

The LENINIST

Morning Star p2
Workers' Europe p3
TU Congress pp4-5
Off with their heads! p8

ERM crisis:

Our alternative

The last two weeks have left the government's economic and political strategy in tatters

AFTER an unprecedented 5% rise in interest rates - from 10% to 15% - Major and Lamont were forced into a humiliating climbdown. No longer could they hold sterling's value against the D-mark, let alone commit themselves to parity and monetary union. The announcement that sterling's membership of ERM is suspended was much, much more than a 'readjustment'. It represents a fundamental crisis of the strategic orientation of the British ruling class.

There is no parallel between this and Attlee's devaluation of the pound in 1949, nor Wilson's in 1967. Those desperate moves were broadly in line with strategic attempts to create a competitive British industrial base. At least the governments concerned could justify their devaluation in the name of 'post-war recovery' or the 'white heat of the technological revolution'. The same is not true of this devaluation, no matter what gloss Lamont tries to put on it.

In the short term, Britain is in for a bout of inflation. Of that no one is in doubt. However, there is more to it than that. This crisis, which will see wages attacked, public spending slashed and prices soar, expresses a profound malaise, indeed a fundamental crisis of direction for British imperialism.

What was the underlying aim of British imperialism's economic and political strategy over the last three decades? Essentially it has been to integrate Britain economically and politically into Europe, to reorientate Britain so that it beats with the same pulse as Europe. Whatever the objections of Powellism and Bennism to the European Community (aka the EEC), there was no real option as far as British imperialism was concerned. The 'Commonwealth' was as real as the British Empire and the 'special relationship' with the USA owed more to the imagination than reality. Certainly there was no possibility of going it alone. The British economy had been fully integrated into the world economy; like many others it no longer possessed an economy that was 'national' in any meaningful sense of the word.

That is what lay behind the Tories' privatisation policies and their drive to 'slim down' the British economy - a recognition that a successful capitalism in one country is no longer tenable. Of course, because capital remains antagonistic, remains a system where the big eats the small, internationalisation manifests itself in a perverted form. Thus we see the slow crystallisation of opposing imperialist blocs within the world capitalist economy - the EC, Nafta and a new East Asian Co-prosperity sphere - all of which heralds a sustained trade war and perhaps even a military world war (if we allow it).

For its own historic and economic reasons Britain has found it particularly difficult to adjust to this historically inevitable pattern of capitalist development. Nevertheless in spite of worldwide connections formed from empire and past glories, receipt of so much Japanese investment, and a post-1945 trans-Atlantic orientation, Europe remained the only realistic option for a relatively declining British imperialism. And what that meant from the 1980s onwards was synchronising the British economy with that of Germany. This is what the "squeezing inflation out of the system" has been all about. The British economy had to be brought in line with Germany.

In one week the whole project has come crashing down.

The scale of the defeat of the government cannot be overestimated. As late as 2pm on the Wednesday of reckoning - September 16 - Lamont was categorically stating that the "Policy remains to take whatever measures necessary to maintain sterling's parity within the Exchange Rate Mechanism" (*Financial Times*, September 17 1992). The rhetoric was backed up with 15% interest rates and a rumoured £10bn spent by the Bank of England during Black Wednesday to keep sterling within its broad band relationship with the D-mark.

So today's free floating (downwards and out of the ERM) pound, represents a definitive failure for the Tories after 13 years in the saddle. But it also represents a failure for the other two main bourgeois parties: the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party (a bourgeois workers' party). Both advocated essentially the same strategy. Steel and Ashdown, Kinnock and Smith criticised the Thatcher government for not joining ERM and tardiness in the speed with which the British economy was being integrated into Europe. It is hardly surprising therefore that none of them has been able to advance an alternative. Opposition calls for Lamont's resignation have been conspicuously muted.

Thatcher procrastinated. Now she basks in 'told you so' glory. But what is her alternative? Essentially she, and the 'anti-federalists', do not have one, or at least one that stands up to serious



Let's see the back of Lamont and capitalism itself

examination. Go it alone is pie in the sky, and the US has its own continental North American project.

British imperialism faces an unprecedented strategic crisis. It must integrate into a German dominated Europe ... but it can't!

The 'Yes' vote in France - by the wafer thin majority of 50.95% to 49.05% - does nothing to detract from the underlying drive by the European powers for integration: the far right/reformist left campaign for a 'no' vote built up much momentum which owed more to xenophobia and anti-Mitterand sentiments than to a coherent alternative. In spite of problems the drive to unite Europe (against the USA and Japan) remains. If one channel is blocked, another will be found. If it is not possible to unite European capitalism peacefully, through democratic methods, the same imperatives are still there. If Maastricht fails there is still the dire necessity for the European powers to compete and survive.

The economies of Europe are finding it very difficult to integrate into Europe under German economic hegemony.

These strains have obviously been exacerbated by Germany's ongoing problems absorbing the former socialist east and millions of migrants. What that poses though is not salvation in the past, but war! This is the irony of the claims of anti-Europeans, like the 'Little England' social chauvinists of the *Morning Star*, that the derailment of Maastricht is goods news for their project of "national sovereignty".

The future is bleak for British capitalism. Having tried to integrate into a German led Europe, boasts about the robustness of the economy - more or less the staple fare at Tory Party conferences - have been shown to be without substance. John Smith is absolutely right to say that the weakness of the British economy - particularly in relation to the powerful German system - lies at the root of the crisis. British industry 'revived' mainly because of its Euro prospects. Investments in Britain have not been due to the strength of its internal market but because it is world language country where the labour movement has been marginalised and tamed, that can be used as a Trojan horse to gain access into what might become fortress Europe.

This has now been put in jeopardy. Britain has been a huge net 'receiver' of investment (outward and inward) because of the British bourgeoisie's strategy of European integration into the wider German led economy. So the ERM crisis cuts to the core of political and economic strategy.

Where now for British imperialism? For the rest of Europe, the process of integration will continue; it is after all objectively necessary for the powers that be. Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and Austria will in spite of all difficulties continue to seek EC membership and the D-mark zone. Even Italy, the other major loser in the recent ERM wobble, says it will re-enter the circus in a matter of weeks (or so it assures the speculators).

Britain on the other hand is simply directionless. Major, pretending to be concerned for democracy in light of the narrow French vote, is playing for time for all he is worth: "We firstly await Denmark's conclusion on how she will deal with the particular problems of ratification she faces," he tells us.

"Secondly, I believe we need to deal with the particular problems in the foreign exchange markets in recent days, that have revealed shortcomings in the ERM system. And thirdly, I think we do have to take account in public debate of many of the concerns that have been raised throughout the Community over recent weeks" (*The Independent*, September 21 1992).

There can be no mistaking it. The pound could float free (ie downwards) for well over a year before there is any thought of rejoining the ERM. This is tantamount to saying that while the government's long term economic orientation is in tatters, it now has absolutely nothing to replace it with.

The strategy of the British bourgeoisie is on the rack. The ERM fiasco has proved again that Britain is the weakest of the major imperialist powers. What the bosses will do now is hard to guess, but one thing is certain. Sooner rather than later, the ruling class is going to come for us.

The organic weakness of the British capitalist economy means something will have to give. That 'something' will be the living standards and jobs of workers in this country - unless we fight back. Only by crushing down on the working class can the ruling class in Britain even think of resuscitating its dream of being the leader of Europe.

Clearly, workers in Britain and throughout Europe have no vested interest in European integration on the bosses' terms. All the governments throughout the EC 12 are planning unity in a way that is best suited to serve their interests; ie, the interests of exploiting us. Such interests do not, of course, tally with our interests.

So what should the working class agenda be? We must reject all attempts that seek 'liberation' in the past, in the myths of the "retention of democracy" and "national sovereignty". Indeed, the crisis of the bosses poses the opportunity for us - the working class of Europe - to intervene with our own agenda. A united bosses' Europe would be a reactionary hell. A united workers' Europe, will be a prelude to a united workers' world. That is something worth fighting for!

The Workers' Europe Conference in Edinburgh in December this year assumes even more importance in the aftermath of recent events. Timed to coincide with the EC heads of government summit, it will lay down an explicit challenge to these reactionary representatives of the old order. The new order waiting to be built in our continent and the world is a proletarian one!

Gareth Phillips

● For details of the Workers' Europe Conference, write to Anne Murphy, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.



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

ACCORDING TO press, radio and TV reports the *Morning Star* can only survive another two months more before closure becomes a distinct possibility; already its long suffering staff are being paid some two weeks in arrears. Of course, when the *Morning Star* was a communist paper, when it was the *Daily Worker*, its existence was constantly under threat. Not as today, though, mainly because of lack of finance, but because of politics.

Distributors boycotted it, courts fined its printers and jailed its journalists, government banned it. The Communist Party always saved it. New printers were found, prison did not cow our comrades, and around the country, day-after-day, rain-and-shine, they got out of bed at 5 o'clock in the morning to collect their paper from railway stations to break the boycott.

Such dedication does not come from thin air nor wishful thinking. It comes from revolutionary politics. Hence as the leaders of the CPGB retreated from Marxism-Leninism, as they went from revolutionism, to centrism, to right opportunism it was hardly surprising that the membership became increasingly disorientated and social democratised. Nor was it surprising that the survival of our Party's daily came to be seen ever more as a technical, not a political matter.

In point of fact politics became a problem. To smooth the way for technical 'survival plans', what was left of principled politics had to give way. Unable to rely any longer on communist initiative and determination, the opportunists diluted their already thoroughly watered down politics.

Formal ownership of the paper by the Communist Party was ended in 1945 ... it did no good, circulation fell. In 1966 the opportunists dropped the *Daily Worker*. Its name was considered too proletarian. The new *Morning Star* was meant to be a 'broad labour movement paper' (though with its political line still determined by the Communist Party). Again it did no good. Circulation fell. Two years later the *Morning Star* attacked the Soviet Union's intervention in Czechoslovakia from a liberal standpoint. Circulation fell.

Finally in 1983, faced with Euro attempts to distance the *Morning Star* from the labour bureaucracy and hand it to an even 'broader', ie petty bourgeois, politics, its editor, Tony Chater, staged a bureaucratic rebellion and declared UDI. Chater promised that by maintaining loyalty to the reformist *British Road to Socialism*, and squeezing what remained of its readers' sympathy, the paper could "print its way out of crisis". One-and-a-half million pounds was spent on a new press ... and not only did circulation continue to fall, but the Farringdon Road building, printing press and all, had to be sold at a bargain basement price to *Sunday Sport* publisher David Sullivan.

Now, at one minute to midnight, Tony Chater has announced yet another (the last?) 'survival plan'. This damp squib involved getting John Pilger, the radical journalist, to pen an article on the virtues of a "free press" and gathering a gaggle of trade union bigwigs for a "relaunch" at this month's TUC. In return for giving trade union bureaucrats power to "advise" on editorial policy, Chater hopes for money and 2,000 extra in circulation (*Morning Star* September 10 1992). On past performance of trade union backed papers, the omens do not auger well.

Nevertheless, whatever the outcome, the *Morning Star* crisis is yet another nail in the coffin of the Communist Party of Britain (which was established as a support group for the *Morning Star*'s UDI). Under its part time general secretary, Mike Hicks, the CPB has provided Tony Chater with a few tired sellers, but also an embarrassing pack of correspondents whose *raison d'etre* is to justify their political past, and thus the politics of JV Stalin. The chances are Chater will dump these unreconstructed defenders of the "indefensible episodes in communist history" (John Pilger *Morning Star* September 7 1992).

If the *Morning Star* folds it will be entirely the fault of an opportunism which Tony Chater perfectly personifies. His paper loyally tailed Kinnock's Labour Party, lauded Gorbachev, welcomed counterrevolution in former socialist countries and refused to back Communist Party candidates in the April 1992 general election. Indeed, to cap it all his lawyers even threatened our organisation with court action if we continued with our general election trial relaunch of the *Daily Worker*.

The daily communist paper our class needs will not come about through such scabs and those who call the police on communists. It will not come through trying to salvage the wreckage of opportunism, but through reorganising the CPGB around a genuine Marxist-Leninist programme. Only such a Party can guarantee our *Daily Worker*.

The Editor

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LETTERS

ANL

As an activist in the Anti Nazi League I have been amazed by the attitude of the SWP. Far from providing leadership, it has done its utmost to prevent and close down all local work. For example, the SWP tried to close the East Ham ANL branch because we were distributing leaflets that talked about racism rather than fascism. The ANL apparently should not fight racism! It is obviously ridiculous to try and separate the fight against fascism from the fight against racism, and the ANL's own literature calls for workers to, I quote, "demonstrate against racist murders".

The SWP also claimed our branch was alienating potential and present supporters. Cited were our calls for an end to all immigration controls. This demand is fundamental to any anti-racist anti-fascist campaign, as the recent events in Germany and throughout Europe, with new restrictions on asylum and immigration, indicate. If the ANL is supposed to be a "broad front", surely members can raise these basic democratic demands.

The central issue for SWPers seems to be that the ANL should not be doing local work because fascism is not the threat it was in the 70s. So the ANL must not fight racism, and does not need to fight fascism; so what does it do? Well, not a lot, and in true SWP style, its members will do their utmost to ensure that it does 'not a lot'. Apart, of course, from organising the occasional national demo, or picket, against foreigners like Le Pen or Mussolini's granddaughter, targets all safe enough away from home to avoid offending anyone.

Lee-Anne Bates
East Ham

More road

It appears quite obvious from comrade Conrad's latest contribution in the debate with comrade Merrik (*The Leninist* No122) that he does not accept the reformist theory of underconsumption as being the cause of capitalist crisis, and recognises the tendency of the rate of profit to fall as the principle factor. Rather than a disagreement on Marxist theory, I think the cause for dispute is due to bad construction in sections of *Which Road?*

Comrade Conrad writes: "This theory is okay as far as it goes." But, in other words, it is not "okay". Comrade Conrad in *The Leninist* article declares that the 'official communist' underconsumption quotation - which ignores the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall - "has been used for reformist purposes". The fact of the matter is that precisely through making the statement re underconsumption and ignoring (in fact rejecting) the rate of profit theory, the analysis of capitalism in crisis by the 'officials' is a reformist theory, leading to reformist political conclusions.

Other poor formulations in *Which Road?* relate to pp39, 41 and 45 regarding alliances and other classes. On page 39 we read: "Nor do we on principle shun alliances with other classes". Obviously this refers to the middle or petty bourgeois class as example reference on page 41 to the Russian CP and its alliance with the 'peasantry'. What should be said is that we do not shun alliances with strata or sections of other classes - the Bolshevik alliance was with the poor and lower sections of the peasantry; not with the peasant class as a whole. In an industrialised country such an alliance would be with the lower sections of the middle class. To suggest an alliance with the class as a whole infers that classes other than the working class can pursue an independent and revolutionary role in the struggle against capitalism. In fact on p45, Conrad takes this formulation to precisely this conclusion when he writes: "We would

certainly be prepared to enter into alliances with revolutionary organisations of the middle class". In other words, a class other than the workers can perform a revolutionary role in the struggle against capitalism. Comrade Conrad, as with the underconsumption theory, makes an immediate qualification; such a development is an "unlikely possibility". A Marxist analysis would declare the historical impossibility of the middle class producing revolutionary organisation in this imperialist era, although sections or strata of the middle class would gravitate toward a strong revolutionary working class struggle and organisation.

In his analysis of the reasons for the degeneration of the British CP and the role of the *British Road to Socialism* comrade Conrad declares on pages 35-36 that the "programme reflected the interests of the labour bureaucracy in Britain". In other words the degeneration of the British CP was a peculiar "British" national-phenomenon: the degeneration in the Soviet Union merely strengthened the bourgeoisification of the British CP. But what of all the other world parties - were their leaders all left centrists as the British? How was it that they all swung left and right in unison with the Soviet leadership? What a great coincidence! Or was it because the leaderships of the world CPs were, in the first place, obeying the dictates of the newly arisen and consolidated privileged Soviet bureaucratic caste, and were secondly reflecting, insofar as they coincided with the privileges of the Soviet bureaucracy, the interests of the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy of labour? Clearly it was an international phenomenon with its roots centred in the economic and political interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Insofar as the resulting politics coincided with the interests of the respective national bureaucracy and aristocracy of labour, relegating revolutionary politics to the back burner, the CPs recruited their members from this stratum of the population, including disaffected lower middle class elements, all of which reciprocated, and served to consolidate the class collaborationist politics of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Comrade Conrad declares that if a BRS type of centrist government came into existence, despite it playing a counter-revolutionary role, if it was "threatened by a reactionary coup we as revolutionaries would almost certainly fight to save it". Here is a declaration of intent that was actually implemented by the Mensheviks and SRs in Russia in 1917, and supported by, among others, Stalin (until Lenin's rectification) regarding the Kerensky Provisional government. In condemning this opportunist tactic, Lenin declared it *unprincipled* to give support to the Kerensky government, even when it was being attacked physically by the reactionary military forces of Kornilov. Ironically, Lenin's opposition to supporting such a government that comrade Conrad would support is for precisely the same reasons; to defend the revolution. I think we can agree though; history confirmed the correctness of Lenin's position against all others.

Paul Conlon
South London

Safer sex

Gareth Phillips' "Safe Sex" letter dishonestly waffles away from the hopeless position put forward in his Aids article in *The Leninist* No122.

Whereas in his original article he confidently blamed the spread of Aids on the "non out section of the homosexual community" (conceivably a contradiction in terms), now he fudges and seeks to identify further sub classifications such as "open" gay or "semi open" gay. But in this self-proving hypothesis he defines these groups by whether or not they use safer sex, before he attributes their behaviour to the influence of the "scene".

I meet a lot of straight working class men and women who routinely carry condoms but would nevertheless give you a dig if you implied that they had adopted a gay lifestyle. They might give you a blank look if you suggested they were complying with the state's "moral agenda".

In both his article and his letter he suggests that casual sex practiced by closet gay men tends to be unsafe sex. Such research as there is shows the opposite to be the case. Gareth should stop promoting old prejudices and start reading some of the latest information available from Project Sigma, Department of Science, South Bank Polytechnic, 103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA.

Most toilet sex, in Britain anyway, goes no further than "I'll show you mine if you'll show me yours". Mutual masturbation and oral sex are popular and fairly safe. Anal sex is comparatively difficult to organise in a public toilet because it involves a greater risk of detection. It's fun but it's not common. Long before the discovery of Aids closet gays were the very people to favour condom use if only because a) they don't want to go home with shit under their foreskins and b) they don't want the embarrassment of giving VD to the wife.

Gareth agrees that "it would be a good idea for the working class to use condoms" but he doesn't want us to be convinced "that Aids can be controlled by individuals simply changing their sexual habits," and he doesn't want the government to promote this message to the heterosexual population even though, hidden within it, are the very non out gays whom Gareth thinks are spreading all the Aids. This is particularly rough on those heterosexuals catching Aids in Britain by unprotected vaginal sex.

Darkest of all is his letter's closing paragraph in which a false dichotomy makes us choose either to use safer sex or else demand that capitalism finances a cure. By inference, Gareth should give up his home and his job for fear of giving capitalism the "responsible individual behaviour" excuse for homelessness and unemployment. When capitalism does find a cure for Aids, it will be yet another means to exert control on the masses. Aids is a class issue and, under capitalism, the ruling class controls the drugs.

In his article he wanted an act of parliament so that there would be less homophobia so that the closet gays would dare to listen to Aids information. Now "sporadic safe sex campaigns are worthless" but he wants us to hang out in "gay venues" where we can thumb through "various leaflets and magazines" and be "constantly reminded of the serious threat Aids poses to us as gay men"; out gay or not, that's not my idea of a fun night out with the boys. Yet he asks us to abandon safer sex in order, somehow, to put pressure on capitalism to find a cure, presumably so that the survivors can enjoy a reprise of the 1970s golden age of promiscuity.

This may indeed be a sad loss but working class lesbians and gay men have far more pressing motives for the overthrow of capitalism. Moreover there is every likelihood that even in global post-revolutionary abundance, new diseases will continue to emerge and while working class science seeks a cure, individuals will to a greater or lesser extent still need to weigh up the odds before gambling their immune system on a session of unprotected penetrative sex.
Mike Fielding
London

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

To reply to letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*,
WRITE to The Editor,
BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.
PHONE us on 071-431 3135 or
FAX us on 081-459 5905.

All for the revolution

Last week Mark Fischer interviewed David Kitson regarding the situation in South Africa today, and the tasks for communists

WHAT IS the situation in South Africa at the moment? How have things changed?

Things changed rapidly in South Africa when de Klerk released the present leaders of the liberation movement. Various aspects of petty apartheid, like the pass laws, have gone. On the surface there have been changes, there is no doubt. The legalisation of mass organisations like the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, the freeing of their leaders - these are advances. But de Klerk has gained too. A lot of sanctions were ended, including sport sanctions, as you will have seen from the recent Olympics. If liberation is defined as the ability of the individual black man to join management, that is what is happening. If you define liberation as the establishment of socialism, then that clearly is not happening.

The ANC is not the only liberation organisation in the field. Their policy of negotiation is not to everyone's liking, especially at the grass roots. At the time of the conference of the ANC, they claimed 700,000 members and had assets worth \$680 million around the world.

The Pan African Congress - which formally claims socialism as its aim - is benefiting from the ANC's difficulties over the negotiations. It has maintained its paramilitary structure, and is still waging an armed struggle. As a result of the disillusionment with the protracted process of negotiations followed by periods of suspension and uncertainty, its membership, according to the *Weekly Mail* (a pro ANC paper), has gone up to half a million.

Inkatha represents another problem. It stands for equal opportunity for people of different ethnic background, at least formally. But it states unambiguously that it supports capitalism. Now it claims more than a million members. That figure is probably exaggerated. If you are a Zulu worker and you want to work in South Africa, you have to get a permit and it is an advantage then to actually be a member of Inkatha.

Having said that, many of Inkatha's members seem to be devoted to the extent that they will go out in armed bands and die for Buthelezi. They certainly have a strong mobilising power among the Zulus.

Buthelezi is clearly a factor that will have to be considered if you are setting up a post Nationalist regime which still has the same economic basis, but has equal opportunity for all colours.

Other organisations like Azapo have opposed the negotiations and carried on with their own low level military struggle.

Our Party supports the right of workers to bear arms and recognises the necessity of the armed struggle. Has this happened spontaneously in South Africa, and what is happening now?

When it comes to an armed struggle by the people, there is the problem that there are not many arms about. The people are arming themselves. You can always get AK47s in from Mozambique if you can pay enough, of course.

The matter at the end of the day can only be settled by force of arms. There

are a great many Kautskyites in the upper echelons of the ANC. The majority of the seats on the ANC leadership are filled by members of the South African Communist Party - Chris Hani, the president of the SACP got the highest vote for a member of the ANC Executive.

There seem to be splits in the Communist Party of South Africa. What forms are these taking?

There is conflict in the Communist Party, but there is no clearly defined body of oppositional opinion. The leadership seems to go its own way and disregard the attitude of the rank and file. Apart from a few people, I think they are the kiss of death. Let us hope there is a struggle within the SACP which results in it accepting the people's struggle and the aim of socialism to which its leadership gives lip service, but which apparently is not 'on the agenda'.

The people are calling for arms. There are lots of firebrands at the lower levels of the SACP and ANC. But in general, the leadership of the ANC/SACP are people who spent many years learning manoeuvre diplomatically. These people do not have strong principles. Winnie Mandela had a constituency that was more militant and younger than the leadership. Nelson Mandela himself has been completely surrounded. The fact that they have split up is very significant from this point of view.

There is clearly a need for political leadership. The recent general strike was positive in that the masses at last were able to make their voices heard. No doubt it caused de Klerk some anxiety, but it is not going to affect things fundamentally in the immediate future. It left nothing permanent behind it.

Who in South Africa holds the initiative now?

The initiative stays with the government. There is a revolutionary situation that has been going on for some time. Clearly there are some echelons of the

state that are acting in a different way to the top leadership. Some of them - particularly in the army and police - want to shoot it out. Given events of recent months, who would deny it!

Clearly there are people in the state structure who don't like the way things are going. But de Klerk is in a strong position. Things have gone his way so far.

The key question is this. In a revolutionary situation, you need a revolutionary party guided by scientific Marxism. That key ingredient the people of South Africa do not yet have.

What are your personal feelings regarding the history of struggle in South Africa?

On a personal note, I look back over the struggle and see many mistakes. But in no sense were they wasted years. When we were about to return to South Africa, the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group held a farewell meeting and presented us with a set of the collected works of Lenin. I now have some time to read them!

I remain a confirmed supporter of Lenin. In some of his writings, he points out there would be great difficulties in building socialism in the USSR given its backwardness. I separate in my mind the Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent development of socialism. The revolution was clearly a success that any country which has not yet had a revolution can draw lessons from. As for the subsequent history of the Soviet Union, Lenin said that it is relatively easy to make a revolution in a backward country, but hard to build socialism. The reverse holds for advanced countries.

Lenin knew that there would be many mistakes, many setbacks and that every now and then the thing would be brought to nought. Our defeats are temporary. This is a hiccup - maybe the biggest 'hiccup' in world history, but nevertheless ...!

I don't suppose I'll live to see the renaissance of world communism, but I'm absolutely sure it will come.

A life in struggle

David Kitson is a hero of the struggle against the obscene capitalist regime in South Africa. He is a principled communist and - together with his wife Norma, an outstanding activist in her own right - has been a friend of the Leninists of the Communist Party of Great Britain for many years.

David was a member of the CPGB during the 1950s during a temporary 'exile' here. He was also a trade union activist in Tass, the forerunner of today's MSF. In 1959 he and Norma returned to South Africa and to underground work in both the South African Communist Party and the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

After the arrest of Nelson Mandela, David was put onto the MK high command. On June 22 1964 the South Africa police raided the Kitsons and detained David under the 90 day law. Norma demonstrated with their two small children against David's detention. She was arrested and held in solitary confinement for four weeks.

After a political trial, David was eventually sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. He was released in 1984, came to London and was given a hero's welcome. However, he was quickly embroiled in controversy with the leaderships of the London ANC/SACP and, consequently, with that of Tass/MSF. This arose from David's refusal to condemn the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, which Norma had been instrumental in founding. Their disagreements with the movement led to the Kitsons being suspended from the ANC and SACP and victimised through the unprincipled withdrawal of David's funding by Ken Gill and the bureaucrats in Tass/MSF.

Dave and Norma are now 'retired' to Harare in Zimbabwe, from where they keep a close eye on developments in South Africa.



Guards at Manchester Piccadilly railway station are involved in a fight against British Rail management, in defence of basic trade union rights. Four shop stewards of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union have been sacked for mobilising to resist management's attempts to break local and national agreements. The four were dismissed on the station platform, in what is a blatant attempt to intimidate the entire workforce. This was met with an immediate walkout and a 24 hour strike. Action will increase through a series of 24 hour strikes, leading to balloting for national action if the four are not reinstated. After initially rejecting any appeal, management has been forced to hold an appeal hearing. But, as the stewards' defence campaign states, "absolutely no confidence can be placed in the appeals procedure. The fight must go on". They are keen to emphasise that this is no isolated act, but part of BR's attempt to destroy the fighting capacity of the rail unions. The guards are demanding full reinstatement, and calling for support from other workers. This is the thin end of the wedge in a national attack by BR. It must be met by national defence of the four stewards, or many others will follow them. Piccadilly guards are calling for support from other union branches, and are willing to provide speakers for branch meetings. Send donations, messages of support and requests for speakers to: RJ MacDonald, secretary, RMT Manchester No1, 7 Franton Road, Clayton, Manchester, M11 4HE, or telephone 061-223 1064. DR

Anti-fascists gathered at Waterloo Station on Saturday September 12 to stop the proposed gig by the fascist band Skrewdriver. Their re-direction point was Waterloo station, not the easiest of places to stop

fascists meeting, but the event was a relative success. By the nature of the action and the location there was much confusion and running from one end of Waterloo to the other. Despite the police presence and tactics, members of AFA, ANL and other anti-fascists were able to damage a number of boneheads. Waterloo, Charing Cross and Embankment stations were closed and traffic was stopped on Waterloo bridge. Due to the anti-fascist presence the whole area was sealed off. However, there was a divide on the day between fighters and non-fighters, and it was difficult to tell who was who. Consequently there was no shared confidence and commitment to fighting the fascists. This led to some unnecessary and frankly embarrassing retreats

as some anti-fascists fled from fascists un-guarded by the police and forced others to flee with them, or stay and face serious batterings. The second weakness on the left was the lack of working class solidarity in approach. It was left to the police to close the transport system down, rather than the transport unions, who were not approached about the event. Despite these failings, anti-fascists should gain confidence from this event and up the struggle against these boneheads in a more confident committed and communist way. There is a defendants' campaign for those anti-fascists arrested. Contact Waterloo Defendants' Campaign, BM 1734, WC1N 3XX. LB

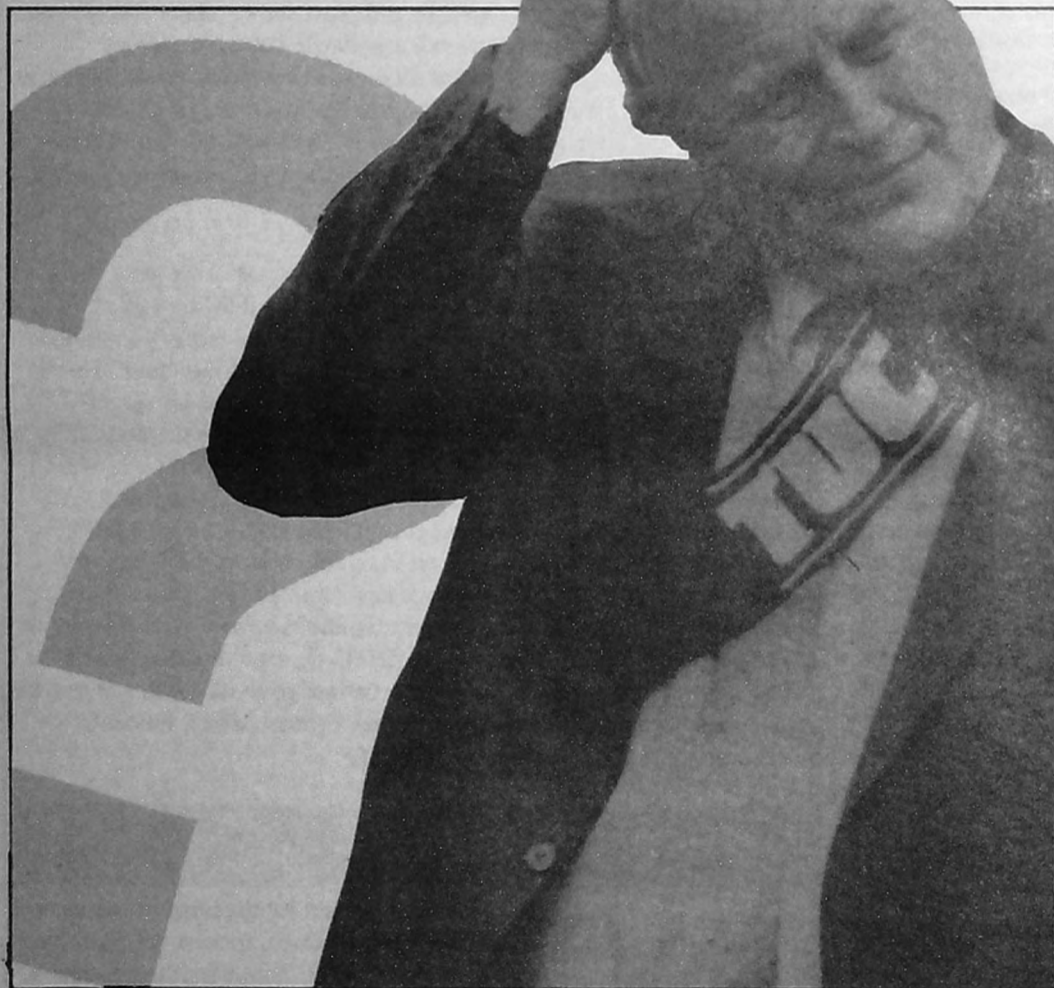
The transnational junk food giant McDonalds took the Transnationals Information Centre to court for publication of a pamphlet a number of years ago exposing the dire working conditions in its outlets. McDonalds allege that the pamphlet is libellous. This is laughable coming from a capitalist enterprise well known for its disgusting treatment of workers and super-exploitative methods. The fight is continuing for two campaigners from TIC, which was forced to close in the face of massive libel action from the company. A support demonstration is planned at McDonalds' UK HQ, High Rd, East Finchley, London N2 (by East Finchley tube) at 4.30 pm on Friday October 16 to protest against new court action against these two and the continuing slave-labour conditions at McDonalds. Join the UWC in supporting this action. The UWC says that McDonalds needs to be hit where it really hurts. A mass campaign to unionise workers in this industry is long overdue. For details, contact Mike Marshall, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. MF

State of the art



The recession has not hit the busy office where we prepare *The Leninist*, indeed the workload continues to increase. To prevent any potential bottlenecks from delaying production of the paper we have taken delivery of a brand new computer. For the technically minded, we now use an 80486 based machine with 16 megabytes of RAM. Although PC prices have been tumbling and we drove a very hard bargain, we are still left with a 4-figure dent in our finances. So this month it is vital that the paper's fighting fund achieves the £600 target. When the chips are down (sorry), we know we can rely on our readers to help. Please send cheques, payable to November Publications. **Vernon Douglas,** Fund organiser

After TUC Where now for trade unions?



The significance of this year's TUC has been its insignificance. Even the *Financial Times* noted that "employees are getting a raw deal from their trade unions". The need for a fighting strategy for union militants has never been so great

THE BIG THING about the TUC this year was the fact that it was not a big thing. It was a non-event. This illustrates how the power of the TUC has been circumscribed. More than that, it is a gauge of how the power of organised labour has been systematically cut down. Opposition to the general rightward drift has been reduced to a rump, centred around Arthur Scargill and the miners. Theirs is the only section of the official trade union apparatus that has any guts, any honour. They were perfectly correct to lead a walkout from the Congress floor when the CBI director general rose to speak. Inviting the CBI to address Congress is in effect an act of surrender: it goes beyond even the Mondism of the 1930s which was a response to an initiative of the bosses. Today, the TUC is the main advocate of the ideas of class collaborationism and betrayal.

The TUC has accepted the parameters of bourgeois ideology totally and has no vision that goes beyond it. This will exacerbate the sectional divisions latent in the organisation, even posing its destruction. When workers identify themselves as partisans not of their class, not even of their trade union, but of the company that employs them, this is a recipe for disaster. This is the corrosive ideology that the TUC is now pushing.

The class struggle is dynamic, however, albeit in ebb at the moment. The delegates who mocked Scargill and applauded the CBI are the same types (often the same people) who a few years ago were talking of solidarity with the miners' fight (but only 'talking', as it turned out). When the class struggle rises again, as inevitably it must, the political physiognomy of the trade union movement will change dramatically. If the TUC does not provide the leadership the class needs in the future, workers will find other leaders, other forms of expression which will be adequate. From this point of view, it is not relevant whether Willis stays or goes. In fact, he is a perfect rep of the type of bumbling, ineffectual losers who currently lead the workers' movement. The debates about the succession to Norman and the majority of the debates at the Congress itself had nothing to do with building winning strategies for workers in struggle in the real world. The main thrust was about saving fulltime trade unionists their full time positions.

This was the substance of the debate about the EETPU and their reaffiliation to the TUC. Members mean money, money means jobs. The delegates were not concerned about *scabbing*, they were concerned about *poaching*.

Decline of the old cart horse

This situation has not appeared out of the blue. It is just the latest staging post of a long organisational and political decline in power of our class. We can see this just by glancing at a few statistics over the period of the Tory administration. In 1979 unemployment was up to 1.4 million and strikers withheld 29 million work days. Shortly after this, the opportunist Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain chose to wrap up the Party's industrial organisation, and organised labour escalated its retreat from industrial confrontation. When the miners faced their Great Strike in 1984, unemployment was at 3.4 million and strikers withheld 27 million work days. But despite the miners' heroic lead and their desperate need for solidarity, only 5 million days were lost through strikes outside the mining industry.

Communist workplace organisation had been weakened to the point of non-existence, and leading labour bureaucrats managed to keep the lid on grass roots anger. In 1991, with unemployment at 2.7 million, strikers withheld less than 1 million work days - the lowest since the beginning of the century. In 1992 unemployment has risen again to above 3 million, but the government boasts strike levels lower than ever recorded. Every bourgeois commentator will acknowledge that workers are not striking because of lack of confidence, not because they are happy with their lot.

What is absent is a 'general staff' for our class; an organisation pulling together and directing militant action throughout the class. In 1973 it was the ability to generalise the dockers' struggle which freed the Pentonville Five and defeated Heath's Industrial Relations Act. It was the Communist Party which made that possible; though far from revolutionary by the 1970s, it could still equip militants with an organisation able to mobilise large numbers of organised workers in solidarity action. The miners lost in 1985 because their struggle was not generalised. An effective Party industrial organisation, even with the reformist political standpoint of the 1970s, could have made a significant difference to the outcome of the miners' strike.

Problems

One of the problems that the TUC has had to confront this year has been the fear of having many of its functions supplanted by the new 'super unions'.

This development has had as its impulse the growing centralisation of capitalist production. By way of example, the existence of the EETPU and AEU as separate bodies is obviously counterproductive to effective bargaining from the bureaucrats' point of view, let alone to effective struggle by rank and file militants. The same can be said of the impending merger of Nupe, Cohse and Nalگو.

Although mergers over the past 10 years have been driven more by spontaneous economic forces than by a conscious desire to plan for industrial control, they have happened all the same. And although for the moment they often look like diverse trades, remote locations, blue and white collar workers, *divided* by a common bureaucracy, the division is now only one of the bureaucracy, less than the previous division between entirely different unions, which often organise in the same trades and same workplaces. The organisational unity presented by these mergers is an asset. To make use of this asset, workers need a strategy to seize the initiative within these new 'super unions'.

The acceleration of mergers has set the scene for the bureaucratic resolution of the TUC schism with 'renegades' such as the EETPU, which for a while threatened to set up an alternative centre with the Union of Democratic Miners.

The advantage which the British trade union movement has over its French and Italian counterparts is that it has only one centre of organisation; the Trade Union Congress. It is a principle which should be fought for and defended.

In the case of the miners' Great Strike and the formation of the UDM, we argued from its inception that this division in the mining industry was harmful, and efforts should be made to bring them back within the main union. We pointed out that militant miners in Nottingham should use the tactic of entering the UDM to bring this about. And in the case of the electricians we argued four years ago, and still maintain, that the TUC loyalists should not have formed the breakaway EPIU, but should have stayed within the EETPU as a caucus to win round the rank and file in a leadership struggle.

A similar point could be made with the militant oil union 'Oilc', manoeuvred by the union bureaucrats into a situation where it more or less had to constitute itself independently. The idea was to isolate these 'troublemakers'. But to be effective, such militants need to be able to relate back to the union structures that forced them into a split situation, to address their own rank and file. This is easily said, and much more difficult to do. But it must be done if that industry is to be united for struggle - otherwise it will fall to defeat.

The AEEU stitch up at this year's congress has left many unhappy faces, not least the printworkers and the Transport and General against which EETPU members scabbed. It is difficult to deny the merged AEEU affiliation to the TUC because of its EETPU wing, without effectively expelling its AEU wing. And the aggrieved unions' attempt to place insurmountable obstacles to the electricians affiliation is not an answer.

The AEEU merger was a bureaucratic manoeuvre reprehensible for its deviousness. But all the same, it is desirable that we should have the electricians back within the TUC. The EETPU exclusion four years ago was itself forced on the union members by the bureaucratic gameplan of its leadership. And even now EETPU general secretary Paul Gallagher says he does not know if he wants to go into the TUC.

The rank and file of the EETPU should have fought its leadership to force reaffiliation to the TUC - in the interests of the rank and file and under its control. EPIU members could have led this revolt had they stayed in. The only outcome which those at Blackpool were capable of contemplating was a bureaucratic stitch up to either let them in or keep them out. At the end of the day, it is the fact that members means money that motivates the bureaucrats.

Like with the initial merger, any resolution of the split will be at the cost of working class control. But there is nothing inevitable about this. The struggle for the unity of the AEEU can be at the same time a rank and file campaign for the control of the product of this fusion.

The AEEU and the Nupe-Cohse-Nalگو mergers are not isolated events. They indicate the trend. Mergers such as MSF preceded it, and others will follow.

If the TUC this year attempted to do anything, it was to lay the basis for this within the context of a unitary centre. To do so, Bridlington was sacrificed. 'Principle' was never a popular word among trade union leaders. Now it is still less so. Workers must develop cross union rank and file coordination as a response if they are not to be still further removed from any effective control within their own unions.

Labour

The 1992 TUC takes place in the shadow of another election defeat for Labour. Desperate for a scapegoat, Labour's leadership has been addressing the 'problem' of its relationship with its union affiliates. An

and to the block vote is mooted in this 'still partners, but different relationship. After hiding away so as not to queer Labour's election pitch, John Smith wants them even further away ... but keep the money coming in.

While many union leaders are no doubt considering what they will now get for their Labour Party affiliation, their members may be wondering what they ever got. Many class conscious trade unionists must wonder what their union pays its political levy to Labour for.

Through the 1984 Trade Union Act the Tories forced ballots on trade unions' political funds after which the union bureaucracies waged block-busting propaganda campaigns and won resounding massive 'yes' votes. Why not put the same energy into miners' solidarity? Nothing like it was seen about the poll tax: why? Because the importance of the class struggle, even the standard of living of the working class, pales into insignificance when the bank balance of the Labour Party is at stake.

The Labour Party was a product of the TUC bureaucracy, but that does not mean that the unions are held ransom by history. The agenda set by the Tories was an attack on the Labour Party; the issue sold to workers was the right to run political campaigns. It is the latter we must defend, and make it a reality by divorcing it from the association with Labour.

Labour uses workers' dues to fund its attacks on the workers who support it. It has always done this. From Ramsay MacDonald to John Smith, the record of the Labour Party has been discussed so many times in these pages that there is little need to repeat it on this occasion. Labour has shown itself time and again to be capitalist through and through. It attacks workers, makes anti-trade union laws, breaks strikes, puts workers on the dole, persecutes, exploits and oppresses them. Why fund these vicious parasites any longer?

The Labour Party is now in the process of transforming itself into a modern, European style social democratic party. One member one vote is being portrayed by the lefty Skinner types as being an attack on the links with the trade unions. But this only ever really amounted to 'one bureaucrat half a million votes'. The sooner trade unionists realise that they get nothing for their cash but heartache, the better.

The political funds as a resource should be made available for executing the class struggle. The rank and file membership should wage a struggle to seize control of these funds, out of the hands of the bureaucrats, out of the hands of the sequestrators.

What is important is that the trade unions can conduct political struggle free from the fetters of the Labour Party. While they fund Labour, they are bound to it.

So the relation to the Labour Party that is up for debate at the moment is like virtually the whole TUC agenda - a non debate. The left - Militant, Campaign Group of MPs and the SWP who are not even in the Labour Party - sees it as its duty to defend this link. In reality this link is an umbilical cord between one set of bureaucrats and another. The trade union block vote in the Labour Party has never meant that it has reflected the interests of rank and file trade unionists. Rather than defend it now, the indecision of the trade union and Labour grandees gives us an opportunity to expose the nature of it, and campaign for a working class political perspective for the unions, not one which chains it to the thoroughly bourgeois party, Labour.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy cannot be confined to a neat section, to be considered in isolation from other problems within the unions. The problem of the AEEU is one of bureaucracy. Lack of members within the trade unions is a direct consequence of the bureaucratisation of the structures. The fact that we are told that trade unionists' interests just happen to coincide with those of a party clearly embarrassed by any association with working class struggle is a result in the real bureaucratic coincidence of those at the head of both organisations.

It is not simply that an inactive and unresponsive layer forms above the rank and file, but that this layer, mainly of full timers, is active in pursuit of its own interests, and responds rather too readily to the overtures of the class enemy. Of course, this year it has done it with a vengeance, with the CBI's director general, Howard Davies, telling delegates "Norman and I are social partners" - social partners in getting their respective members and employees not "paying ourselves more than we earn" (tell that to Ian Vallyence). No wonder there was a walk-out. There must have - or should have - been a rush for the toilets by suddenly nauseous delegates. With the exception of a small minority around Scargill, the fact that there was not tells us a lot about the current politics of the trade union leadership.

This prostration before the enemy class is the current - possibly most honest - face of the trade union bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is not distinct from the union. It is, however, distinct from the membership since it does not share their conditions. Working in its own conditions, which are rarely improved

by industrial strife, the trade union bureaucracy plays a balancing act between keeping its job with the workers and keeping things smooth with the boss.

Even 'left' union leaders will suddenly lose any enthusiasm for industrial action when union funds and property are threatened with sequestration. Unlike their members, these leaders do not have their livelihoods threatened by a pay cut for the members they represent, or the threat of unemployment hanging over the industry they organise. Not directly, at least.

So long as the dues come rolling in, so does their salary and attendant perks. And the law is now constructed to ensure that any effective action is illegal. In such conditions, the objective interests of the working class, those trade unionists in struggle, runs counter to the leadership of its own basic organisations, the trade unions.

This social existence of the labour bureaucracy led the Bolshevik Gregor Zinoviev to describe this stratum as not really part of the working class at all, but a parasitic outgrowth on it. Any dispute that violates the law threatens this. That is not to say that every trade union leader is a scab. That is clearly not true. But we must understand the social position of the bureaucracy - even honest socialists within it - and the stresses it imposes on it.

The way that workers often experience bureaucracy is in it not doing what is required of it, and telling workers to do what it requires instead. But the question posed for the rank and file is rather more than simply the tail wagging the dog. And the answer is more than just replacing unresponsive bureaucrats with 'our people'. This strategy, pursued by left, rank and file based trade union bodies such as the various Broad Lefts, Socialist Teachers Alliance within the NUT, etc, merely replaces right bureaucrats with 'left' bureaucrats ... who proceed to do more or less the same as their forebears.

Rank and file organisation is necessary: but a very different form of rank and file organisation than we have seen in the shape of Broad Left type organisations over the last few years. We will outline exactly what we mean by this in the 'communist strategy' section below.

Rank and file organisation is the very lifeblood of working class democracy. It is often thrown up in the heat of the battle when conditions are critical; but to be only embarking upon such strategies when one should be delivering decisive blows, probably means that one has missed the boat. The need is therefore posed for establishing rank and file organisation. Naturally this will be opposed by the bureaucrats, as a challenge to their authority and salaries. And so it is, since it must in the end be able to dispose of the bureaucrats, or be itself disposed of, in the resolution of a power struggle.

During a period when rank and file organisation was relatively common, several attempts were made to link shop stewards combines across sites and industries. This led to a special TUC enquiry in 1960 and calls by rightwing leaders at that year's Congress that "except for those who want to split the trade union movement there should be no talk of a separate movement of shop stewards". The bureaucrats clearly saw a threat to their own domination of the unions.

Such a stewards movement that they feared had, indeed, historical precedents. Shop stewards organisation provided the basis for militant organisation both before and during World War I. The young CPGB drew a whole swathe of militants from the stewards committees into its ranks, and commanded support on these committees and trades councils far greater than its numerical strength through the 1920s.

In the 1960s, the policy making interest that the bureaucrats wanted to keep to themselves was revealed to be wage control and strike prevention. The emergence of the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions in 1967, led by the Communist Party, was absolutely instrumental in defeating the Labour Party's *In Place of Strife* in 1969.

This was only the start of the assault on the trade unions which marked the ending of the capitalist boom period from 1945, and the arrival of the current period of precrisis stagnation. Rates of profit were falling, expansion was slowing down, workers' living standards had to be cut.

Edward Heath was elected to carry on Harold Wilson's work with his Industrial Relations Act. The Communist Party through the LCDTU led the fightback. In December 1970 half a million workers were called out, in March 1971 a massive 3 million workers responded to the LCDTU and CP's call for a one day general strike.

In July the TUC was forced by rank and file pressure to threaten a one day general strike to free the Pentonville Five dockers, imprisoned for defying the Act. The act was made unworkable by the rank and file against the prevarication of the trade union bureaucracy.

Schools of revolution

Capitalism produced the working class, and it produced trade unions - collective organisations for defence of working class conditions and living

standards.

Currently, this defence reflects workers' present position as sellers of labour power to the capitalist class. The role of trade unions here is as a cartel in the labour market.

There is therefore an inherent limit to the usefulness of trade unions as a vehicle for the pursuit of workers' wider, revolutionary interests. They are a basic form of working class organisation within capitalism, a necessary way for the working class to realise itself as a class, as Marx noted.

But, because of its position within capitalism, the trade union - and the working class, for that matter - is severely limited in the scope of its spontaneous development.

Lenin highlighted this in *What is to be done?*, written in 1902:

"The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, ie, the conviction that it is necessary to combine in union, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc" (Lenin CW Vol 5, p375).

As such, trade union consciousness is bourgeois consciousness, insofar as it is circumscribed by bourgeois society:

"The spontaneous working class movement is by itself able to create (and inevitably does create) only trade unionism, and working class trade unionist politics is precisely working class bourgeois politics" (Ibid, p437).

As we saw, in Britain this bourgeois limitation finds its clearest social expression in the bureaucratic caste that heads the unions, and its political expression in the "bourgeois workers' party", the Labour Party.

Without the intervention of communists, trade unions can be no more than "an instrument of bourgeois democracy", no matter how militant. This situation, argued Lenin, set the tasks of communists with regard to them:

"the tasks of Social Democracy [communism], is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary social democracy" (Ibid, pp384-5)

The intersection of the spontaneous struggle of the working class with communist politics develops a consciously revolutionary mass within the unions.

This understanding must be transformed into effective revolutionary strategy, which must inform how we tackle the crisis besetting the trade union movement today.

Communist strategy

The working class in Britain today is less equipped with class struggle organisation than at any time this century. The collective memory of the working class is its ability to organise, and its ability to codify and refine the lessons learnt from that through the development of such organisation. The Communist Party was always the apex of this organisation, its general staff, tribune and theoretical guide in one. The dynamism and imagination of our class always provided the basis for this; the raw material given a revolutionary orientation by its most class conscious members.

The most positive examples of communist trade union work can be seen in the 1920s, in the National Minority Movement, as a counterforce to the reactionary trade union bureaucracy. It proved itself as a network of factory committees underpinned by party cells. Internationally, this was linked with the Red International of Labour Unions, formed in 1921 as a central trade union leadership under the auspices of the Comintern.

The National Minority Movement was no Broad Left type body, existing only to put up left slates against the right in union elections, manoeuvring for position within the union machine. It emerged out of the conditions of class struggle, to give conscious expression to that struggle, initially within the miners' federation in the early 1920s. Minority Movement organisation spread rapidly into other industries, and was soon based solidly on the most militant sections of the British working class, irrespective of industry, claiming a million members.

This was not an alternative union centre, but a militant minority aiming to win the majority within the existing unions:

"The Minority Movement in the trade unions aims at building up and strengthening and reorganising the existing trade union organisations of the workers, and inducing those organisations to seriously fight for the interests of the workers, and to carry on the class struggle. It is not a separatist movement ... The chief object of the Minority Movement is to build up, strengthen, bring together and unify the existing organisations" (What the Minority Movement stands for, pp5-6, 1924, reprinted 1985).

The NMM consciously pitted itself against the trade union bureaucracy, which was "more often a check on the efforts of the workers in their for-

ward movements than a stimulating, organising and fighting leadership" (p6). Nothing changed there, then. The NMM was the response of "the active workers to band together and to take the initiative in formulating programmes and policies" (Ibid).

But it was the kind of programmes and policies that was so important. The NMM took a stance that was not only militant, but revolutionary. Its aims included:

"To organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from their oppressors and exploiters, and the establishment of the socialist commonwealth. To carry on a wide agitation and propaganda for the principles of the revolutionary class struggle, and to work within the existing organisations of the workers for the purpose of fighting for the adoption of the programme of the National Minority Movement, and against the present tendency towards a false social peace and class collaboration and the delusion of a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. To unite the workers in their everyday struggles against capitalism and to at all times advance the watchword of the united front of the workers against the exploiters" (Ibid p8).

One million workers signed up for this! Put in today's language, applied to the conditions we face now, the shoots of such an organisation could grow rapidly wherever there is developing struggle. There is nothing unique in the 1920s. This is proven by who reprinted the pamphlet in 1985; militant miners and their supporters, who could see the relevance of such organisation to the struggle that they had been through, its absence a major cause of their defeat. There was even an attempt at establishing such structures, in the shape of the National Rank and File Miners' Movement. But in conditions of isolation, defeat and the strengthening hold of the bureaucracy - and the weakness of communist organisation - the NRFMM withered on the vine.

But it need not next time. And, as sure as there is capitalism, there will be class struggle. There will be other 'next times', other opportunities, of equal and greater importance to the 1984-5 Great Strike. But to avoid another defeat - a phrase all too common within the workers' movement - we must learn the lessons now. The miners' strike of 1985 provided many, and far from all negative.

During the strike the class struggle threw up support groups which we argued should have been converted into delegate bodies and united nationwide through committees of elected recallable delegates. Alternative democratic power structures were needed to deliver militant solidarity action. While the state showed at Orgreave that it had learned the lessons of the Six Counties well, British workers forgot the lessons of 1926 when workers defence corps faced bourgeois class violence with working class violence to defend pickets and demonstrations. We argued then that workers' defence corps were an absolute necessity if the strike was to win.

The struggles of the 1980s, not least the miners' strike, have laid the basis for the situation we now face. Essential features of this landscape include the following points:

- The British working class suffered a major defeat in the miners' Great Strike. It has still not recovered.
- The unemployed exist as an unorganised mass, waiting to be recruited to break workers' action.
- Millions of workers remain unorganised, including many women and immigrants in low paid dangerous jobs.
- Few rank and file counterweights to the bureaucracy exist.
- Legal restraints mean that almost any widespread action will escalate rapidly in the weight of forces deployed.

The development of this situation throughout the 1980s has sounded the death knell for the 'beer and sandwiches at Number 10' style trade unionism of the postwar period.

The TUC's overtures to the CBI are less an appeal for a meeting on the middle ground, more a waving of the white flag. The old forms of left organisation within the unions, of pressurising the bureaucracy from the left and of jockeying for position within the union hierarchy, are impotent in these conditions. Not that they were ever that productive anyway.

What is needed is class war organisation within the unions, across sectional boundaries. Rather than capturing union positions, it needs to mobilise the class in action for its own demands. Winning positions can only be seen in this context.

Any effective fighting strategy for the unions can only be part of a fighting strategy for the class as a whole.

There is only one such strategy, that of communism. Today, effective trade union struggle must have at its core a revolutionary orientation. The National Minority Movement of the 1920s had the CPGB as its backbone.

To win in the workplace and in the union branch today means to fight for the rebirth, in today's conditions and on a higher level, of that relationship; to fight for the reorganising of the Communist Party, and to build the battalions for the coming class war around it.

Mike Smith



OUR HISTORY

Battle for ILP

Formation of CPGB and early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos

■ We may be more influential than you think. There is a little advert that has started appearing in some of the 'quality' bourgeois dailies. It reads "This newspaper abides by the PCC's decisions". The pernicious spread of the red menace? Sadly, no. It's the Press Complaints Commission. One day, though. One day...

■ The Morning Star isn't a paper that often raises a grin. But Dave Osler, a supporter of Socialist and the Trotskyite Socialist Outlook, had a letter on September 12, shortly after the Star's last ditch 'relaunch'. Osler responds to the non-event of the year by waxing lyrical on "the Star's indispensable role as the flagship of Britain's entire radical press". Not of this 'radical press', it isn't. The Yawning Star won't even take our adverts! The odd thing is, why now? Osler probably won't take our advice, but it is not generally considered a good idea to hop on a bandwagon that is about to trundle over a precipice. Trotskyism always has led a parasitic existence, but surely it is traditional for rats to leave the sinking ship.

■ This year's TUC arms the workers! Well, not quite. At the invitation of Big Norm, the Territorial Army had a firing range set up in the conference centre in Blackpool. Not only was the TUC addressed by a representative of the bourgeoisie in the shape of the CBI, he brought his 'armed wing'. Just part of the TUC's commitment to 'defend British industry', we suppose. The only wonder is, given rumours of Willis' enforced retirement and the hardware to hand, no 'dead eyed' delegate took the opportunity to guarantee this.

■ An interesting exchange between a UWC supporter and a member of the Met took place at the end of the Unemployed Workers Charter picket of Downing Street. "You should have made an appointment" quipped the latter. He'd never have enough cutlery, replied our comrade. "Cutlery?" said the cop, "That's a bit bourgeois, innit?" Big words and a modicum (just) of wit from the Met. S'pose he must be the one with the 'O' level.

■ A comrade of ours was ticked off last week by an SWPer for opening a local ANL box number. The comrade was told that any leaflets with this offending number already given out must be "collected and destroyed"! All 5,000 of them? Hmm, tricky ...



Shapurji Saklatvala: from ILP Left Wing to CPGB

THE INDEPENDENT Labour Party was the largest socialist party in Britain in 1920, with nearly 800 branches. It was a non-Marxist, reformist party and had been instrumental in creating the Labour Party, to which it was affiliated. However, its rank and file were mostly militant workers opposed to capitalism, many inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.

At its 1920 conference the ILP voted to withdraw from the discredited Second International and investigate joining the Communist International. This was a blow for the ILP's reformist leadership, though they were able to confuse the issue by posing the Vienna Union as an alternative. The Vienna Union, the so-called '2½ international', set itself the impossible task of reconciling the Communist and reformist parties within one centre. The duplicity of ILP leader Ramsay MacDonald was revealed when in November 1920 he became secretary of the Second International (see *The Leninist* No121).

Delegates from the Left Wing group within the ILP were present at the Leeds Unity Conference (2nd Congress) of the CPGB. They outlined their campaign to win the ILP to revolutionary policies and affiliation to the Communist International (see *The Leninist* No120). These issues were to be debated at the Easter 1921 ILP conference. The Communist Party supported the Left Wing group, and published articles in *The Communist* backing their campaign, such as this open letter from Tom Bell.

To the rank and file of the ILP

Comrades, the document submitted to you by your National Administrative Council, containing draft proposals for a new party policy places a great responsibility on your shoulders. Need we say the importance of your decision is a matter of concern to others besides yourselves. Not only the Communist Party of Great Britain, but the revolutionary workers throughout the world are looking to you with high hopes that the decision you are called upon to take will lift the ILP abreast of the best fighting units in the Communist International. A great opportunity is certainly within your grasp. You have to say whether or not the experience of the

last 6 years of war has found any weak spots in your party policy or constitution; above all whether the heroic and courageous example of our comrades in Russia does not call for such a new outlook and policy in the ILP as shall clearly mark it off from the traditions of the past.

If you say yes, then you must fearlessly approach the task that awaits you. That task is none other than a clear declaration as to where you stand in the ferment at present agitating the socialist movement throughout the world. Nor must you be influenced in your decision by the fear of breaking with old associations, personal or otherwise. In face of the great opportunities that confront us today we can indeed truly say that our revolutionary movement is greater than the greatest figure amongst us.

It has ever been the proud boast of your old time officials that schism or theoretic discussion in the socialist movement left the ILP untouched. They have pointed with pride to the attack of the old Marxist parties and the demands made by them upon the ILP for lip service, often nothing else, to the class struggle and the formulae of economic theory, and how the party went on its way doing the practical work of recruiting the masses to socialism. For years they flattered themselves that the attacks of the industrial unionist movement, first formulated in 1905, and the first breach in modern times in the sanctity of parliamentary institutions, was to no avail. They know better now. But the convulsions through which the international socialist parties are passing at present strike deeper than mere academic formulae. The revolutionary ferment of modern times presages the decomposition and break up of the world capitalist system and not all the rhetoric of the Snowdens or MacDonalds can obscure its outward manifestations in the titanic struggle now being waged between communism and capitalism.

The communists everywhere have hailed with satisfaction the decision last year of your Scottish Divisional Council to adhere to the Third International. That decision indicated in no small way that a big section at least of the ILP were receptive to the ideas of the new communist movement, and when at your National Conference (Glasgow) last Easter it was decided to leave the Second yellow International which had so ignominiously failed the working class in its time of need, then the extent of the new ILP impulse was plainly to be seen. The ILP had broken with its traditional policy of compromise, and only the old time leaders held it back from joining hands with the revolutionary communists. But your contribution to the struggle against the attempts of the socialist renegades to rear again their bastard international can no longer be withheld by your old time leaders. You must take a decision now. You have to say definitely once and for all where you stand. Whether, though separated from the Second International, the party is still obsessed with all the paraphernalia of the parliamentary democracy, ie 'constitutional' in its outlook, social reformist in its policy, or alternatively is prepared to take its place in the ranks of the Communist International.

The draft programme submitted by your NAC is not very helpful to you. It contains all the entanglements of the bourgeois parliamentarianism, with a smattering of guild socialism thrown in

presumably as a sop to the idea of sovietism. Herein may be detected the hand of that dilettante intellectual and statistician, Mr Cole, who has suddenly become greatly interested in the work of the ILP. The draft programme still talks of a "National Representative Assembly" and "systems of local government" in approved Fabian style. There is as yet no recognition of the primary task that confronts the industrial working masses of Great Britain, viz the immediate struggle for the conquest of power. True, in the paragraph on "Methods", bouquets are thrown to direct action, but this direct action is merely, as the paragraph states, to be "extra-political", to ensure and buttress the "national will", ie the government.

The seizure of power by the working class consists in the suppression of the capitalist governmental machine and its substitution by a proletarian organisation. The concrete form of that organisation is the Workers' Councils. Your NAC also raises the question of a "Transition Period". Here the idea of a transition period savours of the old Fabian twaddle about evolution as opposed to revolution. It talks of accepting "intermediate systems" of municipalisation and nationalisation towards the final stage of socialism, provided these "give the workers in the industry an effective control and responsibility for its administration". But when the workers have conquered power, the first essential, there can be no question or doubt about the control or responsibility in industry. The dictatorship of the proletariat will attend to that. These two questions of parliamentarianism and dictatorship of the proletariat must be settled by you in no ambiguous manner, if you intend to take your place in the van of the workers' struggle for economic emancipation. They form the crux of the conflict now being waged throughout the international socialist movement, a struggle which can only have one issue, viz the separation into the bourgeois camp of the respectable professional political traitors to labour, from the revolutionary vanguard of the working class now joining up in increasing numbers with the third Communist International.

Against the parliamentary democracy, comrades, you must oppose the principle of direct representation by the working class through the workers' councils. This dictatorship of the proletariat is and must be the means for the expropriation of capital and the elimination of private property in the means of production. There is no other alternative.

The ILP is at the parting of the ways. The issue is communism or capitalist reformism. On you, the rank and file, rests the final decision as to which it is to be.

Yours in the fight,
Thomas Bell
The Communist, December 2 1920

On the eve of the conference the Left Wing group issued a manifesto, which was also published in *The Communist*.

Manifesto of the ILP Left Wing

Comrades of the ILP,
At the Party Conference you will be called upon to decide the future international relations of the ILP.

MacDonald, secretary of the Second International, which the ILP definitely repudiated last year, has not dared to ask the party to follow him in his allegiance. MacDonald, Mrs Snowden, and other prominent figures in the ILP whose faith remains in the Second International, and who privately scoff at the Vienna proposals, will nevertheless use their influence to secure the party's approval of the Vienna venture.

Their motive is quite simple. As long as the ILP can be kept out of the Third International, there is hope for a return to the Second International. The Vienna proposals will be the means of restoring credit to the bankrupt Second International...

Comrades, do not let yourselves be deceived. An 'all-inclusive' International is no longer possible. The Vienna proposals may attract some new sections, such as the British Labour Party, the German Majority Socialists and the Belgian Socialists. These sections may go to Vienna because they know that their own organisation, the Second International, has completely broken down. But the sections now affiliated to the Third International will have nothing to do with Vienna...

Comrades, how can you place your faith in what at best can be nothing but a revival of the organisation you have already repudiated? In facing the decision between Vienna and the Third International, look also at the world situation.

Surely you have learned something from the dismal failure of the League of Nations, from the tyranny in India, from the terror in Ireland? Surely you understand the merciless character of the class war revealed in this imperialism and the systematic attack on wages that is now in progress?

Surely you realise that only the international alliance of its class conscious elements can save the workers' movement and secure the downfall of capitalism? If you do then you will no longer hesitate: you will vote for immediate affiliation to the Third International, and thus take your stand with the revolutionary workers throughout the world.

Comrades of the ILP, we summon you from the apathy that is devastating your opportunist organisation to the restless activity of a revolutionary movement. We summon you to join in the last great campaign against capitalist imperialism, in the task of establishing world communism!
The Communist, March 26 1921

The manifesto was signed by EH Brown, Emile Burns, HS Button, W Coxon, Helen Crawford, R Foulis, P Lavin, HR Lay, JT Walton Newbold, Marjory Newbold, CH Norman, JR Payne, Shapurji Saklatvala, Mark Starr, C Williams, AV Williams and JR Wilson.

The reformist leadership won the day. Affiliation to the Communist International was rejected by 521 votes to 97. Just two years later the doomed Vienna Union dissolved itself into the second international, confirming that it really was just a diversionary device. Following the vote, around 200 revolutionaries left the ILP and joined the Communist Party. The ILP continued for many years as the organisational expression of left reformism within the Labour Party, a role similar to that played by *Militant* today.

Compiled by Doug Hulme

REVIEWS

Photos as weapons

John Heartfield. Exhibition: Barbican Art Gallery, London, August 13-October 18; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, November 20-January 10; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, January 30-March 29.



BORN HELMUT Herzfeld in 1891, he anglicised his name to John Heartfield in response to German anglophobia during World War I. He was the first artist to use photomontage (combining whole or parts of photographs with text to communicate a new message) as a political weapon: "New political problems demand new means of propaganda. For this task photography possesses the greatest power of persuasion."

Inspired by the October Revolution, he joined the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1918. In 1917 he had, with his brother Wieland Herzfeld, co-founded the publishing house 'Malik Verlag' and as an illustrator of left books he showed that even the dust jacket should be turned into a political argument.

Beyond a reconstruction of the room which he and George Grosz exhibited at the First International Dada Fair in Berlin in 1920, this exhibition shows us posters, bookcovers, postcards, newspapers, and magazines from a prolific output that spans more than five decades. A 1928 poster bears the slogan: "Not a man, not a penny for imperialist war armaments. All out for the people's referendum".

The exhibition includes a continuous showing of the documentary 'Zygo-

sis - John Heartfield and the Political Image', by Gorilla Tapes, where scratch editing, chroma key, paintbox and 3D computer techniques are used to animate images of Hitler's speeches so that his hand gestures become comic demonstrations of chicken slaughter and toothbrush abuse. Hitler's opening of the Berlin Olympics is translated: "I'm not declaring these Olympic games open until someone comes up with a decent pair of binoculars. I can't see a thing through these!"

His campaign posters of the late 20s and early 30s seemed particularly striking given that rival parties rarely used photographs. A 1928 KPD election poster depicts a worker's open hand reaching up for power. "The hand has five fingers. Vote list 5". In the 1990s the same image was stolen by 'Save the humans': corrupted as an image of a helpless victim sinking out of sight. Another poster "Fight with us! Vote Communist!" shows a hammer and a sickle held together by a wholesome looking man and woman.

One of his 1932 posters shows a starving child. "Capitalism is robbing them of their last piece of bread. Fight for yourself and your children. Vote Communist! Vote Thalmann." Other posters had a strong anti-racist message. He urgently warned that the advance of fascism risked another world war. A 1932 photomontage shows two skeletons lying in the mud of the trenches wearing nothing but their boots: "Armament is a must". His artwork for Old Motto in the 'New' Reich: Blood and Iron (March 8 1934) is four bloody axes lashed together in the form of a swastika.

AIZ (*Workers Illustrated Paper*) regularly gave him a whole page on which to make a photomontage comment on contemporary politics and these were produced under pressure, following tight deadlines; Heartfield maintaining overall control but delegating to professional photographers, retouchers, and printers. A 1932 edition of AIZ includes a composite photographic portrait of Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler, entitled 'Kaiser Adolf: The Man Against Europe'. Typical to the genre, the title is an integral element, imposing meaning on the image and resulting in an unambiguous message.

Exposing Nazism, and its leaders to ridicule was Heartfield's main aim in the 30s. 'The Meaning of the Hitler Salute' shows Hitler's right hand accepting a wad of bank notes from a gigantic bourgeois standing behind him.

"Little man requests big donation. Motto: Millions are behind me." Another, 'Mimikry', shows Goebels dressing Hitler up in a Karl Marx beard.

When Hitler took power in 1933 Heartfield was forced into exile, first of all to Prague, where he and his brother transferred the Malik publishing house, and John continued to work for AIZ. Pressure was put upon the Czech government to extradite him until the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938 when he fled to Britain. Wieland, however, was refused an entry permit and survived the war in New York. John was included in Mesens' group exhibition 'Living Art in England'. A version of 'Kaiser Adolf: The Man Against Europe' appeared on the front page of *Picture Post* in September 1939, but in 1940 Heartfield was interned.

Released on health grounds after complaints to the House of Commons, he moved to Hampstead, recognising that for many British people the Germans were the enemy, as Germans and not because they were Nazis. He continued working as a freelance for *Picture Post*, *Reynolds News*, and *Lilliput*.

From 1950 until his death in 1968 he lived in East Berlin where, although ill and restricted by Stalin's 'socialist realism', he was re-united with friends and family and was honoured for his massive contribution to the struggle.

Prophetic to the last, among his 1959 works was an image of the socialist GDR frog being gobbled up by an enormous imperialist snake.

Like revolutionary artists such as Brecht, Rivera and others, Heartfield is presented as an 'artiste' with a political quirk. But the very essence of his work revolts against it. It was great art in the service of the revolution; great art because it was in the service of the revolution. The weapons he forged are still there to be used.

Mike Fielding

Confused? You will be

Kevin Ovenden, *Malcolm X Socialism and Black Nationalism*, Bookmarks, pp96, £2.95

KEVIN OVENDEN correctly indicates the confusion and contradiction in Malcolm X's thinking and speeches,

particularly in his later years. But the book fails to analyse these contradictions, or even scratch below the surface of Malcolm's speeches.

As the title suggests, the key debate for Marxists is that between black nationalism and socialism, a question that seems to continue to confuse Marxists since it was first discussed in Comintern. But the book fails to even come to grips with Malcolm's political orientations, let alone come to any conclusions for Marxists today.

We are told "He was not a socialist" (p49), yet on the same page: "Later that year, however, Malcolm began to speak openly and favourably about socialism, saying white anti-racists tended to be socialists. He also located the source of racism at the heart of capitalism." Chapter 3, 'The Theory of Malcolm X', ends abruptly here. We are told that Malcolm X was not a socialist, but he talked socialist sometimes, and sometimes not.

This does not get us a great deal further than the arguments over who owns the legacy of Malcolm X that have been continually waged since his assassination.

More importantly, it does not bring us any closer to an understanding of the politics of Malcolm X, of black nationalism and how it stands in contradiction to socialism.

As far as Ovenden is concerned, it would appear, Malcolm X was a bit of a socialist, so that's alright then.

The book provides, on the whole, an interesting history of Malcolm X set in the context of political developments of the time, but fails to analyse either his black nationalism or his socialism to any useful degree.

We are not shown the logic of his political argument, how and why it developed, or what it meant and means for the working class. These are the important questions for Marxists in arming themselves against all reformist and nationalist ideology.

Later in the book we are told "He became an uncompromising revolutionary" (p85).

This is a bold statement with no explanation or evidence given. Kevin Ovenden uses the examples of Malcolm X, the Black Panthers and the rebellion of the 1960s to illustrate the way in which all struggles threaten the capitalist state "even when led by anti-socialists" (*ibid*).

True to the economism of the SWP, however, there is no discussion of the limitations of spontaneous struggle, or

how this struggle can be taken forward to a class struggle, *consciously* committed to the overthrow of the capitalist state.

There is no analysis of where these struggles can be taken when lacking communist leadership; that is, precisely into the lap of nationalism and reformism.

This can be clearly seen within the contradictions of Malcolm's programme and platform. We need to look no further.

But Kevin Ovenden maintains that Malcolm "became an uncompromising revolutionary". But what sort of revolutionary? And was he really so uncompromising?

A cursory glance at the programme of the Organisation of Afro American Unity, which Malcolm established after his break with the Nation of Islam, clearly shows the reformist nature of his politics.

Malcolm X clearly used anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric; he even came to the opinion that some individual white militants may not be racist, but his programme was one of education, training and economic opportunity for black workers, it was not one of class struggle.

Ovenden makes no mention of this programme, and remains confused at Malcolm's confusion.

But by its very nature 'revolutionary reformism' is riddled with contradictions. This is what Kevin finds difficult to understand. This is not surprising, coming as he does from an organisation riddled with the same contradictions.

This is an interesting history of Malcolm X and the black struggles that followed, but it is little more. It does not, as its title suggests, analyse the debate in theory and practice between socialism and black nationalism.

Only a fleeting mention is made of the Communist Party's role in the United States. The orientation of the Communist Party and Comintern in the 20s and 30s to black workers and the ensuing debate is not mentioned.

The debate then remained largely based in theory rather than practice, and many of the conclusions drawn were confused, if not wrong.

This book does not analyse the situation fully then or now and the debate between black nationalism and socialism remains largely undiscussed, with the confusion surrounding Malcolm X and a communist approach to black nationalism maintained.

Linda Addison

ACTION

Anti Nazi League East Ham

Racist police off our streets!

East Ham ANL action: regular leafletting on the tubes in the East End of London; work opposing the BNP's regular sales pitch in Brick Lane; street meetings and door to door canvassing. Just some of the work that East Ham Anti Nazi League has initiated. Also, Communist Party comrades in the ANL have initiated a petition calling for the convening of a national conference of the organisation. The petition underlines the need for "local and workplace branches, regional committees and a democratic structure." We have had a good response from other ANLers. It will provide a focus for the calls for democracy coming from the grassroots of the organisation. For copies of the petition, write to Lee-Anne Bates at our usual address.

Unemployed Workers Charter



The UWC made the news on September 17. To coincide with the release of the latest figures of accelerating unemployment - the 28th consecutive month it has risen - the Unemployed Workers Charter picketed Downing Street. Our action was reported in the *Guardian* (see picture above), on Greater London Radio, and UWC national organiser Mark Fischer was interviewed live on LBC radio in London. Publicity for our actions in the capitalist media is pleasing, of course. But as Mark Fischer pointed out in his interview, the real people that the UWC wants to talk to are not the hired scribes of ruling class - "it is the millions and millions of unemployed workers and their families out there who need the message of the UWC. The message that tells them that they are not to blame for unemployment, that they can take their own destiny into their own hands if they start to get organised." The UWC plans to make the picket - and other more spectacular actions - a regular welcome to the monthly announcements of the unemployment figures. For details of the actions to protest against the October figures, contact Mark Fischer. Also, for material for our fundraising initiative - the Solidarity And Fighting Fund for the Unemployed (Saffu) - is now available. Tony Benn has given his backing to Saffu and the work of the UWC: "I support the UWC 100%", he writes. "It is important for people to understand that unemployment will go on rising until mass action against it develops." That mass action is what the UWC is in business to build. Contact us at BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX or telephone 081-459 7146.

Communist party seminars

London

- Commodities and money, September 20.
- Commodity fetishism, October 11.
- Capital, October 25.

All seminars start at 5pm and are organised in central London. Registration for each series is £5 waged/£2 unwaged (details from John Praven). For a full list of seminars for the rest of this year, write to usual address.

Scotland

For details of seminars in Scotland, contact our London address or write to PO Box 408, Glasgow G4 9PQ.

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Cromwell got it right Off with their heads!

Real, possibly permanent damage has been done to the institution of the British monarchy

YOU HAVE to hand it to *The Sun*, it has done a very effective job on the Royal Family. Its spree of Windsor-bashing has put the official labour movement in Britain to shame.

If the popular press had been allowed to write their own storyboards for the scandals, they could not have come up with more juicy story lines.

They are all at it. Princess Anne and Prince Charles both have bits of fluff on the side. The Duchess of York, gawd bless 'er, is undertaking a novel and very modern approach to "mending her marriage" by having two American fellas on the go. She broke down in tears while addressing a motor neuron disease conference in Birmingham on September 19. Poor love, she's stressed. Perhaps she needs a holiday. Then again, perhaps not ...

Meanwhile the simpering air head, Diana, has her thoughts on "that fucking family" she has married into broadcast on a charity line (23p a minute and worth every penny, in the view of this author).

Now that would have been tricky enough without the fact that the person she was spilling the beans to was boyfriend James "I love you, squidgy" Gilbey. 'Whoops', as they say ...

Open season has been declared on the royals. And there is plenty of ammunition.

Prince Philip's robust get your fingers out, stop breeding and get a job pep talks to the working class; the family and friendship ties with some of the most unsavoury dictatorships around the world; the landlordism on Prince Charles' estates (a man who apparently sees no contradiction in having EF Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* as one of his favourite books and being one of the countries' largest landowners); and the embarrassingly conspicuous consumption of the new generation of crass 'young royals' - all of this should have been easy meat for the pop capitalist press. It has not; at least until now.

It is of course an irony of the marketplace that in the cut-throat competition for circulation, *The Sun's* revelations have boosted their sales while undermining the institution that sits at the head of the very capitalist system which the newspaper supports so vigorously.

The sordid fiasco has encouraged widespread cynicism and antagonism against the stinking rich royals at the base of society, among the very proles who are meant to imbibe and be befuddled by the myth of the British monarchy.

Probably for the first time in this half of the century, there could well be a popular majority for the abolition of this important institution of the bourgeois state; according to a survey by *The Sun* of its own readers, 56% wanted to abolish the monarchy!

The widespread anti-royal sentiment in Britain only finds reflection in *The Sun*. It is not the creation of Kelvin McKenzie, but a healthy spontaneous reaction of the working class against one of the more obscene manifestations of bourgeois greed, power and privilege.

In contrast the official leadership of the workers' movement has contained some of the most obnoxious toadies over the years. For example, the Queen



Mum - gin-soaked reactionary old parasite that she is - was made an honorary member of the Transport and General Workers Union some years ago and even sent 'fiery left winger' Ron Todd a goodwill message on his recent retirement.

Some might argue that in view of the excellent job that our enemies are doing of ripping themselves apart, we can afford to simply stand back, watch and enjoy.

In fact, this is shortsighted in the extreme. What this country needs is a good old fashioned dose of mass republicanism - a movement that not only is dedicated to the fall of the house of Windsor, but also the stinking, bloated obscenity of a system of which they are the ideal personifications. A modern mass republican movement must also be anti-capitalist to be consistent.

The modern royal family has its origins in the dawn of feudal society and the break from tribal social organisation. By the time of the bourgeois revolution in England of the 1640s, the monarchy had evolved into an institution representing decaying feudal society against the new rising capitalist order. In the course of that tumultuous social overturn, Cromwell did what any self respecting revolutionary would and at a stroke solved the king's recurring problem of collar dandruff.

Having come to power via a revolution, however, the bourgeoisie were keen not to give the same idea to others, namely the working class that they had been forced to create as a necessary

compliment to their own existence.

To avoid its proletarian nemesis, the ruling class consciously set about a skilful piece of social engineering. Apart from the creation of a bourgeois layer in the working class (the trade union and labour movement bureaucracy) to act as a buffer between it and the alienated and angry unwashed, it also created a bourgeois monarchy.

The constitutional monarchy of the Restoration and then the Hanoverians was used by the capitalist class as a means of cementing an alliance with the landowning classes and the heirs of the aristocracy.

At the same time the myth of the politically neutral monarchy - above party and sectional interests, the embodiment of the common interests of all in the nation - was created for the working class. Today the institution of the monarchy is completely woven into the fabric of the British bourgeois state and its unwritten constitution.

Of course, none of this is on the minds of the millions of ordinary working people who want to see an end of the monarchy. What has aroused popular indignation is not even the series of revelations about the somewhat less than snow white private lives of some of them. After all, the carefully fostered image of this family as an idealised form of bourgeois nuclear cosiness - painstakingly constructed since the end of the last war - was always a very fragile one.

As Matthew Symonds pompously put it in *The Independent*: "the increas-

ing emphasis over the last 50 years on the royal family as opposed to the monarchy itself has created dangers. It is unreasonable to expect all the members of a large family, particularly those who have not been brought up within it, to be capable of giving moral leadership to the nation" (September 1).

In fact, the news that members of this family are unhappy, engage in extramarital flings, have their toes sucked by boyfriends on holiday or indulge in eating binges will surprise some, but not many. After all, it is hardly 'Roman' style decadence, is it? As revelations go, it is all pretty tame, boring stuff.

The image of this family as an idealised model has been shattered. But then, as we wrote in *The Leninist* No120, "it would be a surprise if the royals did not reflect, even if in an indirect way, the type of social tensions that are fraying the bourgeois family unit in wider society." The discovery that the No1 family in the land is less like a top notch version of the insufferably twee and contented Larkins of *Darlin' Buds of May* fame, and more like stinking rich Andy Capps will truly shock only a minority.

No, what people are really annoyed about is the money, of course. The fact that these parasites live at our expense, by dipping their bread into the gravy of taxes levied off the working class, has got people's collective back up.

This healthy class resentment is something that should be encouraged.

But if it stays at this, then our rulers will be able to get away with a damage limitation exercise. Our job is to foster not simply an anti-monarchical mood based on how much they cost us. The republicanism we need recognises the role of the royal family in consolidating bourgeois class rule, their role as the embodiment of the capitalist state.

We need class resentment not simply against some bourgeois stooges who live at the expense of our taxes: we want proletarian outrage directed against real Division One parasites who live at the expense of our labour - the capitalist class themselves.

The *Daily Telegraph* pinpointed exactly what was at stake in an editorial earlier this year: "The queen's head on coins and stamps, and the crown on government briefcases, and the coat of arms on government buildings, the invocation of her name in parliament and the courts, the prayers for her in church, the oaths sworn to her by the armed forces, all remind the British people that they are under an authority which, although it does wield political power, provides a permanence that party politics alone cannot furnish" (February 7 1992).

In other words, governments may come and go, but the capitalist system and the rule of the bourgeoisie go on for ever. A threat to the stability of this 'immutable' institution is very dangerous indeed for the capitalist class.

It poses the idea of fundamental, revolutionary change: that the structures and institutions of this society are not 'god given' but are constructed by human beings and can be taken apart by human beings. Understandably, this is not a message that the bourgeoisie actually wants widely disseminated.

The establishment is anxious that the scope of working class anger against this precious institution of theirs is limited. "Something must be seen to change" Matthew Symonds tells us in the same *Independent* piece. "And that something is money" he suggests.

"Royal officials who talk about things getting back to normal and the events of the summer 'blowing over' are most certainly deluding themselves", he correctly notes. Real, possibly permanent damage, has been done. It can be limited by the relatively simple expedient of restricting the civil list payments to the queen herself: "The extended royal family which is doing such harm to the monarchy can only cease to be our concern when it is no longer paid out of the public purse".

They should not be allowed to get away with it. Cosmetic changes are not enough. The series of scandals involving younger members of the royals over the summer months has certainly highlighted the fact that these crass scum live lives of luxury at our expense.

The whole lot of them should be swept away. And as the bourgeoisie is unable to complete the job it began in 1642, it falls to us, the working class, to tidy up. We will abolish the monarchy as part of a revolution which will consign the parasitical system they symbolise - capitalism - to the dustbin of history.

The coming republic in this country will be a workers' republic!

Ian Mahoney