

The LENINIST

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4 page BRS supplement

It's official: Britain can't win

Internment, criminalisation, Ulsterisation, shoot-to-kill, collusion with loyalist murder gangs etc, have not taken Britain one step nearer to crushing the IRA

"T RAITOR," screamed the *Sun*, referring to the unfortunate Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke. The more reserved *Independent* branded his comments as both "naive, silly and damaging" and "ignorant and harmful". Even Labour's Northern Ireland spokesperson, Kevin McNamara, thought it political to adopt a similar stance.

All the man said was that it was "difficult to envisage" Britain militarily defeating the IRA, drawing a comparison with Britain's defeat at the hands of the Greek Cypriot Eoka organisation in the 1950s. We may never know what has provoked such an uncharacteristic outbreak of honesty, but Brooke's statement has certainly brought down the wrath of both the pro-imperialist Labour Party and the capitalist press upon his head. One can only wonder if the cabinet will lose a NI Secretary of State on the heels of a Chancellor.

Such a 'revelation' is nothing new. In 1979 the Irish republican movement's paper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* published a document from British Army intelligence (spot the contradiction) which conceded exactly the same point.

Frankly, we really don't need to be privy to the thoughts of imperialism's upper echelons to know that it cannot win, or to know that it knows it cannot win. Has internment, criminalisation, Ulsterisation, shoot-to-kill, collusion with loyalist murder gangs etc, *ad nauseam* taken Britain one step nearer to crushing the IRA?

No. All Britain has done for years is to keep plugging away with surveillance, propaganda and terror. There is no ray of hope on the horizon for Brooke and his ilk. It has been a long time since Britain had the foolish arrogance to claim, like the old Labour Secretary of State, Roy 'Butcher' Mason, that it can "squeeze the life out of the IRA".

Nevertheless, such overt admissions of bankruptcy by Britain's colonial administration can only enthuse supporters of Irish freedom. That it sets members of the ruling class and their minions at one another's throats is also all to the good.

Such comments as Brooke's, fumed the *Independent*, "are likely to encourage the gunmen and the bombers and to dishearten the police" (November 6). It certainly

had the likes of Ian Paisley swinging from the rafters. Add this to the crisis around the Guildford 4 frame-ups and things are very advantageous for anti-imperialists today. Yes, the *Independent* is right that even admissions by the ruling class of what we already know show that our enemy is far from monolithic and invincible.

Britain is in a no-win situation. It cannot 'normalise' the Six Counties, yet it cannot really explain this away. "Northern Ireland is not a colony, but an integral part of the United Kingdom" says *The Independent*, articulating the view of the vast majority of the capitalist class. Just like sleepy Hertfordshire? Hardly.

Supporters of British imperialism, from media hacks to government ministers, are at a loss to explain how this might be. The 'criminal' argument really doesn't hold much water. Why does the electorate of West Belfast persist in electing what Britain likes to portray as the political equivalent of Dennis Nilsen to the Westminster parliament? The silence on this is more deafening than a BBC Sinn Fein party political broadcast.

As James Connolly said, Britain's difficulty is our opportunity. In times like these there are few scents more pleasant than that of ruling class crap hitting the air conditioning. This is good slapstick, but far more importantly it gives us greater room for action. While the ruling class rants and raves at the foot-in-mouth statements of one of its representatives we must explain to workers in Britain why he is right, why Britain cannot defeat the IRA.

The reformist road of bishops to brickies is no way forward. It is necessary to point this out, given that many leftists will attempt to give Cardinal Basil Hume anti-imperialist credentials after his campaigning to release the Guildford 4.

Now three other churchmen have called on the government to launch an enquiry into the cases of the Birmingham 6 to 'allay public disquiet' about the case. Their main concern is to prevent the ruling class blundering into yet another crisis should another of its stitch-ups be conclusively exposed. As of yet, though, the consensus within the state seems to still believe that it would create more 'disquiet' to lift the lid on this case.

That is exactly what we want: 'public disquiet'. Irish freedom will not be achieved without a great

deal of 'disquiet'. Bishops to brickies alliances, such as 'Time To Go', are wont to flounder at the first test. They may shed bitter tears at 'injustices' such as the Guildford 4 but take great care to avoid the question of the Irish war and which side to take. They are unwilling to fight for the freedom of *all* Irish political prisoners. Because of this they are as incapable as the editor of the *Independent* of understanding why masses of Irish people support the IRA.

Communists are not victims of such confusion. We are not afraid to take sides in the Irish war, for the IRA and against the British Army, because we understand why the IRA fights and why it encourages such fear and loathing among the British bourgeoisie.

An army of national liberation that enjoys mass support from the oppressed cannot be defeated, short of genocide. So long as Britain divides and oppresses Ireland those people at the sharp end of the repression will look to resistance as the way out: at this moment in time, to the IRA.

While Britain stays, that resistance will remain. Yet British imperialism cannot afford to cut its losses in the Six Counties. For the ruling class, this is 'home'. To concede defeat at the hands of the Irish people would be to invite the working class in Britain to emulate them. It is not 'just another colony' that is at stake, but part of the British state within which much political capital is invested. So Britain must continue in a situation which it admits it cannot win.

A working class based movement here, however, can ensure that it *loses*. The disquiet that our good clerics are so worried about needs to be encouraged and channelled into a movement in support of Irish freedom based on the working class. That is why all working class militants, not just partisans of Irish liberation, should support Hands Off Ireland!. For when the mass of workers in Britain take sides with the Irish, then our class will be ready to shake the whole, rotten capitalist system to its very foundations.

•Support HOI! Manchester Martyrs Demonstration contingent, Sunday November 26. Coach tickets from London: £9 (waged), £4 (unwaged) from HOI! BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX or phone (01) 431 3135.

Alan Merrick





Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

IN NOVEMBER 1981, when we began publication, many attacked us for suggesting that the communist movement was heading for liquidationist crisis and that there were profound problems in the socialist countries. Who now can deny that we were right?

During the course of November and December the shattered remnants of 'official communism' will be holding their congresses. In their own different ways these congresses will reflect the general crisis of 'official communism'. The Euros will move still further to the right in an effort to constitute themselves as a neo-Fabian think-tank. Other 'official communists' will, if the leaders get their way, come out with head-in-the-sand platitudes and nothing more. 'Official communism' in Britain seems determined to die with a whimper, not a bang.

The fact of the matter is that 'official communism' world-wide is going through a crisis of 1914 dimensions (when the 'official' socialist parties went over to their 'own' ruling classes). This is a crisis of despair. Brought about by a thousand self-inflicted opportunist retreats, it has produced complete political, ideological and moral bankruptcy.

Politically the 'official communists' are in total disarray and totally impotent. The Euros are nothing more than a bourgeois fifth column. No wonder Murdoch's scab *Sunday Times* praises *Marxism Today* and employs its editor.

Having nothing left to believe in except the passing fads and fancies of others, the Euro CPGB is in rapid disintegration. Membership is spiralling down, it is being deserted in droves by former full time functionaries and organisationally it only survives through selling off one property after another (the proverbial family silver).

The *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain and the New Communist Party are Derby and Joan nostalgic rumps with a part time approach to politics and a financial reliance on political prostitution - something which, given the falling sales of *Marxism Today*, the Euros are turning to for survival as well.

All of this reflects the social demoralisation of 'official communism', a crisis which, with Gorbachevism, has now reached a qualitative turning point. In siding with the pro-capitalism of Gorbachevism, or at least keeping quiet on it, 'official communists' in Britain are siding with their 'own' bourgeoisie which - with developments in Poland, Hungary, the GDR and hopes of bigger and better things in the USSR in mind - praises Gorbachev to the skies.

None of the strands of 'official communism' has any genuine commitment to revolution, indeed both the Euro organisation and the CPB are programmatically committed to the defence of the bourgeois parliament - the classic defining feature of reformism. Not surprisingly, therefore, all - including the NCP, which has never managed to come up with a programme of any sort - place their hopes in the Labour Party and will automatically vote for Kinnock at the next general election, no matter how overtly pro-capitalist his Thatchnockite platform may be.

There is nothing positive left in 'official communism'. It is a barrier in the way of reforging the Communist Party our working class so desperately needs. So what should those forces within the ranks of the three 'official communist' 'parties' who are still committed to the ideas of communism do? In a word, they should rebel!

This is no time to preserve diplomatic silence, this is no time to keep opposition within the confines of the 'normal channels': this is a time for open struggle. Genuine communists, you have no choice if you are to remain communists - you must openly rebel and look towards the politics of *The Leninist*.

The Editor

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LETTERS

CPB swap

When working for the Communist Party of Britain in London I always swapped the *Morning Star* for *The Leninist*, or bought it because it had interesting articles on the CCG, *Morning Star*, etc, but since being in the city of Salford I hardly ever see it.

However, on going to the Manchester student demo to give out leaflets for the party rally and selling the *Morning Star* I saw a chap selling *The Leninist*. I asked if he would do a swap - yes, I've missed reading the paper. If possible please send back copies.

Jack Conrad seems to be always critical of the CPB and the *Morning Star*. One point, Tony Chater works for the *Morning Star* and has a management committee and they have had editors before and editors will come and go. He can be sacked. It is not his personal property and never will be.

Yours fraternally
Malcolm Peach
Eccles

CPB

I recently attended a London Communist Party of Britain youth group discussion on their programme, the *British Road to Socialism*. The evening began with a vague, all bets hedged, opening by Photis Lysandrou, one of the more intelligent, if pompous, CPB leaders.

The meeting was not a complete waste of time. A polemic developed between him and Leninist comrades; we were able to prise out of him the truth that their programme is reformist to the core: "we are not out to displace parliament, we are out to change it", he reluctantly admitted.

The 'official communists' are sinking fast into the mire of social democracy. For the CPB this will mean total oblivion. Good riddance.

Tom Campbell
London

CPGB praise

I would like to congratulate you on your super work: the *British Road* critique was magnificent. Please pass on my praise to Jack Conrad and the Leninist comrades.

I noticed in issue 82 the ad for HOI! papers. I would like to take ten copies; perhaps I could interest some colleagues and comrades in taking one.

Unfortunately Ireland is an extremely touchy subject here. Locals would prefer not to discuss it at all, though I shall keep you posted. The situation here is grim.

I attended a CPGB area meeting in Saltcoats town hall for a pre-congress discussion on the *Manifesto for new times*. Most comrades spoke with praise of the document. I finally managed to get a word in.

I told them this was proof the CPGB had definitely moved from Marxism-Leninism to the right, that the party had no interest in destroying capital so could not therefore refer to itself as communist. Referring to the praise they lavish on the Labour party, I told them Lenin's view on this (*CW* Vol 31 pp257-8) and affirmed its proven relevance today.

I also mentioned their references to feminism and international solidarity. I told them that women are oppressed by capital and can only

be free by joining men in a genuine Communist Party, where they will receive equal rights beside the male comrades when communism is won by smashing capital. I said as communists we have always stood for proletarian internationalism, we do not need new phrases to undermine what we have always stood for.

My comrades received me well, even congratulated me on my points raised. Then they voted for the *Manifesto!* Aaaargh, what bloody fools. I enclose a small donation which I hope to add to in the future.

Yours in comradeship, long live
The Leninist!
Jim McGowan
Scotland

Poland

It would be very interesting for you to see how one lives in a country where the idea of communism has failed. Everyday life is becoming more difficult. We have to queue to buy meat, to buy bread, sugar, matches, etc. I get very angry when some of my domestic equipment goes wrong. From time to time something breaks down and I swear, not being able to find a suitable tradesman to repair it.

Many people do not yet realise what a return to capitalism will mean, but all feel that the present road leads nowhere. The majority imagine that they will work like Easterners [ie east Europeans] and receive salaries like Westerners (this was said by Lech Walesa - a real joker).

If we return to capitalism, unemployment will be a fact. It is said, and unfortunately it is true, that in Poland there exists hidden unemployment. People sit in state offices, do almost nothing and earn the wages of a pauper.

What will become of us? I am vexed about my future.

Urszula Grobowski
Poland

Solidarity

Mark Marston, in the letters page of the last issue, responding to my article 'Internationalism and Revolution', correctly states that I portray "Hands Off Ireland! as an integral part of building a Communist Party." He states that "this is not quite the same as the work that was done to build the HOI! contingent on Time To Go".

I beg to differ. As a communist, all my work is directed to building the genuine Communist Party our class needs; a communist who finds a problem with this approach is obviously no communist. Comrade Marston confuses two points: the platform of a campaign and the way in which communists work within it. HOI! is based on the demands "Troops Out Now" and "Self Determination for the Irish Nation". It is a solidarity campaign in which communists work, as opposed to a communist organisation as such. Our fight for a Communist Party in no way excludes any principled anti-imperialist individuals or organisations who do not share that perspective.

As an aside here, it is important that comrade Marston, a leading HOI! member, can put forward his disagreements without feeling that this is in conflict with his membership of HOI!. Yet, for weeks we were verbally informed by a Workers Power member that it was about to affiliate ("the cheque's on the way").

However, in the wake of my article, this decision was, it seems, reversed because apparently I argued that communists should work for a Communist Party. Surely Workers Power, in the interests of clarity if nothing else, should tell us what its criticisms of HOI! and 'Internationalism and Revolution' are.

Alan Merrik
London

Unions and Ireland

At the Annual General Meeting of the London Overseas Telephones No2 Branch of the Union of Communications Workers a motion was put calling for support for Hands Off Ireland!, troops out now and self-determination for the Irish nation.

Although the motion was eventually lost by a margin of two to one, there were many abstentions and the militant speeches of HOI! supporters were listened to with interest, if not overwhelming enthusiasm. Of the ten or so members who spoke in the debate all professed to support Irish independence, but most feared a "blood-bath" after British withdrawal, and one supported the replacement of British imperialist troops with those of the UN. It is of course not surprising that most workers are so influenced by bourgeois ideology that, even when they believe they are taking a stand against the establishment, they still voice such pro-imperialist sentiments: the Irish are incapable of taking their affairs into their own hands and need British guidance, or that of some suitable replacement.

But the arguments that appeared to sway many members were those put by the branch secretary, that the interests of the union and its members in the Six Counties demanded that such a partisan motion should not succeed. This is rather like the argument that is often used by union bureaucrats nowadays: don't go on strike and risk the sequestration of union funds - accept the loss of your job, or whatever - as though the interests of "the union" were more important than those of its members!

In fact, the defeat of British imperialism is in the interests of all workers, both British and Irish, irrespective of what union they belong to (including the Protestant working class, despite their present consciousness). Failure to take sides means supporting the status quo and the British occupation. Some neutrality! This line was, however, supported by 'left' Executive Committee member Alan Crisp, who attended the meeting, although he did not speak in the debate.

The motion was lost, but the arguments were heard. The need now is to identify where our support lies and build on that.

Paul Jackson
London

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.

Lessons of October



Agit-prop for the vanguard party

Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement

THE 72nd ANNIVERSARY of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and the eighth anniversary of the launch of *The Leninist*, were celebrated by the coming together in London on November 4 and 5 of members, supporters and sympathisers of *The Leninist* for a weekend school and Saturday evening rally under the title 'Lessons of October'.

In order to achieve both the maximum political input and extensive participation by all comrades, the school used a combination of lectures to elaborate the views of *The Leninist* on the one hand and, on the other, openings based on preparatory discussions by working groups. This format proved highly successful and the effectiveness of groupwork was acclaimed in the feedback session at the close of the school where comments and criticisms were noted for future reference.

The first working group operated under the title 'The revolutionary party and its paper'. It dealt with the necessity of 'hairsplitting' arguments between *The Leninist* and the rest of the left in order to achieve ideological clarity and defeat all opportunist trends. Without this the vanguard of the working class cannot be won to the hegemony of the Party. Only when this has been achieved will a mass circulation daily paper on the model of Lenin's *Pravda* be required.

The first of the three one-hour lectures given by comrade John on aspects of the Soviet Union and its revolution outlined why we consider that the Bolshevik revolution was not a purely Russian affair but can only be understood as breaking the weak link of the imperialist chain and as the first step of the world socialist revolution, yet to be completed.

The necessity of forging the Leninist party from the top down by winning the allegiance of advanced workers and revolutionaries to a polemical, theoretical paper on the model of *Iskra*, was not peculiar to Russian conditions. Likewise the rejection of parliamentarism, and the necessity of soviets — organs of workers' power, while the bourgeois state apparatus has to be smashed. These are universal laws of the socialist revolution.

The group-led discussion on Communism, Women and Feminism identified feminism as an ideology which is opposed to Marxism-

Leninism. It has its source in women's oppression but is anti-working class, directing women's struggle against men instead of against the state. It was agreed that a working class women's movement is needed, and *The Leninist* should work towards making an organisational initiative in this direction — preconditions for this being the preparation of a clear theoretical platform in the paper, and the development of women comrades.

The working group dealing with the National Question highlighted the need to uphold national rights, not in order to achieve the separation of nations, but precisely to provide the most favourable conditions for the cooperation and eventual merging of nations in future world communist society. Another area of agreement was that the Leninist principle of one Communist Party in each state was correct. However in concrete terms this would mean the organisation of a Communist Party of the United Kingdom, and a lively discussion developed on what special circumstances applied in Northern Ireland which, for the moment, require a different approach.

At the Saturday evening rally the fraternal speaker from the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*) condemned the inadequacy of Gorbachev's glasnost political reforms and the widely recognised failure of his perestroika policies to solve the Soviet economic crisis. He quite rightly pointed to the impossibility of taking socialism forward without the widest extension of socialist democracy, and pledged to support all thoroughgoing democratic reforms while keeping up criticism of inadequate measures.

Comrade John, for *The Leninist*, however, took the view that only political revolution by the working class could prevent the restoration of capitalism by the bureaucracy. There was no middle way.

The bureaucratic formal socialism which had been introduced by the 1917 revolution, despite being a relative fetter on the productive forces (ie much more could have been achieved with socialist democracy), had nevertheless facilitated extremely rapid industrialisation and economic advance comparable to the best growth rates of imperialism, right into the sixties.

In the seventies, however, the productive forces reached the

point where socialist democracy became a necessity for their further development. The bureaucratic form of socialism became an absolute fetter on the productive forces, producing the 'stagnation years' of the Brezhnev period, economic and political crisis and the alternative roads of political revolution by the working class or the restoration of capitalism led by the bureaucracy, through its transformation into a bourgeoisie.

Comrade John pointed to the futility of pinning one's hopes on some section of the bureaucracy to introduce socialist democracy through enlightened reforms. No section of the bureaucracy exists which has a material interest in abolishing itself — only the working class is capable of "committing historical suicide" by pushing society forward through socialism to the establishment of classless communist society.

Although bureaucratisation is an inevitable feature of socialism, especially strong in the extremely backward conditions which gave birth to the world's first lasting proletarian dictatorship, the transformation of the soviet bureaucracy (of the working class) into the master of society was by no means inevitable.

This depended not only on the objective conditions but also on the subjective factor. Only through the vigilant and unrelenting leadership of its Communist Party could the bureaucracy — a necessary evil throughout the transition period of socialism — have remained the servant of the working class.

Unfortunately, through the victory in the CPSU of the centrist opportunism under Stalin, placing the interests of the Soviet state and its bureaucracy above those of the world socialist revolution, the Party was gradually transformed from the party of the working class into the workers' party of the bureaucracy. Today its top sections are therefore incapable of leading the Soviet working class to the political revolution which it is now called upon to deliver if the restoration process is to be halted.

The speeches were followed by a moving performance by the Workers Theatre Movement of its latest piece *October*, written specially for the occasion. It ended with *The Internationale* in which the entire rally joined, spirits and fists raised.

Stan Kelsey

For the last two months the Unemployed Workers Charter has been joining striking CPSA members outside the Marylebone Unemployment Benefit Office. Their strike is part of a national campaign by the Department of Employment against staffing shortages throughout Unemployment Benefit Offices in London and the rest of the country. The UWC has always emphasised the importance of unemployed and employed workers striking together, and the industrial action at this office provided an excellent opportunity for this to be put into practice. With Tory cuts biting hard across all government departments, management are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit staff. Indeed, as the situation worsens within the DoE many simply leave as the pressure of handling an ever increasing workload with less and less staff becomes unbearable. This has a knock-on effect on unemployed workers. Providing them with any kind of help becomes impossible. That is why the UWC has been urging employed and unemployed workers to unite in support of the CPSA strikers. Join the UWC and fight the Tory onslaught. GP

About 200 people attended the Terence MacSwiney demonstration on October 28 in South London's Brixton. The march was led by the Pollock republican flute band from Glasgow, and was supported by a number of left wing and Irish groups. Before the march set off, as well as at the rally at its end, the Workers Theatre Movement gave a spirited performance of *Twenty years* which was warmly received (there was one heckler who we originally thought was a fascist — however he turned out to be a member of Red Action). The largest contingent on the march was provided by Hands Off Ireland!, whose militant slogans dominated the whole demonstration. Our contingent was joined by passers by as the march progressed and many new contacts for HOI! were made. As a result, a HOI! meeting the following week in Brixton with the video *Behind the Mask* attracted a very good audience. The march could have been much bigger. A number of left wing groups showed their usual sectarianism and refused to mobilise for it. The SWP managed to mobilise only two persons, one for each end of a banner. The IFM/RCP withdrew its promise of support because it was (wrongly) not allowed to have a speaker. Although also denied speaking rights, HOI! distributed thousands of leaflets to publicise the march and is now stepping up its activity in the run up to the Bloody Sunday demonstration on Saturday January 27 (where no doubt the organisers will also refuse us the right to speak). TC



Hands Off Ireland! fights for mass working class based solidarity with Ireland's struggle for self determination

Ford workers are demanding a cut in hours with no loss of pay, adding momentum to the strikes being conducted by engineers demanding a 35 hour week. The unions' chief negotiator at Fords has threatened a strike ballot unless "the company works towards reducing" the working week to 35 hours with no loss of pay for 33,000 manual workers. On top of this, the unions have called for a substantial pay rise. At present the company has offered a two year deal worth 9.5% in the first year, but with no mention of a reduction in hours. This has been rejected. Ford workers must fight for and win this improvement in their working conditions because it is not only of significance to them, but also to the unemployed. Any reduction in the hours worked without loss of pay is a victory for our whole class, including the unemployed. The Unemployed Workers Charter recognises the importance of such struggles and is continuing to organise street collections for the striking engineers. The unity of unemployed and employed workers is of vital importance. Victory to the engineers and Ford workers. NE

Second time



It is not possible to overestimate the importance of *The Leninist* at the present moment in time. The disintegration of bureaucratic socialism, calls from Euro Jon Bloomfield for his organisation to cease calling itself a Communist Party, the continued rise of working class industrial militancy and the deep divisions in the Tory ranks calls for as never before *The Leninist's* clear undeviating Marxism-Leninism. To ensure that our paper keeps coming out we must meet our £600 monthly fighting fund. So it is more than just good news that for the second month in a row the fund has ended with a surplus, a small one but nonetheless a surplus; £40 in fact. Many thanks comrades, in particular to UR, HJ, NG, VR and WS. Keep it coming.

GREEN CAPITALISM

During the twentieth century capitalism plunged humanity into a host of regional ones. It destroyed millions of lives and blocked development. Should the working class first – promises to dwarf capitalism. Thatcher's the blue whale will end in destruction: possibly no hole in, certainly no one worrying whether their tested on laboratory rats

MARGARET THATCHER has announced plans to establish a project to monitor the environment. She warned that "mankind" is "inflicting irretrievable damage on the planet". As we have said before (see 'England's green, unpleasant left', *The Leninist* December 23 1988), it seems everyone is now green. 'Green issues' have shot to the fore, becoming one of the central issues of politics today. But what is the truth behind this – if indeed there is any truth behind it.

There are certainly enough signs of 'green capitalism'. You cannot avoid noticing all the eco-friendly products stocking the shelves of supermarkets such as Sainsburys and Safeways. In the motor industry lead free petrol, for so long dismissed as ludicrously impractical and, for those that can afford them, catalytic converters have become *de rigueur*. Pick up any newspaper, look at any billboard and it seems that all businesses are trying to sell themselves on the green ticket.

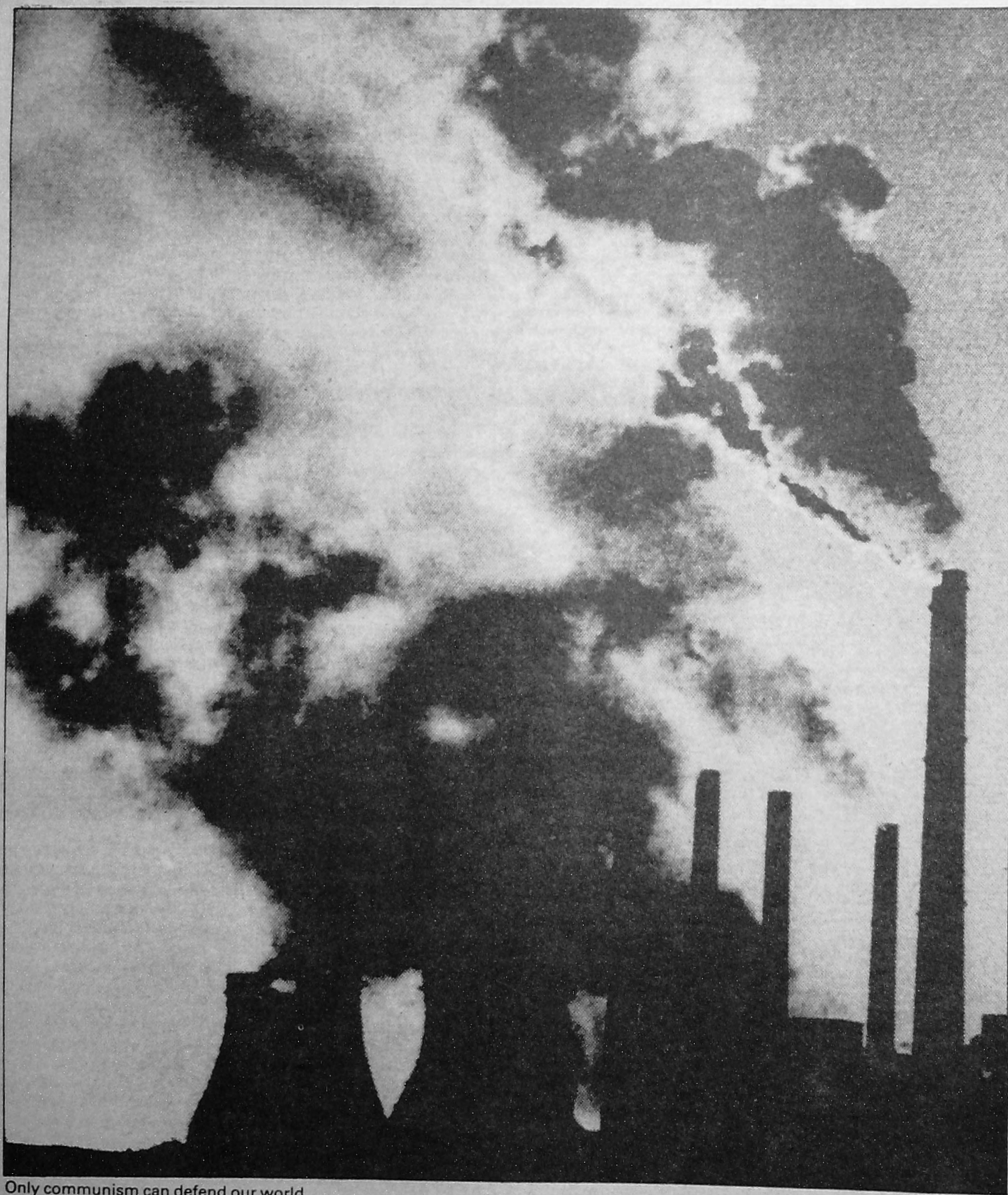
Call me cynical, but this writer suspects that much of this must be hype, either on the level that many green products are not really so green at all, or that they are so at the cost of efficiency. In the former instance, many products, green at the point of consumption, are none too eco-friendly at the point of production. As to the latter example, one wagish commentator pointed out that the green household bleach that substituted hydrogen peroxide for chlorides did not so much kill the offending bacteria as send them platinum blond. Never mind that more people are dying from cigarettes, or that driving a car is more likely to see you off than inhaling its exhaust fumes; sticking a whale on the front sells goods. However, as the saying goes, you can fool some of the people all of the time, and so on.

There is a definite cleaning up of capitalism in some sectors, this cannot be doubted. Many businesses can back up their wholesome marketing image with lengthy statistics. The question is, though, can capitalism generalise this? Can the conscientious middle classes now sleep easy till the next crisis?

To an extent capitalism has responded to pressures other than the needs of its immediate accumulation. Today we see something of an accumulated reaction in society to disasters from Thalidomide, through the Amoco Cadiz and asbestosis to Bhopal and Chernobyl. That such disasters seem to be becoming ever more destructive and situated within a climate of the continual haemorrhaging of resources has taken root as a powerful idea socially.

The problem appears to be one of the relation of man to nature, rather than the result of a social relation between men, which is why the spokespersons of capital can so readily jump on the green bandwagon. The nexus is, after all, not a social one and not therefore directed at their society. From below, this is a spontaneous reaction to the symptoms of capitalism which does not direct its fire at the system itself. It can therefore be contained, even manipulated.

Seen in such a light the eco-problem can



Only communism can defend our world

Century capitalism has
two world wars and a
the process it has
es and vast resources,
t. The next time –
not kill the beast
of all previous crises.
come of green
touching concern for
incalculable
ozone layer to have a
with the luxury of
cosmetics have been
bits

become a nice little earner. For instance, there is no reason (aside from possible initial outlays on new capital) that the more expensive green products on your supermarket shelves should be any more expensive to produce than their counterparts. Indeed, they may even work out cheaper.

Yet, given the eco-hype, the concerned customer can be relied on to fork out an extra few bob on what she or he feels is in the interest of South Sea dolphins or a perforation proof ozone layer. For those first into the market there is a definite advantage here. It is only the later flood of capital into this sphere in search of the cash of concerned and gullible consumers that will drive the profit rate down.

There are few capitalist disasters that are not profitable for some sector of capitalism. When the Herald of Free Enterprise went down, the price of the London quoted shares of Eurotunnel rose: the investors had taken it for granted that it was something to do with the Channel tunnel, which it was not; still, that's neither here nor there. There is clearly no argument for capitalism on moral grounds. We must therefore ask if it is possible for capitalism to go green, and if so on what basis. It is clear from the above examples that we can answer the former in the affirmative. Let us therefore proceed to the latter.

Green money

Green consumer goods offer a profitable market for capital. This is an offshoot of "ethical investment". A recent special report into business and the environment in the *Independent* estimated that at least 10% of the stock traded on Wall Street is what the paper termed "screened ethically". The basis for this is of course that many people react away from buying from companies that sell electric prods to regimes with more dubious records than most on human rights. Witness, for instance, the effect of the consumer boycotts on South African investors. Though minor, it could claim some effect in some sectors. Certainly, it opens up a niche for 'safe' capital.

Then there is the question of waste. This has become a highly profitable sector for capitalism. Everything from plutonium to PVC can be processed in some way, either to be 'safely' disposed of at the cost of its previous owners or, more commonly, to be recycled in some new form.

Play your cards right and you might even be able to combine both. This has many advantages for capitalism's profit margins: for example, recycling aluminium uses only 5% of the energy needed to extract it from its 'natural' state, bauxite. Given this, it is rather surprising that Alcan only announced this year plans to build Europe's first plant to recycle aluminium cans.

There is also the advantage that the initial outlay on raw materials is very low; you may even be paid to take them. If nothing else, combustible waste can be used to generate electricity.

Capitalism, like the dog, is an animal that has learnt to eat its own shit. It also does better out of it than the common canine. Waste has become something of a boom industry and, as is common with new boom industries, probably enjoys a relatively high profit rate.

Nevertheless it must be pointed out that this sector is subject to the laws of capitalism, like any other. Capital will be drawn to it so long as an adequate profit rate is received. That is, after all, what it is all about.

It is also not true that all aspects of waste disposal are or can be profitable. Where it is not it must be partially or entirely undertaken by the state (thus lowering the overall profit rate) or abandoned. All the guarantees of the leaders of the western world for the environment are at bottom completely conditional on the profit rate.

The same must be said in the case of the greening of large scale industry. Many industries are boosting their green credentials by the introduction of equipment to reduce waste. This is being backed up by legislation on national and multinational levels.

Again, this is far from being capitalism with a conscience. To an extent it is an example of capitalist 'planning', within a given enterprise or state, or through inter-state agreement. The bourgeoisie must look further than the current turnover of capital to continual reproduction to ensure its existence.

This has gone from being a concern at the fringes of the capitalist class to being one for the class as a whole. Any who step out of line on this are liable to get slapped.

There is nothing new in this: British capitalism responded in this way to facilitate the reproduction of its workforce in the nineteenth century, with the introduction of factory legislation fixing working conditions and the length of the working day, and in the twentieth, with the construction of the welfare state. The conditions may be different today, but the bosses' response is essentially the same.

Such a policy is not only rational as far as the long term interests of capital go, but also falls into step with the immediate ambitions of its most dynamic and powerful elements. The *Economist* of September 2 explains the situation: "Big, well run companies will prosper – indeed, governments will use them to set the pace for change, arguing that if they can produce cleaner technology, then it should become standard. So will small, clever entrepreneurs."

"Some governments have begun to boast about the size of their environment cleaning exports. The countries with the toughest standards tend to be the best – led by Japan and West Germany. Some newly industrialised countries, such as Taiwan and Singapore, are catching up, spurred on by increasingly stiff environmental regulations at home. And some industries have begun to realise that environmental regulation offers the best argument for trade protection. Why should companies in dirtier countries be allowed to cut costs and compete with us, they will ask. Trade will increasingly provide a powerful force for cleaning up the world."

'Cleaning up' in more ways than one. It is obvious from the above that all this ecology stuff is a very powerful weapon. Big and/or dynamic capital can use it to squeeze out sluggish competitors. Cleaner production is gradually becoming a must in many areas, with taxes and fines hanging over the heads of non-compliers.

In the United States courts are already going beyond fines and sending chief executives to jail for such acts of "gross environmental negligence" as the illegal dumping of harmful chemicals. Large and dynamic capital can afford to make the changes to comply with new legislation. Capital with lower rates of profit, however, will find this much harder.

Many will not be able to comply and – if caught – will go under. Others which do comply will find their profits reduced even more as overheads soar, and will again have liquidation staring them in the face.

Obviously, this is in the interests of the capital which can make, or has made, such a transition with far less trouble. As their competitors collapse they may expand, which will lead to a temporary offset to the general declining rate in profit.

We can see a similar situation on the international level. It is no accident that Japan and

the FGR are leading the field. They enjoy the highest growth rates of the imperialist states.

As the *Economist* argues, their ability to 'green' their production and enforce these standards legislatively provides a pretext to enforce export barriers under another name, excluding those countries unable to fulfil the necessary conditions. But there is more to it than that.

These states may have the power to enforce these conditions internationally, through the EC or even the UN. Not only will other countries then be restricted in what they can export to the likes of the FGR but also in what they can produce themselves. Despite Thatcher's green soliloquies, Britain's low rate of growth indicates that it may well fall into this category.

These moves can and will be used as a lever to further squeeze the 'underdeveloped' countries oppressed by imperialism, who can in no way compete in the green rat race. It is also bound to exacerbate inter-imperialist rivalries. The pressure will be on for 'green' imperialism to marginalise its 'grey' competitors. The competitors, however, will resist in whatever way they can. And in that, at least, there is nothing new at all.

Atomised and alienated

It would be grossly one sided to view the current trajectory of capitalist development as being in a direction of 'harmonious' ecological development, even if for the most self interested reasons. We still have our Ethiopias, our Sudans, and there will undoubtedly be more.

Capitalism, unlike previous forms of society, is characterised by its necessity to continuously revolutionise the forces of production. This society has seen growth unimaginable to the builders of the Pyramids or the wonders of ancient Rome or Athens. In a few short centuries human society has notched up greater development than throughout all previous history.

The Greens would identify that as being the problem. Their solution is a 'return' to a reactionary utopia, with vast reductions in production, technology and population.

For communists, though, this is not the problem. Socialism and communism will continuously revolutionise the forces of production – indeed, at a rate way beyond anything seen today. Greens see this as a development of their industrialist nightmare.

For communists it is a precondition for true liberation, as Marx and Engels explained in the *German Ideology*: "it is possible to achieve real liberation only in the real world and by real means ... slavery cannot be abolished without the steam engine and the mule jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture ... people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity." (*MECW*, Vol 5, p38)

The problem is not that capitalism produces too much of these goods, 'spoiling' both man and nature in the process, as the Greens would have you believe, but that it is incapable of producing enough of them.

More correctly, what is produced is not produced for need by the social collective, but by atomised, alienated individuals for equally alien necessity:

"The social power, ie, the multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals as it is caused by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their cooperation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus are no longer able to control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these." (*Ibid*, p48).

A rather unwieldy sentence, but one expressing most succinctly the central problematic of Marx's critique of bourgeois society: the question of alienation.

Where does this brief philosophical excursion take us on our critique of green capitalism? Human society is based on collective labour, a reciprocal and continual transform-

ation of man and nature. Under the direct and conscious control of human society this can be regulated at all levels, the consequences of any developments predicted and if necessary modified accordingly. However, this is not our situation.

Man does not relate to man directly, but through the medium of exchange – exchange based on alienated labour. As Marx explains, this confronts us as an alien and hostile power outside of our control. If we are not in control of our own social productive powers then, by definition, we cannot control the articulation of nature which this entails.

As the productivity of labour increases, in an alienated form, then the power of this alien force, our own social labour, manifests itself against society with ever greater strength. This has absolutely nothing to do with the intrinsic nature of the forces of production – the level of technology, agriculture, population, etc – and everything to do with the social relations of production, with capitalism.

An obvious deduction from this is that capitalism cannot rationally plan. On a national and international level, despite the presence of a plethora of agreements, this is undoubtedly true.

The consequences of deforestation, the famine and depopulation of areas like the Sudan and Ethiopia, are a million miles away from the wonderfully tightly-knit and geometrically pleasing schema of the architects of bourgeois policy. This is a wasteful destruction of resources for any society.

The problem is not only atomisation, which has existed in different ways in all hitherto forms of society, but atomisation with its own distinctive dynamic.

Capitalist production is production for profit, profit which is divided among the capitalist class relative to their amount of total social capital. The competition which this dictates forces the continuous revolutionising of the forces of production.

But as productivity rises, profit rates, and eventually even the mass of profit, decline thus exacerbating the fight between different capitalists. The drive to accumulate is the motor of capitalist society. That drive must in time become a mad scramble.

This occurs within all sections of capitalist production, green and otherwise. To continue to exist, corners must be cut, regulations broken. Green capitalists will be both attempting to make competitors abide by stringent guidelines while at the same time seeking to circumvent them themselves.

This also comes into conflict with the need to reproduce the conditions necessary for capitalist production, in particular reproduction of the labour force. These stresses are already apparent today.

Such a crisis is characterised by an overaccumulation of total capital, making necessary the destruction of capital so that accumulation may continue. Capitalists are not Santa Clause, and every capitalist will seek to offload the crisis onto the working class and onto other capitalists, if necessary through war.

During the twentieth century, capitalism has plunged humanity into two world wars and a host of regional ones. In the process it has destroyed millions of lives and vast resources, and blocked development.

The next time – should the working class not kill the beast first – promises to dwarf all previous crises. This is the inevitable outcome of green capitalism. Thatcher's touching concern for the blue whale will end in incalculable destruction: possibly no ozone layer to have a hole in, certainly no one with the luxury of worrying whether their cosmetics have been tested on laboratory rabbits.

The danger is the very antithesis of unfettered growth; it is the fettering of human development: growth, by the capitalist system, which in the last analysis can only resort to the most wasteful and barbaric solution – war.

Imperialism's verdant hue does not offset this at all. In fact, as we have argued, it is an integral (if perhaps fleeting) tool of accumulation. The only way to protect our planet is to free our society by overthrowing capitalism, 'green' or otherwise.

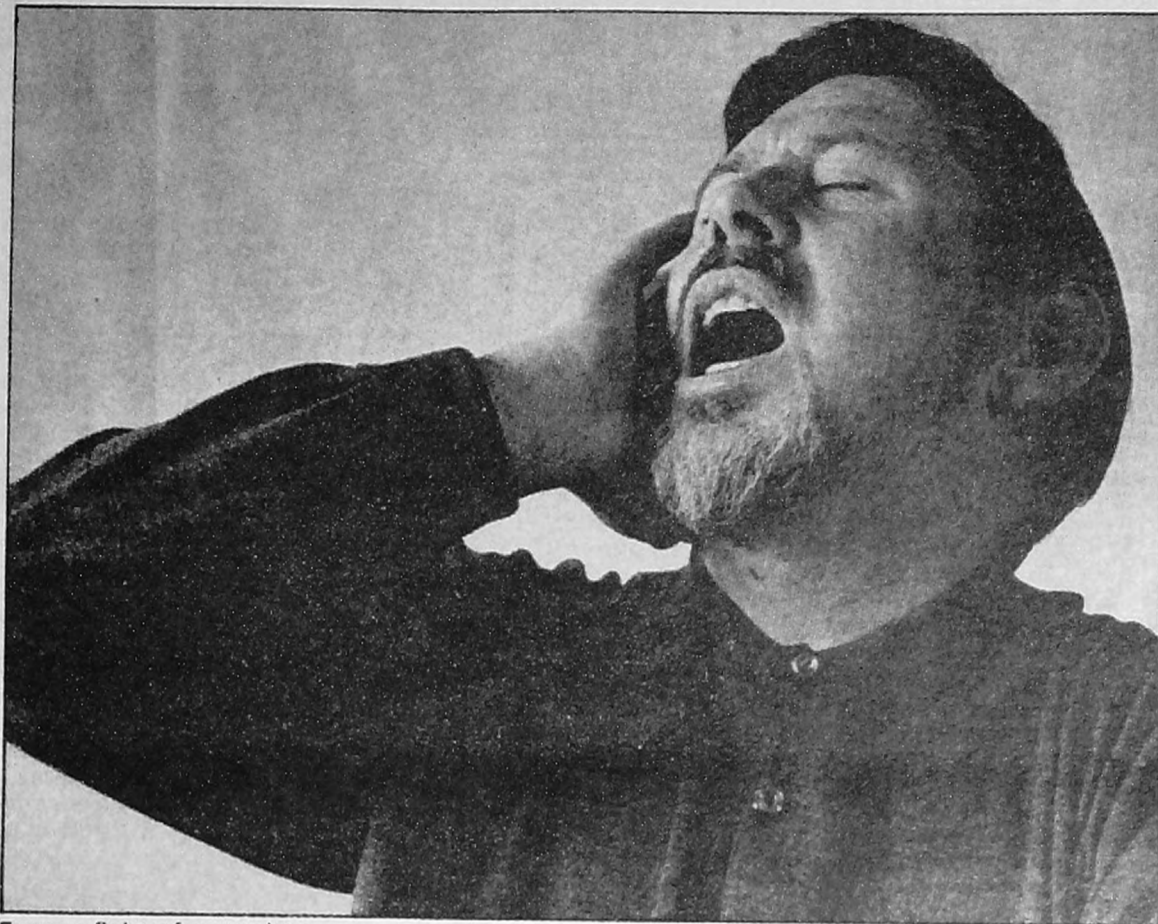
Green capitalism and ecology are no alternative. The only choice is socialism or barbarism.

Sean Quinn



EWAN MacCOLL

Honoured comrade



Ewan: a fighter for our class

What a heart has ceased to beat. What a voice has ceased to sing!

■ We caused something of a disturbance in the ranks of the Workers Power Group after the Enniskillen bomb, when we pointed out that although they had defended the bomb, their comrades in the Irish Workers Group – within their 'Fourth International in waiting', the LRCI – had condemned it. In October the IWG did it again. Its paper *Class Struggle* stated that the IRA's "bomb in Deal, as at Enniskillen during the crisis over extradition, provides room for the oppressor to get off the hook of their present difficulties over the UDR." *Damn and blast, if the IRA hadn't taken out the marines in imperialism's heartland that nasty Thatcher woman would have got a real tongue lashing from the IWG! Shouldn't Workers Power, which generally retains a fairly healthy attitude to the war, have words with the IWG on its crypto-pacifist whinings?*

■ *Workers Power is engaged in some verbal sparring with the cold-war 'socialists' of Socialist Organiser. The issue is over an ex-Workers Power member of Iranian extraction, now abiding with the Soggies, whom they allege the former threatened to shop to Khomeini. We feel that the Soggies are being somewhat creative with the truth. The individual in question, however, is rather fickle in his political affiliations. Before he was a member of Workers Power he bounced around our periphery. God knows where this unstable individual was before this, or what tempting fruits of the left he will taste after the Soggies – we really don't care. But then, unlike Workers Power, we were never stupid enough to have him as a member or give him secret bulletins.*

■ *The editor of the next step, Joan Phillips, in the issue dated November 17 confesses to a few gaffs in the previous edition. For instance, in an article on abortion, "if they have the right to end unwanted pregnancies" came out as "if they have control over their own fertility". According to Joan, this is because the RCP's typesetting equipment "has a tendency to garble text". Oh come on! As we know to our cost, when these things balls up they produce gibberish, not an incorrect political line. This sounds more like a cover for a political gaff by the editor than a technical one by a poor dumb machine.*

EWAN MacColl died on October 22, aged 74. MacColl loved life and lived it to the full. He never wasted a moment of it, and suffered no regrets for past mean or petty actions. MacColl was not only a shining example of the communist artist, but a working class intellectual. He recognised the need for communists involved in the arts to study the treasures created in the past and to absorb and use all that is progressive.

Although he left school at 13, and although his family background was hardly affluent (his father was blacklisted for his militant socialism) books were part of Ewan's life from an early age.

The first his father picked up for him were from a secondhand book-stall, Darwin's *Descent of Man* and the *Origin of the Species*. He did not quite manage them at eight, but by the time he was thirteen he had read them. By fifteen, he'd been through all fifty-two volumes of Balzac's *The Human Comedy* (Marx and Engels' favourite novelist) and everything written by Gogol and Gorky among many, many others.

MacColl was a very rounded man culturally. However, in two particular areas he excelled: theatre and song.

Undoubtedly, as far as British theatre goes, MacColl stands at the summit of achievement. He owes his origins here to the Workers Theatre Movement and was responsible for helping to form its Red Megaphones in Salford. Yet, while others failed to find ways to take agit-prop forward after the demise of the WTM in the mid 1930s, he succeeded.

With Joan Littlewood he set up first Theatre of Action, Theatre Union and after the Second World War the Theatre Workshop, which featured many avantgarde productions, not least his own unique ballad operas like *The lost factory chimneys* and *Johnny Noble*. In

them the agit-prop of the 1929's Red Megaphones was reworked and found new life.

MacColl studied the most interesting areas of world theatre, from the classical Greeks to the Italian Commedia dell'Arte style. He took the best from the past and combined it with the most advanced of his day, such as the movement developed by Laban and the lighting theories of the Swiss, Appia. He also presented plays until then unseen in this country, such as Lope De Vega's classic, *Fuente Ovejuna*, recently performed at the National Theatre.

After touring for many years, after the trials and tribulations of the road, Theatre Workshop eventually found a permanent home at London's Stratford East Theatre in 1955. Here, it won a huge reputation. It brought dance and music back into the mainstream and is recognised as being responsible for the 'new wave' in British theatre which swept away the dull uniformity of acting in the manner of BBC announcers. Theatre Workshop meant that the people were heard in their own right; they were no longer cardboard cutout cockney comic types but living, thinking, dangerous beings.

MacColl's contribution to song was no less outstanding. From his mother he learnt the ballads of the industrial working class of her youth. This was the tradition MacColl loved and added too. Not for him the rustic romanticism promoted by Cecil Sharpe, but the street songs of Salford, the songs of proletarian love and toil exemplified by his own *Dirty old town*.

More than anyone MacColl was responsible for the folksong revival in the late 1950s, which saw masses of young men and women cram into tiny folkclubs to hear and perform music which did not rely on half crazy superstars and multi-million pound production and pro-

motion. During this period MacColl broke new musical frontiers, fusing his ballads with the jazz and blues of the American negroes. Although he rightly despised the crass commercialism of the synthetic pop industry he was nevertheless, therefore, responsible in no small part for the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

MacColl was not one of those artists who sought to make a living by playing on middle class sympathy for his origins in poverty and working class struggle. He was an unapologetic partisan and activist.

He maintained a living bond with the working class, not least the miners. He remembers being lifted onto his father's shoulders so he could see the miners' leader, AJ Cook, speak at a rally during the 1926 lockout, and, at the other end of his life, his seventieth birthday celebration concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in January 1985 was turned into a rally in aid of the miners' Great Strike.

His closeness to the mining communities was not only political, it was the result of hard work. When he took up theatre as a full time job and began touring on a regular basis, MacColl and his partner, Joan Littlewood, were determined to 'crack' the pit villages, and methodically set about doing this over a number of years.

In a videotaped interview we recorded with him just before his death – his last interview – he told us how he tried to find out what the miners and their families wanted to see. He said they were more interested in American films than theatre, which was "too slow". They related much more to the type of characters portrayed by the likes of James Cagney than the stuffy middle classes who then dominated the British stage.

So MacColl and his troupe set about deploying the speed of agit-prop and its recognisable characters to draw the miners to their theatre. "We needed a working

class audience in order to survive; without it there could be no real development, the theatre could never be anything more than a charming toy. How in the world could one possibly build a great theatre unless one identified with and drew sustenance from the people who, in our society, produce the wealth – the working class?"

One thing which he insisted on again and again was how agit-prop was not dead.

"Agit-Prop goes right back to the medieval morality plays, and farther. Agit-Prop tends to be regarded by many people as having been a flash-in-the-pan. But these are people who weren't in contact with agit-prop, never saw agit-prop, and certainly who never attempted to act or produce agit-prop."

For him it is still relevant and needs rediscovering.

"I can foresee a position where it is possible, in this day and age, to produce epic plays with agit-prop as the main kind of structure of the play. Agit-prop doesn't demand long transitions in time and space. It is held together by the subject, by the politics of its subject."

Rediscovering and reworking agit-prop is of course just what our new WTM is all about. MacColl's narratives about the WTM troupe he established, the Salford Red Megaphones, in the books *Theatres of the Left* and *Agit-Prop to Theatre Workshop* are a source of inspiration for us. Like Ewan, we are determined to use theatre as a weapon in the class struggle and to give it relevance to working class audiences.

Given this, we knew there was no one better to have as our Honorary President. He was more than willing to take up this position, and so began a short but very productive relationship.

Just before he died we were able to spend a day with him. Raphael Samuel recalls taping him for fourteen hours almost non-stop for the book *Theatres of the Left*. We had a similar experience. We set up the camera, outlined what we wanted to talk about, and Ewan sat down, looked straight at it and talked and talked (The interview will be of great importance for the film we are planning about the WTM). He talked about the past, about songs and plays ... and about the future of the WTM, a subject on which he sizzled with enthusiasm.

Incidentally, Ewan's attitude towards his heart operation speaks volumes about the man. The first half-hour or so of our meeting was taken up by a vivid description of the preliminary operation he'd just had and the incredible technology being used now in hospital surgery. He'd watched the whole thing on a screen above the operating table.

Politically, throughout most of his life, MacColl's centre of gravity was the CPGB. He joined the YCL at fourteen and was in the Party until the early 1960's, when he left disgusted by its degeneration and the growth of revisionism.

Like many other good revolutionaries, MacColl turned to Maoism. This was no act of sectarianism, rather a result of confusion, a clutching at what seemed to offer hope to those brought up on, but betrayed by, centrist opportunism. MacColl was, for all his political limitations, a man who committed himself wholeheartedly to the finest cause in the world: fighting against capitalism and for the liberation of the working class. That is why we were honoured to call him comrade. We will always remember Ewan MacColl, a great fighter and artist of the proletariat.

Tom Cornack
(Director, WTM)

REVIEWS

Deadbeat

New Communist Party, *New Communist Review*, winter 1989, no number, pp32, £1

AFTER disappearing, un-noticed and unmourned, some time ago, the NCP's "quarterly theoretical journal" has resurfaced. While not a cause for celebration, it nevertheless gives us an opportunity, an excuse if you like, to look at the state of this organisation and how the crisis of bureaucratic socialism and 'official communism' is affecting it.

Let us begin by saying that as this is what passes for 'theory' in the NCP, it does indeed have a problem. Not only is the journal disjointed, boring and amateurish in the extreme; worse, the articles are often plain daft and certainly lack any sense of political honesty. Did you know that William the Conqueror 'privatised' England (p9) and that there are a "growing number of communist parties throughout the world, for the convening of an international conference of communist and workers' parties" (p13). In other words the NCP still suffers today from the same theoretical poverty as it did when it was founded in July 1977.

However, although the NCP has, Coelacanth-like, stayed the same, the world around it has changed ... and the process of change is becoming ever more rapid. Far from the growth of revisionism being confined to parties in the imperialist heartlands, parties like the CPGB, as the founders of the NCP imagined, the emergence of Gorbachevism and with it the counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc government in Poland, the social democratisation of the ruling party in Hungary and the dramatic developments in the GDR prove, as we have argued, that bureaucratic socialism is suffering from a general crisis of 1914 proportions.

This leaves the NCP with a problem, a big problem. Throughout their political lives NCPers have equated any criticism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with anti-Sovietism and anti-communism - an idealist method which, while it involved many an opportunist twist and turn, did have the centrist virtue of not having to think for oneself. This method has now come a cropper.

Gorbachev is saying the same sort of things as the Euros did when Sid French, Eric Trevett and Co split away from them in the name of defending the holy line of the CPSU. Unable to openly admit Gorbachev's Euro type politics, let alone his pro-capitalism, some of the writers of *New Communist Review* pepper their trivial little articles with anti-Gorbachevite code words. Ernie Trory, for example, dismisses Ernst Henri and Dmitry Belsky as "so-called Soviet historians" apparently because, in articles reprinted in *Soviet Weekly*, as true Gorbachevites they criticise Stalin. Incidentally the editors of *New Communist Review* indicate their true feelings on Stalin by reprinting extensive extracts from his speech to the CPSU's 18th Congress in March 1939.

Where does Gorbachevism leave the NCP? Frankly, facing extinction at last. Since its earliest days it has survived by prostituting itself to one socialist country or another, above all Czechoslovakia, whose leadership has few friends even in the 'official communist' movement.

With the suddenness of the collapse of the 'hard line' in GDR in

mind, what faith can be placed in the far more precarious Prague regime? If the cheques (pun intended) stop arriving with the Monday morning post, what will become of the NCP's weekly paper, expansive headquarters and posse of full time functionaries?

Will any of this be debated at the NCP's congress in December? On the evidence of *New Communist Review* it seems unlikely. While there will be some implied diplomatic distancing from Gorbachevism, to bring this out into the open would split the NCP down the middle.

Not surprisingly there are proto Gorbachevites in the NCP who refuse to admit that there is anything untoward happening in the socialist countries and who will follow the CPSU even when it is destroying socialism. Jim Hillier, from our experience a slippery opportunist character if there ever was one, insists that far from there being a "so-called crisis of socialism", the "opposite is true". Perhaps he is planning to do an Egon on Eric.

David Sherriff

Agents

Nurit Schleifman, *Undercover Agents in the Russian Revolutionary Movement - The SR Party 1902-14*, Macmillan 1988, pp222

THOSE CPBers who not so long ago thought it necessary to finger Jack Conrad and other Leninists attending one of their public discussion meetings evidently give little credence to the likely presence of police agents, nor respect to why serious revolutionaries use elementary security measures against the state. Presumably they would view this study of the Tsarist political police as totally irrelevant in today's Britain, seeing things as they do through rose tinted *British Road* spectacles. Nothing could be further from the truth.

While Tsarist police infiltrators were incapable of undermining the revolutionary movement they did immense damage: thousands suffered death, imprisonment or exile as a result of their activities. We would be naive indeed to suppose today's British state is not doing the same sort of work.

Communists in Britain during the 1920s used to joke that the Special Branch had the same number of members as the CPGB, so often did they suffer one-to-one marking. And that's not just a joke - I still have a photograph of my father's personal policeman, who used to inform employers about him after every job interview.

Peter Wright's book details the acquisition in the 1950s of the entire Communist Party membership list in an undiscovered weekend suburban raid. Then there was the microphone which operated for 16 years from a cavity in the stage at the Party's King Street headquarters. If the British state is interested in 'official communist' British Roaders it is certainly interested in revolutionaries, and security measures to ensure the safety of communists must be taken seriously.

Police penetration of the revolutionary movement before World War I was nowhere more extensive and permanent than in Tsarist Russia, where the secret agent became the cornerstone of police political work. Secret agents took part in everything from agitation to terrorist actions, from local organisations up to central committees, and were even found on commissions of in-

quiry set up to investigate suspected traitors.

This scholarly study by a lecturer in history at Tel-Aviv University uses a selected sample of 215 agents with clear affiliations to the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Social Democrats (ie, communists) and the anarchists. Besides the revolutionary press and a multitude of memoirs and letters - which show the immense personal grief experienced when a comrade was exposed as a traitor - Schleifman draws on three main sources of information: the archives of the Foreign Agency of the Okhrana (Tsarist-secret police); the Socialist Revolutionary Party archives; and the Nicolaevsky Collection, which contains clippings from the post-revolutionary press of some 600 police agents whose identities were exposed after the Okhrana's files fell into the hands of the Soviet government.

The 1905 revolution forced the state to recognise it was not dealing with isolated groups of revolutionaries, but with revolutionary ideas which could grip the masses. As a result the Stolypin Directives of February 1907 extended the infiltration of secret agents beyond revolutionary organisations into all public strata. To information and liquidation were added 'illumination' (osveschenie), whereby the police organisations were instructed to investigate the "nature, goals and methods" of secret organisations - a tall order, which Mr Plodski was unable to deliver.

Schleifman chooses the SR Party as the focus of his study, although the secret police penetrated all sections of the revolutionary movement, especially the anarchists. He claims that police activities were frustrated by the rivalry of different police departments and the competing ambitions of individuals. He should also have added a police inability to grasp the true dynamic of revolutionary politics: in September 1914 agents in the field were directed to do everything possible to prevent the unification of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks!

The Okhrana are not alone in this. Schleifman maintains that the exposure at the end of 1908 of agent Evno Azef, a widely acclaimed member of the SR leadership, devastated the SR Party with suspicion and mistrust from which it never recovered. Yet after the February Revolution of 1917 it emerged as the biggest party in soviet elections and even managed to find itself well ahead of the Bolsheviks after October in elections to the doomed Constituent Assembly (parliament).

Schleifman is no communist, his book might just as well have been written by a member of the Tsarist secret police. He lumps together all revolutionary trends, saying they "failed to consider seriously what conditions the secret agents needed ... nor did they draw the operational conclusions".

Having described how the SR's founding conference in December 1905 "barely papered over the divisions" between groups bound together only by "a sense of possessing a common heritage", he naively claims that the organisational structure of the SR Party "was not substantially different from the democratic centralism" of the Bolsheviks. The latter is, however, not only based on the subordination of the whole organisation to the will of a single centre but also on open ideological struggle for scientific socialism - a difference which Schleifman does not understand, but which has everything to do with the obvious fact that the SRs failed where the Bolsheviks succeeded.

Ian Farrell

ACTION

The Leninist

London Seminars, 5pm Sundays. Details: 01-431 3135

November 26: No seminar because of Manchester Martyrs demonstration.

•Last of the series on Green Politics:

December 3: Can the planet cope with ever expanding production? Is communism ecologically possible?

•Next series: Women and the Family:

December 10: Is biology the source of women's oppression?

December 17: What is feminism?

Hands Off Ireland!

Latest edition of *Hands Off Ireland!* out soon! Articles on Irish political prisoners, the state of the 'withdrawal' movement and the need for Hands Off Ireland!, the importance of the Easter Rising today, Manchester Martyrs commemoration, reports and HOI! action. Order now: individual copies, 40p; bulk (5 and over) 20p (inc. p&p).

Hands Off Ireland! will be organising contingents on the following marches:

Manchester Martyrs Commemoration, Sunday November 26. Assemble 12.30pm, Longsight Market, Dickenson Road, Manchester. London and Sheffield HOI! are organising transport: ring 01-431 3135 for details.

Bloody Sunday 1990, London, Saturday January 27. Watch this space for further details.

Smash the PTA! Join HOI! on the IFM organised picket of Downing Street, Wednesday November 29, 5.30pm.

Workers Theatre Movement

Performances: On the Manchester Martyrs Commemoration (see above).

Rehearsals: Every Sunday in London.

Phone Paul Harrington on 01-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of all the above WTM activities.

Unemployed Workers Charter

Engineers' Solidarity Fund: Send SAE for UWC petition and collecting sheet to support the engineers' 35-hours strike and build the unity of employed and unemployed workers. Regular street collections in London.

Central London meetings, 8pm every Monday, to discuss the politics of unemployment and to organise actions:

November 20: The first National Hunger March: 1922.

November 27: Solidarity with the Engineers' strike for a 35 hour week.

December 4: The TUC and the National Unemployed Workers Movement - cooperation, 1922-24.

December 11: Harassment of the unemployed today: trade union attitudes towards the Tories' Employment Training scheme and 'actively seeking work' requirements.

December 18: The National Unemployed Workers Movement and the General Strike, 1926.

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Free Abortion on Demand!

ABORTION rights are under attack again. The government's Embryo Research Bill is a bigots' charter, a reactionary attempt to shackle science, and could be used to undermine the limited gains on abortion women made in 1967.

The bill stems from the Warnock Report, which was meant to examine the 'moral dilemmas' involved in embryo research. Scientists have made tremendous advances in cancer prevention, infertility and combatting senility as a result of experiments with test tube embryos. Their discoveries also make it possible to detect congenital abnormalities at very early stages of pregnancy: the possibility therefore arises of ensuring that only healthy embryos are allowed to develop.

For the Tories and all reactionaries this has dangers. Mankind should not be allowed to act as god. Instead the state should step in and ensure that all advances are tightly controlled and serve the system's interests. This will be done through banning research into embryos older than 14 days: after that these pinhead sized collections of cells will be given legal protection.

The 'pro-lifers' consider this a gift. For them human life begins with conception (only 15% of fertilised eggs actually get to full development). If laboratory embryos are to be considered to have legal 'human' rights then so should an embryo in a woman's womb. So as well as supporting moves to ban embryo research completely, 'pro-life' MPs are planning to use an amendment to the government's bill which would reduce the time limit for abortions - which in fact they absolutely oppose on moral grounds - from 28 to 24 weeks (possibly to 22 and even to 18 weeks; and in practice if a 24 week limit became law, abortions after 18 weeks would be outlawed).

Anyway, the 'pro-lifers' are not particularly interested in preventing a handful of post-24 week abortions. The numbers are so small they are not recorded in government statistical categories (there were only 22 in 1988). No, what the bigots are out to do is to create a hostile climate against abortion so that they can pursue their salami tactics; restricting clinics, advertising and NHS abortions, whittling away abortion rights till all abortions are made illegal. That is their hidden agenda.

All previous attempts - the White bill in 1975, the Benyon bill in 1977, the Corrie bill in 1980 and the Alton bill in 1987 - to erode women's rights on this issue have flopped, so why should we be worried now? Simple. Because this time they are using a 'Trojan horse' amendment to a government bill, hence it will not be possible - as Dennis Skinner did in 1987 - to talk it out. Indeed, Thatcher is said to be sympathetic to the idea of giving the amendment government support and hence making it a party question, not a matter of individual conscience. So there is no room for complacency.

How should we respond? Should we limit our activities to a defence of the '67 Act? If not, why not? Is this type of attack irrelevant any-

Abortion rights have been subjected to a long line of determined attacks since limited access to the operation was enshrined in David Steel's 1967 Act. Like the continuing furore over the RU486 abortion pill, which allows a pregnancy to be terminated without surgery, these attacks are an attempt to recreate a reactionary moral consensus which denies women even the basic right to control their own fertility

way? After all, we communists say that a bourgeois state cannot liberate women. Are attacks like, say, Alton's in 1987, or the most recent round, more or less meaningless to the real struggle for women's liberation? And apart from that type of argument, isn't there room for us to relax, given the still surprisingly high level of support for legal access to abortion that exists in society?

The 1967 Abortion Act (originally sponsored by David Steel, who now supports the 24 week amendment along with, it seems, Clare Short) which, 20 years later, the British left is so keen to defend, legalised abortion; but only under strictly controlled conditions. The mass petty bourgeois feminist movement, which emerged after the act was on the statute books, was highly critical of it.

Before its descent into Greenham Common mysticism and the labyrinths of Labour Party committee rooms the feminist movement insisted, as we do, that women must have the right to free abortion *on demand*, not curtailed by arbitrary time limits imposed by church or state.

The 1967 legislation stipulates that women can only abort fetuses after they have satisfied certain stringent conditions. The pregnancy must threaten the welfare of the mother's existing children or there must be a tangible risk of handicap to the child before the '67 Act sanctions the operation.

Most women, however, opt to seek a termination on the basis of an additional clause: that "the continuation of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman greater than if the pregnancy was terminated".

Thus, to describe the 1967 Act as "a woman's right to choose", as many on the left do, is an insult to over 150,000 women who every year have to go through the pain and humiliation of having to justify themselves under this clause to often unsympathetic and insensitive doctors.

In fact, the closest working class women have ever really come to 'abortion on demand' was courtesy of the cash nexus, not through the enlightened deliberations of Britain's legislators. Prior to 1967, estimates put the number of abortions annually at one hundred thousand. These were illegal 'back street' operations where the only condition you needed to satisfy was having the money.

There were drawbacks with that avenue of supply, of course. Many were butcher jobs done with the

help of large doses of gin and knitting needles. Some 3,000 septic abortion cases a year ended up in hospital due to the unhygienic conditions under which the operations were performed, with 50 of those unfortunate women dying annually.

While public concern at these horrendous figures was one of the spurs to the introduction of the 1967 Act, the real impetus was the need of the ruling class to bring abortion under the control of the state: to regulate more directly the fertility of working class women in a period when expansion in the economy necessitated their increased participation in the production process.

Today, it is indicative of the disarray and lack of socialist consciousness of working class politics that the pathetically despondent British left is defending the '67 legislation, claiming that it enshrines 'a woman's right to choose'. As we have shown, this glib assertion is simply not true.

Of course, it would be simply infantile leftist posturing to say that attacks on the 1967 Act are irrelevant to the struggle for women's liberation. After all, we recognise that the limited political liberties that the working class enjoys under capitalism - such as the right to vote, free speech, association - are a sham, undermined by the social power of capital itself.

Communists must be the champions of any fight against attempts to limit or curb these already circumscribed rights. Who would be foolish enough to argue that if the Tories proposed banning elections, it would be irrelevant to the struggle of the working class?

No, the real danger to avoid is fighting *defensively* against this type of attack.

Thus, if we are mobilising against these latest attacks on the right to abortion, we should not limit ourselves to defence of the '67 legislation. Our basic slogan should embody what we see as the basic prerequisite for women's full participation in social life: *for free abortion on demand!*

Unsurprisingly, the defensiveness of pro-abortion activists in the past has prompted defensive tactics. Parliament was seen as the key: previous legislative attacks on abortion rights have been "talked out" of parliamentary time by opponents. Yet, as we have said above, this new attack cannot be defeated using the same tactics: the anti-abortion amendments to the government's bill will be given the necessary time.

Similarly, people who ostensibly stand for 'a woman's right to

choose' have found themselves embroiled in gobbledegook arguments with the anti-abortionists on when 'life' starts: when a fetus becomes a 'baby' with certain inalienable 'rights' and thus when the time limits for abortion should be imposed.

For example, the SWP got hopelessly enmeshed in the reactionary logic of the anti-abortionists when it tried in 1987 to rebuff the arguments of David Alton, trying then as now to restrict the time limits on abortion. Countering the Liberal MP's claim that "by 18 weeks a child is no different in size and weight from a child at 28 weeks", the SWP retorted that below 22-24 weeks, fetal lungs are not sufficiently developed to survive *even* on a ventilator. They still do the same thing.

As far as we are concerned, this is more or less irrelevant. Technical questions are a diversion from fighting for the rights of women.

For example, most late abortions are presently performed because of fetal deformities. The best test for this cannot be done until after 20 weeks. But what should be our attitude if medical science is able to achieve a break-through in this field, as is perfectly possible, and such authoritative tests can be done much earlier? Our defensive *technical* arguments would be totally undermined.

Human life is *social* life. Our concept of 'life' can have no meaning outside of this context. Otherwise we will entangle ourselves in obscurantist philosophical meanderings about the spiritual 'essence' of human beings. Life starts with birth, when a child enters human society, not before.

British Social Attitudes: The Fifth Report 1988-89 indicates a surprising shift in the British people's attitudes to abortion. In 1983 less than half the population was in favour of abortion on social grounds. By 1987 a majority supported it. Less surprising, but still significant, is the fact that more than 90% approved of abortion on medical grounds. This 'liberal' attitude to abortion is encouraging, given the high profile campaign of the anti-abortionists.

These 'permissive' attitudes are indicative of the fact that the establishment has difficulty in reinforcing a reactionary moral consensus in areas of people's direct personal experience. Literally millions of women have had legal abortions since '67. Having an abortion, or knowing someone who has, is not an rare experience for British workers.

Similarly, in the United States - where the issue of abortion is

polarising bourgeois politics - the anti-abortionists are encountering stiff opposition from large swathes of American people.

These attitudes are, of course, pleasing for communists and all those fighting for women's rights. But we cannot be complacent. Obviously, social attitudes are malleable: and the reactionaries are employing new and militant tactics, imported from the United States and Canada, where pregnant women are physically intimidated and clinics fire-bombed.

Abortion clinics up and down the country have suffered the unwelcome attentions of shrill anti-abortion picketers; in Manchester earlier this year these scum even forced their way into a nursing home and tried to break into an operating theatre while an abortion was actually taking place.

While such actions are small scale and unlikely to shift public opinion in and of themselves, they can help create a climate where attacks on access to abortion become more acceptable. This is especially so in the absence of equally militant and forthright politics and tactics from pro-abortion campaigners. Even given the widespread support for abortion, there is clearly no room for complacency.

The continuing attacks on this fundamental human right must be fought by communists. We must struggle to take the issue of women's liberation, expressed in such demands as a woman's unconditional right to control over her own fertility, to the very heart of the working class movement.

Obviously, we are not in favour of abortion as 'just another' method of contraception. It is frequently painful, dangerous (on average two women each year still die from the operation) and emotionally distressing. Yet, while abortion remains a necessity, if women are to have control over their own bodies, we will support it unconditionally.

No trust can be placed in parliament, as many in the National Abortion Campaign want to do. The Tories have nearly a 100 majority in parliament and the lavishly financed 'pro-life' organisations, Spuc and Life, have found a receptive audience. This time we are dealing with a government Bill. Filibustering won't work. Neither will lobbying.

What is needed is a mass communist-led working class women's movement to fight for abortion rights. This is the way forward.

There is a growing wave of industrial militancy, the Tories are suffering deep divisions and are extremely unpopular. The basis exists therefore for a mass mobilisation of working class anger for women's rights. Women make up nearly 50% of the workforce, they are increasingly influential in the trade unions. The TUC makes much of its commitment to women's rights - it should prove it. But with or without the TUC, action against the Embryo Research Bill must include strikes - by both men and women - as well as mass demonstrations.

The bigots can be defeated by working class action; they must be defeated.

Ian Mahoney



Which Road?

A critique of the *British Road to Socialism*

WHILE working through the 1978 edition of the *British Road*, section by section in previous supplements, we deliberately refrained from dwelling on a number of specific questions. Having rounded off the last supplement with parliament and elections we will continue here with the army, Ireland and finally women, before turning to some broader political questions concerning the *BRS*.

5. Some specific questions (continued)

5.2. The Army

There are two important references to the army in the *BRS*. The first states: "Democratic changes in the armed forces and police are vital. Britain under left governments would need efficient and adequately-equipped armed forces to defend it against enemies. But it is essential that the domination of their upper echelons by representatives of the capitalist class should be ended, and that members of the forces should have full trade union and democratic rights. This should also apply to the police force, and the use of both for strike-breaking or other actions against democratic rights should be prohibited. Democratic supervision of the police and the armed forces by parliament and local authorities should be strengthened." (p41).

The second refers to the threat of a right-wing coup.

"The critical problem would be the composition and attitude of the armed forces. This faces the left with four tasks. First, democratic reforms in the armed forces are vital questions for today, and not just in the future. Second, at each stage every effort should be made to strengthen the broad alliance and its support for the left government, since this would have a great effect on the decision of the armed forces on whether or not to act. Third, the left needs to win direct political support from among the armed forces themselves. This would be assisted by the democratic reforms already proposed, and by the way in which the strength and activity of the broad democratic alliance affected members of the forces. Finally, the left governments themselves would need to transform the structure and leading personnel of the armed forces as rapidly as the situation allowed." (pp48-49).

Apart from the entire assumption that it is possible to lay hold of a ready made (capitalist) state machine and use it to change society, these statements reveal what is, in the last analysis, the pro-capitalist position of left re-

formism.

The *BRS*'s "left government" is, as we have already made abundantly clear, nothing but a left reformist government administering capitalism. For that reason (and that should be good enough for all who call themselves communists) they no support whatsoever for its 'defence' spending, let alone support for "efficient and adequately equipped armed forces". In the real world the *BRS*'s 'defence' spending can only be defence of the interests of the British bourgeoisie, against either the capitalists of some other state or the working class itself. That is the reality of capitalism, whether it has a right, centre or left government.

This was the question that separated the internationalist forces that went on to form the Third International from the opportunists and social chauvinists of August 1914. At the urging of their 'own' national bourgeois masters, the MPs of the opportunist parties of the Second International voted for war credits ('defence' spending) and in the process became culpable for the deaths of millions upon millions of workers who were slaughtered in World War I.

The Bolsheviks in Russia and the Spartacists in Germany were almost alone in standing by the 1912 Basle Manifesto of the Second International. They called not for 'defence of the fatherland' but turning the imperialist war into a civil war for the liberation of the proletariat: in October 1917 that line produced the world's first socialist state.

Those who want to see Britain have its own October will not defend the bourgeois order, no matter in what governmental garb it presents itself. We stand with Liebknecht's motto: Not a man, not a penny, for the bourgeois army!

Naturally, "democratic changes in the armed forces and police are vital". We do not take the childish position of damning all members of the army and police as permanent agents of capitalism. That is a one sided position not worthy of genuine communists.

But for us agitating for "democratic changes" demands rights, the election of officers, an ending of the bullying and humiliation of recruits and the abolition of the officers' mess and their other caste privileges would be carried out not as an aim in itself but as part of the revolutionary struggle. Demands would be designed to split the army, to win allies for the revolution and give it a ready armed and trained auxiliary.

To the left reformists such as the authors of the *BRS* the key question is the "composition of leading personnel" of the army. To us communists it is the necessity of shattering the entire body and winning as large a section of it as possible to our side.

Again we can hardly disagree with the demand that neither troops nor the police are used "for strike-breaking or other actions

against democratic rights". But we have seen how the *BRS* proposes to avoid this. With typical reformist naivety, typical reformist parliamentary cretinism and typical reformist treachery it places its faith in "democratic supervision" by the bourgeois state, ie, "parliament and local authorities".

We, on the other hand, rely on the class strength of the proletariat: its ability to cause internal divisions in these "bodies of armed men" through a combination of its political magnetism and its ability and willingness to physically confront the armed might of the state with the armed might of the working class in the form of the workers' militia.

Yes, to defend our rights we must build a strong workers' militia. With it, a split in the army becomes possible. No soldier, no matter how sympathetic to the working class, would dare come over to us in a revolutionary situation unless we clearly meant business, only then could we really hope to "prohibit" the police and army being used for "strike-breaking or other actions against democratic rights".

The workers' militia does not spring forth ready armed like Athena. It grows out of the class struggle itself, from anti-fascist actions, from battles on the picket lines, from defending mass demonstrations and workplace occupations. Life shows us how true this is. The miners' Great Strike produced its own embryonic workers' militia in the form of the heroic hit squads. And as the class struggle goes to even higher levels and reaches the point of insurrection there can be no doubt that such bodies would be forged into a unified workers' militia.

So for us the demand for a workers' militia is one we fight for under capitalism. And we will use every opportunity to take even tentative steps towards it; because, as we have indicated above, only by fighting for the workers' militia can talk of socialism be taken seriously.

The workers' militia is the necessary and dialectical complement to our slogans for democratic rights in the states' armed bodies. Indeed, without such a rounded position one inevitably falls into either infantile leftism, which does not want to get sullied by demands for democratic rights for those in the enemy's state machine, or senile rightism of the *BRS* kind, which puts all its eggs into the basket of bourgeois constitutionalism.

Only through the tireless agitation for democratic rights and the organisation of communist cells in the army with the ability of the proletariat to organise its own violence through the workers' militia can there be any hope of preventing (presumably in a revolutionary situation) the right wing coup the *BRS* fears.

And from these two sources (a subverted and divided army and our own armed bands) arise not only the means for preventing the

right wing coup but carrying out the "left wing coup" we want to see. This brings us to what is to replace the old army.

Where the *BRS* wants to "transform the structure and leading personnel of the armed forces as rapidly as the situation allowed" we want to disperse the existing (bourgeois) armed forces as rapidly as the situation allows and replace it with the *armed people* as advocated by Marx and Lenin.

In principle we are against a standing army. It was only the isolation of the world revolution in Russia that forced the Bolsheviks to take a temporary step back from their aim of replacing the standing army with territorial workers' militias. The facts of intervention, civil war and the cultural and technical backwardness of the country, forced them to build a new standing army, the Red Army.

Although the Red Army was led by communists, it was in a sense a bourgeois institution: a standing army was a carry-over from bourgeois society, and therefore more of a reflection of Russia's formal socialism than the dawning of communism. As society evolves towards communism, all bourgeois remnants will wither away, and one of the first carry-overs to disappear must be the standing army.

So, for us, the question of what is to replace the smashed bourgeois army is determined by the environment into which socialism emerges and the wider progress of the world revolution. A standing proletarian army might be necessary but our aim is to abolish it "as rapidly as the situation allowed" and move forward to the armed people.

But even if we are forced to have a socialist standing army, this 'bourgeois' institution must be firmly counterbalanced by the communist workers' militia based on the workers' councils. Because an army, even under socialism, is a sphere for specialists, bureaucratic and removed from the day to day life of the masses, it could pose a block to social progress.

Therefore, as well as ensuring that there is no officer caste and that there is a comradely, democratic atmosphere in the proletarian army, the workers' militia should be equipped with the *most advanced* weaponry, otherwise its power to balance the army would be meaningless, merely formal.

Today, such weapons would have to include tanks, 'smart' surface-to-air and anti-tank missiles, anti-chemical and biological equipment, and radar and sophisticated communications equipment. Only then would the workers' militia be *genuine*.

5.3. Ireland

The *BRS* places no conditions on its correct insistence that: "Independence should be

granted to all remaining British colonies and all British troops abroad should be withdrawn." (our emphasis, p43).

It also commits a future "left government", and presumably itself, to supporting: "all movements for national liberation" (our emphasis, p55).

Jolly good. But our BRS opportunists don't mean all when they say all. They are selective. When it comes to Britain's 'oldest colony' - Ireland - all principle is thrown out of the window. Instead of unconditionally (ie, now) demanding the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and supporting Sinn Fein/IRA, the BRS suggests that Britain "should ensure a democratic solution in Northern Ireland, based on the implementation of a Bill of Rights, the end of all repressive measures, the withdrawal of British troops to barracks, and financial and other measures to begin to tackle the appalling problems of poverty and unemployment. These steps would create conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended and British troops withdrawn completely. The British government should recognise the right of the majority of the people of Ireland to rule their country, and should co-operate with their representatives in bringing this about by consent." (our emphasis, p43).

In other words, the BRS advocates that the British government should carry out a 'positive colonial policy' along the lines suggested by its spiritual father, Eduard Bernstein, who wanted German imperialism to carry out "civilising work" in its colonies. (*Evolutionary Socialism*, p170).

It is to British imperialism which the BRS looks to ensure a "a democratic solution", "ending all repressive measures", the "overcoming of poverty and unemployment" and, even more far fetched, "creating conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended". Only after the 'paddies' have been civilised would it be possible in this BRS never, never land for Britain to withdraw completely - well after British imperialism had cooperated in bringing about the conditions for Irish unity on the basis of the "consent" of "their representatives", who presumably by definition must include the fascist Rev Ian Paisley.

In saying that the withdrawal of British troops is only possible after British imperialism has ended unemployment, poverty, repression and sectarian strife, the BRS is putting its own version of the church's worthless message to the working class: you will enjoy happiness and the good life only when you're dead.

Yet, of course, the precondition for enjoying happiness and the good life is life. Likewise the precondition for ending unemployment, poverty, repression and sectarian strife in the Six Counties is British withdrawal. It is British imperialism which has overseen the massive imbalances in unemployment and housing conditions between the Loyalist and nationalist populations in the Six Counties precisely in order to foster sectarianism. And it is British imperialism which has used troops and a whole gamut of draconian laws to suppress the nationalists when they refused to be ruled in the old way and turned to the armed struggle.

However, the opportunists want to appear left and principled on this question. So with their usual facile sophistry they 'boldly' declare that as British imperialism has caused the mess, it must clear it up! Frankly, such an approach might apply to small children, they will after much altercation reluctantly tidy up their bedrooms. But British imperialism is no 'little monster'. British imperialism is an irreformable beast. It owes its existence in no small part to its rape and systematic plunder of Ireland. For Ireland, Britain is the problem, not the solution.

Using the logic of the BRS, one should propose that, as the apartheid regime causes racial discrimination, poor housing and oppression for South African blacks, it must be made to deal with these problems ... and only after these problems have been overcome should apartheid be ended! The same logic should have led the BRS to insist that before one could countenance a US withdrawal from Vietnam it should have been 'forced' to create the conditions for the unity of Vietnam ... because it was responsible for maintaining the division!

But the BRS is not concerned with logic, nor with the class struggle for socialism. What its tortuous formulations are designed to achieve is a 'socialist' veneer to cover the revolting practice of its authors when it comes to the 'Irish problem'.

When it does not matter the opportunists

are quite prepared to mouth anything. But as soon as it comes to putting that principle into practice, then it is a different matter. How else are we to explain the following passage from the 1978 BRS's immediate predecessor?

"The enforced partition of Ireland should be ended and British troops withdrawn from Northern Ireland, leaving the Irish people free to realise their united republic." (BRS 1968, p37).

In fact all four previous editions of the BRS dealt with Ireland in a similar vein without any opportunist caveats. None of them contained anything about "troops returning to barracks" or British imperialism solving social ills, let alone being the benign instrument with which to overcome sectarianism and unite the country it divided. And why was there no promise to negotiate with the Paisleyites to ensure that they "consent" to Irish unity? Simply because before 1969, it was a matter of abstract principle. After 1969 the bombs, bullets and molotov cocktails started to fly and British soldiers started to return home ... in body bags.

We do not consider the previous editions to have been in any way Leninist. But they, like the Second International adopting the Basle Manifesto which committed all affiliated parties to fighting inter-imperialist war with class war, could uphold a correct principle, at least formally.

In spite of the 1968 BRS being their party programme, a year later, when faced by the revolutionary reality of Derry and Belfast, the opportunists wilted. Without a trace of embarrassment the opportunists did a complete about face and junked the formally principled position they had only just voted for. In response to the events the Executive Committee of the CPGB went against its own programme.

Along with the Irish Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (they later merged to form the Communist Party of Ireland), the CPGB issued an appeal for a 'democratic solution' to the crisis of British imperialism in Ireland. But this "democratic solution" did not entail the defeat and ejection of the forces of British imperialism on the skids of their helicopters. No, it was the imperialist government of that dyed-in-the-wool reactionary, Harold Wilson, they called upon to "take action to solve" the problem "without delay" (CPGB leaflet reporting the joint statement of the CPGB, IWP, CPNI, August 3 1969).

It was only in the fifth (1978) edition that this implicitly pro-imperialist position was enshrined programmatically. Although, as we have seen, this edition commits a "left government" to support all movements of national liberation, it contains actual attacks on those very forces in Ireland.

Apparently the actions of the IRA make "more difficult the development of joint action by the working class and labour movements of Britain and Ireland" because the armed struggle has been "exploited" by British imperialism. (p14) In this way the BRS is able to blame the forces of national liberation for the lack of a mass solidarity movement in Britain and, even more sickeningly, for the violence of the oppressors!

In terms of the basic issues before us, Ireland is in essence exactly the same as any other imperialist colony. The only call communists can make is for Britain and British troops to get out unconditionally - ie, now. The IRA is likewise no different from any other liberation movement that has fought British imperialism. Therefore our position must be one of unconditional support for it against 'our own' rulers.

Of course there is a difference between the Six Counties of Northern Ireland and other colonies. It is nearer. It is more important to British imperialism than any former colony, not least because it is part of the United Kingdom and thus regarded as 'home' by important sections of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

No wonder the opportunists wilted. It is far harder to maintain a principled position on Ireland than far away South Africa or Nicaragua. However, the reasons which make it far harder to maintain a principled position on Ireland are at the same time the very reasons why a principled position is so vital.

While opinion poll after opinion poll registers a majority of the population in Britain wanting to see British troops withdraw from Ireland there can be no doubt that this is in the main because of deeply reactionary anti-Irish prejudices, not sympathy with Ireland's freedom fighters. There are some who attempt a short cut when it comes to Ireland, pandering to the existing consciousness of the

masses by watering down their slogans and principles. But this produces no better results, only demoralisation and further splits and divisions in the solidarity movement.

A solidarity movement with Ireland can only be built on the basis of challenging British imperialism and the pro-imperialist sentiments within the workers' movement head on. It is not IRA bombs that are the problem but the opportunism of the dominant organisations on the left in Britain. They shy away from the long, difficult and dangerous task of winning workers in Britain to take sides: for the IRA, against the British army. That is the main reason why the nationalist masses in the Six Counties do not have the mass solidarity movement they deserve and quite rightly demand. This is a problem that will only be overcome through the ideological victory of Leninism and the reforging of a genuine Communist Party.

Where the BRS cannot go beyond demanding that the liberation movement in Ireland lay down its arms and take the road to reform, Leninists not only fight for the communist line in Britain but also Ireland. What Ireland lacks - just like Britain - is a genuine Communist Party. Only with such a party can the working class in Ireland establish its hegemony over the national liberation struggle, draw Protestant workers away from their dependency on Loyalism and achieve real freedom through socialism.

The struggle for a united Ireland must be linked to the struggle for socialism; this means the working class taking a lead in the national liberation struggle and at the same time ideologically combatting all nationalist tendencies, no matter what 'socialist' credentials they claim to have. For genuine communists in Ireland there must be no playing up to nationalist sentiments. They must march separately from revolutionary nationalists but strike together with them against British imperialism.

What this necessitates is a programme of uninterrupted revolution which unites all oppressed forces and sections into one mighty stream that can sweep British imperialism and capitalism away from Ireland as an integral component of the struggle for socialism in the rest of the British Isles. This, not the BRS's treacherous calls for surrender, is the communist way forward in Ireland.

5.4. Women

There are two main passages which deal with women. As they are both relatively short we will quote them in full. The first is from the subsection dealing with "social forces and movements".

"The struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class. The emancipation of women is an important goal in itself. In addition, unless women are involved in the overall struggle for socialism, and men in the struggle to resolve the specific problems of women, the possibilities of developing working class unity and the broad democratic alliance will be greatly diminished. Thus the fight for women's liberation is an integral part of the struggle for socialism, and needs to be taken up by the whole labour movement.

"The subordination of women to men in society is experienced by all women, but working class women are doubly oppressed. They are exploited because of their position as workers and discriminated against because of their sex. The movement for women's liberation which has developed in recent years has been a major stimulus to thought and action on these questions. It has focused attention on the sexual division of labour, particularly on how women's role within the family, economic dependence, and responsibility for child care, limits educational opportunity, career prospects and participation in social and political life on equal terms with men. This has highlighted the debate and activity on economic and social issues like equal pay and child care, and shown the importance and potentialities of organising on related questions like abortion and battered wives. It has also raised other questions on the nature of personal relationships, human sexuality, and the future of the family, with which the progressive movement needs to concern itself much more than in the past. Support for the basic demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and of the Working Women's Charter and the overcoming of sexism, the defence of male privi-

lege, are essential parts of the struggle to build the broad democratic alliance." (pp29-30).

The second quote is the subsection "women and socialism".

"Major improvements in the position of women under capitalism can be won by campaigning for the practical conditions for their liberation and by combatting sexism. But the conditions for their full liberation can only be achieved as socialism is built and society moves towards communism. A socialist government would complete the practical basis for this by fully implementing any of the measures outlined in the previous section which had not yet been carried through. Women's control over their own bodies, with freely available abortion and contraception; socially-organised child-care, taking account of parents' responsibilities and wishes, housework and dependants; and equal rights to jobs and at work, would be basic rights in a socialist society.

"But more than this is needed, as has been shown by the experience of the existing socialist countries, which have ended legal and economic discrimination against women but still have to conduct a constant battle against outworn ideas carried over from the past. There would have to be a sustained effort, in which an autonomous women's movement would have an important part to play, to end the sexual division of labour between men and women in the family and at work. This division of labour, which stems from women's child-bearing function in our society, is not inevitable nor eternal. The continued subjugation of women in their personal relationships which it involves would not only limit their potential role in building a socialist society, but deform that society itself. There would need to be a persistent and determined struggle against the deeply-ingrained prejudices resulting from generations of discrimination against women. The aim would be to create a deep respect among people for each other, on the basis of equality, within which both sexes would be able to use their skills and abilities for the benefit of all, and express themselves fully within personal relationships." (pp59-60).

We agree with much of what is written above. But we have important reservations and we consider some of the BRS's formulations vague or even downright wrong.

Yes, the "struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class." It is also true that the liberation of women is an "important goal in itself" and that the unity of men and women is vital if socialism is ever to be realised.

However this needs expanding. The oppression of women is tied up with the existence of exploitative society. The BRS does not emphasise or explain this nearly enough. Women's oppression resulted directly from the development of class society. Under capitalism this specifically means that women perform unpaid domestic labour, they also bear and raise children (future workers, the source of the commodity labour power) gratis, at no cost to the capitalists.

As a result of this division of labour (no pun intended) women are placed in a marginal position in the labour market. They thus constitute a major section of the reserve army of labour - brought into work or thrown out of it with the ebb and flow of the capitalist economy. Women are therefore among the most vulnerable sections in capitalist society, used as cheap labour, often reduced to doing part time work, used to divide the working class in an effort to drive down wages and increase the rate of exploitation.

Hence the abolition of exploitation is the beginning of the liberation of women, and as such there is a close interconnection between the liberation of women and the liberation of the working class. Therefore the liberation of women is not something to be left to women alone. As women workers have no separate interests from other workers, our task must be to win all workers to recognise that they have a vital interest in the liberation of women. Women's liberation is, in other words, a task for the working class.

Material advances in society have obviously created the objective conditions where the second class position of women in society can be greatly broken down. Even under present day society women should have full equality before the law, equal opportunities in social, economic, political and cultural life. For us there can be no compromise on this. That is why we demand now free and unrestricted contraception and abortion rights, free 24

hour nurseries, high quality but cheap laundries and workers' restaurants (the Ritz could be a useful bench mark) and other sweeping measures to socialise housework.

These should be "basic rights" under capitalism as well as in "a socialist society". Of course, we doubt that capitalism will carry out such measures. In that case via revolution we will smash through its objections and replace it with a socialist state that will socialise domestic work and the responsibilities for rearing children. And as socialist society advances it will leave behind the conditions which lie at the root of women's oppression ie, the division of labour and what Marx called "bourgeois right" (people receiving goods equivalent to their work). Only in this way can we begin to really talk of women's liberation.

Obviously all of this is perfectly orthodox communist stuff, going back many, many years. That is why we find it strange, very strange, that the BRS calls for us to line up behind the feminist movement.

We do not equate feminism with women's liberation. It is a petty bourgeois separatist movement with roots in the nineteenth century; it is not, in other words, a product of "recent years".

Feminism has a completely utopian world outlook and even in its most 'socialistic' manifestations is, in the last analysis, an ideology which sees men, not capitalism, as the source of women's oppression. As such it has always been opposed by genuine communists, not 'only' a man such as Ilyich Lenin but by our great female comrades, such as Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai and Inessa Armand.

In the absence of any genuine communist work on the women's question in Britain, feminism assumes a prominence that it frankly does not deserve. Feminism is akin to other sectionalist ideologies such as black power, muslim fundamentalism and Zionism. It will never liberate women because, although it is a reaction to chauvinism, it is separatist, isolating women from the working class movement and the struggle for socialism.

As the BRS says, middle class and bourgeois women are oppressed. But it is working women who are responsible for all the general advances women have made, not feminism, which is more concerned with winning economic advantages for middle class women at the expense of middle class men than liberating women.

Put to the mild test of capitalist stagnation feminism has completely retreated from its own limited programme into reactionary calls for censorship, attacks on male picket line violence and blaming the male sex for all the worlds evils. As a result, what was the Women's Liberation Movement has collapsed organisationally and dissolved itself into Labourism.

What is needed is the beginning of real communist work on the women's question, not channelling women's anger into the proven dead end of feminism. Male workers have both a short term interest in drawing women into the workers' movement in order to conduct their common struggle against capital effectively, and a long term interest in winning women to the revolutionary movement. Truly, without women victory for men is impossible.

This does not mean we should rely on spontaneity. It might be capital that oppresses women but male chauvinist attitudes are, as the BRS quite rightly states, deep rooted. That is why it is necessary for the Communist Party to take a lead in fighting for women's equality in the Party and in the working class movement as a whole.

Against haughty male objections that they are more important, experienced or committed, concretely what this means is insisting on positive measures to promote women to leading positions. That means before housework and child rearing are fully socialised, communist men must be won to take on a full share of the burden. And in order to ensure that this involves the mass and not only the vanguard it also means ensuring that, both before and after the revolution, a powerful proletarian women's movement is built which will fight for the right of all women to take a full part in all aspects of social life (including the workers' militia and its precursors) alongside men.

Again, as the BRS points out, the experiences of the "existing socialist countries" shows that the advance of women is not automatic. Indeed, because of bureaucratic socialism many of women's rights under socialism have remained purely formal. More,

because of the pro-capitalist trajectory of Gorbachevism (welcomed by Euro men and women alike) the position of women in the Soviet Union is set to dramatically deteriorate through being made unofficially unemployed and driven back to the home and family through the sickening 'mummy, daddy and me' campaign ... truly the interests of women lie in defeating opportunism and the triumph of communism through world revolution.

6. The 'BRS' in practice

The opportunists are fond of telling us about their practicality. They claim to be realists who aren't afraid of getting their hands dirty. We do not deny for one moment that many 'official communists' think their road is the only road. But this has nothing to do with practicality, merely the result of theoretical short sightedness and a refusal to learn from history (and not only the October Revolution). As we have argued, in terms of charting a practical road to socialism their programme is a non-starter. Life proves it. If we have a look at where a BRS type programme has been put into practice, what do we see? In a non-revolutionary situation a BRS type programme could only result in a reformist whimper, like the Socialist Party/Communist Party government in Mitterand France. But in a revolutionary situation, such a programme results in bloody counterrevolutionary terror as witnessed in Chile in 1973. So let us examine these two examples.

6.1. France

May 1981 saw the election of Francois Mitterand as president, and in June this was complemented by the election of an absolute majority for the Socialist Party in the National Assembly. The 'official communists' in Britain greeted developments in France with enthusiasm, and when subsequently four Communist Party (PCF) members were included in the government, enthusiasm became ecstasy.

In accepting government positions the PCF advanced the same perspective as outlined in the BRS, that of acquiring small gains in the 'here and now' in the hope of realising, step by careful step, the goal of socialism. The PCF labelled the Mitterand administration 'progressive' in an effort to conceal the bourgeois nature of both Mitterand and the Socialist Party.

The economic and social policy presented to the electorate by Mitterand included extensive nationalisation, a wealth tax, increases in pensions and other state benefits, administrative decentralisation, in conjunction with massive investment to modernise industry and the economy; all in the midst of a capitalist world recession. What he was presenting was, in other words, a French version of the BRS.

True, the new government introduced a few minor reforms, increased pensions, decreed an extra week's holiday and a shorter (by one hour) working week. However it did not take long for the iron laws of capitalism to assert themselves. The sugar dissolved to leave the bitter taste of the pill.

In an effort to stem inflation Giscard d'Estaing's 1% levy on wages was re-imposed, unemployment was soon spiralling past two million, and in July 1982 a halt to all wage increases was ordered. For all its 'socialist' rhetoric it was forced, like any other government of a capitalist nation, to bow before the altar of capitalist profit. Workers' living standards and interests were a sacrifice that no bourgeois government, including one formed by a bourgeois workers party, could avoid. France had to remain competitive with its imperialist rivals.

What was the role of the four PCF ministers in all this? They were used to dampen down working class resistance. PCF militants felt that they were in an impossible position. How could they not lead strikes against attacks on the working class? On the other hand how could they lead strikes against their 'own' government? It was, of course, precisely for this reason that the Socialist Party (which had an absolute majority in the National Assembly) offered the PCF seats in the cabinet.

Some 'official communists' in Britain excused the PCF's reformism at home because of its international position, not least its sympathetic response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the declaration of martial

law in Poland in particular, as evidence of 'pro-Sovietism'. Yet, of course, *foreign policy is and can only be an extension of domestic policy*. The PCF was utterly opportunist at home and abroad. It might have gone along with the Soviet Union on Poland and Afghanistan but it willingly participated in a government which was unquestionably anti-Soviet.

During the period when it included four PCF minister the Mitterand government deployed new weapons of mass destruction against the Soviet Union, including medium-range land based and submarine-launched nuclear missiles. Compared with his openly reactionary predecessor Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterand was rightly portrayed by the bourgeois establishment as being more pro-US, an 'Atlanticist' rather than a Gaullist. Of course, none of this excuses the role of the PCF. Both Mitterand and d'Estaing served the interests of French imperialism ... and there is nothing 'progressive' in that.

The task of communists is not to provide a cover for imperialist reaction but - especially when it is fronted by a 'socialist/communist' government - to expose it to the workers, thereby preparing them for the only progressive development to come from imperialism - proletarian revolution. That the PCF did nothing to further that objective is not surprising given its BRS like programme.

6.2. Chile

The election of Mitterand occurred in the absence of a revolutionary situation; it was no different from the election of a Labour government in Britain with a MacDonald, Attlee or Wilson at its head. However, things were different in Chile.

Salvador Allende's election as President in 1970 was at a time of a rapidly maturing revolutionary situation. The bloc of parties backing Allende and forming the government under him was centred on the two main workers' parties, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, which were both dominated by opportunists. However Popular Unity also included a number of parties based on the petty-bourgeoisie, as well as the bourgeois Radical Party. It was therefore no revolutionary alliance, uniting different forces on the basis of a commitment to overthrow the existing state through revolution.

The Communist Party was fully committed to Popular Unity, it was in fact its prime initiator, its most staunch defender, and fought to broaden it to include the country's main bourgeois party, the Christian Democratic Party. This perspective flowed from the party's BRS like programme, which was constitutionalist, rejecting revolution and civil war, and claiming that the bourgeois state machine could be won over, slice by slice. Its leaders painted a highly inaccurate picture of Chile's 'democratic' traditions, the loyalty of the armed forces to the constitution, and the economy's total dependence on imperialism - totally playing down the development of Chilean based capital.

Working within the boundaries of bourgeois legality forces opportunists to act in the most suicidal fashion. For example, in order to secure Christian Democrat approval for appointing Allende as president, Popular Unity agreed never to act unconstitutionally. Later, to win cooperation from the army chiefs, all political agitation in the ranks of the armed forces was prohibited. For the same reason the government allowed squads of soldiers to terrorise and torture workers and peasants who attempted to arm themselves.

So it is clear that the Allende government was reformist; it never seriously attempted to break from the shackles of bourgeois legality although it was petrified by the growing danger of counterrevolution. Objectively Allende's government acted as barrier in the way of revolution. Obviously this could not be admitted. In order to maintain the loyalty of the masses it hid its cowardice behind pseudo Marxist language.

Writing in *The Lessons of Chile* Volodia Teitelboim declares unashamedly: "Throughout the period of Popular Unity rule, Chile was under a kind of dual power, which cannot of course, be compared with the situation in Russia in 1917. In Chile there was a lawful popular government and on the other hand, an unlawful reactionary power backed by all who earlier had dominated society. In addition to certain key economic and financial layers and the mass media, that reactionary power controlled a considerable part of

the state apparatus." (p3)

The Popular Unity government is counterposed to the rest of the state machine: Teitelboim claims it somehow represented an element of dual power. Yet far from this not being comparable with Russia in 1917 there are important parallels.

Kerensky's provisional government was made up of members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Mensheviks, who undoubtedly considered themselves socialists. This did not make it an example of dual power, it was a government committed to reform, not revolution. And like Allende, Kerensky was faced by two threats, the aspirations of the masses as articulated by the Bolsheviks and the threat of army counterrevolution. Allende's and Kerensky's governments were both examples of centrism.

In Chile a "kind of dual power" was developing, not from inside the bourgeois state but in the factories. From meetings open to all political tendencies, workers' committees, the *cordones* were elected by rank and file workers. Because delegates were subject to recall these committees reflected the political level of class conscious workers, they were in fact proto-soviets.

The cordones existed in most industrial centres, sparked into life by an early threat of a military coup. Despite initial objections to them from the trade unions (led by the CPC), they eventually united all major tendencies.

The cordones represented embryonic dual power. It was to these institutions that revolutionaries should have looked, sought to nurture, and to transform into organs of state power. Yet, because of the lack of a party solidly based on Marxism-Leninism and determined to see the revolution through to the end, the cordones slowly withered, never revitalising, even on the eve of the 1973 coup.

Tragically, the Communist Party was under the domination of opportunists who resolutely fought any moves to break from the reformist path, whether from within the Party or the working class. Strikes, illegal occupations, the cordones, the arming of the masses and agitation inside the armed forces were all opposed by the CPC leadership. It put the elusive goal of creating an alliance with the Christian Democrats above everything.

Underlying the CPC programme was the theory of stages. Before socialism could be fought for it was necessary to arrive at the 'democratic stage'; a theory applied before and after the 1973 fascist coup for equally opportunist reasons.

There are, and were democratic tasks to be carried out in Chile, but these are inseparable from the proletariat's struggle for socialism. Only proletarian-led revolution can secure democracy and allow its full development.

Today, the battle against the disintegrating fascist military junta is one that can unite a broad spectrum of the Chilean population. The task of genuine communists in Chile is to gain hegemony over the anti-fascist movement, not with the aim of placing in power some different section of the bourgeoisie through an election but to ensure that fascism goes through revolution. An anti-fascist revolution which would, given the power of the communist-led proletariat, develop uninterrupted towards socialism; there being no need for a second, specifically socialist, revolution. In this way the struggle for democracy, against fascism, and for independent economic development, would be led, used, and resolved by the workers fighting for their own rule.

Before the 1973 coup, the opportunist leaders of the CPGB promoted the Chilean road as the *British Road* in practice. Parallels were drawn between the 'long democratic tradition', 'constitutional army', and 'strong organisations of the working class' of Britain and Chile.

Of course, come the September 11 coup everything was thrown into reverse gear. In a piece of political dishonesty which takes some beating, the opportunists turned their previous claims on their heads. Suddenly we were presented with Chile's lack of democratic traditions, its backwardness, even the activities of the ultra-left as reasons for failure.

These were diversions, designed to protect the "uniquely" British BRS. But life had spoken. The only conclusion that any communist worthy of the name could come to is that *the reformist road leads to disaster for the working class*. As we know, though, opportunism is not honest. It has to lie.

Our aim is not to convince congenial liars to speak the truth, that would be futile. Our aim is to break the hold opportunists have over

the working class, for only if this is done can we avoid the bloody disaster of Chile.

7. History of the 'BRS'

It is essential to look at the BRS in terms of its evolution. Only in this way is it possible to appreciate how 'official communism' has arrived at its present dead end and how it produced a programme which is hopelessly eclectic, full of strange incongruities and totally useless as a guide to practice.

For the BRS and the miserable gaggle of reformist Euros and CPBers to claim that their programme has any sort of living ideological link with our Party when it was formed, when it vowed to follow the Bolshevik road to workers' power, let alone with the theory of Marx, Engels and Lenin, requires by definition the most monstrous distortions. The BRS has in fact much in common with the bible of the Christian cult. Both have been the subject of numerous revisions and much doctoring of what were once firm revolutionary principles.

The CPGB, like the early Christians, started off as a bitter enemy of the existing state. Now the Euros and CPBers, just like the C of E, defend the state and want to use it for petty reformist purposes. To justify such a perspective the hack-writers of opportunism, just like the numerous ghost-writers who contributed to the fraud that are the bible's four gospels, have had to constantly rewrite their programme, each new revision overlaying the other and at the same time being fashioned by them.

So the 1978 BRS was not born ready made. In fact it was the product of many years of centrist adaptation and opportunist retreat. The fifth BRS is a freeze frame photo of the revisionist process circa 1978. But the revisionist process did not reach its final point in 1978 nor did it begin in 1951 when the first edition of the BRS was published. Before the BRS there was the aborted (aborted 'because of the outbreak of World War II') 1939 *Draft programme*, before that there was *For Soviet Britain*, adopted at the CPGB's thirteenth congress in February 1935, and before that there was the 1929 general election manifesto, which was "so comprehensive" that many regarded it as a "party programme in everything but name." (Max Adereth in *Communist Review* Spring 1989).

Each programme has represented a further step to the right and a further burying of the Marxist-Leninist principles on which our Party was founded in July 1920; and yet, as we have seen in our detailed examination of the 1978 BRS, all sorts of carry overs from Marxism-Leninism can still be found. So can appendix-like, now redundant, revisionist carry overs from previous opportunist programmes.

• **A general election manifesto: Class against class.** This is always thought of as being wildly leftist. In reality the CPGB was uncritically adapting to the centrist drift in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Sure there were plenty of leftist phrases; sure, a sectarian attitude towards rank and file members of the Labour Party resulted, but we must see the wood for the trees. The essence of *Class against class* was the refashioning of the CPGB into an arm of the Soviet state's diplomacy. Naturally today's opportunists do not want to face up to this, instead they use the centrist sectarianism of *Class against class* to dismiss the revolutionary positions it advanced, above all any criticism of the Labour Party as a whole is dismissed as wholly wrong and wholly sectarian.

• **For Soviet Britain.** Unlike *Class against class*, *For Soviet Britain* was formally the programme of the CPGB, its first. In spite of this it reads more like a centrist (ie, revolution in word, reformist in deed) election manifesto or a run of the mill centrist congress resolution. There are general truths about the evils of capitalism and the correct insistence that socialism can only come as a result of "forceful" revolution and a "workers' dictatorship" (p8). Yet gallumphing though the entire document is an army of facts, figures and frankly utopian plans that were only relevant for the year 1935. Reference is made to the number of unemployed and how the Albert Hall is "refused to the workers", there are quotes from the then prime minister and detailed schemes for after the revolution for everything from banking to mining, from iron and steel to railways, from textiles to agriculture, from fishing to trade, and from housing to

health and education (pp14-24). Such irrelevant facts and fancies are damning evidence of an inability to grasp the strategic purposes of a real communist programme and hence evidence of a sharp turn to the right. Hardly surprisingly, it was thought necessary to produce another programme within four years!

• **Draft programme.** This was to be submitted to the CPGB's 16th Congress, scheduled for early October 1939. However, the outbreak of World War II meant that the congress was only convened in 1943. Because the *Draft programme*, just like *For Soviet Britain*, was specific to its immediate day, rather than outlining the broad tasks of the epoch - ie the strategic measures necessary for the conquest of state power - it was not surprisingly absent from the agenda. Like *For Soviet Britain* it had become an anachronism, but this time within one month of being published!

In many respects the *Draft programme* was an expanded version of *For Soviet Britain*. Yet there were differences. Its authors had moved further to the right. The *Draft programme* took on board Comintern's Seventh Congress project of international class collaboration with the proposal for a popular front between the working class and the bourgeoisie in order to "safeguard" bourgeois democracy against fascism. But the most significant step to the right was the description of how socialism would be achieved. According to the *Draft programme*, a "labour movement" majority in parliament was key. A proletarian state would emerge, not from revolution but from the new (parliamentary) government's call to rebuff the "violent resistance of the powerful financial magnates". Showing the clear signs of what was to come, its authors insisted, against all the evidence of the October Revolution and in true moralistic style, that: "The path of violence is never chosen by the working class, but only by the exploiters" (p60).

• **The British Road to Socialism.** The BRS was first issued by the Executive Committee of the CPGB in 1951 and a second slightly amended form was adopted at the 22nd Congress in 1952. Using the absurd claim that Marxism had previously failed to realise that "no two countries are exactly alike" (Max Adereth) the BRS for the first time committed communists in Britain to a consistently Labourite parliamentary/reformist road to "socialism". Soviets/workers' councils were out. Parliament was no longer to be replaced, instead it was to be "transformed".

• **BRS 1958.** This stated that "a transition to socialism without armed struggle is possible today"; that is, capitalist resistance to a Labour government committed to socialism could be overcome without recourse to violence. Another 'innovation' was the perspective of affiliation of the CPGB to the Labour Party and the eventual formation of a "single working class party".

• **BRS 1968.** It updated the 1958 edition; it also insisted, in an effort to distance itself from living socialism, that parties "hostile" to socialism would be free to operate under socialism. It was in this edition that a decisive shift in the world balance of forces was at last 'discovered' in order to justify the peaceful, parliamentary road.

• **BRS 1978.** We have dealt with the fifth edition in terms of its eclecticism, its parliamentary cretinism and how it became outdated one year after it was published with the election of the Thatcher government. Nonetheless it is instructive to look at the Party crisis it provoked.

When the Executive Committee launched a new *Draft of the BRS* in 1977, its intention was to repeat the propaganda exercise that heralded the previous four versions. But instead of CPGB members going through the ritualistic 'debate' - success being gauged by how many Labour MPs put their oar in - the 'debate' became real.

Up and down the country there were meetings against as well as for the *Draft*. Many branches and districts - now riven with factions and proto factions - refused to act as the leadership's spear-carriers; they had new masters. The columns of *Comment* - the forerunner of *7 Days* - were dominated by the 'for' or 'against' argument, although Fergus Nicholson, now the leader of the burnt out Straight Leftist faction, ensured that his troops mutinied on their knees by merely calling for the draft to be "referred back" (*Comment* October 1, 1977).

Charlie Doyle took a more principled stand. He produced a pamphlet outlining his (centrist) criticisms of the *Draft BRS* under the title of *The British Road to Socialism Draft*

- *Revolutionary Path or Diversion?* It circulated widely inside and outside the party and was even reprinted in the Trotskyite paper *Socialist Challenge*. This was something that the EC was not prepared to tolerate; it banned it, using the tenuous argument that as all other rank and file members were only allowed 800 words (!) in the 'official' press to outline their views on the *Draft*, it was unfair for anyone else to get more.

Yet, in spite of Canutian efforts, the leadership had to reconcile itself in the end to the reality of deep divisions, something which the 35th Congress, despite its clear majority for the BRS, did nothing to overcome.

The overwhelming majority of the opposition to the *Draft* came from the centrists. Their break up and disintegration had already begun (They are now divided between the ranks of the New Communist Party, the *Morning Star's* CPB and the Straight Leftist faction inside the Euro organisation). Those around Sid French, Surrey District Secretary, did not fight out their position at the CPGB's 35th Congress in November 1977. It was rumoured at the time that the EC was preparing to 'reorganise' Surrey District, French's power base. Some even suggested that both Sid French and Eric Trevett (District Organiser) were to be expelled at the congress for their undoubted factional activity. To avoid such an 'embarrassment' a split was decided upon. French and 700 supporters left the CPGB to form the NCP in July 1977. Lack of principle aside, let us examine the NCP's historiography, for in essence it mirrors the entire centrist spectrum's mythology about the rightward drift of the CPGB and their 'fight' against it.

According to one of its later documents: "The denunciation of the Stalin personality cult and the Hungarian counterrevolution in 1956 were used by revisionist elements to weaken and divide. The party programme, the BRS, was first revised in 1957 - the start of a process culminating in 1977 which deprived it of all revolutionary content ...

"In 1965 the *Daily Worker* had its name changed to the *Morning Star*, which marked the definite beginning of the decline ... Harry Pollitt had died in 1959, R Palme Dutt had retired from the Executive Committee and stalwarts like JR Campbell, W Hannington, W Rust and J Mahor were gone, to be replaced by the likes of G Mathews, J Gollan and J Woddis ...

"1968 saw the CPGB take the wrong side during the events in Czechoslovakia, and 1977 saw the new draft of the BRS - which put the cap on the whole process ...

"Marxist-Leninist forces within the party, like Sid French, had waged a struggle since 1965 to correct the line, but this had proved impossible. So it was that in July of 1977 healthy forces met to form the New Communist Party and renew the struggle on Marxist-Leninist principles." (*The Revolutionary Party*, 1982, p27).

Centrists always find themselves defending 'last year's revisionism' as opposed to this year's. Their resulting problem is obvious. It was 'stalwarts' like Pollitt, Dutt, Campbell et al, who presided over the launching of the BRS in 1951. Were the 1951 and 1952 BRS's fundamentally different from the 1977 *Draft* or the 1978 fifth edition? No! If the 1978 BRS is revisionist - and it is - there can be no doubt that all earlier editions are also revisionist.

All have exactly the same reformist approach to central questions such as the state, parliament, and democracy. Differences that exist are superficial. For example, the 1951 BRS claimed to be based on "Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin" (our emphasis, p22). And in place of the 1978's implication that Britain has been turned into some sort of EC colony, we find the 1951 BRS instead obsessed with Britain being a satellite of America ... "Britain," it claimed, was being "turned into a satellite of America" (p9).

Gollan, Woddis and Mathews (the CPGB's leaders in the 1960s) were the chosen successors of those who produced *Class against class*, *For Soviet Britain* and *Draft programme*. They walked in the footsteps of Pollitt, Dutt and Stewart (the CPGB's leaders from the late 1920s till the late 1950s). This does not mean that there was no change. Centrist opportunism evolved in the 1960s - particularly after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 - into right opportunism, thus creating a schism with those forces which remained loyal to 'yesterday's revisionism'.

Claims by the centrists that the 1977 *Draft* marked a qualitative departure from previous

editions, "depriving" the BRS "of all revolutionary content" indicate, if they indicate anything, a recognition of the need to cover up the role of the heroes of centrism, and their indirect responsibility for today's state of affairs.

Moreover, that Sid French's heirs only place the beginning of his struggle against "revisionism" from the name change of the *Daily Worker* in 1965, is a clear indication that his political tendency had nothing to do with "defending Marxism-Leninism". No, his bucking at the change was because he perceived the divergence of the leadership from centrist opportunism. If not, if his was a genuine struggle against revisionism, it would have commenced well before 1965, before the BRS was even conceived of. Either that or the NCP would trace - yes, with hindsight - the origins of opportunism back to the leaders it still insists on lionising. It does not. Nor does any other centrist current.

8. What sort of programme do communists in Britain need?

Before we focus our attention on to the CPB's BRS and then the Euros' *Manifesto for new times* (because of deep internal divisions they could only manage to come up with a "strategic document for the 1990s" rather than the programme their last congress instructed them to produce) we must look at what sort of programme communists in Britain need.

There are, as is well known, plenty of 'parties' which have failed to produce a programme. The NCP is no exception, except it makes a virtue of it. At its Fifth National Congress its general secretary, Eric Trevett, actually declared that the NCP should "avoid the danger of adopting a programme". Yet the fact is that a communist programme crystallises the unity of revolutionary theory and practice. Lenin insisted that a programme was not a "danger" but a "necessity", and went on to argue that a programme establishes the basis for party action (*CW* Vol 4, p230).

It goes without saying that with us the program of communists is a revolutionary programme. Its immediate (minimum) demands are aimed at the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state machine.

For us the programme formulates the basic views of a genuine Communist Party, establishes our basic tasks and gives unity to our agitational work and our ultimate aim of communism. It is therefore quite natural for communists to give great importance to their programme, to take great pains in formulating it, to jealously guard it against any attempt to water it down.

Because a genuine communist programme should give no space to tactical tasks it does not need renewing every ten years, let alone after a month (as was the case with the CPGB's 1939 *Draft Programme*). The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (in all its manifestations) has only had three programmes; the 1903 programme which outlined the perspective of overthrowing Tsarism, the 1919 programme which concentrated on the building of socialism and the 1961 programme which claims to deal with the realisation of the material and technical basis of communism (the Gorbachevite 1986 programme is an "updated" version of the Third Programme).

The point here is not to defend the three programmes of Soviet communists but to emphasise that programmes should only be changed given the fulfilment of strategic tasks, in our case the overthrow of the existing capitalist state.

Because of this the programme must be as short and concise as possible. There is no place for long historical explanations nor details relevant only for the immediate situation. Everything that is not essential should be kept out.

A programme is not a matter of the icing on the cake; on the contrary, it is the foundation for the building of the Party's strategy and tactics. The programme represents the crystallisation of the Party's principles and overall strategic approach to the conquest of state power by the proletariat.

Genuine communists will therefore never be content until we have a programme solidly based on Marxism-Leninism. It is for this reason we Leninists are adamant that the BRS must be replaced, lock stock and barrel.

Long live the CPGB purged of opportunism!

Forward to the Leninist programme!

Jack Conrad