

# The LENINIST

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## Kinnock vs Major: Fight whoever wins!

The conference season is over. One thing is for certain - none of the bosses' parties has anything positive to offer the working class

**W**ITH the ending of the Tories' jamboree in Blackpool, conference season for the major bourgeois parties has come to a close. All three were media carnivals with carefully stage-managed 'debates', vacuous and third rate platform speeches from the party leaders and tiresome standing ovations for limp performances that actually warranted little more than a polite ripple of petty bourgeois applause.

All three of the major parties were on their best behaviour with their eyes on a general election in the first half of next year, of course. The remit of the conference organisers was to provide a week long party political broadcast, and that is what they came up with. No political controversy or debate was allowed to get in the way of the *really* important things in this year's conference season. For instance, would the gender flesh tones of the Labour Party's backdrop give Kinnock's normally rather garish complexion more authority? Was John Major capable of telling a joke and getting away with it? Would his ovation measure the same level of decibels as Thatcher's?

These, apparently, were the keynote issues which the bourgeois media feels we humble punters should focus on, and on the basis of which we should decide our political affiliations.

The lack of substance of the three conferences of the main bourgeois parties should not lull workers into a bland complacency, however. It is incredible that these establishment politicians, whose daily bread consists of making promises that can never be kept and telling optimistic lies, are offering little or nothing to the working class in the lead up to the general election. They are not even giving us promises to renege on; there is no excuse for illusions in what the parties of the bourgeoisie, including the Labour Party, are planning for our class.

**Labour Party.** The Labour Party conference underlined the success of the Kinnock leadership in refashioning the organisation as a safe alternative party of government. At one time these conferences did reflect, in however a distorted and indistinct way, the rank and file of the party - their preoccupations, their priorities. This year's conference bore more resemblance to an America-style convention than to a genuine consultative gathering of delegates of the largest workers' party in Britain.

The leadership's contempt for the membership of the party and the extent of the marginalisation of the left was graphically illustrated by two events.

First, at the very beginning of the week, Militant's two hapless MPs were excluded from the conference by an overwhelming majority of 8:1. This, as Militant's post conference analysis pointed out, indicates the desertion of the party at a grass roots level by leftwing activists, rather than a shift of the bulk of the party over to Kinnock-

ism (*Militant* October 11 1991).

Second, the defence debate. Labour conference passed a vague and poorly worded resolution advocating the cutting of British defence spending to the West European average. Even before the debate on the resolutions had commenced, Kinnock had already cavalierly indicated that no matter what the vote, he and a future Labour government would totally ignore it. As the soft Left *Tribune* commented bitterly, "What's the point of conference?" We could effectively counter: "What has ever been the point of Labour Party conference?"

With cruel precision, Richard Crossman, the centre-right Labour Party MP diarist, highlighted the actual relationship between the Labour Party activists and the centres of real political decision making in the Party when he wrote that "the Labour Party required militants, politically conscious socialists to do the work of organising the constituencies. But since these militants tend to be 'extremists', a constitution was needed which maintained their enthusiasm by apparently creating a full Party democracy while excluding them from effective power. Hence the concession in principle of sovereign powers to the delegates at the annual conferences, with the removal in practice of most of this sovereignty through the trade union block vote on the one hand, and the complete independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the other."

Defence proved to be the only minor hiccup in an otherwise faultless PR week for the Labour leadership, however. The centrepieces of the conference were the speeches by Kinnock himself. The posture of statesmanship, dynamism and future prime ministerialship that these carefully rehearsed pieces of political theatre were meant to convey were, of course, consciously planned. Peter Mandelson, the party's former publicity chief and one of the main architects of Labour's bold new thrusting image, was no doubt pleased with the performance of his protege. Workers need to be a touch more critical of the content of Kinnock's mouthings, however.

As we have pointed out before in these pages, the actual content of Labour policies is virtually indistinguishable from the soft-focus Tories under everyone's favourite train-spotter, John Major (see for example my article in *The Leninist* No106, 'Kinnock's Labour Party: Preparing for Power'). While Kinnock pontificated on the NHS and education - the two issues guaranteed to initiate emotive responses from the audience - there were no firm promises of substantial extra funding for these services. All Kinnock's team is promising is *not* to do what the Tories are doing, for example not to encourage hospitals to opt out of local health authority control.

*Militant* (October 11) correctly points out that the speeches contained only three firm promises on spending - improvements in child benefits and pensions and the national minimum wage.

Yet, as we have shown, Labour is already backtracking on even these 'firm' promises. Tony Blair, the Party's shadow employment secretary, has "refused to elaborate on the timing of Labour's commitment to increase a national minimum wage ... 'We don't have an optimum timescale,' he said at a Westminster press conference. '... Over time we want to move to it, but we've made it absolutely clear that it must depend on the circumstances of the economy'" (*Financial Times* June 25 1991).

Bombast and hypocritical huff and puff were the content of Kinnock's speechifying. As the *Financial Times* commented, "The government's tale is one of past mistakes, of a dreary present and a far from buoyant future. But the Labour Party is so frightened of being thought reckless and it offers the same basic policies" (November 4 1991).

Despite the cautiously vacuous nature of Labour conference this year, the event undoubtedly did underline their revival as an electable alternative to the Tories. Similarly, the content of the conference, which contained little if anything positive that the Party is offering and was mostly composed of dire (and largely accurate) overviews of the state of the British economy and the degeneration of its social services from Labour Party grandees, performs a useful dual function for the Party leadership.

First, naturally, they were a useful stick with which to beat the floundering Tories with during a week long PR hype for Labour. The Conservatives' clumsy attempt to take the wind out of Kinnock's sails with the leak, on the eve of his big conference speech, that a November election was out, backfired badly. "You can run, but you can't hide," he was able to thunder to rapturous applause.

The second function of these 'state of the nation' dirges is more ominous for the working class: they are the means by which a party that has made even its modest promises dependent on the state of the British economy *alibis itself in advance* for the inevitable renegeing on these promises, the inevitable attacks on the workers it will launch.

The conference was therefore a comprehensive victory for the Kinnockites and marked a further marginalisation of the hapless left, both on the floor of conference and in the withering fringe around the event. It confirmed the fact that neither the Labour Party nor traditional Labourism are "dead", but *can* win the next election, despite the cretinous claims of the RCP's *Living Marxism* that: "Whenever the general election is, one thing now seems certain: the Labour Party cannot win it" (October 1991).

Conservative Party. Of course, Conservative Party conferences have never made any pretensions to be anything other than rallies for the blue rinse and

Colonel Blimp faithful of the Tory rank and file.

Major went into this year's conference - his first as party leader - with the need to revive flagging Tory spirits and opinion poll ratings. As illustrated by this year's performance, he suffers from two crippling disadvantages in this, however.

First, the exhaustion of any sort of real Tory political agenda. Joyriding will not be stopped with already tried and failed "short sharp shock" two year prison sentences. Nor will opposition to the totally discredited, one year to go, poll tax be ended by banning councillors who won't pay it from voting to set it. Simply, the Tories have simply run out of ideas to overcome Britain's inexorable decline. The Thatcher led restructuring of British capitalism has not avoided the current descent into economic recession, neither has it put Britain back among the most competitive imperialist powers. And where another bout of its 'leaner but fitter' bloodletting will lead was shown in the leaked report on British Coal: 14 pits and the rest closed down. Understandably, many bourgeois strategists are saying that any such move would be irrational and against Britain's long term interests.

Second, Major as a personality, if that is not too big a word for it. Thatcher at least cut an imposing and authoritative figure capable of the mobilisation of substantial petty bourgeois prejudices in society.

Major's keynote address to the conference had as its central message - "I'm normal, I'm ordinary". As Hugo Young in *The Guardian* put it, "John Major's first conference speech as leader nakedly exploited the politics of personality"; or, put another way, 'I don't have one - vote for me'.

The political content of his speech, small though it was, underlined the ideological loss of direction and vulnerability of the Tories. His defence of the NHS could have been made by Kinnock: "There will be no charges for hospital treatment, no charges for visits to the doctor, no privatisation of health care, neither piecemeal nor in part, nor in whole. Not today, not tomorrow, not after the next election, not ever while I'm prime minister."

Quite why, when the benefits of the market are supposed to confer such

positive and liberating results in other sectors is a total mystery. The day before Major's speech to the faithful, the Central Statistical Office announced a further fall in Britain's inflation rate to 4.1% - its lowest for three and half years.

There was disappointment expressed with this figure, especially after Chancellor Lamont had claimed at the Conservative Party conference this week that UK inflation would soon fall below Germany's 3.9%. The bench mark of a newly reunited Germany, with the strains and pressure that process has placed on the country's economy and currency, is hardly an ambitious one. With all the talk of a 'classless society' Britain has greater inequalities of wealth than ever, more homeless, more forced into beggary and prostitution, three million unemployed and economic growth below and inflation above its main rivals. No wonder the Tories have tried to sell themselves using John Major's 'personality' and using the racist card.

In the absence of any real substance to the party's conferences, the bourgeois media in their typically hysterical and silly way, have been reduced to playing 'Opportunity Knocks' games with clapometers. Despite the truly boring nature of this year's season, the working class should pay careful attention to the questions discussed and the emphasis at these meetings of the parties of our enemies.

This all the more true given the dire state of working class organisation. Later this year, we will see the congresses of two of the wrecks of 'official communism', the *Morning Star's* political wing, the Communist Party of Britain and the bow-out congress of the Euro organisation. These pathetic fragments of the once proud Communist Party of Great Britain underline the fact that while our enemies may be floundering politically and ideologically, the combat readiness of our class leaves no room for complacency. The unseen 'spectre' haunting all the bourgeois parties' conferences was the working class and its potential strength.

That potential can only be realised with a reformed Communist Party. We urge all those committed to giving our class a voice at last to join us in the fight to reforge our Party.

Ian Mahoney

● Sunday November 10, anniversary rally 'Under the Banner of October', to celebrate the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the launch of *The Leninist* in November 1981. Tickets £5 waged, £2 unwaged from Nick Clark, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Telephone 081-459 7146.

● Saturday November 23, picket and press conference to coincide with the Euros' swansong congress. The press conference will both public launch the first two books in the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB's new series - *Communism Lives!* For more information or tickets and press credentials, write to Anne Murphy, address and telephone as above.





Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

SOCIALIST Cuba is now in the frontline of the world revolution. Imperialism is just waiting for the right moment to pounce on Cuba and convert it back into a neo-colonial warehouse. The counterrevolutionaries in Moscow have done everything to help out - help out imperialism, that is. Gorbachev has withdrawn troops and the nuclear umbrella. Yeltsin is even more servile. He wants to prove his loyalty to his imperialist masters by helping them bring down Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba.

The immediate threat to Cuba is economic. Cut off from its natural US trading partner by almost three decades of blockade, Cuba survived by developing ties with far off Eastern Europe and the USSR. Now, with the collapse of the socialist bloc and the restoration of capitalism, Cuba's economy has been thrown into crisis. Trade will now be at 'world market' prices, ie at prices which amount to the plundering of Cuba, reflecting as they do the unequal terms of trade between imperialism and the oppressed countries of the world.

What the US plans is that, under ever greater economic pressure and deprivation, sections of the Cuban population will become restless and disaffected. Then, using 'dissidents' like the Cuban Political Rights Association, it aims to create some sort of a Tiananmen Square 'excuse' it needs to stage a new, and this time successful, Bay of Pigs invasion.

It is against this backdrop that the Communist Party of Cuba meets in congress. Not surprisingly it has been called "the most important meeting in Cuba this century". Obviously no exaggeration. The communists of Cuba have to chart a revolutionary strategy in the most difficult of conditions that will combine the most flexible tactics, without for one moment jeopardising the country's independence and socialism.

It is quite understandable that the comrades want to use every diplomatic device available, try and boost tourism and seek out new avenues for trade. This is necessary and right. However, the most powerful weapon in the hands of the Cuban revolution is proletarian internationalism.

Over the years Cuba has played an outstanding and honourable role in the world revolution; many of its sons and daughters have given their lives for revolutions in far off places, not least Ernesto Che Guevara. Now is the time for the revolutionary movement the world over to repay its debt to Cuba.

What is needed is the broadest, most powerful, most militant solidarity movement with Cuba. The perfect model for this is the Hands Off Russia campaign which saved the young Soviet Republic from certain death.

Of course this will be no easy matter. Today we are living in the midst of a period of reaction, not revolution. The bourgeois beast is full of aggressive self-confidence and all sorts of 'leftists' and 'socialists' are scurrying for cover. In Britain, most 'revolutionary' organisations joined the monster in celebrating the "collapse of communism" in Eastern Europe and the USSR. In this miserable spirit some have already let it be known that they will not lift a finger to help socialist Cuba, not only the likes of the SWP and Socialist Organiser, but the 'official communist' Euros.

At the Euros' September 14-15 Executive Committee meeting their Chris Myant did everything he could to heap slander and abuse on Cuba and its intransigent leadership. According to this maggot: "Cuba now faces its 'Cambodian option' as Castro and his colleagues try to batten down the economic hatches. His sneering at the drift and change in the Soviet Union now looks like what it was, a silly attempt to defy the inevitable. Silly because the Cuban miracle, for all its elan, its hope and its sparkle could never have got off the ground had it not been for the massive and constant Soviet subsidy. The boast of a third world country that had achieved first world infant mortality rates through its socialism was based on the backing of a supposedly developed country that had achieved third world infant mortality rates through its 'socialism'" (*Changes*, September 28 1991).

Lies, lies, lies! Cuba wants to expand its overseas contacts and is certainly not set on a Pol Pot-type genocide of its own people. It is imperialism that wants to strangle Cuba and carpet bomb its population. And whatever the Euros say, there is nothing "inevitable" about counterrevolution, nor is it "silly" to resist it.

The comrades in Cuba can rest assured that we will expose and destroy the opportunists who are lining up with the enemy class in the name of "socialist democracy" and "workers' liberty". Class conscious workers in Britain will treat these people with the contempt they deserve and rally in defence of socialist Cuba.

Heroic Cuba must not stand alone, it will not stand alone! Imperialist hands off Cuba! Venceremos!

The Editor

## LETTERS USSR

In Jack Conrad's speech in *The Leninist* No109 he poses the question; "So what is the state in the USSR, now, in class terms? Is there anything for communists ... to defend in it? We would say no". In reaching this conclusion comrade Conrad makes certain statements, but by no means proves his point that the Yeltsin counter-coup "amounts to a social counterrevolution".

A "social" revolution, or counter-revolution, involves the transformation of not only the political superstructure, but more essentially, the property relationships. Until in Soviet Russia there is a property relationship transformation then capitalism has not been reintroduced. Nowhere does comrade Conrad declare that the Soviet Union is now a capitalist system. In fact, he declares that "both Gorbachev and Yeltsin say it's full speed back to private property, back to capitalist property, and back to capitalist social relations" (original emphasis).

To define the class nature of a system according to its political superstructure places the Marxist method of defining a society on its head.

The state in the Soviet Union has not been a socialist state for many years now, despite its inherent and objectively imposed role as defender of socialist property relations. Is it yet any different in its present role, despite its declared aim to revert to capitalism? No.

The declared intentions of forces within the Soviet Union do not as yet correspond with objective facts: they have yet to accomplish their declared aims. To state as comrade Conrad does that "... it is clear that the bourgeoisie is back; the states within the USSR are now theirs," not only equates definition of the state to determine the nature of the system, but also considers that a bourgeois class exists, but without any property basis.

A class is produced and formed according to its concrete relationship to the means of production. It is revealing that comrade Conrad declares that this bourgeoisie is back in the state machine but does not declare that it is back in control of the economy; ie, that they have expropriated socialised industry and transformed it into their own personal estates. Until such a time as they have realised this they remain as before, a bureaucratic parasitic caste.

Our slogan should still be, defend the socialised economy against Gorbachev and Yeltsin - for political revolution and the establishment of a genuine democratic workers' soviet state.

Paul Conlon  
London

## India

Following the restoration of capitalism through counterrevolution led by the reactionary Gorbachev clique, the Soviet Union is now engulfed by all pervading economic, political and cultural crisis.

The way the attempt to capture power [by the coup] was made, was not in consonance with Marxist-Leninist principles, norms and values. It has once again vindicated the quintessential Marxist-Leninist teaching that no basic and radical change is possible without a correct base political line, necessary mass awakening and mass upsurge.

The reported agreement between Gorbachev and Yeltsin about sharing of power and implementing the out and out reactionary policies and measures - all in league with the US imperialists - will undoubtedly disintegrate the Soviet Union further and make it more open to naked interference by the US imperialists and help accentuate the already severe crisis in all spheres of society to a yet unprecedented dimension. Obviously, all these are being done with a view to striking a decisive blow on the noble ideology of Marx-

ism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism and eliminating the revolutionary forces inside the country.

Identifying ourselves with the great peoples of the Soviet Union at this grim hour of test and trial, we urge genuine revolutionaries to adhere resolutely to the fundamental teachings of Marxism-Leninism and close their ranks to resist the surging wave of reaction.

We also urge the anti-imperialist and truly democratic minded forces of the world to frustrate and foil the attempts of the imperialists, and particularly the US imperialists, to interfere in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Socialist Unity Centre of India  
Calcutta

## Democracy?

In the No108 issue of *The Leninist*, comrade Jack Conrad makes the statement that 'Democracy is either revolutionary or reactionary.' This definition, as a generalisation is correct, insofar as we compare class democracy such as the difference between proletarian and bourgeois democracy. However, when it comes to practicalities of involvement in class struggle, the above definition is an oversimplification.

One cannot deny the correctness of the Leninist analysis re Gorbachevism and Yeltsinism, that their democracy is one of a democratic counterrevolution. In other words, the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union must be given its freedom in order to introduce capitalism in place of the socialist property relationship.

However, in the Soviet Union the workers themselves are allowed certain freedoms, ie that of selling their labour power on the open market and the right to legally defend that right and their conditions through strike action, to organise in trade unions, to assemble, demonstrate and organise politically.

While fighting against the facade of democracy which in actual fact keeps the working class oppressed on the basis of consensus, we nonetheless defend the right to strike, to demonstrate and organise. In fact, within that class democratic system, we fight to extend those rights.

Just as we oppose bourgeois democracy as a system of oppression and yet defend within that system the freedoms won by the workers, so in the Soviet Union we must oppose the bureaucratic democracy of Yeltsin and co, and yet defend the new won workers freedoms, which did not exist under the old Stalinist regimes, even though, at this stage, the workers themselves are using their freedom to assist in the destruction of the socialised economy.

In opposing the position of some Trotskyist groups who welcome the Yeltsin democrats - freedom to introduce capitalism - we should make clear that we defend the workers' freedoms to strike etc, in order to facilitate the struggle against the counterrevolutionary democracy.

We must clearly define and distinguish between the counterrevolutionary democracy of Yeltsin and co, and the rights and freedoms of the workers which must be defended. These freedoms and rights are a necessary precondition for Marxist-Leninists to be able to approach the workers with a genuine socialist policy and programme, in order to galvanise a struggle against the re-introduction of capitalism into the Soviet Union.  
Tom Cowan  
South London

## Workers Power

Comrades Copestake and Nelson (Letters, No110) correctly condemn *Militant* and the SWP for their down-

right perfidious position on the Soviet coup/counterrevolution, which they celebrated with glee, bowing to anti-communist spontaneity (once again).

However, I don't think the (right moving) left leaning Trotskyites of Workers Power should go unscathed. Personally, I find their position the most nauseating of all. Like everybody else they joined on the "now that communism is dead we can build real socialism" bandwagon, but they did so in an utterly dishonest fashion, by dressing up the August counterrevolution in 'orthodox' Trotskyite clothing and by deliberately misrepresenting the views of *The Leninist* (or, in good old fashioned language, they lied).

Most monstrously, Workers Power claim that *The Leninist* gave "clear critical support" to the State Emergency Committee and that the only (!) criticism *The Leninist* had of the coup makers was the fact that they did not "suppress democracy adequately enough" - Workers Power wants us to believe that *The Leninist* was disappointed that the coup makers did not read the military manuals (ie, the one on how to make a successful coup) sufficiently well! What laughable, crass idiocy. Workers Power are so blinded by Trotskyite dogma they cannot read what is written in clear, precise English, right in front of their eyes.

Also, as usual, Workers Power are years behind everyone else, as living reality obviously takes some time to eat away at their ossified dogmas. On page ten there is another of their (very predictable) screaming headlines, which shouts excitedly: "Only political revolution can stop capitalist restoration!" If they came back from the planet Mars they would realise that capitalism has been restored already, by a political/social counterrevolution - to which they gave "clear, critical support"! To top it off, they hilariously warn on page one: "But no-one should be complacent" - and this is from a group which until very recently had not cottoned on to the fact that capitalism had been restored in Poland! The August counterrevolution has proved once and for all that Workers Power is a thoroughly anti-Marxist, anti-communist sect, which has drowned totally in the Labourite swamp. Still, at least they are good for a (right moving) laugh.  
Eddie Ford  
Cornwall

## Japan

Thank you for sending us every issue of your organ. We were much interested in your recent articles regarding the Soviet coup. And we published your two articles in Japanese in the recent issue of our organ, the *Kaihoh* (*Liberation*). We would like to send you some copies of this issue.



Soon we are going to write to you about our impressions of your articles. Japanese Revolutionary Communist League (Revolutionary Marxist faction) Tokyo

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

## WRITE OR RING

If you wish 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 071-431 3135.

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# Theirs only on paper



The paper of communists, not the reformists of the *Morning Star*

As expected, it has started to get around that the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB is going to relaunch the *Daily Worker* for the period of the forthcoming general election campaign. Also as expected, partisans of the working class are pleased to hear this, being as it is a milestone in the rebuilding of the revolutionary party of the working class in Britain. But unfortunately not the *Morning Star*, claiming, as it does, to incorporate the original *Daily Worker*.

We received a letter from Mary Rosser, secretary of the Peoples' Press Printing Society which publishes the *Star*, expressing objections to our move in no uncertain terms.

Now we are not being churlish about this: we would be prepared to discuss with any revolutionary organisation. But given the *Morning Star's* supercilious attitude we do not feel so inclined. After all, there is a bit of history about this, not least the history of the CPGB; but anyway, no one is accusing the *Star's* Communist Party of Britain of being revolutionary!

Back in May an advertisement placed in the *Morning Star* was interfered with by their editorial staff. Our name, which appeared in the artwork, was removed from the advert, without consultation, on the unbelievable grounds that the Provisional Central Committee "doesn't really exist". We reported this at the time in *The Leninist* No106 and it is worthwhile repeating here an extract from Ms Rosser's letter of explanation: "No organisation can claim the name of the Communist Party of Great Britain while that organisation exists - or if that name is incorporated into any new name which is agreed by that organisation. To do so is to invite litigation."

So why did the CPB take up the issue of us being the Communist Party of Great Britain? The Euro organisation, which still hangs on to our name by the skin of its reactionary teeth, does not feel confident enough to challenge us. Of course the Euros are not communists; they know that and so do we. So to challenge us in the courts would only expose their mealy-mouthed perfidiousness.

But the CPB defending the Euro patch? Hardly! Instead this was a case of political censorship by the 'official' communist CPB, expressing its wish for their readers not to know that there is a Communist Party of Great Britain taking up the struggle to overthrow capitalism. But on this issue the *Star* had to capitulate; it too knew full well that what we claim is the historic role of the Party based on political continuity.

The CPGB was set up in 1920 as the disciplined Marxist-Leninist vanguard party - a Leninist party with the express aim of leading the workers in insurrection, the overthrow of capitalism and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. And this has always been our aim.

The relaunch of the *Daily Worker* is part and parcel of the fight for our goal, to reforge the CPGB on its true revolutionary principles. The *Daily Worker* was an integral part of the revolutionary strategy of the CPGB.

In a letter to Tom Bell in August 1921, Lenin strongly advised the CPGB "To start a daily paper of the working class ... not as a business ... but as an economic and political tool of the masses in their struggle" (original emphasis, *CW*, Vol 32, p511). Since its establishment in 1930 the *Daily Worker* suffered bannings, police attacks, censorship and confiscation. Its staff came to accept periodic imprisonment as the price they pay for printing a militant workers' paper in a capitalist state.

The *Morning Star* is not the *Daily Worker*, no matter how much it tries to 'incorporate' the name. It is the daily paper of the trade union and labour bureaucracy (or would like to be). It does not conduct a militant struggle, nor propagate the ideas of communists. The threat that is made to its existence is not political, but the threat of declining sales. It is threatened as a business, especially since the Soviet Union cancelled its order.

Many parallels exist between the *Daily Worker* and Lenin's *Pravda*, not only in its intended function as a popular workers' revolutionary paper. The name *Pravda*, meaning 'truth', was first used by Trotsky, but Lenin did not hesitate to take hold of the name and

put it to Bolshevik purposes. All the same, Trotsky, reputed to be outraged at Lenin's audacity, did not threaten to take Lenin to court!

In establishing *Pravda* in 1912, Lenin stressed that it would be a legal paper of the working class struggle. Nonetheless, it was subjected to persecution by the Tsarist autocracy, the bourgeois state of February to October, and the bourgeois and opportunist press alike. Even though it was working within the opportunities provided by the law, it presented a real threat to the capitalist order.

Even the legal activities of the revolutionary party must threaten the state. How else can revolutionary ideas be propagated to the workers? So called legal 'Marxism', the idea that the struggle for socialism can be conducted without transcending bourgeois law, is a dangerous illusion against which the Bolsheviks waged a consistent struggle (see *The Leninist* No59).

It is stating the obvious to say that to overthrow the state the working class will have to infringe its laws. But what is more insidious than denying the obvious is the path which legalists are forced to tread, bringing them into conflict with the revolutionary working class and into the service of the bourgeoisie.

A party which, in periods of relative liberal calm, ignores the necessity of genuine communist structures, will come to operate exclusively on a legal basis. The Communist International took this danger seriously enough to instruct "Legal communist parties in the capitalist countries have, as a whole, not yet grasped fully how seriously they must work to prepare the party for the revolutionary insurrection, the armed struggle and the illegal struggle ... Every legal communist party must be organised so that, should it have to go underground, it is ready and capable of continuing its struggle" (*Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, p258).

How do the Euros and CPB live up to this requirement of a communist party? Dave Cook, ex-Euro national organiser "does not indulge in subversive activity of any kind" (*The Leninist* No59), while Mike Hicks, part time gensec of the CPB says: "I have never attempted to, or encouraged others to, breach the laws of our land" (*Ibid*). And security? Rather than being alarmed at a breach in security such people would be horrified that the state should even do such a thing.

Rather than using legal opportunities tactically to reach the workers as efficiently as possible, 'official' communism has come to rely on its legal status for its existence. It was then a short step indeed to call in the law to defend them, and from there to defending the law upon which they rely.

Mary Rosser's letter of September 19 reads: "I have been instructed to inform you that the title *Daily Worker* is the property of the [Peoples' Press Printing] society and may not be used by any other organisation without permission" (our emphasis). "Property" and "litigation" are what the 'official' communists believe in - the wealth and the weapons of the bourgeoisie. This is what their party and paper stand on and this is what they will fall on.

No, comrades, the *Daily Worker* and the Communist Party of Great Britain are the weapons of the working class in this country for the overthrow of capitalism. Their use for other purposes cannot be countenanced. Let the bourgeois 'communists' run to their bourgeois friends and their courts. We will use all legal methods to propagate communism, even the law itself!

"The workers cannot build up their own party unless they ruthlessly fight every lie that is told about it ... class-conscious workers, those who oppose liquidationism, have undoubtedly taken first place in creating a working class press" (VI Lenin, *CW* Vol 19, p65).

Steve Riley

One-hundred and fifteen TGWU members at Tanks and Drums at Speake in Liverpool have been sacked for taking official strike action in support of a pay claim. The workers have been on strike now for nearly seven months. Having balloted for industrial action, and got the sanction of the general secretary, the members came out. The company have attempted to use the courts and the Tories 1990 industrial relations law - through to the Court of Appeal - to get the action declared unlawful, but lost at each stage. They have now applied to take the case to the House of Lords. Having issued an ultimatum to return to work within two weeks, which was rejected by the strikers, the company sacked all 115 members on strike. The company are now threatening court action to prevent picketing at the plant and are bussing in scabs daily. The strike caravan also got 'mysteriously' burnt out within 24 hours of it being there. Despite the strike being official, it has had little or no publicity from the union and the strikers are desperately in need of financial and physical support. The strikers are determined to win this dispute even if it means closing the factory down, but they need the solidarity of other workers to do it. They are mounting a weekday picket at the plant from 7.30am each morning, with mass pickets being held every Monday. If you can make it, the factory is on Goodlass Road, Speake, Liverpool 24. Send donations and messages of support to: Vinny Tuzio, Senior Steward, Tanks and Drums Dispute, c/o TGWU, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool. Cheques to TGWU (Tanks and Drums). SR

"East London routs the fascists" read the headline of the *Daily Worker* after the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when the Communist Party-led mobilisation of half a million workers drove the blackshirts off the streets. Faced again by a rising fascist threat in East London, Anti-Fascist Action organised a successful dayschool and rally on October 12, attended by over 150 local activists. The rally was addressed by an AFA speaker, Gerry Gable of *Searchlight* and a Cable Street veteran and CPGB Provisional Central Committee supporter, who emphasised the centrality of the class struggle and the organisation of a communist party in the fight against racism and fascism, today as 50 years ago. On Sunday October 20, in Brick Lane, East London, AFA is following up this successful event with a demonstration against the British National Party's paper sale on that road, from 11am, under the slogan of 'Reclaim the Lane'. On November 10, AFA is also organising a march against racist attacks, assembling at noon at Aldgate tube station, East London. We are supporting both these events and urge all comrades to come and join our contingent on the day. Phone (071) 431 3135 for further details. NP



On October 4, the Offshore Industrial Liaison Committee (OILC) declared itself an independent trade union. OILC had been manoeuvred into this position after failed negotiations between it and the AEU and EETPU to reach an agreement. These, and others such as the GMB, have shamefully played a membership poaching game between each other for the North Sea oil industry's 36,000 workers, the majority of whom are unorganised. OILC was motivated by an understanding of the need to build united working class organisation in the North Sea to defend workers' rights and prevent outrages such as the Piper Alpha disaster of 1988 in which 167 workers died. However, the failure of negotiations with the yellow trade unions and the de facto witch hunt of OILC representatives at this year's TUC has produced what is, in effect, a further fragmentation of the trade union movement, in much the same way as the split of the EIPU from the EETPU a couple of years back. This allows the bureaucracy to isolate militants within a separate body, cutting them off from the rest of the workforce. OILC activists could find themselves further marginalised by 'sweetheart' deals with the bosses by the bigger unions. What is needed is cross union rank and file workers organisation, fighting in all areas for unified working class action, within one union for the industry, controlled by the membership. SQ

### Extra needed



Comrades who read this column each issue will know that each month we have to raise a minimum of £600 to cover the production costs of *The Leninist*. This is the routine. But every now and again we have to ask our supporters to dig deeper. This is one of those occasions. To improve our paper's production facilities we are about to take delivery of an image scanner. Although it has many features which we will use to brighten up the paper, the feature I must bring to your attention is the cost, £800. September's fund just made it with £606, but for October we need bigger donations and more requests for standing order forms. Thanks for all contributions, especially those from LG, PR, AS, RW and DCG. Vernon Douglas, Fund Organiser



# On the frontline

Oskar Martinez, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, was recently in London. We interviewed the comrade on October 10, on the eve of the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba

**Could you place the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in context? What problems is Cuba facing at the moment?**

The coming congress is a very important one for all Cubans. Key questions will be discussed there. International circumstances have deteriorated. Many Eastern European countries have gone down. We must, as communists, assimilate those experiences.

In Cuban socialism, there were many things that were copied too mechanically from the experience of Eastern Europe and the USSR. We think we have to improve our system, we have to introduce more democracy into the Party and into society.

But the changes we expect to make will be designed to make our people and society *more* revolutionary, to be *more* socialist, not less.

Talking about democracy does not mean that we are going to change to capitalism, or introduce five, six or seven new parties. We are going to stay with our one party system, we are going to stay with socialism, but we want to *Cubanise* socialism.

The question of the economy is obviously very high on our agenda. With the crisis in Eastern Europe and the USSR - a region with which we had our main commercial interchange - we have very big economic problems. This is exacerbated by the continued US economic, financial and diplomatic blockade that has been going on now for 30 years.

Those two external factors of course have an influence on our situation. So Cuban communists have the task of discussing and formulating lines for the economy.

**Recent developments in the USSR have been very disturbing for communists the world over. How do you assess these events?**

We have maintained a principled position in relation not only to the Soviet Union but also to other countries. That is, every people has its own right to do what it wants to do. Of course, when the Soviet people decided to develop this new perestroika process, we respected their wishes. After all, they know better than anyone the best line of development for their country.

We have respected this principle consistently.

**But is it a defeat?**

What happened in Eastern Europe is of course a defeat for socialism. There, they began by talking about how to make better socialism, how to make a better form of democracy and increase living standards, but then ended up with capitalism. They have thrown away socialism, and the communist parties of those countries have been smashed.

That is something that we obviously oppose. That is one of the reasons why we say we want to see better socialism, but maintaining socialism, in our own country.

In the Soviet Union circumstances are different. As the events of recent weeks took place, we maintained our principled position and respect for the majority will. Of course, we would like to see this in all countries, including the United States. That is our wish, but of course the world is not made from wishes.

**Could you give us your view of perestroika, and the role of markets under socialism, and maybe some of the things that Cuban communists will be discussing in terms of democratisation.**

Well, we think that the world, I mean the 'third world', the poor people, have no alternative but socialism. Before the October Revolution existed, the same problems were there that are here today and those problems were not because of communism or socialism. They were there because the capitalist system could not solve problems. So, according to this precept, we say that for the 'third world' countries to get away from their miserable existence, they have to build something new, and the only alternative is socialism.

Of course, when we talk of socialism, we mean principled socialism. Perhaps the concrete historical experience in Moscow, East Germany and the other Eastern European countries, and including even Havana, show that mistakes have been made. But the principle of equal justice for everybody, social care for everybody, is still the only alternative for the 'third world' countries and, of course, for our country.

In our specific case, socialism has a direct connection with our independence. In this, Cuba is different to other countries. Hungary is no longer socialist but capitalist, but it is still Hungary. Poland is no

longer socialist, but is still Poland.

But Cuba, after many years of attacks by America, will never be allowed by America to be a country in any real sense of the word. Cuba will be a new Puerto Rico or a large Miami out at sea. That is why we say our alternative is directly linked with our independence. The Cuban people are painfully aware of this fact.

We have to improve on the things we have achieved. We have to improve our style of work in the Party. We have to introduce more democracy at every level of the Party. The people must be able to participate more directly in the decisions of the government. That is what one of the main items on the agenda of the congress will be.

Another important item will be our principle of the maintenance of a one party system in Cuba. Under our conditions - I'm not talking about other countries, or the other hemisphere - we can have only one party. There are three reasons for this.

Thirty years ago we had a lot of parties in our society, four or five. Those parties did not resolve the problem: one party resolved the problem, that is the first reason. Secondly, during the struggle against Batista we had three different organisations fighting him, and after the revolution those revolutionary organisations united and made one Party. Our strength comes from our unity. We have a principle that has been demonstrated all over the world. If we divided our forces, that is to the advantage of the imperialists. The imperialists have an important tactic - divide and rule. We have resisted for the past 30 years precisely because we have not permitted our enemies to divide us.

Thirdly, in Cuba we have no social basis for other parties. That means that the people who are really interested in the establishment of other parties are not in the country any more. They are outside the country - they are 90 miles away from Cuba, in the US.

Those people represent nothing other than the interests of the US imperialists. So if a second party is established in Cuba, that will be a party of counter-revolution. We are not fools: we don't play games with power.

**On the question of democracy. There are those who equate democracy with the market, central planning with bureaucracy and authoritarianism. What is your view on this?**

According to some people who think this way, we have all over the world a lot of 'democracies'. For example, you have democracy in the United States according to the definition of democracy the US accepts. You also have 'democracy' in Haiti after the coup: certain people there are talking about 'democracy'. You have, apparently, 'democracy' in other countries in the 'third world'. You have democracy also in the industrialised countries.

But if you analyse every country concretely, although they are all free market countries, they aren't the same. The 'third world' countries talk about 'democracy', yet millions of their people go hungry, live in misery and illiteracy. They, like the advanced industrial countries, have huge problems of unemployment. In our concept of 'democracy', one of the most important things is the fact that you have a job, you eat, you can read and write.

The United States is the biggest democracy in the world, but how many unemployed do they have? Democracy is also being able to be sure that your children can go to school free of charge and have the possibility to go further in life, regardless of what type of people you are. That is also democracy.

Democracy is the possibility to give your opinions not simply on the national policies of the government, but the day-to-day running of your society. That is also democracy. We do not accept lectures on democracy from people who deny their own people these basic rights.

**What type of solidarity movement with Cuba needs to be built? Do we need more internationalism, or less?**

Solidarity for us means that you are able to fight, that you are able to do all you can for other people, including to die for other countries and people when they have justice on their side. We have many examples of the Cuban people's solidarity with these causes - Angola for example. With the fall of the socialist countries in Europe, the solidarity activities of those countries has stopped.

But Cuba maintains its position of solidarity with the just struggles of the peoples of the world. Of course, now we have one main task: that is, to save

the revolution in Cuba, to save socialism from the threats and aggression of the United States.

At this moment, this is the main manifestation of our international solidarity. I see from many friends in the world, including in Britain, the same determination to contribute to this battle. This is an important form of internationalism.

**Building the solidarity movement is very important. But we would say that the key to ending the isolation of Cuba is the struggle to reforge a genuine world communist movement. Cuba, alongside a solidarity movement, surely also needs strong, militant and united communist parties in every country in the world, Britain included.**

Undoubtedly, the fall of the world socialist system has had a huge effect on the international movement and the communist parties of the world. As a consequence, many parties have collapsed, others have refashioned themselves and others have changed their names. Undoubtedly all of this has been a very hard blow to the international communist movement. But at the same time we think that the principles of Marxism-Leninism and the socialist conceptions are still totally valid. And that coincides with the answer I gave to you at the beginning of the interview.

What are being called into question are the historical concrete experiences of socialism: but the main principles of Marxism-Leninism are still true. We, as the Communist Party of Cuba, are proud of keeping the name Communist Party. We are proud of being communists, although this may be a 'bad' word in today's world.

We are proud because to us communism represents the most pure form of justice, and it is a matter of principle. The Communist Party of Cuba, although it is a Party that concentrates the whole Cuban nation, will keep the name of Communist Party. Changing it would be a betrayal of Marxism-Leninism. We hope there are others who feel the same way.

## Statement of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee to the CP of Cuba 4th Congress

The Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain sends its warmest fraternal greetings to the October 10 Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba.

In these dark days for communists, with the victory of counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the USSR, socialism in Cuba stands as a beacon. While communists in Cuba meet to discuss the crisis in world socialism and the revanchist threats of the imperialists, communists in other countries will follow their deliberations with great interest and solidarity.

The Communist Party of Great Britain pledges its unconditional support to the defence of socialism in Cuba. Just as the defeat of socialism in Eastern Europe and the USSR is a defeat for the world's working class, so Cuba's existence as a socialist state is a precious gain for the world proletariat. The CPGB calls on the working class in every country to rally to the defence of revolutionary Cuba.

In Britain, the Communist Party recognises its duty to help build a mighty movement of solidarity with Cuba. As the imperialists become more aggressive, we need *more* internationalism, not less!

Long live the Communist Party of Cuba!  
Long live proletarian internationalism!



We reprint the statement from Granma, paper of the Communist Party of Cuba, on the abandonment of Cuba by Soviet troops

# Cuba will never let itself be turned over or sold out to the United States

**T**HE DECISION, taken by the Soviet authorities unilaterally and without prior consultation, concerning their military personnel in Cuba, the so called Instruction Brigade, which we have called since 1979 the Study Centre n12, has grave political consequences and compromises our security ...

This brigade has in the course of time become the only Soviet military presence - a fact known to the United States, even if this was not a publicly known fact ... On the eve of the 29th anniversary of this brigade, which continued to be a fighting unit with all the necessary means and instructions, the question was raised of its unilateral withdrawal, on the grounds that it belonged to a past epoch.

For us the word symbolic, which we were the first to use in this connection, has two meanings: the brigade is not a numerically significant force, but at the same time it expressed friendship and solidarity in the face of the US's threats...

In the scenario of the joint press conference held at the end of the bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States, the announcement of the decision to withdraw the military contingent in our country appeared as an unconditional concession in the eyes of world public opinion. President Gorbachev omitted any reference to the US presence in Cuba, as did Secretary of State James Baker, who knew the news already and had time to find the right words...

On September 12, some hours after the Cuban ambassador in Moscow sent an official note to president Gorbachev concerning the announcement of the withdrawal, the Soviet Union's foreign affairs minister, Boris D Pankin, gave a press conference. In his preliminary declaration, as in his answers to journalists, Pankin gave additional elements which made it possible for us to publicly fix the Cuban position on the principles of the matter...

According to the head of Soviet diplomacy, the American side had been told of the removal of the military contingent of the Instruction Brigade - before the Cuban government could even learn about it from the press agency - because this was an appeal to the

US with the hope that they would respond on their side with similar gestures.

According to Pankin, and thus according to the Soviet authorities, everything was based on what the US might hypothetically do, on condition that these hopes were not unfounded; but the Soviet hopes are extremely modest - a reduction in the military personnel at Guantanamo or other equally minor gestures. But in any case this would only depend on the choices made by the US and could be reversed at any moment, as often happens with US policy, above all now that the country feels that it owns the planet. The gestures that the USSR has said it is ready to make, on the other hand, are irreversible and unconditional...

Happily, we are no longer in October 1962, but nearly in October 1991, and the defence of Cuba rests solidly on a doctrine and preparation that, for more than ten years has totally excluded any other hypothesis. It is based on the unbreakable determination not to become the US's slave and to rely on our own forces...

We can also count on our own experience, and on being faithful to certain principles that we cannot renounce ... We have rejected all the pressures and even all the proposals of different North American administrations who have demanded that we abjure and break our close links with the Soviet Union...

One is filled with indignation at the thought that we are moving towards a new world order in which small 'third world' countries such as Cuba, whose systems displease the US, have no other choice than to submit or face the risk of disappearance; there will be no more room for ideological loyalties nor for elementary ethical principles without which a new menace will arise for our civilization; the predominance of a new barbarianism based on the technological power and hegemonic delirium of the US.

Nonetheless, we have always had confidence in the peoples and the future. What our country represents today it has not become by waverings and denials. Faced with the arrogance of empire and the difficulties that have appeared in our relations with the USSR, we have chosen dignity and self-respect, without for all that deceiving ourselves. We know that we have reduced material resources and that we will be obliged to make truly heroic and superhuman efforts. But we are ready to do what is required by our principles.

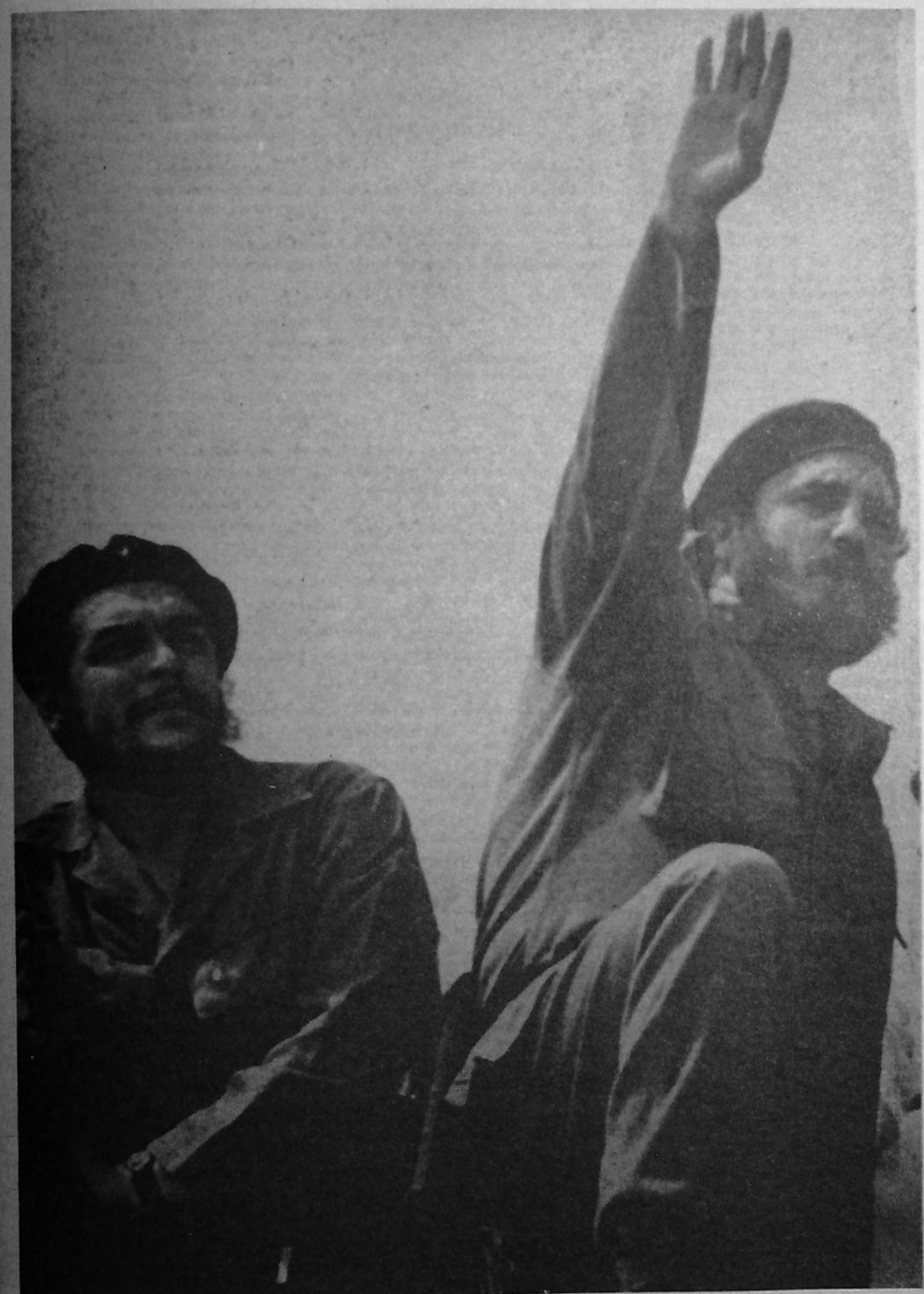
It would be unjust to put an equals sign between the Soviet military collaborators in Cuba, representatives of a tradition of solidarity and internationalism which has been indispensable for the construction of our armed forces, and the American forces at Guantanamo. It would also be immoral and unjustifiable to accept now, at precisely the moment when the talk about the end of the Cold War is reaching its climax, when nobody can use the pretext of Communist expansionism, nor see a danger in a small Soviet military contingent, that a US base and its aggressive troops should stay on Cuban soil while the Soviet troops withdraw. We would be ready to accept the simultaneous retreat of both forces. That would be the only equitable, just and honourable alternative in present circumstances. Besides, these questions should be discussed by us, as an interested party...

Cuba is willing, to this end, to take part in an international accord at the United Nations.

In this agreement, with all its guarantees, one could [introduce] clauses satisfying both parties, among them, evidently, the cessation of practise invasions of Cuba which the US commanders have carried out systematically in the region for years.

Then, in the case of Cuba, you could really talk about a new political philosophy at work in international relations...

The unilateral and unconditional decision by the USSR, taken without any consultation with us, to withdraw its military unit, amounts to giving the US the green light to go ahead with its aggressive designs against Cuba. This is the moral meaning of the withdrawal of this symbolic contingent from Cuba; there is no other possible explanation or interpretation of this event. Cuba will never surrender or sell itself to the USA. We will fight to the death in order not to become slaves.



Fidel stated at the Fourth Congress that Cuban communists would fight in the mountains again to defend the revolution if necessary. Workers internationally must take up the fight to ensure that it does not come to this





# Defending socialism

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos



The Bolsheviks demanded solidarity: communists in Britain delivered

**I**MMEDIATELY following its formation over July 31-August 1 1920 the Communist Party plunged into action. British imperialism was set on another attempt to destroy the Soviet Republic and restore capitalism. The CPGB was determined to stop it.

A London Hands Off Russia! committee had been formed at the initiative of pro-communist shop stewards in January 1919. This was quickly added to by other committees around the country, culminating in a national Hands Off Russia! committee in the autumn. This committee was the pinnacle of a broad, mass, militant movement.

Its leadership brought together official representatives of big unions like the boilermakers, railwayworkers, engineers and miners as well as the TUC's parliamentary committee, in the form of AA Purcell, a founder member of the CPGB. Alongside them there were three vice-presidents - all CPGB foundation members - Tom Mann, general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, George Peet, secretary of the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement, and Willie Gallacher of the Clyde Workers' Committee.

The Hands Off Russia! campaign scored a brilliant success in stopping the Polish war drive against Soviet Russia through stopping the arms ship *Jolly George*, on May 10 1920. Two months later Britain was again threatening war, this time demanding that the Red Army cease all hostilities against Poland. It was into these conditions that the CPGB was born.

The first CPGB circular to branch secretaries was issued under the signatures of Arthur MacManus and Albert Inkpin. It was a call to action:

## The threatened war against Russia

There is no need to remind you of the importance of saving Soviet Russia

from the attacks of the capitalist governments. For nearly three years you have worked loyally and well to that end. Your efforts, according to their own admission, have paralysed the militarists' attempts to crush our Russian comrades, for they realise how deeply Hands Off Russia! propaganda has sunk into the minds of the workers.

But this is a supreme moment for action. War - definite, open bloody war - in support of the Polish nationalists, is threatened against Russia ... Comrades, the government must be told in plain terms that the workers will not have war against Soviet Russia. It is our duty to deliberately advise the workers not only to refuse all service for that purpose, but to oppose it actively.

The Communist Party, in the first days of its existence, must be worthy of its mission. Let us rise to the height of a great occasion.

Call meetings ... Get in touch with organised workers ... and urge them immediately to notify the government that they will not make nor handle munitions, nor volunteer for service, nor be pressed into services, but will actively oppose, by a general strike, the threatened campaign.

Speak boldly and act quickly. Neglect nothing. On the shoulders of every individual member of the Communist Party rests the fate of Russia at this critical moment. Let every member, therefore, be a missionary for the salvation of Russia, lest we be branded with infamy of crushing by our apathy the first socialist republic, and our hopes and ideals at the same time. August 5 1920

On August 7 1920 the CPGB issued a call for the formation of councils of action; this was endorsed two days later at the first meeting of the Provisional Executive Committee. Hundreds of Hands Off Russia! meetings happened all over the country and passed resolutions in line with the CPGB's resolutions. It was in this atmosphere that the Labour Party executive and the TUC's parliamentary committee (on which sat two CPGB members) met and agreed to threaten the government with a general strike. To organise this it set up a National Council of Action.

On August 13 1,044 delegates met

at Central Hall, Westminster. They demanded the end of all British support for Poland and any other "efforts against the Soviet government", the "withdrawal" of the navy blockade and the recognition of the Soviet government and the "establishment of unrestricted trading and commercial relationships between Great Britain and Russia". Naturally CPGB chair, Arthur MacManus, saw these developments as potentially insurrectionary.

## Towards the Revolution: Our Policy

The decision [to form] a Council of Action and the granting to this Council of "full powers" to organise a general strike ... constitute a situation which must be examined and judged on its merits of revolutionary possibility.

Apart from the actual decision to prevent war by a general strike if need be, the general course adopted to arrive at this decision, and the path pursued, contain significant consequences which are at once vital and important.

To decide to strike against war, or the threat of war, dismisses once and for all any further question as to the validity of industrial or direct action for political purposes, and relegates the bones of that skeleton in Labour's cupboard to the political crematorium.

Again, the granting of power to the Council of Action to summon a strike immediately, should such be necessary, is not only as J H Thomas put it: "a challenge to all constitutional institutions", but, however little he may have dreamed it, it is a challenge to the constitutionalism of Labour itself. The unwarrantable insistence of a constitutional ballot before any industrial action could be adopted, which has in the past been well-nigh the strongest weapon in the armoury of capitalism, is, let us sincerely hope, also a thing of the past.

We must see to it that the working class tactics against capitalism in future are determined solely by the exigencies of the moment, and the possibilities of success, and not by any stale and crusted formulas which may have served Labour a hundred years ago. The other feature, the challenge to capitalist institutions, is the first real ringing declaration of war against the power of our exploiters and oppressors, which has gone up from Labour's ranks.

On this score *The Times* rightly attaches the greatest importance, and it is tragically amusing to read that: "Any overt attempt to overthrow the constitution would be met with a firmness on the part of the great bulk of the people of this country that would bring our magniloquent revolutionaries to their senses." And then to read almost immediately following that: "Most British citizens know as little of the Constitution as of the composition of the air they breathe".

Due attention is paid to the possibilities thus opened up to such a body as the Communist Party, and certain of our executive recommendations are quoted to show that we are alive to such possibilities. Well, they will not be disappointed. We see in the threatened

war with Russia not only another military holocaust, but a deeply conspired imperialist attempt to crush the working class Republic of Russia.

Official Labour can rest assured of our support in this crisis, because the Communist Party is to the Republic of Russia flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone. We are not to be intimidated into a lukewarm support or pacifist shelter by the insidious references to the conditions in Russia and the policy of those whom we seek to support. The dictatorship of the proletariat has no terrors for us, in that, not being blinded by capitalist morality and sentiment, we can appreciate realities when such confront us, and we do know that capitalism will not allow the working class of this country to attain its economic emancipation unless compelled to do so by the organised might of that working class. That is the dictatorship so much decried, particularly by those who today dictate for capitalism.

The Communist Party has sent out several communications to its members, advising them as to policy and a general line of action. Its executive are apprehensive of all that is at stake, and of what is involved in the formation of the Councils of Action. We have sought for representation ... on the Council, but so far our efforts have met with a refusal. We intend to insist upon such representation, not as a successfully absorbed body, but as an independent and free unit, with equal right to advise and urge both as to policy and action. Meantime our members are again strongly advised to get on to the local councils, not only as representing the local branch but as delegates from their shops, unions, committees etc.

The Councils may be called upon to function not only in controlling a strike, but constructively in efforts to maintain the strike. Any local construction must bear the hallmark of communism, and only the communists can stamp such an imprint. Labour will, and must, obviously in the interests of its own policy, endeavour to effect a consummation to the present decisions by the establishment of a Labour government. This is in their minds and the Councils of Action but the means to this end.

We must follow the developments very closely, and all the time keep strengthening our organisation and machinery to ensure that we shall be fit and prepared to take the fullest advantage of any opportunities which may present themselves. Our work is not for a political revolution with a Labour government, but a social revolution with administration by soviets or workers' councils. Your local Councils of Action have potentialities which should be nourished and developed, and in the meantime we hope that all members will endeavour to act in uniformity with the executive policy, and thus ensure the greatest margin of success from this impasse. Get to your posts! Keep there! And be prepared to respond to such advice as the situation at Headquarters may warrant the offering. Our watchword for the present should be "Be active, alert, and ready." *The Communist* Vol 1 No3 August 19 1920

Faced with mass working class pressure, prime minister Lloyd George dared not act. War was stopped. Soviet Russia was saved.

At the September executive meeting of the Euros a Joe Marshall reported, according to Changes: "The party is primarily an elderly party, it is itself old and has little energy; its fabric has fallen apart..." Now that's how you sell the 'Communist Party in Transformation'.

And, on the above, the latest edition of Marxism Today, the abyss bound Euros advertise themselves as the "Community (sic) Party in Transformation", soon to be Democratic Left. Now, we thought that this was to be decided by its congress, and no-one else. So much for 'Democratic'. Other proof-reading funnies include an appeal to "Western intellectuals". Now that ought to grab the academics.

Speaking of the Euros, their September Executive Committee meeting held a special session on the events in the Soviet Union. The "largest cause for concern" was not the definitive collapse of the Soviet socialist state, nor the floodtide of anti-communism sweeping the globe, but "a 'Leninist' press release supporting the coup". Flattering though this is, we do think their sense of proportion is a bit out.

Schisms in Militant do not seem to have stopped at the level of the application of Labour Party entrust strategy between Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe. It seems that events have taken a peculiar, although not altogether unexpected, turn in Scotland. Those Millies who are sick of Labour council poll tax prosecutions and Labour Party purges, but still looking for a larger home, are arguing for entering the Scottish National Party. Out of the bourgeois workers' party into the bourgeois nationalist party. What next? Sean Connery and the Proclaimers flogging Militant around Glasgow housing estates? Unlikely, you may say, but when that balding actor with the twinkle in his eyes knocks on your door, remember where you read it first.

Lastly - very lastly - Tony Lecombe, leading member of the fascist British National Party, plus other members of the master race were seen attempting to tear down our Communist Party posters in Bethnal Green. However, things did not go altogether to plan, and these great white hopes slunk off after failing to shift so much as one. With this level of expertise, we think the fascists' day is still some way off.



## REVIEWS

### Rebels sing

**Republican POWs, H-Blocks, Long Kesh, *Music From The Blocks*, 1990, £5.95. Available from The Art Shop, 51-53 Falls Road, Belfast**

**Hot Ash, *Who Fears to Speak ...?*, Republican Publications, 1990, £5.99. Available from Sinn Fein Books, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin**

THESE TWO tapes came close on the heels of one another and were met by great local acclaim, but outside Ireland they seem to have received less attention than they deserve. They are both commemorative collections of Irish folk songs, the first for the tenth anniversary of the hunger strikes and the second for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Easter Rising.

*Music From the Blocks* is a truly remarkable achievement, both musically and as a political statement: "They will not criminalise us, rob us of our true identity, steal our individualism, depoliticise us" states the introduction. The tape is "Dedicated to ... the memory of all those who died in the Anti H-Block/Armagh Jail agitation campaign". It was recorded by republican prisoners under strict secrecy, using a hand held recorder and mattresses for soundproofing around the cell walls. It is as much a tribute to the current volunteers incarcerated by the British state as to the hunger strikers and activists of 10 years ago.

The choice of songs draws largely upon material made famous by Christy Moore, which as we know includes some written by Bobby Sands: 'Back Home in Derry', 'McIllhatton', and 'The Time Has Come'. The days of the blanket protest are recounted in 'Ninety Miles From Dublin', while 'Sad Song For Susan' acknowledges the sacrifices of the families outside the jails.

The struggle is placed in its international and historical context by 'Victor Jara' and an excellent rendition of 'The Foggy Dew'. But the emotional centrepiece of the tape must be 'The Time Has Come', written by Sands when he took the lead in his final blow against British imperialism.

Given the conditions under which the tape was made, the quality of the recording is excellent. The prisoners themselves say that "probably it isn't as professional as the people on the outside, especially people who are into music, would like to see ... but it is to portray a message, to let people know that even though we are ... held in captivity, that we still see ourselves as political activists."

After the session the prisoners read statements and discuss the project among themselves. The overall effect of the tape I found both impelling and moving, I could not take it off the deck for days. The last tune on the tape is 'Farewell to Erin'; on the first hearing I was taken by surprise because it is a favourite of mine and was not included in the cover notes.

The prisoners themselves are very pleased with the tape and also the response it has had. In its effect the project has proved very successful. Although distribution at first was a bit slow, publicity soon came from an unexpected quarter, c/o the chief sectarian himself - Sammy Wilson, DUP leader of Belfast city council. Loyalist politicians, who were furious at this being done right under their bigoted Orange noses, made such a stink that sales trebled almost overnight. The tape is now into its second release.

Folk music in Ireland is often political, and *Music From the Blocks* is Irish music at its most political as effective propaganda. Tapes such as this are a weapon in the armoury of the national liberation movement.

The character of *Who Fears to Speak ...?* is entirely different. It is more musically rounded and professionally produced. More to the taste of the music officianado, but it lacks the obvious *coup de main* of *Music From the Blocks*. The three musicians of Hot

Ash are joined by, among others, the Jim O'Neill/Robert Alsop Memorial Flute Band from the New Lodge, and the wonderful voice of Brid Keenan, to produce a varied and balanced sound.

The title of the tape is taken from the response of the Irish state, and bourgeois and labour apologists for British oppression. This layer of servile scum were, to a party, scared of the Easter 1916 seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations. As Des O'Malley, Progressive Democrat leader, expressed their fears: the insurgents of 1916 might be seen as some sort of example for today - the penny drops, if old Des had half a brain he would be positively dangerous! The only groups which celebrated the rising with any heart were the anti-imperialist forces which are still fighting on.

*Who Fears to Speak ...?* is a meaningful contribution to the commemoration/celebration, and as a memorial to the struggle to free Ireland it is impressive. Opening up with 'The Foggy Dew' and going straight into a gaelic martial 'An Raibh Tu Ag an Charraig', it sets the tone of resistance. With 'Bloody Sunday - This is a Rebel Song', Hot Ash cock a clear snook at the U2 toadies; it is good to see someone having a go at those snivelling multi-millionaire creeps.

The struggle of Irish women is commemorated by Brid singing 'Bean an Ghleanna' - penetrating and unaccompanied, as she sounds best. She also sings 'Irish Ways and Irish Laws', in Irish - which is the way I always preferred to hear it. 'James Connolly' is in there, as is 'John Mitchell' and 'Micky Free', making for a comprehensive treatment of Irish heroes. I was pleased to hear 'Only Our Rivers' too, another personal favourite, but it is not the best version of a song which sounds better in a female voice.

A tribute to the H-Block struggles and the hunger strikers includes recited extracts from Bobby Sands' 'Trilogy' and 'The Sleeping Rose'. Recitals are fully in the tradition of albums like this, started with *Protest Songs* released during the campaign around the blanket protest. A little more, however, would not have gone amiss since it concentrates the image perfectly, stops any listening philistine from thinking it is just another tape of Irish music.

*Who Fears to Speak ...?* is an excellent tape which will be listened to over and over again, and it is a good compliment to the historic recording of *Music From the Blocks*. The clear advantage that Hot Ash has over the prisoners is that you may be lucky enough to see them on tour. It is a pity though that they left Brid Keenan home in Belfast, because for me she makes the tape what it is.

Mike Smith

### Feudal relations

**Zana Muhsen with Andrew Crofts, *Sold, Sold, Sold - A Story of Modern Slavery*, Futura Publications, pp216, £4.50**

THE YEMEN is one of the poorest nations on earth. Most of the able bodied men have to go abroad to find jobs. They then send money back to their families. The women are left behind in the villages to look after the families in conditions of abject poverty.

This book details the real life experience of the author and her younger sister, after they are sold by their father to become wives to sons of his friends in the Yemen.

The story begins in early 1980, when Zana, aged 15 and her younger sister Nadia, aged 14 are living with their parents in Birmingham. Their mother is British, and their father is Yemeni.

The beginning of the story gives a brief insight into the background of the

two girls; the impression is of a very normal family life with nothing out of the ordinary. Zana writes that for the first ten years of her life her father took little notice of her or her sisters. It was only after then that he seemed to take an obsessive interest in her movements, demanding to know where she was at all moments of the day.

This was obviously a result of his upbringing in the Yemen, where it was considered unthinkable for a girl of marrying age (after ten years old) to be seen talking to strange men.

It was at this time that she discovered that her father held strong racist views; he used to say that where he came from black people were slaves, and that was how things should be.

Zana and her sister are told by their father that they have been invited to the Yemen by his family for a holiday. It is not until they have been out there for several days that they are suddenly introduced to their 'husbands' and informed that they are there to stay.

The book gives details of Zana's struggle against the situation she finds herself in, and her fight to get back to Britain. Even though the story is a harrowing account of a young girl literally sold into near slavery, it also gives a graphic account of the appalling conditions of life for millions of people, not only in the Yemen, but in countless backward countries.

Differences in culture play a big part in understanding the reasons why things are done as they are in the Yemen and elsewhere. Arranged marriages are a fact of life to people there; they are nothing unusual. In the larger cities, the custom of arranged marriages is slowly dying out, as is women's complete subservience to men.

However, in the remote villages (which in the main means practically the whole of the Yemen) life is the same arduous struggle it has been for hundreds of years. The supremacy of men is absolute; women have no rights at all. Women have to be completely covered and veiled while out of the house, and even in the house if strange men are present.

The facts of Zana's 'marriage' are far harsher than the usual arranged marriage; she is given no opportunity to voice opposition to her situation. In the Koran it is stated that no girl should be forced into an arranged marriage against her will. This forms the basis of her struggle to inform the authorities of her predicament and get the marriage annulled.

The book gives many examples of how difficult life is in the Yemen, from having to walk many miles a day to obtain water from wells in the villages to replenish stocks in the houses, the danger represented by the many poisonous snakes and insects which roam freely (Zana contracted malaria several times), to the horrific accounts of child-birth which both Zana and her sister undergo with no medical facilities whatsoever (not surprisingly the child mortality rate in the Yemen is very high).

The story also gives an interesting insight into the indifference displayed by the authorities (both British and Yemeni) toward ordinary people. (One interesting aside here is the social position accorded to affluent men in Yemeni society. In the remote villages especially, the 'wise men' are the most affluent in the village - a position handed down from generation to generation.)

The role of the Foreign Office is seen to be especially unsympathetic, bureaucratic and unhelpful.

The book does not try to give any conclusions or lessons to be drawn from the experience; it is simply a matter-of-fact account of the events from Zana first arriving in the Yemen to her eventual return to Britain.

Differences in culture play a big part in understanding (or not) events in other countries. This is why communists stand for the coming together of all that is progressive in cultures of all societies to form a truly world culture.

Chris Allen

## ACTION

### Communist Party

**London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135**

This seminar series provides collective discussion to assist the CPGB Provisional Central Committee in drawing up its Draft Programme, section by section. Join in the debate. Fight to forge the weapon of the proletarian party in Britain. (The second part of each seminar is a weekly discussion on current political developments.):

**October 20: Specifics of socialism in Britain.**

**October 27: The Communist Party: introduction.**

**November 3: The Communist Party: principles of organisation.**

'Under the Banner of October', Sunday November 10: anniversary rally to celebrate the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the launch of *The Leninist* in November 1981. Tickets £5 waged, £2 unwaged from Nick Clark, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

**Communist Party streetwork** and campaigning in the four constituencies where we have adopted prospective parliamentary candidates:

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**Bethnal Green and Stepney (Stan Kelsey)**

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**Reclaim Brick Lane!** Sunday October 20: Join CPGB activists and anti-fascists against the fascist paper sale, 11am (sharp) corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road, London, E1.

**National demonstration against racist attacks, Sunday November 10:** Join the CPGB contingent 1pm, Aldgate East tube. March through East End.

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### Unemployed Workers Charter

**UWC NATIONAL MARCH AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT**

**London, February 1992**

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# Homelessness: A crime against humanity

As Anatole France wryly noted: "The law in its majesty forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under the bridges of the Seine"

**H**ome Secretary Kenneth Baker's recently announced 'clampdown' on squatting following the next general election illustrates the worth of the type of 'equality before the law' that says that the rich are as equally entitled to sleep rough as the poor. Squatters are almost universally young, working class and desperate. The alternative is they face is dire.

Last year it was estimated that some 3,000 people were sleeping rough on the streets of London every night, in an average year over 400 die of hypothermia, TB and other diseases associated with living on the streets. Now the government boasts that the number of homeless on London's streets is down to a couple of hundred. The fact of the matter is that this has had nothing to do with the building of new homes or the renovation of derelict ones. No, the government's 'success' is entirely due to police harassment of the homeless and scare stories about them being a pack of "parasites" with "good homes to go to" (Chief Inspector Robin Jackson, *Evening Standard* August 6 1991).

Not only have the numbers arrested under the 1824 Vagrancy Act shot up - 1,400 were prosecuted in the four Central London courts - but less visible forms of homelessness are still rising, with an 18% increase in the official numbers of families living in temporary accommodation in London in 1991. Families sometimes live five to a room in damp and rat infested bed and breakfasts and hostels. With the rush to privatise all council housing stock by both Labour and Tory councils, these families have little chance of being rehoused and will remain homeless. Moreover, because of the extortionate rents (an average of £200 a week for one room) being charged by landlords, there is no way out of this

poverty trap. There are few jobs and fewer still which can provide the means to pay this kind of rent.

While the bourgeoisie carefully doctors the official figures for homeless families, it totally ignores the existence of the single homeless. Last year CHAR, a campaigning group for the single homeless, estimated there to be at least two million homeless people in Britain. There are many reasons why this figure will soon be higher. The European Community estimates that 6.6 million people in Britain live in 'relative poverty', proportionately more than any other European country. This stratum of the working class is particularly vulnerable. Major's 'economic recovery' will mean increasing unemployment until at least the end of 1992. The withdrawal of all benefits to those under 18 means that more and more unemployed youth will be forced to roam the streets or go cap in hand to friends. The poll tax, mortgage repossession, community 'care' and massively high rents in the private sector will also add considerably to those without proper homes.

Tory policies have done much to exacerbate the misery of homelessness, while making little attempt even to provide superficial relief. It was not until 1990 that they finally deigned to admit that a problem even existed! As Tory minister George Younger said recently, it is a real annoyance to have to put up with these "people you step on when you come out of the opera". His type are not going to solve the problem - to do that would only encourage more people to become homeless, according to the Tories! Instead of being provided with homes, the "parasitic", "lazy" homeless are herded and bullied into shelters.

Can Labour provide the answer? No, their record in local government in the last few years has shown them just

as ready as the Tories to increase the numbers on the streets. Hackney is a good example of how Labour deals with homelessness; unemployed tenants in rent arrears and squatters already legitimately accepted onto the council housing list are being illegally and forcibly kicked out by police and bailiffs. Diane Abbott, the local 'left' MP, said at a meeting of angry tenants on Pembury Estate in July that she had no sympathy for squatters and supported the council.

People need to stay within the law, no matter how viciously the state attacks them. The Tories now plan to make squatting a criminal offence - something which, just going by Abbott's attitude, Labour would be bound to endorse.

Nobody should be surprised however at the attitude of Tory or Labour to the housing question. Naturally, because they are committed to running the system which causes homelessness they will, as Engels argued, "at most see to it that the measure of superficial palliation which has become customary is carried into execution uniformly" (*The Housing Question*). It is very apparent that declining British imperialism is no longer willing to apply even the amount of 'superficial palliation' available in the days of the welfare state.

Writing in the last century, Engels accurately pinpointed why capitalism is the cause of homelessness and why the only solution lies in the abolition of that mode of production.

Firstly, because capitalism relies for profit upon the surplus value created by workers; it needs a proletariat in order to survive. Thus a mass of workers comes into being, a propertyless class which is wholly susceptible to the vacillations endemic in the system. They are victims of a system which on the one hand creates a re-

serve army of unemployed workers and on the other hand drives "the mass of the workers from time to time onto the streets unemployed" (*Ibid*).

Secondly, because capitalism centres mainly around the big cities, workers crowd continually into densely populated cities in search of work. There they find themselves at the mercy of capitalist landlords and extortionate rents. Henceforth, as competition drives the cost of housing up and crisis within the capitalist economy results in growing unemployment, the housing problem affects the working class even more acutely. This is of course glaringly obvious today.

The contradiction between the tens of thousands of empty properties and the homeless tens of thousands can only be understood by turning to the method of Marxism-Leninism and overthrowing the system whose *raison d'être* lies within the unceasing drive for profit. The solution to the housing crisis lies in socialism.

In the aftermath of the socialist revolution, homelessness can be resolved at a stroke, by the immediate confiscation of the property of the bourgeoisie by the new workers' state and its allocation to the homeless and poorly housed. In the longer term, the complete eradication of the housing problem lies in the higher stage of communism. As the dichotomy between town and country ceases to exist, with the withering away of class society, the overcrowded cities created by capitalism too will wither away.

In the first edition of *The Big Issue*, the newspaper "produced by the homeless for the benefit of the homeless" (see *The Leninist* No110), Nick Hardwick, director of the Centrepoint hostel for the young homeless, comments on the fact that there is a "growing army of homeless people" on the streets of Britain. He is not, however,

interested in mobilising that army for positive action to gain housing. Instead he, and others of his philanthropic ilk, are supporting this wonderful new initiative of Anita 'Body Shop' Roddick in producing a boring patronising monthly tabloid which purports to be the answer to homelessness in Britain.

The idea behind this little venture is not to give money towards the provision of decent housing for the homeless. Instead homeless people are to be trained in 'positive attitudes' and get up and go, so that they can find themselves decent jobs and homes and live happily ever after as little entrepreneurs. It is not the system which is at fault, but the lazy feckless drunken homeless people who need to pull themselves together and get off the streets!

The dangers of this type of venture have already been pointed out in this paper, but need to be reiterated. This shows an attempt to mobilise the homeless along deeply reactionary lines; it agitates for individualistic solutions to the problems, it agitates against any militant collective action by the homeless. These ideas are extremely dangerous if left to infect those already deeply alienated from society and must be fought against concretely by all partisans of the working class.

Collective, militant action is exactly what is needed in order to gain for the homeless the basic right of a decent home. The working class have the right and the need to seize the empty property of the bourgeoisie and use it for themselves. The right to decent housing is not only a human right, it is also a revolutionary demand.

The homeless are becoming a formidable army on the streets. It is an army which should be organised as a militant auxiliary of the workers' movement, not as the foot-soldiers of reactionaries like Roddick and her ilk.

*Siobhan McLaughlin*

## More laws to bludgeon youth

The proposed new law against joyriders is a weapon in the class war - an additional weapon in the armoury of the state to commit assault and battery on working class youth

**T**HE OPPRESSION of working class youth is being redoubled by the state in a torrent of legal cudgels. The list is alarming: harassment of the homeless, eviction of squatters, workfare, new powers against rioters and also, as recently announced at the jackals conference, the invention of a new crime, "aggravated criminal taking and driving away". The new law against joyriding will increase the maximum jail term from six months to two years and introduce unlimited fines and automatic disqualification.

Certainly joyriding is an anti-social activity, it presents a real danger to

bystanders, especially children, in what are almost always working class estates. But to the bourgeoisie and their state it is *their* law and order (and their profit) which is threatened, not the wellbeing of workers.

The social basis for joyriding is firmly seated in deprived communities. Lack of work, money, hope and meaning to life. The unending boredom of a shitty alienated existence. For some it leads to suicide, for others to riots, and for others to joyriding. This is the condition of a growing section of the working class in Britain.

As we have argued in *The Leninist*, rioting is a spontaneous revolt against

authority which, with conscious leadership, could be given revolutionary direction. No such thing could be said about joyriding. Still, anti-social behaviour has its roots in the conditions of capitalist society and its solution in capitalism's overthrow, especially the anti-social behaviour of the bourgeois class.

Bourgeois law creates crime where the victim is found guilty: homosexuals, prostitutes, strikers and poll tax defaulters, to name a few. And the capitalist class itself is inextricably linked to crime: the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba was organised by the US government and the Mafia; corrupt Soviet bu-

reaucrats needed capitalism to use their ill-gotten gains. There is no bigger crime at all than the oppression of the working class for the expropriation of the wealth it produces. Who are they, the most anti-social of all, to punish the working class for its errors? They themselves are a veritable class of criminals!

They use the law to conceal the deficiencies of their society and to suppress those who would change it. Karl Marx wrote in the *New York Daily Tribune*, "Legal punishment is nothing but society's defence against violations of its own conditions of existence. But what kind of society is it that has no better defence than a

penal judge? If there are large numbers of crimes, of a nature and frequency as if they were a phenomenon of nature ... isn't it necessary, instead of glorifying the judge, who eliminates one group of criminals simply to make room for another group, to reflect seriously on the need to change the system which produces such crimes in the first place?" (February 18 1853).

Law and order, crime and punishment, is a class issue, and has a class solution. This ultimately lies with working class control of the conditions of its creation and elimination.

*Steve Riley*