity - JC]. Indeed, the concepts 'political department of the trade unions' or 'political expression' of the trade union movement, are erroneous. Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are working-men. However, whether or not a party is really the political party of the workers does not depend solely upon membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns." (VI Lenin, Speech on affiliation to the British Labour Party, August 6 1920, CW, Vol 31, pp257-8)

The Labour Party can change (not into a revolutionary party, mind you), for example, in the midst of the storms of revolution. But a Labour Party mouthing left slogans would be a by-product of a revolutionary situation; it should not be seen as a programmatic aim. Winning the masses is essential if the revolution is to triumph. Undoubtedly to achieve this reformism must be fought and beaten. This task is what a genuinely Marxist-Leninist programme should be tackling, along with the tactics and methods of work revolutionaries should employ in a non-revolutionary period, which is in reality for us communists nothing more than the preparation for revolution.

Instead the *BRS* concentrates on selling the Labour Party left as a vehicle for socialist change. We have already dealt with the symbiotic relationship between the reformist left and right and the totally unscientific position advanced by the *BRS*. It certainly comes as no surprise to us that there is no mention of the danger the Labour left represents, not least in a revolutionary situation. Neither is it a surprise that no strategy or tactics are advanced to break the grip of the reformist left over advanced workers.

## 2.6. The Communist Party

### 2.6.1. The Party's 'essential characteristics'

This subsection begins by asking: "What are the essential characteristics of a party capable of giving the leadership needed in the struggle to transform the labour movement, strengthen working class unity, build alliances with other democratic movements in society, and achieve socialism?" (p25)

Five such characteristics are given in answer:

1. "... it must be based on Marxism-Leninism." How true!
2. "... it must be organised for socialist revolution" and "It must be firmly rooted in the working class." Yes! Yes!
- 3 and 4. It must be organised on the basis of both democracy and centralism. Again, how

could we disagree?

5. It needs to have "international solidarity" with the world communist movement.

For us these five characteristics are vital principles on which a Communist Party must stand or fall. Of course, in the hands of the opportunists they have been drained of all revolutionary content. In the *BRS* they represent vestiges from the past, not living practice. We will briefly examine the five "essential" characteristics one by one.

1. "... it must be based on Marxism-Leninism". As has already been seen – and the rest of this critique will prove – the *BRS* is definitely not based on Marxism-Leninism. Moves now afoot from certain right Euros to formally drop 'Marxism-Leninism' and replace it with 'scientific socialism' or some other formulation (like the replacement of proletarian dictatorship in the programmes of orthodox communism with the thoroughly reformist "transformation of the state apparatus") in the 1978 *BRS* is not a case of introducing "simpler language" (the perennial revisionist excuse) but a further fatal step along the road to full blown bourgeois politics.

2. "... it must be organised for socialist revolution" and it "must be firmly rooted in the working class." Again, it is clear from everything we have seen in the *BRS* so far that its authors have completely embraced reformism and have no intention whatsoever of organising themselves "for socialist revolution".

As is well known, the opportunists consider communist security and discipline a joke; in fact their naive faith in the bourgeois state, slap dash organisation and do your own thing approach is the joke. The authors of the *BRS* want to organise for social reform, not revolution. Mind you, as their election results show, they cannot even manage that.

What about being "firmly rooted in the working class"? It is clear from the *BRS* and reality that the Euros are firmly orientated towards the bourgeois, certainly Euro ranks are not made up of workers but the disorientated middle class. As to the CPB, it is firmly orientated towards and just about rooted in the lower echelons of the labour bureaucracy. Neither trend in 'official communism' is firmly rooted in the working class or sees the need to be so in practice.

3 and 4. The Communist Party must be organised on the basis of both democracy and centralism. With these two organisational principles monolithic unity can be forged around a principled Marxist-Leninist party programme. There is a dialectical relationship between a revolutionary programme and democracy and centralism in a Communist Party. Democratic centralism is the form of organisation the Party uses to carry out its revolutionary programme.

Under certain circumstances, it is true, communists will organise with the maximum of centralisation and restricted democracy. The balance between the two is determined by objective conditions. Naturally though in a bourgeois democracy like Britain the democratic side of democratic centralism in a Communist Party does not need to be curtailed. But there is none of this in the *BRS*. However when we look at the practice of the Euros, what do we find?

There is one sided centralism and no real democracy. In their own narrow circles, anything goes. *Marxism Today* does what the hell it likes and the overwhelming majority of members do not bother to attend monthly (!) meetings while a substantial minority does not even pay dues. So much for 'centralism'. What about 'democracy'?

Anyone who has even passing knowledge of the Euro organisation is well aware that it is riven with factions. Far from minority rights being recognised, the Euros exclude oppositionists like the Straight Leftists or set in motion wholesale expulsions (one way or another) of those who supported the *Morning Star*. In other words, although the Euros exercise no centralism over their own ranks, others are subject to the most authoritarian methods.

In a Party whose leadership long ago abandoned Marxism-Leninism, democratic centralism can only be such *bureaucratic centralism*. Far from this maintaining unity, it ensures splits, factional conspiracies and organisational disintegration.

The practice of the CPB organisation is hardly different. Tony Chater, the editor of the *Morning Star*, does what he likes with it; it is his personal property. In his 'party' bureaucratic centralism reigns, just as it does in the Euro organisation from which he split. There is no genuine debate, no life. Membership is overwhelmingly inactive; discipline is reserved for those who dissent politically.

## 2.6.2. Proletarian internationalism

Here we will deal with the fifth "essential characteristic" of a Communist Party. The reason we are giving "international solidarity" a separate section is simply that we disagree not only with the 'official communist' practice, as is the case with the other four "essential characteristics" but the theory itself.

The *BRS* has substituted the Marxist-Leninist concept of proletarian internationalism for the much 'broader', much more acceptable (to the bourgeoisie) catch all of "international solidarity". For the opportunists internationalism is about liberal sympathy for the oppressed, which increasingly takes the form of charity mongering stunts like Band Aid and Mandela Day. Besides this 'official communism' considers internationalism to be a matter of taking "into account the socialist experiments of other nations" so as to facilitate the "highly original and specifically British" road to socialism (quotes from Max Aderth's miserable apologia for the *BRS* in the CPB's *Communist Review*, Spring 1989, p13).

That proletarian internationalism gets no mention in the *BRS* is directly linked to the fact that its authors (and apologists) have no understanding at all of the world revolution. For them Britain can build full socialism all by itself. In contrast for Marxist-Leninists the liberation of the working class is a world wide struggle.

A genuine communist programme should be founded on and developed in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. 'Official communism' considers this to be a code word for subservience to the leadership of the CPSU. Leninists do not use proletarian internationalism (or socialist internationalism) in this perverted way at all. Proletarian internationalism grows out of the universality of capitalist exploitation, it is an objective law which reflects the development of the world market - never analysed in the *BRS* - which render the existence of national frontiers, rooted in the capitalist order, increasingly reactionary.

Because we are fighting in conditions of world wide capitalist exploitation, because the working class can at the end of the day only liberate itself through a world communist order it is obvious that what proletarian internationalism requires is more than a vague "international solidarity" but a *general line of march*, a plan of action determined by world, and not merely national, conditions.

Therefore, as Lenin said, a genuine communist "must not think only of one's own nation, but place above it, the interests of all nations." (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 22 p347). In other words workers today might fight on the national terrain, but only in order to realise communism, which is by definition a world order. Because workers' struggles are ultimately indivisible "proletarian internationalism demands, first, that the proletarian struggle in any one country should be subordinated to the interests of that struggle on a world wide scale ..." (our emphasis, VI Lenin *CW* Vol 31 p148). Truly we workers have no country.

In name of communism we must combat all forms of chauvinism and national narrowness (not least when it is dressed up as "highly original and specifically British") within the workers' movement, not least as manifested by the *BRS*. Only on the basis of the ideological victory of internationalism over nationalism can the revolution move decisively forward. To facilitate this, to give it form, genuine communists must also fight for the highest possible organisational unity in the global struggle for communism.

Proletarian internationalism demands the unity of theory and practice of the workers' revolutionary struggle on a world scale. This found its highest expression so far in the Third (Communist) International - the world party of socialist revolution established under Lenin's leadership in 1919. In the future we are certain it will find an even higher expression in a global proletarian dictatorship, the World Union of Socialist States.

Extending solidarity to national liberation movements like the ANC and Sinn Fein (the latter which the opportunists actually denounce) flows from our proletarian internationalism but does not entail burying our ideological differences with such organisations. Nor does it mean denying the necessity for a genuine Communist Party winning the leadership of the masses in every country without exception.

National liberation movements led by rev-

olutionary democrats are not working class organisations. Their programmes and practices are not based on the Marxist-Leninist scientific world outlook. Nevertheless when such organisations fight the forces of imperialism - our main enemy - in a revolutionary fashion we have a duty to do all in our power to deliver active solidarity. All this is a far cry from the miserable national narrowness enshrined in the *BRS*.

## 2.7. Social forces and movements.

The *BRS* takes five pages to tell us all about what it calls the "social forces and movements". It says it consists of women, the old, the young, homosexuals, blacks, nationalists in Scotland and Wales, tenants and residents associations, environmental groups, community newspapers, theatre and other cultural groups, broad committees against social service cuts, teachers, civil servants, scientists, technicians, journalists, local government and social workers, peace organisations, students and last but not least, many religious people. In other words just about everyone. (pp29-33).

## 2.8. Alliance not isolation

The authors of the *BRS* present these "social forces and movements" as distinct from the class struggle (which by implication is equated with economic questions) and if anything therefore above class interests. Apparently by identifying with the "social forces and movements" the "labour movement" (sic) can "become more conscious of its own national role as the leading force in society".

### 2.8.1. Class and "social forces and movements"

The 'discovery' that working class interests go beyond the workplace and the lumping together of a sociobiological mixed bag of groupings, races, sexes, orientations, professions, protesters, age groups and enthusiasts into "social forces and movements" is supposed to be the great contribution of the Euros to mankind's intellectual treasure house. This is, of course, sheer silliness. It's like young teenagers thinking they are the first to discover sex.

Since the dawn of class society there have been "social forces and movements" aplenty. Naturally we must study them as things in themselves, in their 'autonomy'. At the same time, though, we can only fully appreciate their origins, true social significance, historical evolution by examining them in the light of the underlying struggle of classes.

For example no serious study of Christianity is possible without a thorough grasp of the bible. But merely to do that would not get us beyond the how many angels dance on a pin head of theology. Christianity can only be fully comprehended by examining it in the light of the decay of ancient slave society, the class struggle in Jewish society as represented by the Sadducees and the Zealots and how and why the Roman ruling class was able to turn what was a religion of the oppressed in Palestine into the state religion of the oppressor empire.

It took the historical and dialectical materialism of Marx to reveal that all "social forces and movements" were in fact reflections (usually unconscious and indirect) of the class struggle. Marx insisted that the class struggle was the locomotive of history, and therefore to understand what was going on in society it was necessary to go beneath the surface of the "social forces and movements" (and the ideology of the open struggle) of the day and locate the fundamental movement of history in the forward march of mankind's productive forces and how this comes into contradiction with existing productive relations (ie class relations).

Marx showed that capitalism would inevitably become an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces (the threat of a new general crisis and a new world war would certainly represent that). Not surprisingly decadent capitalism has thrown up all sorts of radical "social forces and movements". But only a proletarian social revolution can unfetter the productive forces: a proletarian revolution because only through a proletarian revolution can we reach communism, a mode of production where there is

abundance and no social fetter on the development of the productive forces.

## 2.8.2. Democratic rights and 'autonomy'

We will now turn our attention to democratic rights and 'autonomy'.

Communists are for the fullest extension of democracy, first under capitalism and then under socialism. The working class is won by communists from being simply a class within capitalism, a class in itself, and transformed into being a class for itself, a class for the liberation of humanity, through winning it to become the most consistent champion of the democratic rights of the oppressed.

Likewise the struggle to extend democracy under socialism is linked with the struggle for communism. The transition from socialism to communism depends not only on material advance but also the extension of democracy to the point where democracy becomes all embracing and negates itself.

The fact is that the democratic demands of the oppressed can only be fully realised through the struggle for communism. Women and homosexuals can, for example, only be truly free when the family as the economic basis of society is abolished. The same for the demands of the peace movement. Peace can only be guaranteed when the proletariat has secured its victory on a world scale. Certainly the religious dream of heaven on earth will only come near to realisation with communism.

In the *BRS* the "social forces and movements" are projected as autonomous components of the "broad democratic alliance". In fact there is an insistence on "autonomy", the unmistakable 'contribution' of the Euros. For them community politics, protest groups and the feminist milieu are the stuff of politics, and ugly class interests should not be allowed to interfere.

By insisting as a matter of principle that the "social forces and movements" should be "autonomous" the *BRS* can be interpreted in such a way that classes and their struggles can be down played, even dismissed. This has led the petty bourgeois Euros to sneer at the 'economism' and 'class reductionism' of Marx, Engels and Lenin in an effort to undeservedly elevate their miserable scribbles in *Marxism Today* to truly mole hill heights.

Our aim is working class political independence from all other classes and strata. This is a pre-condition for socialism. We do not accept it as good, inevitable nor permanent the situation where to use just three examples women, black and Scottish workers organised by feminists, black separatists or SNP nationalists. For us, all workers must be won to accept the leadership of the Communist Party. This means we will fight to break the working class from the influence of all non-Marxist forces.

So while the *BRS* makes a fetish about respecting the "autonomy" of its 'broad democratic alliance' allies we make no bones about our determination to defeat all sectional mis-leaders and gain communist hegemony over all areas of working class life and activity. 'Autonomous' movements can in the end only be autonomous from Marxism-Leninism and dependent on the bourgeoisie.

Championing the rights of the oppressed must never be left to the oppressed alone. That would be disastrous. The rights of the oppressed should be the concern of the working class as a whole. This also applies to the Communist Party. There should be no black or women only-ism. The Party should establish commissions and organisations in which all elements participate. "Autonomous" sections in the Party can only weaken it. We are for monolithic unity.

### 2.8.3. Alliances

As we have said the *working class* must support the struggles of all those oppressed by capital by becoming the champion of democracy. This does not mean however, as the *BRS* seems to imagine, that capitalism can be ended simply through the extension of democratic rights. The working class champions democracy in order to make revolution and become the ruling class. With the political weight and determination of the working class thrown into the battle for the extension of democracy we can get all oppressed sections of the population to align themselves to the Communist Party and its programme for rev-

olution.

The whole question of alliances must be put into context. It is not the *main strategic question* of the revolution as it was in Russia. In Britain today, with the working class constituting around three quarters of the population, it is clear that our revolution will at the end of the day be decided by the extent and degree of working class unity we have achieved. This is the *main strategic question* we face.

Again unlike Russia the intermediate classes in Britain are not overwhelmingly downtrodden and culturally backward peasants. In the main they consist of the well healed petty bourgeoisie and middle class professionals like doctors, lawyers and journalists, as well as the middle ranks of managers and civil servants (see subsection 2.1.3.). Because this strata can gain from selling itself to monopoly capital it is therefore at best an extremely unreliable ally even in the fight for democracy.

Yet although it is tied to the existing system by a thousand golden strings there a possibility that in the event of a profound capitalist socio-economic crisis certain sections of it could turn to revolution. In the event of such a development it would be perfectly principled to consider an alliance; not a reformist alliance but a revolutionary alliance, ie, an alliance committed to the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state.

We certainly aim to get many talented members of the middle classes to commit class treachery and join the Communist Party and as large as possible a percentage to look to the working class for salvation. Nonetheless it has to be admitted that only after we have won state power would it become possible to win the intermediate strata as a whole to our side. With state power we will transform it from being a servant of the bourgeoisie and turn it into a servant of the proletarian state, eventually proletarianising it as the forces of production develop along with communist social relationships.

For the *BRS* it is not only the Communist Party but the Labour left which must help to build the 'broad democratic alliance' and working class unity (p34). We have already stated our opinion on the reformist objectives of the *BRS* and the role of the Labour Party and the Labour left. Nevertheless it is worth while re-emphasising that the only form of working class unity that is genuine is unity around the Marxist-Leninist banner of a Communist Party.

Only a Communist Party can fight for the long term interests of the working class as a whole. Only through its class party, the Communist Party, can the working class become a class for itself and exercise hegemony over oppressed strata and sections, like blacks, women and homosexuals. Only a Communist Party can enable the working class to operate strategically, enter and break tactical alliances, politically defeat the ideas of the bourgeoisie in our class and make revolution.

## 2.9. Winning a new popular majority

This subsection illustrates the prostration of the *BRS* to the Labour Party. The "winning of a new popular majority" referred to in its title, is a majority for the Labour Party. This is what the *BRS*'s dreams of building alliances are all about.

The Labour Party is criticised for creating disillusionment among the masses, for falling back from the 49% of the vote they obtained in 1951. To reverse this the *BRS* offers a "new strategy" in order to achieve a "decisive advance in the Labour vote." (p34)

This "new strategy" would reject the "traditional right wing approach of adopting capitalist politics to win the so-called middle ground in politics"; this "has been constantly tried, and has constantly failed to win the majority of the electorate to Labour's side." The *BRS* says that its "alternative" is "the only way forward." (p35)

That the working class has become disillusioned with the Labour Party is not surprising. Nor is it a bad thing in itself. The real question is where this disillusionment is channelled: to the politics of despair or to the politics of revolution. Revolutionary politics has everything to do with exploiting Labour's difficulties caused by its congenital attachment to capitalist policies. Our task should not be to throw social democracy a life line, but to ensure that it drowns without trace. This is the real way forward.

Jack Conrad