

Paul Fleming

THE BREAKDOWN of the Acas talks, the Nacods decision to strike, the £200,000 High Court fine on the NUM, the approach of winter and the prospect of power cuts, means that the miners' strike — the most important strike since 1926 — is heading for its climax. This and the jailing of the Cammell Lairds, 37, cries out for the mobilisation of the entire working class by our leaders especially the TUC.

Sufficient time has now passed since the TUC Congress in September for the trade union leaders who so overwhelmingly voted for "total support" for the miners to turn their militant platform rhetoric into real militant action. But instead of genuine solidarity all we have seen are a few offers of interest free loans to top up the NUM's depleted coffers and a TUC fund which it promises will not go to fund picketing. As well as this the new TUC General Secretary Norman Willis has exerted himself, not of course to achieve mass action in support of the miners or to get TUC affiliates to respect NUM picket lines; no, Willis has been using all his power to get the NUM and NCB to meet over the negotiating table in order to achieve a 'reasonable' settlement.

So the promises of "total support" offered at the TUC have been shown to be empty. The "voluntary" resolution passed at the Congress has proved not to be worth the paper it's printed on. Even as the Congress was in session trade union leaders with key workers in the power industry declared that they would in no meaningful way support the miners' strike. And since the Congress we have seen leaders who demanded sympathy action in support of the miners, even a 'big bang', retreat from taking any real action. Indeed we have seen not a few visibly running from the field of battle. The dockers strike, the second this year, ignominiously collapsed with promises from TGWU National Docks officer John Connolly that his members would move scab coal for the BSC; and the proposed rail strike was pathetically called off just when the miners' strike looked like broadening into a general offensive against the Tories.

Not only trade union leaders, left and right, have shown themselves bankrupt. Those who lauded the 1984 TUC as "historic" like CPGB General Secretary Gordon McLennan; those who carried heady editorials hailing "full TUC backing" for the miners à la *Morning Star*, have shown themselves to be posers, agents for the labour bureaucracy, not militant leaders of the working class as they are wont to claim.

Given the misleaders that sit at the head of our class and the ossifying effect they have on militancy and militant action we Leninists of the CPGB have argued that it is now absolutely essential for militants to organise independently of the official trade union structure. This must apply not only in right wing dominated unions like the EEPTU but even in the NUM itself.

For despite the fact that Arthur Scargill appears so outstanding compared with most union tops, he has severe limitations. At the TUC he did a deal with Lionel Murray which far from benefiting the miners and the working class in general allowed the TUC fat cats to get away with making promises which they knew would never be delivered. Instead of appealing over the heads of these parasites direct to the rank and file Scargill showed that he was still firmly tied to the existing structures both ideologically psycho-



NEWS LINE

## Rebuff the Tory winter offensive

logically and morally. This he showed again at the Labour Party Conference in October where despite the empty militant rhetoric Scargill preferred to back Neil (I deplore violence) Kinnock than expose him.

In the wake of the TUC, on the basis of appealing over the heads of the officials, Scargill should have barnstormed the country fighting for a general strike to back the miners with or without the TUC, calling for Congress words to be turned into deeds. He should have shown the need for the Miners' Support Committees to be transformed along the lines of Councils of Action in order to rally the country's best militants and provide the organisational basis to challenge the state and side step the TUC. Unfortunately, not only was Scargill content with standing ovations at the TUC and Labour Party but he and other leaders of the NUM have embroiled themselves in secret talks where they have debated semantics with the NCB and MacGregor. And with the failure of these debates it was then the turn of Acas to hear Arthur's version of the *Plan for Coal*. All the while police terror reached new levels and the Tories prepared their offensive. Unfortunately Scargill, far from being a "Marxist" bent on overthrowing the existing system as was claimed at the Tory Party Conference, is a Labourite (albeit with a syndicalistic flavour) fully committed to a reformism for him enshrined in the *Plan for Coal*.

We say that capitalism plunging into crisis cannot provide jobs, decent

wages and economic growth. Because of this, defence of jobs and conditions, the miners' strike, must be seen as political struggles which, if they are to be won, must go beyond the boundaries of reformism.

This realisation is particularly important as the miners' strike now enters its crunch period, as we enter the winter months. Because Tory attempts to break the strike have come to naught the possibility of power cuts in December and its consequent adverse impact on industry is looming. In order to avoid this the Tories will be forced to secure the estimated 22 million tons of coal picket bound at the pit heads. To move it they will not only need an army of scab lorry drivers and perhaps even army drivers but the deployment of unprecedented police violence in order to smash through the miners' picket lines. There will undoubtedly be fierce resistance, but even with previously sit at home miners mobilised and other workers bussed to the pits, Orgreave proved that the nationally organised police force, equipped with riot shields, body armour and steel helmets, backed up by cavalry charges and snatch squads, are more than a match for massed pickets no matter how large and heroic. This and the prospect of the courts being let off the leash means that winter will be a crunch period for the miners' strike and unless we mobilise the power of the working class as a class against the Tory offensive there is a great danger that the NUM could lose the battle of the winter if not the

war itself.

To avoid this setback, to ensure total victory is gained and that the miners are not forced to fight well into 1985, we have called for other sections of the working class to strike alongside the miners. Carworkers, traindrivers, teachers, dockers, healthworkers, united with the miners in strike action could unleash a strike wave which could reach general strike proportions and force the Tories to retreat. We also say that in order to fend off police terror it is vital to form Workers' Defence Corps now.

Such Corps could prove crucial in the coming battle to stop the movement of coal from the pit heads. The raw material for them already exists: those who have received military training in the army, the hit squads, the fittest and bravest pickets, these elements fused together under determined leadership could turn the tables on the police and give them a dose of their own medicine. With Workers' Defence Corps scabs could be made to think again, be they miners or lorry drivers. What is more police invasions of pit villages could be made unthinkable and certainly untenable given firm organised resistance. From the basis of a number of coordinated strikes and militant Workers' Defence Corps our own united workers offensive could be launched which should not only aim at total victory for the miners but for revenge for all workers who have suffered because of the Tories, their anti-trade union laws, and their decaying system.



## THE LENINIST

### The Special General Meeting

THE DECISION of the Management Committee of the People's Press Printing Society to declare the requisition for a Special General Meeting, which is backed by the leadership of the Communist Party, "out of order" is dictated by one thing and one thing alone — the fear of defeat.

Two weeks after vaguely telling readers of the *Morning Star* that the "requisition is out of order on a number of counts" they finally published their reasons on October 6. In a revolting display of contempt for communist morality the Management Committee contorted the rules of the PPPS in a way that would do credit to some devious and inventive High Court judge making a ruling on the NUM constitution.

The requisitioners want to remove five members of the Management Committee — the rules say that "any member... may be removed" — their motion is therefore "out of order". The requisitioners want to get comrades Chris Myant and Frank Chalmers appointed editor and assistant editor — the rules we are told are to facilitate "trading" therefore according to themselves only the Management Committee can have a say in who edits the paper, who is hired and who is fired. Of course for communists the editing of a communist paper is a political not a trading question. Despite this and the fact that at the last AGM a resolution was passed to appoint a Moscow correspondent their motion is deemed "out of order".

The other reasons given by the Management Committee for declaring the SGM "out of order" are just as spurious. They even have the gall to raise the matter of expense as a reason not to call it, and in an equal sign of political desperation they use the miners' strike and the "need for unity" in an attempt to get themselves off the hook. In the face of 1,300 shareholders who have called for a SGM in October their pronouncements show the utter hypocrisy of the Chater/Costello group which dominates the Management Committee, for they intend calling their very own SGM in January despite their talk of "expense" and the "need for unity".

The close run 1984 AGM sent the cowardly leaders of the Chater/Costello group into a panic. In order to cover their flight from the field their only defence has been bending the rules of the PPPS; censorship — as with the refusal to advertise the SGM; and perhaps bourgeois courts.

Chater stands exposed. We have long declared this comrade's rebellion to be liquidationist. The description of the Communist Party as "an outside body" was no slip. It is the essence of his political orientation.

Those who insisted on following Chater in a misguided belief that he was launching a crusade against Eurocommunism must now seriously consider their future.

We accept the legitimacy of the SGM. All honest communists must. But this does not mean we support the aims of the McLennan/Euro leadership. Far from merely wanting to "restore the relationship between the Party and the *Morning Star*" they are bent on transforming the *Star* into a daily version of that insult to communism *Marxism Today*.

Because of this although we will fight against the boycott we will call for a vote against all their motions due to the politics that motivate them. In the same way we will fight for shareholders to attend the Management Committee's SGM. But we will call for a vote against their predictable "back the survival plan" motions simply because of the liquidationist politics which lie behind them.

The Editor

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## LETTERS

### Feminism

I feel that I must write to express my strong reservations about the article published in the September *Leninist* newspaper.

You do not define what you mean by feminism, nor why you oppose it, but implicitly present it as a unitary movement whose ideological impact within the CP must be opposed. This is an inadequate position for communists to present. Feminism is a broad social, political and ideological movement which contains within it many strands. In this it is just like socialism, which again under a single title encompasses many different political currents. In a class divided society these class divisions inevitably have an impact within any general movement. As early as 1848 we find Marx and Engels talking of the existence of bourgeois socialism, aristocratic socialism, proletarian socialism, etc. Socialism retains several different class tendencies (*The Leninist* claims to identify 4 within the CP alone). Similar class divisions exist in feminism.

It may be the case that some of the prominent feminists in the CP are also Eurocommunists, but most CP members are supporters of one reformist tendency or another, so that reformism and hesitation in the face of the class struggle cannot be ascribed to feminism in particular. Most socialists in Britain are reformists, but you would not on those grounds demand that the stranglehold exercised by socialism over the CP be broken. By posing the issue in the way you do, you will just tend to discredit *The Leninist* in the eyes of revolutionary women.

It is quite wrong to identify feminism as such as a serious ideological danger to the CP. On the contrary, both in the CP and in the socialist movement generally, 'left wing' anti-feminism exercises a much more telling influence. This expresses itself in the form of male hegemony over women in public and organisational life. Programmatic acceptance of the nuclear family and the bourgeois institution of contractual marriage, treating the public ideological struggle against sexism as primarily a "women's affair", asserting that socialist revolution will of itself solve the problems of women's oppression, etc.

The contradictions giving rise to the socialist movement and those giving rise to the feminist movement cannot be reduced one to the other. The socialist movement is generated by the exploitation of the workers under capitalism, the feminist movement arises out of the exploitation of women in the family.

If the Eurocommunist feminists are to be criticised it should be on the basis of their feminism like their socialism being reformist. As far as I can make out, they fail to deal seriously with the question of political power.

Without political power, the oppressed cannot abolish the economic and legal foundations of their oppression. This fundamental Marxist thesis applies equally to the working

class and to women. There is about as much chance of a male dominated state machine putting through the measures needed to abolish patriarchal social relations as there is of the bourgeois state establishing communism. If you are to criticise the Eurocommunist feminists, criticise them on their pacifism and reformism rather than their feminism.

Yours in comradeship

W. Newton  
Scotland

### Press Release

On the week-end Sept. 8/9th, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), at its annual Ard Feis (Conference), took a historic step forward when it adopted the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin as providing the basis for its socialist principles. In taking such a step the IRSP do not see these teachings as a collection of immutable, fossilised principles to be accepted as a faith or dogma. Studied in the light of the historical experience of the working class and related to the concrete conditions existing in Ireland to-day, they become a powerful weapon in the hands of the party, providing the necessary method, viewpoint and science, to define the correct strategy and tactics to defeat Imperialism and build Socialism.

In embracing the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, we are placing ourselves in line with the most advanced thought of our age and as a consequence are in line with the revolutionary tradition passed on by James Connolly. Likewise we stand in the revolutionary tradition of the United Irishmen of '98, because they in their time stood for the most advanced thought of the age — Bourgeois Democracy. At that time bourgeois democracy represented a revolutionary phenomenon directly applicable to a progressive solution to Irish ills; and as a consequence, Irish Republicanism could be defined as Revolutionary Bourgeois Democracy, tailored to complement specific needs and conditions in Ireland. However, by Connolly's time, conditions in Ireland and elsewhere had changed and the needs and demands of the people were different than they had been in '98. Bourgeois Democracy had ceased to be revolutionary, had been superseded by Socialist Democracy which to this day dominates the stage of all human endeavour for freedom.

Irish Republicanism has its roots set in bourgeois democracy. It is illogical in this day and age to contend that Irish revolutionaries must struggle to realise a Republic with the same political and economic content as that envisioned by our predecessors of 1798. To propose such a thing is to suggest the world has stood still for nearly 200 years; that the economic and political conditions, along with people's appreciations of them, have remained constant; and that the needs of the people have continued unchanged. Yet the failure of Irish separatist parties and movements to move to a stage beyond republicanism (bourgeois democracy) to revolutionary socialism, means in objective terms, the

acceptance of such an illogical proposition. Attempts to coat this position with a veneer of left-wing rhetoric, does little to improve the situation, rather, it has the effect of sowing confusion among potential revolutionaries. In essence, left-republicanism and the various forms of Hibernianised socialism, at the end of the day, equate with bourgeois democracy. We demand revolutionary change to our economic and political conditions, not reform. Only revolutionary socialism with its principles based on the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, enriched in the Irish situation by James Connolly, offer the solution to the problems besetting Ireland today.

There are several parties and organisations in Ireland to-day, who would claim to be in the tradition of the United Irishmen and James Connolly. They like the IRSP would claim to be basing their principles on the most advanced thought of our age. But it must be borne in mind, that not alone were United Irishmen advancing the most revolutionary ideas for a new society, they also used revolutionary means in attempting to implement them. Apart from how the IRSP may differ from such parties and organisations of the "left" on the end product, only the IRSP is committed to revolutionary means to achieve the end. On this count such parties and organisations fail to achieve the necessary criteria demanded of revolutionaries.

The IRSP not alone rejects the peaceful transition to socialism through parliamentary means, but alone among the parties advocating revolutionary socialism, we support the Armed struggle against British Imperialism, unequivocally. We do so because we believe the resolution of the National Question to be a necessary prerequisite to socialism in Ireland. Armed now as we are with the powerful weapon of Marxism-Leninism and committed as we are to the greater ideological schooling of our members and followers, we intend to dig roots so deep among the working-class that it will prove impossible to dislodge us.

Jim Lane  
National Chairperson, IRSP.  
Ireland

### RCG Again

I read with some amusement Peter Rhodes' bleating little letter in *The Leninist* no.13. Isn't it remarkable that after nearly two years of badgering the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) to answer *The Leninist's* 'Call to all Communists' (printed in September 1982), the only response we have so far gained is this small non-political gripe from an RCG loyalist.

Indeed, the main thrust of our comrades' interventions at the Group's day school was precisely the question of why the RCG has failed to take up the debate we proposed to them through the pages of *The Leninist* no.3. Therefore it really is rather misleading and hypocritical of Peter Rhodes to crow about the amount of time allocated to Leninist comrades to speak. If the RCG allows us time to speak, but

refuses to answer our questions, ignores our repeated requests to debate out some crucial issues and merely sits in sullen silence while our comrades bring these matters up, then there really isn't very much to boast about is there comrade Rhodes?

Fraternally,  
John Mills.  
Nottingham

### Laboured Dialectics

I am very impressed by your paper it is a breath of fresh air. I would like to go into detail about my disagreements but for the sake of time allow me to make some rather outlandish generalisations which are pertinent to what is on hand ie the fettered ideological come theoretical struggle within the movements. In my opinion *The Leninist* has the most mature political positions on proletarian internationalism, sectarianism and opportunism within the movement in Britain. I am not uncritical and my criticisms I believe are not unimportant but presently they can be delayed, my main criticism is on Leninist strategy. If this debate could continue I would go into detail but what I propose is unlikely to gain a response anyway. Most readers know Lenin (not that I am comparable) was sometimes in a minority of one but he kept on patiently explaining and debating. I suggest *The Leninist* is, but not the most by a long shot, immature in its dialectical understanding of strategy, in fact the process of strategy most pertinent to the vanguard is the one adopted by the 'Trotskyite' Militant Tendency within the bourgeois Labour Party (and I refer your serious readers to *The mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin on the Trade Unions* by Lenin). The Labour Party is not just a bourgeois workers' party in parliamentary decline, a mish mash of left and right wingers struggling with reformism or overcome by reformism, or is Labourism a dogmatic process. The Labour Party can only be viewed as a series of wider processes.

The move to the left within the rank and file in the Labour Party is evident but essentially it will be and is being swallowed by the unconscious opportunists in the Militant Tendency, whose strategy for revolution has been matured through decades of struggle. *The Leninist* I believe would find it as difficult to admit its incredible mistake in strategy as the Militant 'Trots' have in its "proletarian internationalism". The petty bourgeois label is a smear and sometimes an easy excuse to avoid logical argument, on the other hand, the term left Stalinist is a smear which sets to accomplish the same thing. It is essential for Leninists today to be in the Labour Party. It is not that the liquidation of the Communist Party suits my purposes, but that communists cannot separate themselves from the main mass of class conscious workers.

Fraternally  
Paul Anderson  
Glasgow

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

# Pitt on the Strike, Polish Coal, & Ireland

Comrade Malcolm Pitt is the President of the traditionally militant and communist led Kent Area NUM. The comrade has been outspoken in his condemnations of British imperialism's actions in the Six Counties and has quite correctly drawn the links between the miners' struggle and that of the Irish people. We also concur with the comrade's position on Polish coal and we draw particular attention to his comments on the future development of Miners' Support Committees...

**The Leninist:** In our paper we have drawn parallels between this strike and that of 1926 in that we consider both to be major *strategic* confrontations for the entire working class. What do you think are the key questions for today?

**Malcolm Pitt:** The first question which obviously comes to mind is that in this particular dispute it was the government that picked the time and picked the place of the dispute. Certainly over the last six years it has been making quite detailed preparations to break the miners as part of an overall political strategy of breaking the trade union movement. I think we can even go further and say since 1972 and 1974 ruling circles in Britain have pinpointed the National Union of Mineworkers as the heart of the trade union organisation in Britain and therefore it was necessary to take it out of operation either by buying the miners out or else by confrontation. It's fairly clear that the Thatcher government decided that this would be by confrontation. One thing it has brought up very clearly is that the trade union movement still *responds* to actions by government or by the employing class rather than initiating or planning action.

I think this is also true internationally. It is quite clear now that with the development of the multi and transnationals that no trade union centre is in the position to counter their strategies effectively without very close links with the rest of the international trade union movement. So one thing the strike has definitely raised is the whole question of the organisation of the trade union movement nationally, internationally and also the need to develop broad strategies capable of uniting trade union centres in common action.

### Miners' Support Committees

**The Leninist:** One of the healthiest aspects of the strike for us has been the semi-spontaneous development of Miners' Support Committees throughout the country. We have argued for the transformation of these committees into broad, *fighting* working class organisations which encompass industrial militants and all those committed to giving total physical support to the miners. What is your view of the role of these committees?

**Malcolm Pitt:** Well I think that it's fairly obvious that the sort of Support Committees which would come into existence, particularly if they were clearly based on the trade union movement would take on more and more the character of Councils of Action. I said this at the beginning of the strike. I don't like to make artificial comparisons or attempts to project onto organisations functions and powers which they do not have as a result of the developing struggle but it's fairly obvious that the coming together of trade union organisations and also political parties creates organisations which have a role far beyond merely collecting food or putting out leaflets on behalf of the miners.

And again, it's very clear that once you get organisations of that nature coming together, then the issues cease to be just the issues of one particular trade union, one particular industrial dispute, they become clearly political issues and discussing a political strategy. So yes, I would see that the Miners' Support Groups, or any organisation that has been built up because of struggle, should as far as possible be maintained and also developed as regular facets of working class organisation — without again trying to *artificially* extend their life beyond the strike.

I think one of the things which raises itself is the whole role of trades councils which has been demoted in terms of trade union priorities. I think it's about time the whole issue of trades council representation at congress should be fought on and the role of trades councils, not just in terms of being a discussion shop for political activists in the trade union movement, but as being real fighting organisations of the trade union movement in local areas, that perspective should be developed and the Miners' Support Groups given that sort of lead.

### Ireland

**The Leninist:** Many people may have been quite surprised at some of your statements on Ireland and by the fact that parallels have been drawn by several people between the actions of the state in the occupied Six Counties and the battle against the miners. What in your view are the lessons of Ireland for the miners?

**Malcolm Pitt:** I've made the point since the beginning of the strike, I made it earlier than this interview, that the miners' strike is quite obviously a symptom of an economic crisis which is affecting British capitalism. It's therefore very much part of the political response of the ruling class to that crisis, but because of the development of imperialism over the last fifty years or so, you have seen the contradictions developing on an international scale.

So with the whole question of Ireland, I've made the point that first of all we've got to recognise that we are engaged in a battle against the same enemy but on a different front. The enemy is imperialism and it's not just a matter of emotional solidarity with the 'poor, oppressed Irish people'. It's a basic fact of life that workers throughout the world, either engaged in national liberation struggles or struggles against employers in advanced capitalist countries, they are quite concretely fighting against the same enemy, even sometimes against the same company.

But also there has been the whole experience of the strike. Fifteen years ago people on the left were saying that the tactics which were being developed in Northern Ireland were merely a parade ground for what was going to be developed in our own country, on the mainland, and I would think that the majority of trade unionists turned their back on that and said it wouldn't happen. I think there's been an entire negligence of the whole Irish question over

the last few years to the extent that people have got to look through the agendas of TUC and Labour Party conferences and say 'where is Ireland?'

I think then that the experience of Brixton and Toxteth events again brought it home that the police had been developing a whole series of tactics which threatened democratic and trade union rights in Britain and was therefore an issue which had to be taken up by the trade union movement. That was reinforced after the Warrington NGA dispute when we saw those tactics being used against trade unionists. Now of course the full apparatus of the police has been revealed and miners have suffered at first hand what various minorities in this country and of course the Irish people have suffered for a very long time and it has certainly raised their consciousness. People are now definitely aware of the nature of the state. You'd have a hell of a job in one of our villages persuading the average miner that the police are neutral and in some way there to 'protect' equally the scab and the striker, or the NCB and the striker. That illusion has been destroyed.

People have begun to look at the issue of police violence and state violence and we've had people in Yorkshire for example who have gone over to Belfast and they are beginning to link up the two issues and say 'Well this is exactly what *we* are suffering.' They can recognise the common enemy. So there is a whole new consciousness developing and I think that will be extended. In our own coalfield there are now links developing between the Southall people, the black community and our people. Again the issue of police violence has come up and the black comrades are saying quite clearly 'we've been up against this for some time and now you're learning' and our people are saying 'yes we recognise what you are up against' and so therefore this is going to be the beginning of a relationship which is going to carry on.

So there's a definite lifting of consciousness because of what has happened with the police. But I think obviously with the issue of Ireland itself, ever since the days of Connolly, there's been the supposed recognition in socialist circles of the struggle for national liberation in Ireland and the struggle for socialism in this country. I believe that what is happening in the miners' strike is just bringing it home more forcefully and therefore I think we've really got an opportunity to really develop a discussion about our attitude as the British labour and trade union movement towards the problems of the Irish people.

### Women

**The Leninist:** The high level of involvement of women in this strike is one of the most healthy developments in the arena of women's struggle for a very long time. In our paper we have looked

continued overleaf...

## Interview

... continued

at the women against pit closures movement as the embryo of a working class women's movement. What is your view of this?

**Malcolm Pitt:** I've made the statement previously that one thing we can't argue with is that the women have very much become the backbone of the strike. Women are now making the headway in many ways in regard to propaganda, arguing the case and of course in terms of organising their own intervention with regard to pickets and demonstrations. The important thing about it is not just in terms of the miners' strike whereby it's been a tremendous plus in regards to organisation, because that weakness that capitalism used against strikers whereby they could put pressure on a family has been not just removed but turned the opposite way whereby women are now saying to their husbands 'if you ever thought of going back I'd divorce you'; that is a strength but in the wider sense there has been a whole series of discussions about feminism, about the role of women. Socialists have always recognised the revolutionary potential of women. We've seen it in every big social upheaval — in Petrograd, in the Paris Commune, all the way through history.

But the arguments over the last few years have tended to be somewhat rarified and often I think really becoming a fringe activity. I think what is important now is that you are beginning to see the beginning of a mass *working class* women's movement and it's very clearly linked to the whole question of class struggle. It's class struggle which has released it, it is in fact manifesting itself in *working class action*. And so I think this is far more important than some of the more academic discussions which have been carried on in the past.

And I think it's something again which has frightened the ruling class. They have always underestimated the sort of forces that come into the field. I'm quite convinced that at the beginning of the strike they believed that they could provoke a strike in Yorkshire, there would be a brief flurry through the rest of the coalfields and then it would crumble and turn in on itself. What's happened of course is that the strike has become more and more solid, despite a handful of scabs who I think are a symptom of the strength of the strike if you just get *handfuls* responding after seven months of what the NCB has been putting out. But more than that you've seen this tremendous movement by not just the women but also by the youth. I think that's an important development because it's not so long ago that *The Guardian* produced articles 'proving' beyond any shadow of a doubt that young miners were middle class, that they were all bought off by the system, integrated into the system and that they would never identify with the trade union movement, they would never take up the cudgels in regard to the fight for jobs and that a whole period of trade union history was finished. Also there have been sections within the labour movement that have taken similar lines — 'The Forward March of Labour Halted' and all this sort of nonsense, that the working class has lost its revolutionary potential and we've got to look under every floorboard for some new social force to pick it up. Well, I think the response of the young miners has proved that position totally wrong. You've seen them bringing all the various cultural things which were being used previously to take them out of the working class movement brought into it — there's been the songs and the organisations that have developed out of football crowds and such, these are now being used in action on the picket lines. I think that that is also something which is of concern to ruling class circles because they have now seen a whole section of working class youth and working class women radicalised on a massive scale and that won't finish with the strike as in '72 and '74. That's going to continue in a whole new series of developments in the Labour Party, and trade unions

and in the labour movement generally.

**The Leninist:** Have you seen a change in men's attitudes to women during the strike?

**Malcolm Pitt:** Yes, there's no doubt about it. I don't want to disparage the work of the feminist groups by the way because I think they've certainly broken the ground in many ways in terms of ideas, although I disagree with some of the more bizarre manifestations of it. Certainly there has been a reaction to a certain extent by men against what was taking place. There was an initial period of adjustment, but talking around and listening to women describe what's happening, it's been accepted I think by the majority of miners, certainly the majority I've been in contact with anyway, that the women are playing an important role. And it has also been accepted that the fact that they are going to play that role is going to have some effect on their own domestic arrangements and how things are organised.

I think that given that everyone sees mining communities as in some ways very male chauvinist, I think the response of the men has been extremely positive. People are now in a position to start making remarks like about women standing for branch committee and so on, which is very good.

### Polish Coal

**The Leninist:** In our previous issue we reported the meeting held for International Miners' Day at the beginning of September between, amongst others, representatives of Kent NUM and the Polish mineworkers union. Despite assurances from the Polish representatives at this gathering Poland has still not blocked coal exports to Britain during this strike. What is your attitude to the Polish authorities' actions?

**Malcolm Pitt:** The question of Polish coal has obviously been of great concern to us. Our national union has had quite close links with the Polish miners' unions. It has taken a sympathetic position in regard to the problems of the Polish people in the last period to the extent of Scargill becoming quite a centre of controversy on the whole issue and we still recognise the very serious problems that the Polish people are confronted with. But we have felt that such a long dispute must merit a hearing by the Polish government and also the Polish trade unions and a response in line with their international working class duty.

There has been a whole series of approaches, of which the one on International Miners' Day was just one where at different levels and different sections of the movement have approached the Poles in regard to getting the movement of coal stopped. For instance the Australian miners' union have made representations and expressed their dissatisfaction with the sort of answers they've been given in regard to the maintenance of contracts. So we have been extremely concerned about it, we've made representations, we recognise the problems that the Polish people are confronted with but we are still making the very basic demand which we are putting on every section of the international working class movement that we want them to block the movement of all coal and allied fuel stock from coming to Great Britain. That is the position which we hope very soon the Polish government and Polish trade unions will respond to.

**The Leninist:** Do you think that the actions of the Polish authorities may have improved the image of Solidarnosc in the eyes of many miners?

**Malcolm Pitt:** I don't know, that's more difficult to judge. There have been statements, for example in *Labour Briefing*, and letters allegedly from Solidarnosc unions pledging support to the British miners, but on the other hand we've seen Lech Walesa saying that Margaret Thatcher is doing 'a good job and the miners are wrong', you know. I think that the position which the NUM took was a correct one. I think it recognised the fact that in Poland there were serious grounds for discontent and opposition and that was expressed in the formation of Solidarnosc.

At the same time it recognised that the political direction taken by that organisation was basically anti-socialist. I think that position has been confirmed. I think that that in no way excuses however the actions of the Polish government or Polish trade unions in not responding properly to the basic call for international solidarity. Despite all their problems we expect them to honour all their international obligations.

### The way forward

**The Leninist:** How do you see the strike developing? How are you going to win?

**Malcolm Pitt:** On this strike it has been proved over the last seven or eight months that predictions on the development of the strike have tended to be a waste of time. All you can say is that at certain levels, there are certain directions the strike could take and predictions have always been somewhat rash. The general perspective that the NUM has to have I believe is that we have got to escalate the level of the dispute to the extent of the governments' resistance to coming to a sensible resolution of the dispute.

In the six months prior to the TUC, I think our attitude was correct in that there were certain problems in developing solidarity because of the situation we had in Nottinghamshire and other Midlands coalfields, which again would be rash for us to ignore — it's difficult to call on a railway man to put his job on the line when in fact he can say there are Nottinghamshire miners working. But I think that on the other hand over that period, because of the campaign which the NUM waged, by sending people out to speak and really developing the links between our union and other unions, that people have recognised in the trade union movement that this dispute is not just an issue for the miners, it's not just an industrial dispute, it's really a central issue in regard to the overall government strategy and that as Bill Sirs said at the beginning of the dispute if the brigade of guards goes down, what chance have the light infantry?

I think that reflects a very strong feeling within activists within the trade union movement. I think you can see that level of support developing, despite the problems in the steelworks, which I lay firmly at the door of the leadership of the ISTC, which has consistently betrayed their members over several years, despite all of those problems there has been a general intensification of support in terms of food, money and also by the taking of industrial action. That was before the TUC.

I think we were right to avoid taking the issue to the TUC prior to congress because again that could have put us in the position of Aslef or NGA with all the problems of compromises being floated here, there and everywhere and with all the divisions that can create. I think the actual decision in terms of the resolution passed by the TUC was a significant step forward. I think it's interesting to note the type of people who were supporting it — Basnett of General and Municipal, Laird of the AUEW. I think that that itself entails a recognition by the right wing of the trade union movement that if the miners are allowed to be defeated then it won't just be the removal of Arthur Scargill from the national scene, but also of course that the government can do without talking to the Basnetts and the Gavin Lairds and all the rest of them. All I think there is that if you like bureaucratic self-interest involved in that respect.

So there's that which is important in terms of the overall movement. On the other hand obviously we feel that it could very much remain as a paper resolution unless we do the work of turning that support into active solidarity and we are engaged in doing that, in making sure we are actually meeting the people at power stations, etc. Though our indications are that the message has been picked up already and particularly Hammond's statement against the NUM, there was

an immediate response by his own members in several power stations in refusing to move blacked coal in protest against that statement. So I think the overall picture is quite positive.

I think we have got to look at what the ruling class is doing. I think there is very clear evidence that there are very serious splits and divisions on their side. I think the fact that we've seen these series of negotiations take place is not merely some sort of manoeuvre you know, an attempt to raise people's hopes and then dash them. I think there are sections within the government who are seriously concerned at the length of the strike, the radicalisation which has taken place because of the strike and the fact that other trade unions now have been involved in victories because of the miners' strike — the NUR and Aslef, having taken a fairly nasty knock in the past, have now managed to restore a certain confidence because they have had quite a significant victory because of the miners' strike and everyone knows it's because of the miners' strike they managed to get a pay award without any strings attached.

So that process is something which concerns them, the fact that the church is now becoming quite openly involved with warning voices about the continuation of the strike, the fact that Pym has now come out with a statement about the 'human cost' of the strike — all those are very clear indications that the ruling class is now very uncertain which way to go. I believe that we could possibly see after the Tory conference, after the jamboree when obviously Margaret will not wish to be seen handing concessions out, that we will see serious negotiations take place. On the other hand, I think we have got to be aware of the fact that the issue is not decided on their side and it is quite possible we could see an escalation of the dispute and the 'hawks' would be thinking in terms of further action against trade union funds. I would be surprised if they put Arthur Scargill in prison, but I can certainly see the likelihood of action against our funds, the possibility of the use of troops in regard to the movement of coal — I think that is a real possibility. I think we have got to be careful that the sort of initiatives that are being put about by Nacods — though obviously I recognise the importance of the strength of the vote because that is a very clear indication of the strengthening of the strike — but on the other hand the type of suggestions which are being put forward could begin a process of a series of compromises in the air which could again I think confuse people on what exactly the dispute is about and therefore to some extent cause a few problems particularly when the government reversed the apparent development towards a settlement.

So I think we've got to have that perspective. There are indications that sections of the ruling class are clearly now talking in terms of a settlement as far as the miners' dispute is concerned with all the political repercussions and that that could have with regard to a change in government or a change in the leadership of the government. On the other hand I think we have got to be careful not to fall for some 'Oh well, it's now all coming to an end then lads' sort of line, we've also got to be aware that the whole direction could quite easily change in regard to an intensification of the dispute. And at some point, I think the issue of a general strike will be raised concretely by the course of the struggle.

I think it's quite obvious that if the divisions in the ruling class circles are resolved in regard to a further intensification of the dispute, then obviously that can only be met by further action by the trade union movement and the question of the General Strike becomes part and parcel of that development. That of course opens up a whole new dimensions in regard to the advance of the class which is possibly one of the reasons why the ruling class will avoid that sort of confrontation in this particular period.

# IRELAND

## Part II

Jack Conrad

### 1. The Crisis in the Six Counties

THE BOOM OF the 1950s and the 1960s to a certain extent concealed the long term decline of the Six Counties' traditional industries. For while industrial production increased by an average of 4% per annum in the 1960s compared with 2.6% in the rest of the United Kingdom, once the boom was replaced by stagnation the old water-based industries such as shipbuilding, textiles, and certain forms of engineering which had proliferated in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century went into a nosedive. Where, for example, Harland and Wolff employed 25,000 even in the 1950s, today the figure is down to around 6,000.

The British authorities attempted in the 1970s to restructure capital in the Six Counties and attract new investments. In fact they pursued a strategy that was remarkably similar to that followed by the government in the Twenty-Six Counties. Capitalists were offered an extensive range of inducements to invest: enterprise zones; a science park; a freeport within the boundary of Belfast airport; 50% research and development grants; up to 75% of factory costs covered by grant and tax relief; 80% refund on corporation tax; up to 90% of machinery and equipment costs met by grant and tax relief; and 100% industrial derating. These incentives plus enormous spending on developing the infrastructure were intended to make the area an extremely profitable base from which to export to Britain and the rest of Europe.

This helped push public spending up to 66% of GNP in 1979, a figure only equalled by the massively spending Twenty-Six Counties in 1983 (see Table Four in Part I). But despite this spend, spend, spend development strategy the results were disastrous in terms of economic return on subsidy, a Keynesian nightmare. For far from the De Lorean sports car venture collapse being an "extremely serious lapse" on the part of the Northern Ireland Development Agency, as the All-Party House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts claimed in its inquiry, it was in reality merely the most spectacular example of failure of British government attempts, both Labour and Tory, to breathe life into the decaying corpse of the Six Counties' industrial base.

The fundamental cause of this failure is of course to be found in the changes in the world market. But this is only one dimension of the truth, for the Six Counties has failed in a remarkable fashion.

One factor determining this is straightforward — the Six Counties' economy is chained to Britain, its products were designed to meet the needs of its market and empire. While the nature of its economy has changed to a degree the pattern of trade remains, for the British market absorbs almost 60% of its total foreign trade (which in total equals 75% of the area's GNP). Therefore to extend a well known aphorism:

when Britain catches cold the Six Counties catches pneumonia.

But this is by and large true of the Twenty-Six Counties as it is of the Six Counties. So why when both parts of Ireland offer similar incentives\* for capitalists to operate and invest has the Twenty-Six Counties proved so dynamic while the Six Counties faces industrial dodoism?

Compared with the Six Counties which had a historically well established industrial base and an extremely experienced workforce, the Twenty-Six Counties industrialised in the main from scratch, from green field sites; its workforce came either directly from the countryside or was drawn from the reserve army of labour (this included very large numbers of women). Everything else being equal this should have favoured the Six Counties. For although its industrial base was increasingly old fashioned, under capitalised, and unresponsive to changes in the world market, taking economic factors only, new investments generated internally or from Britain and other overseas countries should have with extensive government help transformed the industry in the Six Counties along the lines of the Twenty-Six Counties' new tech, 'sunshine', export led growth.

So why did this not happen? What is the main difference between the two parts of Ireland?

We would argue that the *main difference* between the Twenty-Six Counties and the Six Counties in the 1970s, the key to understanding their different performances, is the existence of a *revolutionary situation*, the fact that since 1969 the Six Counties has witnessed a sustained and seemingly intractable struggle against the form, and increasingly the fact, of the British domination of the area. This and its diametrically linked determining opposite: Britain's insistence on staying, is the political explanation for the area's economic failure.

It is not a simple question of bombs destroying factories, or even the 'troubles' causing companies to pull out, but rather the instability in the Six Counties means that investors are extremely reluctant to risk their capital. A study by the Cambridge Journal of Economics in 1978 estimated that up to 20,000 jobs had been lost because of the war. While there is naturally enough little documented proof of this, we do have the empirical evidence in the form of the area's decline. Although in January 1984 the *Financial Times* did report that it had discovered that a £5 million factory planned by the Federal German electronics company, Grundig, was cancelled after the head of the company Thomas Niedermayer was kidnapped by the Provisional IRA in 1973, (his body was not discovered until 1981 [*Financial Times* January 31 1984]). The *Financial Times* offered this as evidence in support of the contention that the war was the prime cause of the Six Counties' economic performance. This was fully backed up by the MORI poll conducted amongst US

executives in 1982 which revealed that perceptions about the Six Counties' political instability had spilled over into perceptions about its productivity and industrial relations.

The spark that ignited the armed struggle against Britain was the fight against sectarianism. Ever since partition Britain's rule in the Six Counties has relied on the maintenance of sectarianism, something it did through and in cooperation with local Orange capitalists. But far from local capital being the *cause* of sectarianism, as some claim, all historical evidence suggests as does current reality that it is imperialism which uses sectarianism, fosters and maintains it, in order to secure its rule. Today not only does British imperialism rule directly, but local capital only survives as a withered appendage of imperialism, with little economic or political influence. No, far from Orange capitalists being the root cause of sectarianism it is imperialism which by bribing a section of the Protestant working class creates the material base for sectarianism, the anchor on which the social order is secured. On the basis of the division of the working class between Catholics and Protestants (a division deepened since the imposition of direct rule) in the Six Counties, Britain dominated not only the Six Counties but indirectly through this the Twenty-Six Counties themselves.

By giving Protestants as opposed to Catholics the higher paid jobs, or even jobs in times of high unemployment, better housing, and other privileges the British authorities and their local agents were able to foster sectarianism in a section of the working class, a section that through the promotion of loyalist Orange ideology and its bigoted hatred of Catholics, which included not only those directly bribed, who we would define as an aristocracy of labour, but the mass of the Protestant working class. As a result the British authorities have been able with relative confidence to rely on the loyalty of the Protestant working class in opposing equal rights for their Catholic brothers and sisters.

Even in 1932 when because of the staggering collapse of areas of traditional Protestant employment the working class was only able to find momentary unity. Because of the steep rise in unemployment, up to 40.8% in the engineering industry and 73.7% in shipbuilding, both Catholics and Protestants found themselves so to speak in the same boat, as many of the privileges secured by the Protestants dried up and their poverty equalled that of the Catholics. Thus Protestant and Catholic workers in Belfast were roused to physically fight shoulder to shoulder under the leadership of communists against the authorities over unemployment benefit, "and many of the fiercest battles took place in the Protestant quarters of the city." (Tom Bell *The Struggle of the Unemployed in Belfast*, October 1932 p2). Despite this militant unity, with the revival of industry, especially shipbuilding, in 1935 Protestant wor-

kers were easily led to participate in vicious pogroms against Catholics. With British connivance; unity proved fleeting, sectarianism stubbornly powerful.

In the late 1960s, at the tail end of the long boom, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association emerged reflecting Catholic demands for a reform of the sectarian state in the Six Counties and an end of discrimination against Catholics. Based mainly on the college educated Catholic middle class which grew rapidly during the boom, the movement's eminently reasonable programme proved in the context of the Six Counties to be dynamite although it managed to draw in some Protestant elements as in 1932 unity proved impossible to maintain. Not only did demands for the ending of sectarian discrimination threaten the very foundations of the state but the boom was ending, stagnation rearing its head through the veneer of uninterrupted growing prosperity. As a result disoriented Protestants determined to preserve their privileges, were easily whipped into a frenzy by the semi-fascist Rev. Paisley and they joined the notorious B Specials in attacking Catholic areas and Civil Rights marches. NICRA lost even its token support from Protestant based organisations and was soon reduced to nothing more than a shell as it insisted on keeping its struggle firmly within the limits of reformism.

The sectarian attacks which included mass intimidation and the burning out of many Catholic families led to bitter and violent resistance by the oppressed. The Unionist establishment under both Prime Ministers O'Neill and Chichester-Clark attempted to placate the Catholics with certain concessions, but these were meaningless, far too little, far too late, and led to ever more fearful Protestant flocking behind the sectarian demagoguery of Paisley.

The social order wobbled: rioting, most determined in Derry, open defiance by the Catholic masses in the ghettos, and the inability of the local satraps to cope forced Britain's Labour government to insist that British forces be asked to intervene in order to prevent total breakdown.

Portrayed as a benign act, the intervention of British troops was in reality not an attempt to mediate or keep apart two warring factions; their role was strictly partisan — to restore the status quo, to crush all resistance to British law and British order.

While Britain acted with the iron fist against the Catholics its method of domination of the Six Counties necessitated the continued use of the velvet glove for the Protestant workers.

In the 1970s the role of Britain's Orange bourgeois allies markedly declined, through the Unionist monolith shattering, the imposition

\* While it is true that some argue that the IDA's package offered by the Twenty-Six Counties government is more attractive than that of the IDB (Industrial Development Board) in the Six Counties, this is only a very marginal question, and can in no way account for the markedly different performances of the two economies in the 1970s.

of direct rule, and the near extinction of native capitalism (which, by the mid 1970s accounted for no more than 20% of total investment in the Six Counties). Despite this it was vital to keep the privileges offered to the Protestant workers sufficiently substantial in relative terms to the Catholics in order to prevent the erosion of the material foundations of the Protestants' sectarian bigotry. So, far from reversing discrimination and ending the oppression of the Catholics, intervention of British troops and later direct rule actually maintained the Protestants' relative privileges and vastly increased the burden of oppression suffered by the Catholics.

Catholics have always suffered unemployment rates between two to three times higher than Protestants, but as unemployment has now risen to around 20% a large section of the Protestant working class finds itself facing the prospect of poverty. In the face of this the British government has deliberately pursued a strategy of creating tens of thousands of government sponsored jobs, all the while increasing the impact of bribery of those in work (mainly Protestants) through linking their wages directly to those in Britain. Thus wages for men increased from 87.5% of the British average in 1971 to 92.1% in 1979, and those of women from 92.0% to 98.1%\* (see Table Five). And while the rate of exploitation in the Six Counties as a percentage of the figure in Britain rose in the 1950s and 1960s, it declined dramatically in the 1970s (see Table Six).

TABLE FIVE  
Six Counties' Average Gross  
Weekly Earnings as a  
Percentage of Britain's  
(All Industries)

Year	Men (aged 21 and over)	Women (aged 18 and over)
1971	87.5	92.0
1972	86.4	93.4
1973	88.0	93.0
1974	88.3	89.9
1975	89.2	95.0
1976	94.4	100.1
1977	90.3	95.5
1978	88.7	93.4
1979**	92.1	98.1

(Source: Boyd Black et al  
*Low Pay in Northern Ireland* p7)

TABLE SIX  
The rate of Exploitation in the  
Six Counties as a Percentage  
of the figure for the UK as a  
Whole

Year	%	Year	%
1954	68	1971	85
1955	69	1972	76
1956	70	1973	88
1957	74	1974	80
1958	68	1975	83
1963	77	1976	75
1968	83	1977	61
1970	89	1978	66

The cost for Britain has been considerable. In 1981 the Six Counties received a direct subsidy of £780 million, or just over £500 per head (£10 per week for every man, woman and child. And if pensions and the cost of 'security' are taken into account the total rises to around £1,500 a year, about 50% of its total public spending. This represents a 100% increase in Britain's subsidy to the Six Counties statelet in the course of the decade 1968-78 — even after the effects of inflation are taken out. So while employment in manufacturing industry has declined from 40% of all jobs in 1960 to a little more than 25% in 1979 and unemployment has soared, the total number of jobs has actually risen. The cause of this was pinpointed by comrade Bob Rowthorn in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*: the total number of service jobs has grown enormously, by 80,000 in fact and in particular the number of government jobs, which increased during the 1970s in the Six Counties at a rate far higher than in Britain (Vol 5, No.1 March 1981). By 1983 46% of all

employment was accounted for by the public sector on which the Six Counties' economy is 70% dependent (*Financial Times* June 6 1984).

These measures have all been designed to perpetuate sectarianism, to maintain the loyalty of the Protestant working class to the link with Britain and their fear of equal rights for the Catholic working class. But despite British efforts to shore up the Six Counties' economy a combination of growing world capitalist stagnation, experienced by its main trading partner in an acute form, and the growing resistance to Britain's presence by the Catholics has meant that it "is now, perhaps for the first time, in danger of losing its entire manufacturing base." (*Financial Times*, March 17 1982)

## 2. Why Britain Stays

Britain has fought numerous colonial wars this century in order to preserve its empire, but in the aftermath of the Second World War and the rise of Pax Americana, the world's largest empire was consigned to the history books, over which only gin-soaked relics weep. Why then with this history, why when countries like India, Kenya, Nigeria, Yemen, Cyprus, and Malaya have gained independence, should Britain still hang on to the Six Counties?

Most parliamentarians justify Britain's continued presence on the basis of the so-called 'Loyalist veto' and fears of a 'blood bath' in the event of withdrawal. But when has British imperialism ever been concerned with protecting the 'rights' of majorities let alone shedding blood, especially that of Irishmen? If it had it would never have built an empire, it would never have engaged in any violent struggle with nationalist forces in order to maintain its rule. What is more, as we have already made crystal clear, Britain has been responsible for millions of Irish deaths, and it has undoubtedly carefully and deliberately constructed the Protestant 'veto' in the first place. All Marxists worthy of the name recognise that if Britain considered it in its interests it would not hesitate for one moment to consider the rights of the Protestants, blood bath or no blood bath, veto or no veto. So why does it stay?

Part of the answer lies in Britain's determination to preserve the unity of the United Kingdom, the fact that the Six Counties are not just regarded as near home, but the fact that important sections of the ruling class consider them as home. Enoch Powell put his finger on this when he declared:

"Ulster is Britain's test of its own will to be a nation. A nation that will not defend its own frontiers or recognise the rights of its own people is well along the road to being no nation." (*The Guardian* February 18 1981).

The *Times* Editorial had similar views on the matter: "The Ulster question goes to the heart of allegiance and national identity. That is the root issue of political society prior to and surpassing in importance all other issues." (July 2, 1981). In other words the ruling class fears that defeat in the Six Counties, 'an integral part of the UK', would lead to challenges to its rule in Britain itself.

Of course before 1921 all of Ireland 'enjoyed' an integrated status. Formal independence was granted to southern Ireland only because it allowed the link to be maintained with Ulster capital, whose shipyards, linen manufacture, and engineering were of great significance to Britain's economy. As well as this, by maintaining a grip over the Six Counties, making it a component part of the United Kingdom, Britain felt confident that in the event of war it could secure all of Ireland and prevent it from becoming a springboard from which to threaten the mainland.

This strategic view of the importance of Ireland still plays an unambiguous part in the thinking of the military establishment. Vice-Admiral Sir Ian McGough, former Royal Navy Commander of NATO's North Atlantic area stated the following in the May 1982 edition of *International Relations*: "the strategic importance of Ireland (the island) in any scheme of protecting shipping in the approaches to the British Isles can hardly be exaggerated... if Britain should once again find herself at war — and particularly with the Soviet Union — she could not accept a militant left-wing government in Eire, with the prospect of military facilities being not only denied to Britain, but made available to her enemy" (quoted by Geoff Bell *The British in Ireland* pp.97-98).

While there have been barbed mutterings about ending the Twenty-Six Counties' neutrality from Whitehall, and suggestions that it should join NATO or some EEC style defence pact, the Twenty-Six Counties' government has rhetorically replied by pleading that this must go hand in hand with a united Ireland, something which Britain has of course not seriously negotiated or even considered, preferring not to put its trust in the stability of a united Ireland, but in the maintenance of the existing situation which has served it so well.

For by dissecting Ireland and maintaining its direct colonial hold over the Six Counties Britain as we have seen effectively put back the wheels of progress; it froze the reactionary position maintained by the Protestant workers of the North, bought off the weak national bourgeoisie, and politically crippled the once militant working class in the South. This of course has had its costs, the aristocratic landowners had to be compensated, the Protestant workers bribed; but this was a small price to pay for strategic security, and a usually cooperative vassal in the form of the Southern bourgeoisie. Crucially through this the economic exploitation of both parts of Ireland was facilitated. The border, far from interfering with the efficiency of exploitation, allowed Britain to continue to dominate both sides of it, withdrawal from the Six Counties would undoubtedly end this situation.

Some including CPGB General Secretary Gordon McLennan have foolishly argued that it is actually in the interests of imperialism, including British imperialism, to re-unite Ireland. This, it is claimed, would allow Ireland to join NATO, enhance economic exploitation, and relieve Britain of the burden of military oppression and indeed the bribery of the Protestants. What this view conveniently forgets to consider is the consequences of a British withdrawal from Ireland, something the bourgeoisie themselves intuitively have understood. For a British withdrawal from the Six Counties would free previously pent up social forces; released they would, like the contents of Pandora's box, plague imperialism with nightmares turned reality. The ending of the British presence would throw all of Ireland into profound crisis, the result of which could only be extremely negative for imperialism, for withdrawal would ensure instability. Ireland would become gripped by social chaos, the end result of which could be revolutionary. This scenario haunts the bourgeoisie.

TE Utley, a former leader writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, eloquently voiced this fear when he wrote:

"The instant withdrawal of British troops... would plunge the whole of Ireland into anarchy on a scale hitherto unimagined. Whatever side emerged victorious would almost certainly be anti-British and would tend to look for support to Britain's enemies..."

"British security is hardly compatible with the existence of a Cuba a few miles from her Western shores. Any notion that the vacuum created by the withdrawal of United Kingdom troops would be promptly and smoothly filled by a successful invasion of the North by the Irish Republic and, as a result the establishment throughout Ireland of a peaceful, if rather inefficient and corrupt bourgeois state, is absurd" (quoted in *Revolutionary Communist*, No.8, p.11)

So the choice for Britain, far from being one between today's chronic guerrilla war and civil unrest in the Six Counties or a stable bourgeois united Thirty-Two County republic, is in fact between almost certain chaos and possible social revolution in the event of withdrawal or the maintenance of the status quo, something which although increasingly costly, at least has for British imperialism the advantage of being the devil you know as opposed to the devil you don't.

And what goes for British imperialism goes for imperialism in general, including US imperialism. For despite electioneering posturing by certain Irish American bourgeois politicians, the US has no interest in ending the British presence in Ireland. It clearly considers its interests best served by the maintenance of the border, and thus Ireland's social forces frozen in backward limbo.

## 3. The National Struggle

The demand for national self-determination against imperialist oppression is in the interests of a number of classes: it is therefore a democratic demand. It is not a demand that contradicts the struggle for socialism either in the oppressed or oppressing nation; in fact it can be used as a lever to open up the road to socialism if the working class is firmly committed to a principled position.

In the oppressed country the working class, by gaining hegemony over the national liberation struggle, can, as in Vietnam after the victory of the national revolution, open up an uninterrupted path to socialism. In the oppressing country itself the uprising of an oppressed nation can be made synonymous with the overall struggle against the bourgeoisie and its state.

But against this fundamental principled position a whole spectrum of opportunists raise objections. Amongst these there are those in both Ireland and Britain who have adopted the idea that far from there being an Irish nation divided and oppressed by Britain, there are two nations in Ireland.

One is Eire, which is Catholic (whose people are Irish) and 'Northern Ireland', which is Protestant (whose people are British). The partition of 1921, even though around

\* This was not due to industrial militancy. Workers in the Six Counties have had a far lower strike record than those in Britain. The IDB Northern Ireland actually boasts that the Six Counties has "one of the best labour relations records in the world". And 90% of all strikes are of 'British' origin, ie. national disputes of those such as hospital workers, firemen, or civil servants.

\*\* In 1979 average gross weekly earnings in the Six Counties for full time men aged 21 and over was £93.40 per week (92.1% of the British average). This was for an average working week of 44.5 hours (including 5.2 hours overtime). Full time male workers in Britain earned £101.40, but this was for an average working week of 43.2 hours. As a result average hourly earnings were 89% of the British average. Women full time workers earned an average of £61.80 for an average working week of 39 hours; the figure for Britain was £63 for 37.5 hours, thus the hourly average was 94% of the British average. The discrepancy between wages in the Six Counties and Britain is at least in part explained by the industrial and employment structure in the Six Counties. It has a larger agricultural sector well known for low pay and a large proportion of its workforce is employed in declining industries such as textiles — again a low payer. Government sources estimate that between a fifth and a third of the difference in average weekly earnings between the Six Counties and Britain are accounted for by the Six Counties' particular industrial and employment structure. But given the fact that the rate of exploitation is significantly lower in the Six Counties, the real question we must ask ourselves is not why the area's wages are lower than in Britain but why they are so similar?



# A Lesson of October

Jack Conrad

THE REVOLUTION of October 25 (November 7) 1917 was a turning point in the history of humanity, for the first time the working class succeeded in putting an end to capitalist rule and through their dictatorship laid the foundations for the transition to communism.

Despite the fact that the October Revolution took place 67 years ago its lessons have lost none of their relevance to those fighting for peace, democracy, and socialism. The October Revolution brilliantly confirmed and deepened Marxist understanding about the nature of the state, the role of force in history, and the central role of a disciplined vanguard party guided by the most scientific theory in leading the masses to victory and then fending off the forces of counterrevolution.

Directly related and intimately linked to the building of such a vanguard party the October Revolution also proved the need for a ruthless, persistent, and determined ideological struggle against all opportunist ideological tendencies and manifestations inside the workers' movement. Part and parcel of building an ideologically sound party was the defeat and elimination of reformism, social chauvinism, and revisionism which are inevitable while the workers act under capitalism. And without the complete victory of this struggle there could in the words of Lenin be "no hope for the dictatorship of the proletariat" — a truth often ignored or deliberately obscured today.

Of course there are many around today, not least inside our CPGB, who assuredly declare that the methods employed by the Bolsheviks were all very well and good for backward Russia, but 'times they have changed' and therefore we should junk the awkward and embarrassing ideological baggage inherited from them. These worshippers of bourgeois respectability, our 'creative thinkers' who believe we can get communism not only through the Labour Party but by using the capitalist military/bureaucratic state machine, are, despite their pretensions, far from original, they in fact do little more than unconsciously repeat the same revisionist claptrap against which Lenin and his comrades had to direct their polemical salvos.

Today the names of Bernstein,

Millerand and Struve only appear in the footnotes of history but in their day they came out with acclaimed weighty tomes which modified that revolutionary principle, spoke from many a labour movement platform to wide agreement that this revolutionary tactic was invalid. In the same 'anti-dogmatic' way these 'creative thinkers' ended up justifying the imperialism of their own nation even to the point of urging workers to slaughter each other in World War I for the sake of the 'fatherland'.

Those who in our own time think we have no such problem with our leaders are fooling themselves. Have not the leaders of the Italian, Spanish, French, British, and Japanese communist parties to name but a few fallen into opportunism more overt than Russia's Mensheviks — their support for import and immigration controls, the chauvinist attitude they have towards those of different nations has not only led them all supporting the military

spending of 'their' nation but in the case of France even nuclear weapons which are unquestionably directed against the Soviet Union. The unvarnished truth, a truth that must be faced by all advanced workers, is that 67 years after the October Revolution, the leaders of most communist parties in the advanced capitalist nations — parties which were established because of the inspiration provided by that monumental event — have descended to the depths of social chauvinism. Indeed it is often the case that it is only that the call has not been made from the ruling class which prevents certain leaders transforming their parties along the lines of Britain's Labour Party, Germany's SDP, and France's Socialist Party — that is into bourgeois workers' parties.

In Britain degeneration has gone to the extent where the very existence of the Communist Party is put into question because of the domination of

## STATEMENT The Brighton Bombing

THE LENINISTS of the CPGB utterly condemn the chauvinist response of the Euro/McLennan leadership and the *Morning Star* to the attack on the Grand Hotel in Brighton by the Provisional IRA. We unconditionally support the struggle of the forces of national liberation in Ireland against British imperialism: we therefore have every sympathy with the IRA's attempt to wreak revenge on the Tory establishment. Those who claim that such actions "simply play into the hands of the most reactionary elements in the ruling class" in practice advocate pacifism and equate the violence of the oppressed with acts of individual terrorism. It is not the terrorism of the IRA which divides the working class in the Six Counties, nor is it responsible for the lack of solidarity for the cause of Ireland from the workers' movement in Britain. No, the cause of these problems must be placed firmly at the feet of British imperialism, its ability to bribe the Protestant section of the working class in Ireland, and the fact that it can maintain the loyalty of the mass of workers in Britain itself

for its continued domination of Ireland. Confronted by resistance of the nationalist masses in the Six Counties imperialism inevitably uses the iron fist; it needs no excuses for repressive measures. The task for communists in Britain — the oppressing nation — is not to bewail the violence of the oppressed but to build a mass movement of workers against British imperialism. Our failure to do this has cost us dear. No nation that oppresses another can itself be free — something tragically proved by the way the methods developed to suppress the Irish have been unleashed against the miners.

## STATEMENT London District's Proconsul

AT AN EMERGENCY meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party on October 15 the leadership factions took the unprecedented step of "helping out" the London District Committee following the untimely death of comrade Bill Dunn by appointing comrade Ian McKay to take his place "until" the District Congress. The "temporary" shifting of comrade McKay from the position of National Organiser to effectively

its leadership by various cliques of opportunists. Refusal to admit this tragic fact, attempts to conceal fundamental differences beneath the veneer of Party 'unity' are not only acts of moral weakness but are in and of themselves opportunist. In the same way ideas about sinking our differences in the face of a determined Tory enemy, especially given its assault on the miners, are easy philistine slogans which far from strengthening our class do the opposite.

In practice the 'unity' of the philistine means revolutionaries, militants, class conscious workers uniting around and subordinating themselves to the likes of Neil (I condemn all violence) Kinnock and in the context of the CPGB Gordon (I back Neil) McLennan, or Tony (I back Neil) Chater. Because of this when we hear calls for unity we always ask unity with whom, unity around what, unity for what?

This was the position of the Bolsheviks. They never sacrificed principle for the sake of 'unity'. Yes they were often organisationally united with opportunists, they were after all in the same party as the Mensheviks until 1912, but this was in order to expose the opportunists in the eyes of the workers who followed them.

We have the same position. We are united in the same party as a number of factions, the McLennanites, the Eurocommunists, the Chater/Costello grouping, the Straight Leftists, all of whom are unquestionably opportunist. But while organisationally united with them we are conducting an open ideological struggle in order to expose the opportunists in front of not only Communist Party members but all advanced workers. We do this in order to build the Communist Party, in order to attract to it fully conscious and partisan recruits from the class. This is the way to build the vanguard Britain's workers need if they are to settle accounts with 'their' capitalists as Russia's Bolsheviks and workers were able to do with 'theirs' in October 1917.

For the tendency around *The Leninist* the October Revolution and the role of the Bolsheviks is a shining beacon which even over the span of nearly seven decades still brightly lights up the path before us. Given our situation today when in the face of the desperate need of our class for a vanguard party when our CPGB shows the clear signs of disintegration because of the opportunists we remember that the Bolsheviks led the Russian workers to victory not despite their ideological struggles but because of them. This is a key lesson for us today.

the Proconsul of London District shows just how worried the leadership are that the 'middle of the road' Dunn would be replaced by a comrade who shares the oppositionist politics of the majority of the London District Committee. By not even consulting the District Committee, in the face of fierce argument from EC oppositionists, the Euro/McLennan leadership show how willingly they flout the norms of inner-Party democracy, how contemptuous they are of Party activists, and how fearful they are about the growth of opposition against them from the Party — especially from London the largest concentration of Party members next to Scotland.

This dictatorial imposition of McKay, the Special General Meeting of the PPPS (the coop that owns the *Morning Star*) sponsored by the leadership, the PPPS Management Committee's call for a boycott of the leadership's SGM, the decision to call its own SGM in January, all attest to the fact that the crisis in the Communist Party is reaching boiling point, as does the leadership's setting aside a £600,000 fund to fight the inner-Party struggle — no doubt primarily in the bourgeois courts.

one third of the population in the carefully gerrymandered Six Counties statelet were Catholic, recognised this fact, or so the theory goes.\*

Since partition 'modern Irish irredentism' has been used by bourgeois politicians in the Twenty-Six Counties in order to secure the support of the populace against the outside threat — Britain. And in our time this ideology has gained support from the Catholic minority in the Six Counties, which is often described as 'belonging' to the 'Catholic nation'. It is this 'backward nationalist ideology' which blocks the development of independent working class movements in both parts of Ireland; it is the problem which leaves Ireland alone in Europe without large workers' parties. In the hands of the Two Nationists the IRA becomes the villain of the piece and the British state a frustrated victim, which if only allowed would sell out the 'British' people of 'Ulster' as a necessary precondition for the ending of the Twenty-Six Counties' neutrality and the integration of a united Ireland into NATO — which would also open up Ireland to more 'far reaching' economic exploitation.

Many of the adherents of this view not only advocate that the British workers' movement must resolutely oppose IRA terror against the majority of the population in the Six Counties but they insist that we must also offer the 'majority' our solidarity and material aid in their struggle against undemocratic moves to 'expel' them from the UK. It is claimed that the best way to overcome sectarianism is for British political parties, that is, the Labour Party, to organise in the North so that workers can recognise their interests as workers through getting down to the bread and butter questions at the root of politics.

Of course all such attempts to make the Irish, Catholic or Protestant, 'more like us' have floundered. Militant's victory in getting Derry Trades Council to stand workers' candidates in local elections ended in utter humiliation. The cretinous 'bread and butter' method of overcoming sectarianism says everything about those advocating it and their contempt for genuine revolutionary politics. They seem to glory in the domination of the workers in Britain by a privileged caste of philistine labour bureaucrats. They are so narrow minded, so engrossed in trade unionism and 'normal' politics as they have existed in Britain, so arrogant that the British way is the only way and that the Irish must overcome their nationalism, that they end up not only advocating that workers in the Six Counties are offered liberation through deadening Labourism but they themselves objectively adopt big-power chauvinism.

For 'socialists' of an oppressor nation who call upon an oppressed people to 'forget' their nationality are not internationalists as they claim, let alone Marxists, but advocates of submission, who refuse to recognise the distinction between the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor. These 'socialists' who disdainfully call upon the Irish to drop their nationalism, who simply equate republicanism with loyalism, who chant 'not Green, not Orange, but Labourite Pink' in fact objectively seek to perpetuate British domination, cloaking their treachery in parodies of working class slogans about unity and comradeship.

A Marxist analysis of Ireland must start from the concrete analysis of British conquest, how Britain's imperialist domination has been maintained by fostering sectarianism and by dividing the country, as a first principle recognising the fundamental difference between the nationalism and violence of an oppressed nation and that of an imperialist oppressor nation. Only through this method can we avoid falling into the trap of subjectivism

which however leftist it may start out being, invariably, given the powerful magnetic forces exerted by bourgeois society, is pulled to the right and into the camp of reformist respectability and the bourgeois art of the possible and to opposition to the undeviating proletarian science of what must be.

This does not mean that Leninists, as some Two Nationists ridiculously claim, deviate towards Irish nationalism or see the workers in Ireland only playing a tailist role behind the republican movement, or even that we consider that the Protestant section of the working class has no rights, that it should be bombed into a united Ireland; such suggestions can only be a result of deliberate distortion or a naive failure to understand our proletarian internationalism.

But before we develop our ideas on these questions (see Part III) let us deal with the question of nationality in Ireland, for we by no means deny that two nations could develop in Ireland.

Nations are living, evolving communities of people which can diverge as well as converge, as communists consider they ultimately will. Nations are historically constituted communities formed on the basis of common experience, territory, and culture. The Irish nation evolved from the Celtic tribes and the English feudal invaders as well as the Scottish and English Protestant settlers of the early 17th century\*\* far from being only loosely connected these elements slowly merged. Generation after generation, differences in language, economic life and culture diminished so that by the 19th century they were of secondary importance, a fact vividly illustrated by Wolf Tone the Protestant who founded the United Irishman and led the 1798 uprising against Britain.

Partition, rather than recognising the existence of two nations, resulted from Britain's determination to continue to dominate all of Ireland, something it facilitated through its creation of a labour aristocracy based on Protestant descendants of Scottish and English settlers. By cementing an alliance with this section of the working class and ensuring its relative privileges, a sectarian statelet could be created which far from manifesting stability has, especially in recent times, shown all the signs of profound economic, social and political instability, something inevitable given its foundation on British imperialist gerrymandering, discrimination, and terror.

The people of the Six Counties of Ireland are not part of the British nation. They are in the UK only because of the power of imperialism. Its economy is not that of a fully integrated and equal part of Britain; it is an oppressed directly colonised area (which next to the Italian south has the most severe social and economic problems in the EEC). The inhabitants of the Six Counties have a vastly different cultural and political life to Britain, something made plain by their insistence on not electing British type politicians but Paisleyite or Sinn Féin candidates, their refusal to 'forget' the Battle of the Boyne, the Famine, William of Orange, and Easter 1916. Indeed, British imperialism itself is fully aware of the difference. It does after all pass specific draconian laws for the Six Counties, discards the English jury system, interned without trial hundreds of republicans, deports UK citizens back to the Six Counties, maintains its domination by deliberately and callously fostering sectarianism, and pumps in millions of pounds in order to specifically bribe a section of the working class based on their religious affiliation.

Historically, the Irish economy North and South has looked towards Britain as the outlet for its products, rather than the stunted home market. The nature of the

economies has changed — particularly the Twenty-Six Counties — but the pattern remains essentially the same. The British market absorbs almost 60% of the Six Counties' manufactured output and just under half of the Twenty-Six Counties' exports. Despite this, cross border trade has grown (albeit from a very low base figure) at a phenomenal rate: exports from the South by an average of 24% from 1952, and from the North total exports grew by an average of 30% between 1973-9. And behind these impressive figures lies the even more impressive performance of Ireland's one nationalist smuggling industry which deals in goods as diverse as cattle, TVs, hi-fi equipment, and drinks. Lamb smuggling alone is estimated to have been worth up to £20 million in 1980.

The cultivation of loyalism and the creation of a sectarian statelet have hardly allowed the smooth continuation of the process of merger between the various components of the Irish nation, but it has not created two nations. Both parts of Ireland have their important differences, but like North and South Korea, East and West Germany, North and South Vietnam, it is one nation.

But while we consider the Six Counties to be a dissected part of Ireland and all its people to be Irish, this does not mean that the Six Counties could not become a nation in its own right. Given a couple of centuries of separation, independent economic and cultural development it would be inevitable that two nations would emerge; this could be accelerated by dramatic change, say the expulsion of the Catholic section of the populace from the north. But in the here and now, and despite the 'troubles' and the effects that this has on crossing the border, movements between the two areas "are probably freer than between any other two states of the EEC" (*Financial Times* November 18 1982). There are random road blocks by the British forces, and sometimes by those of the IRA, but citizens of both the Twenty-Six Counties and the Six Counties frequently cross the border to do the weekend shopping, or go to work. Catholics of course have relations across the border and indeed they often marry residents from the other area something not exactly unknown amongst Protestants, especially before the 'troubles' — hardly what one would expect from two nations, one of which (or so we are told) is determined to have nothing to do with the other. The fact is that the Six Counties' population has not even developed an economic life which has grown away from their southern neighbours, let alone evolved a different language, or a distinct culture. Yes, there are different religions, but this is true of many nations including Britain; yes there are different accents, but then this is so for people in Cornwall compared with those in Yorkshire.

Those who are determined to see a 'Protestant' nation in the Six Counties (and estimates derived from the last population census indicate that Catholics might make up 42% of the population today), those who are un-Marxist enough to use religion as the basis of their understanding of what constitutes a nation might like to speculate about two nations existing in Scotland or even within the confines of cities like Glasgow or Liverpool. What made northern Ireland and in particular the Belfast area different from the rest of Ireland in the nineteenth century was the residue of the 'Ulster custom', the fact that it was the focus for industrialisation, first around linen, and then shipbuilding and engineering, and the fact that it was Protestants who were those to first leave the land and the fact that they were allowed to monopolise the skilled jobs, something that encouraged them to turn against their Catholic fellow workers and support the sectarian politics of loyalism.

This behaviour was not determined by their being a different 'nation', but by the creation of a labour aristocracy based on religious discrimination, something only possible due to the domination of Ireland by British imperialism. (In a not dissimilar way divisions between black and white workers in South Africa and the US South are not based on nationality but the fostering of a labour aristocracy). This said, the partition of the country has inevitably had some effect in creating a divergence, for while British imperialism continues to dominate both parts of Ireland, the method it has been forced to employ has necessitated different forms, especially since 1972 and the imposition of direct rule. This and the 'troubles' has led to some specific characteristics of the north becoming more prominent, especially the xenophobic sectarian outlook of the Protestants.

In the absence of two nations the task that dominates Ireland, its politics, its economy, and its people is that of national reunification and liberation. It is the British imposed division, British cultivated sectarianism, and British domination of all Ireland that is responsible for turning back the wheels of progress and for the absence of an ideologically advanced workers' movement in Ireland — not the nationalists.

The reverse side of the chauvinist two nationalists' coin is the pseudo internationalists, who for all their workerism end up with exactly the same chauvinist conclusions. In this camp we must include the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), which not only calls upon workers in the Six Counties to unite on the basis of narrow trade unionism but finds itself swept along with the wave of bourgeois media hysteria every time IRA bombs have resulted in civilian casualties, this especially being so when those casualties occur in Britain rather than in Ireland.

Thus in the wake of the Birmingham bombings\*\*\* in 1974 the SWP launched into a backstabbing assault on the Provisional IRA, categorising it as merely one of those "small, conspiratorial groups set apart from the mass of workers" (*Socialist Worker* November 30 1974).

It is because we recognise the democratic content of the struggle of Sinn Féin and the IRA that we give them unconditional support, and unconditionally support their demand for Irish self-determination, and this includes supporting them whatever tactics they choose to use. Those who simply label the Provos as a terrorist group do so in order to excuse their own chauvinism. For while the republican movement has used and does use terrorism, their actions are not isolated individual acts of terror but merely a particular tactic employed in a protracted armed and political struggle against the forces of British imperialism. This struggle has of course seen many other tactics employed — not least the ballot box through which it has exposed the lie that it had no mass support — something also proved by the very survival of the IRA, depending as it does on

\* The originator of this theory was the Irish Communist Organisation, a group which has its origins in a split from the CPI over Khrushchev's criticisms of Stalin. Because of its commitment to the Six Counties "maintaining its place in the UK" it prefixed its name with 'British' and became the BICO. Another organisation adhering to a version of the two nations theory is the Trotskyite *Militant*, which advocates workers' unity through economic struggles.

\*\* Nations are not based on race or tribe and certainly not religious prejudice. They can though be formed from diverse peoples. The Italian nation was formed from Romans, Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs, etc; the French from Gauls, Romans, Britons, Teutons, etc; the British from Britons, Romans, Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Cornish, Welsh, Picts, Scots, Irish, etc. So there is no such thing as the "Jewish nation", let alone a "Protestant nation" in the Six Counties; to suggest such a thing is to abandon Marxism for idealism.

\*\*\* An action which to this day the IRA denies. Despite this, the point about the SWP is completely valid as it has reacted in exactly the same way on numerous other occasions when the IRA has claimed responsibility.



popular sympathy to protect itself from the forces of British imperialism.

So the IRA is no Red Brigade, no Red Army Faction, no Weathermen, no "elite group" as comrade Gordon McLennan moronically claimed in his 1973 pamphlet *Britain and the Irish Crisis* (p10). It is a national liberation movement in essence exactly like the NLF in Vietnam, ZANU in Zimbabwe, the FDR/FMLN in El Salvador, and the ANC(SA) in South Africa.

While many find it ever so easy to support national liberation movements 1,000 or more miles away, when it comes to the other side of the St George's Channel 'special features' are suddenly discovered which invalidate basic principles supporting the right to self-determination. With these 'ifs' and 'buts' the call for the withdrawal of Britain and British troops can only be considered as part of a 'package' of progressive reforms which must be carried out by imperialism itself (ie. progressive colonialism, à la Eduard Bernstein).

So although opportunists glorify military actions by liberation movements if they take place a long distance away, when exactly the same tactics are employed by the IRA or INLA terrorism becomes unacceptable. Blinkering themselves, ignoring their praise for the ANC etc, terrorism is branded as automatically being an isolated individual act which those in the workers' movement should soundly condemn. Thus a car bomb detonated in Pretoria close to the Voortrekkerhoogte military headquarters which kills civilians is praised\* while IRA actions are condemned as divisive. Indeed, there are some who claim that terrorism is a complete anathema to communism, that terrorism must be opposed *per se*.

This is most certainly nonsense. Of course we do not elevate terror above other tactics but we ourselves cannot reject it under certain circumstances. This was something bluntly stated by Lenin in his 1901 pamphlet *Where to Begin*: "In principle we have never rejected, and cannot reject, terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle, given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions" (CW Vol 5 p.19).

We could produce countless other examples from the writings of Lenin about the correctness of terrorism under certain conditions, examples from the practice of the Bolsheviks from 1905 to the October Revolution and the Civil War, let alone from national liberation movements as diverse as Washington's Minutemen, the French Resistance, and the NLF in Vietnam. But it would all be of no avail, for our opportunists' opposition to the national liberation movement in Ireland has not only to do with the rejection of terrorism as a tactic but with their loyalty to the peaceful parliamentary road and increasingly to British imperialism itself.

It is to cover this fact that leads opportunists frantically throwing one slander after another at the liberation movement in Ireland. In their frenzy they seem to have no concern that their own position is reduced to an eclectic shamble of pro-imperialist, anti-socialist, anti-republican prejudice. They do not even seem concerned that despite mouthing the slogan for the right of Ireland to self-determination their programme specifically denies it in its preconditions that imperialism must fulfil what they call democratic demands. Of course the major democratic demand that lies at the nub of the Irish question is none other than that of self-determination.

Those who place conditions in the way of this demand, whatever their subjective intentions, side with imperialism. Writing in the aftermath of the Easter 1916 Uprising,

Lenin declared that:

"If we do not want to betray socialism, we must support every rebellion against our main enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big state, provided it is not the rebellion of a reactionary class. By refusing to support rebellions of annexed territories we objectively become annexationists." (CW Vol 22 p333).

#### 4. Social Forces

The national question hangs over Irish economic and political life like an ever present black storm cloud. Nothing can escape its shadow. How the national question will be resolved is inextricably linked to the class forces in Ireland and their relationship to British imperialism.

In the past, most notably in the nineteenth century, the Green bourgeoisie, despite its small size and marginal economic role, was willing to fight British imperialism, or at least to stand on the platform of Home Rule. But with partition and then the creation of the Free State those drives which propelled the Green bourgeoisie into conflict with British imperialism, most notably the desire to exploit the Irish workers and people itself, while not fully met were at least partially satisfied. Certainly after the failure of de Valera's attempts at independent development, the Green bourgeoisie by and large accepted their role as being a collaborating bourgeoisie which with the growth of industrialisation in the Twenty-Six Counties under the impulse of imperialism, merged under imperialist domination into a single entity with imperialism. So the Green bourgeoisie as bourgeois revolutionaries proved stillborn. It is true that Fianna Fail does employ anti-British rhetoric but there can be little doubt that this is mainly for the benefit of nationalist orientated voters. Certainly when the 'anti-British' Charles Haughey was Prime Minister he epitomised the case of the poacher turned gamekeeper. He brought in tougher border security cooperation with British forces in the Six Counties, refrained from making political capital out of the British failures at 'devolution', was very restrained over the H-Block hunger strike, and was in general a very good friend to Britain. The report of the New Ireland Forum with its emphasis on "cross border security" and recognition of "British sovereignty" over the Six Counties just shows how pusillanimous the Green bourgeoisie — both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail — have become. What concerns them is not Irish unity but the possible dire consequences that might flow from the continued "troubles in the North".

In the face of a pro-British imperialist Orange bourgeoisie, bribed Protestant masses, a docile compromising lackeyish Green bourgeoisie, and certainly after Easter 1916 a disorientated working class, the centre stage of the struggle for Irish independence (the bourgeois revolution) was left to the forces of the petty bourgeoisie.

They have time and time again launched themselves against British domination of Ireland. Evolving from the Fenians of the nineteenth century, through the Irish Republican Brotherhood, to the IRA and Sinn Fein of the 1918-21 war of independence and the split in the civil war, to eventually the Provisional IRA of our own day, which was formed in 1970 out of the struggle against the sectarian state which erupted in 1969.

It is true that at the time of the split in the republican movement between the Provisionals and Officials, the Provisionals declared in their manifesto that the MacGiolla leadership was intent on pushing onto the republican movement "an extreme form of socialism" and that the "ultimate objective of the leadership... is nothing but a totalitarian dictatorship of the

left" (Michael Farrell *Northern Ireland: The Orange State* p270). But those who characterised the split as simply a left/right one were soon proved wrong by the Officials' drift towards social democratic respectability as the Workers' Party (WP) in the Twenty-Six Counties and their ignominious oblivion in the Six Counties. What is more, the Provisionals quickly moved to the left, dropping much of their early narrow Green nationalistic anti-communist rhetoric and replacing it with nationalist petty bourgeois revolutionary socialism, which identified the struggle in Ireland with not only what they saw as similar Gallic movements in the Basque country and Wales but with organisations such as the FSLN in Nicaragua and SWAPO in Namibia.

Those who had insisted that the Provisionals were a 'terrorist group' with no mass base (most notably the Labourite proconsul, Roy Mason) were of course devastatingly exposed in August 1981 when Bobby Sands the IRA H-Block hunger striker was elected MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone. After he died his martyr's death an estimated 100,000 attended his funeral to pay tribute to him and his cause. That this was no momentary aberration was shown in subsequent elections; indeed in the 1984 EEC elections Sinn Fein secured 13.34% of the total votes cast in the Six Counties. A MORI poll reported on BBC2's *Brass Tacks Reports* in July 1984 revealed that a significant number of SDLP voters were prepared to switch to Sinn Fein. 40% viewing the IRA as basically patriots and idealists, in fact the majority of SDLP voters were strongly of the view that the national question is the real cause of the 'troubles' and that 'terrorism' is the least important cause.

That Sinn Fein is breathing down the neck of the SDLP and threatens to supplant it as the major nationalist party sends shivers of fear down the British establishment. Jim Prior, speaking as Northern Ireland Secretary, is reported in *The Times* to have told a private meeting of Tory MPs that if Sinn Fein overtook the SDLP the Six Counties would become "ungovernable, a Cuba off Britain's western shore." (July 17, 1984)

But while not dismissing Prior's fears the fact is that the politics of petty bourgeois nationalism have proved incapable of developing or sustaining an all Ireland revolutionary movement against British imperialism which can rally to its banner both those experiencing repression most severely — today the Catholic masses in the Six Counties — and all oppressed and exploited sections of the Irish population, including the Protestant working class or at least a section of it all of which would be necessary if Britain is to be ejected from Ireland. Because of its petty bourgeois nature, Sinn Fein has oscillated between reformism and guerrillaism in its attempt to fight Britain with physical force on the one hand and gain wider support on the other. For example when guerrilla struggles were crushed in 1923, Sinn Fein spawned the reformist nationalism of de Valera; likewise after the failure of the 1956-62 Border Campaign, Sinn Fein again slowly slipped into reformism, something only upset by the outbreak of the 'troubles' in 1969, which split the organisation in two.

Because of its oscillating politics and its inability to unite the broad masses, petty bourgeois nationalism is by itself unable to actually resolve the national question, simply because of the extraordinary mass of different but interlocked contradictions that exist: a collaborating Green bourgeoisie, a pro-British loyalist bourgeoisie and working class in the North, the division of the country, etc.

For while it is true that Sinn Fein stands in opposition to British imperialism, supports the guerrilla

campaign against the British state, its class basis, programme, and outlook made it impossible for it to achieve a decisive victory. This is partially due to the fact that Sinn Fein still essentially sees its struggle as being confined to the Six Counties, its activities in the South being seen as supportive. Because of this the approach in the Twenty-Six Counties has tended towards moralism, to simple appeals to the anti-British imperialist tradition. But more fundamentally it is because petty bourgeois nationalism — which however revolutionary — subordinates working class interests to that of Irish unity. And because this national unity is to be on the basis of capitalist relations of production not only are the workers in the South to be kept as auxiliaries but there exists no possibility of splitting the Protestant workers from loyalism. A united capitalist Ireland dominated by Green nationalism has, to say the least, little attraction for Protestant workers in Belfast. Not a few of them look askance on the backward social laws inspired by the Catholic Church in the Twenty-Six Counties; most notoriously the bans on abortion and birth control. What interest can Protestant workers have in such clerical reaction?

Therefore even if Sinn Fein overtakes the SDLP in the Six Counties, even if it manages to enlarge its 4.88% share of the vote in the Twenty-Six Counties, its Green nationalist programme offers no prospect of mobilising the workers as a class on an all Ireland basis.

Although Sinn Fein under the Adams leadership recognises the increasing importance of the working class in Ireland, and indeed is now projecting Sinn Fein as a socialist republican party, it still demands that the working class subordinate itself to the national struggle in alliance with other sections of Irish society including the capitalist class, which is decidedly anti-working class and reactionary.

In his presidential address to Sinn Fein in November 1983, Gerry Adams declared: "We must be mindful of the dangers of ultra-leftism and remember at all times that while our struggle has a major social and economic content, the securing of Irish independence is a prerequisite for the advance to a socialist republican society." (AP/RN November 17 1983). The implication is clear: despite its 'left turn', Sinn Fein today as in 1918 demands that "Labour must wait."

Sinn Fein because of its petty bourgeois nationalism, cannot fight for the hegemony of the working class over the national question. It thus refuses to see that the struggles for national liberation and socialism, far from being separate, must be linked if British imperialism is to be defeated. Because of this there is always the danger that if petty bourgeois nationalism continues to dominate the national struggle, as in the past it will do a deal with British imperialism.

Only the working class has an undeviating interest in the total ejection of imperialist influence from Ireland which is not only military and political but also economic. For the working class is the only class which has an undeviating interest in expropriating the means of production — so much of which is in the hands of the imperialists or dependent on them. Linked to this the working class not only has every interest in total victory but it has the potential to rally around its class programme all exploited and oppressed sections of the Irish population, this especially so today with the exceptionally rapid growth of the working class in the 1970s.

\* Though the editors of *Unity*, the incoherent paper of the Northern Area of the CPI, in an effort to distance themselves from the stigma of 'terrorism' have asked whether the "action in Pretoria might have been misguided." (May 28, 1983)



Geraldine Duffy

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION marks the most historic gain for women ever won. For the first time the door was opened for women to achieve genuine equality. But a vital ingredient that contributed to this victory is often forgotten, perhaps conveniently. In the years preceding the revolution communist women had consistently fought against the feminist movement (which was considerable at that time) taking a hold in the working class movement.

Yet today in our Party we not only see the Eurocommunists promoting feminism but also the centrists. This latest development was made obvious by a recent letter to the *Morning Star* by Susan Michie, a well known leading Straight Leftist who defended feminism against attacks from the left, effectively siding with the Euros in the current debate on women. Once more these 'hard left' posers expose their reformist underbelly but, more importantly, this development reveals just how thoroughgoing acceptance of feminism is in the Party.

### What is Feminism ?

Comrade Michie believes that feminism is simply an awareness of women's oppression and "is Marxist to the extent that it is understood within the framework of the class struggle", consequently she scorns the idea that feminism is nothing but bourgeois ideology. In other words comrade Michie seems to be making some sort of distinction between 'socialist feminism' which orientates itself towards working class women, and 'radical feminism' which does not.

However, 'socialist' feminism is just as big a danger to the Communist Party as radical feminism is, in reality, because of its orientation, it is more dangerous. Clara Zetkin, one of the founders of the Communist Party in Germany and leader of the international women's communist movement, in her own struggle against feminism in the German working class movement, warned against: "socialist outcroppings in the bourgeois women's movement, which turn up only so long as the bourgeois women feel themselves to be oppressed." Thus, if bourgeois women have trouble winning equality from their male counterparts they will try to use the power of the working class to win their aims and once these have been gained they will turn their backs on their working class 'sisters'. This is why feminism as a cross class ideology is extremely dangerous to the working class movement and why Zetkin repeatedly scorned the term "feminist", claiming that to join forces with the feminists would be to blunt the sharp edge of socialist policy. As Eleanor Marx put it: "Whenever working women meet together with bourgeois (or petty bourgeois) women it is the former who come

under the influence of the latter."

We stand with Zetkin while every other major group in the Party not only joins forces with the feminists but have accepted this ideology as their own. This leads us to a very important point. In the same way as being anti-Zionist does not make one anti-Semitic, being anti-feminist is not equal to being anti-women. Lenin argued strongly against the Bund organising Jewish workers separately, as did many Jewish Party members, yet who would accuse Lenin of anti-Semitism? Like Zionism or Black Power, feminism is a separatist ideology, it raises the question of who working class women should unite with — other women or working class men? Krupskaya pointed to the difference: "Bourgeois women... always oppose themselves to men and demand their rights from men. For them contemporary society is divided into the main categories, men and women." But, "That which unites the working woman with the working man is much stronger than that which divides them. They are united by their common lack of rights, their common need, their common conditions which are the exploitation of their labour, their common struggle and common goals."

This is not to reduce the struggle for women's liberation to the struggle for socialism but is a realisation that unless women fight for their class interests first and foremost their hopes for liberation will come to nothing. This is not to say that working class women do not support the demands of the bourgeois women's movement but only as a means to an end. First, because each victory represents an advance in itself, however limited, in that it provides somewhat better conditions of life for working class women. Secondly, and more importantly, because it exposes the limitations of capitalism and the fact that it cannot provide equality for the working class woman.

A lack of understanding of this Leninist approach to democratic rights has led to twin dangers manifesting themselves in the Party. On the one hand, some comrades deny the critical significance of the specific oppression of women and consequently have failed to take it up seriously in both theory and practice. This is a fault which comrade Michie points to although it's a bit rich given her own faction's particular failure to take the women's question seriously. It is this very lack of seriousness which has led the centrists into tailing the second danger — the development of a reformist position which differs little from bourgeois feminism.

In promoting a non-feminist but Marxist-Leninist approach to the women's question we are not defending those who fail to see the need for special work among women for fear that bourgeois feminism will rear its ugly head (something *Militant* and the

SWP have got down to a fine art). If we are to avoid this happening it is essential to emphasise educational work among male comrades and to involve them in communist work on women.

All too often in the Party male comrades "regard agitation and propaganda among women and the task of rousing and revolutionising them as of secondary importance, as the job of just the women communists... Unfortunately, we may still say of many of our comrades, 'Scratch the Communist and a philistine appears'... In the final analysis, it is an underestimation of women and their accomplishments." (Lenin, *Emancipation of women*, p114). This is an attitude especially prevalent among the centrists, not least among *Straight Left*. Overt bigotry against women is less acceptable in centrist circles than it once was, as Michie's letter indicates, but their total lack of initiative on this question points to the truth. What is more the fact that these bigoted attitudes are not far from the surface is illustrated by the acceptability of anti-gay cracks — indication enough that they still look to Stalin (who outlawed homosexuality) rather than Lenin and the Bolsheviks (who legalised it after 1917).

### 1917 and After

More than any argument anti-feminism was proved correct by the Bolshevik revolution. The Bolsheviks worked to polarise working class and bourgeois women in order to strengthen the bonds between working class women and men. Against this, the Mensheviks had argued for cooperation between working class women and the feminists. The revolution proved the Bolsheviks correct and struck the mightiest blow for women's equality ever.

The legislation which was introduced in 1917 granted women full equality — an unprecedented move. However, this does not mean that Soviet women were immediately equal with men or even that they are now. What was granted to women in the Soviet Union then and what still exists now is formal equality, this is distinct from real social equality. As Lenin put it: "the more thoroughly we clear the ground of the lumber of the old bourgeois laws and institutions, the more we realise that we have only cleared the ground to build on, but are not yet building."

The situation in the Soviet Union as regards women, although obviously vastly improved since just after the revolution, is still only formal equality. The major barrier to further progress for women in the Soviet Union at present is their role in the home, this is something Lenin pointed to around sixty five years ago: "even when women have full rights, they still remain down-trodden because all housework is left to them." The socialisation of domestic labour would

certainly be a major step towards women's liberation in the USSR but women will remain unequal for as long as society operates so that each is remunerated for *work done* rather than for *need* because of the child bearing function and lack of physical strength compared to men. In other words women will not be fully equal until communism.

These are facts which the blinkered centrist carthorses choose to ignore. Instead they are content to continually preach that "women have equality in the Soviet Union" as the ultimate cure-all. This blockheadedness results from a complete ignorance of the stage that the Soviet Union is at, not something that the CPSU discourages.

Given that women do not have full equality in the Soviet Union feminists would argue that the central question is one of women's power. Essentially, they argue, what is needed is a women's revolution, 'men' cannot be expected to solve the contradiction between the sexes. This view is extremely dangerous, it ignores the fact that these 'men' are first and foremost not 'men' but communists. If they fail to fight for women's liberation they fail in their communist duty because bourgeois rather than 'male' attitudes will have won the day. It is not in the interests of communists to continue the oppression of women, to suggest this is an argument determined by petty bourgeois ideology and is similar to that which argues that it is in the interest of a white worker to oppress a black worker. The Bolshevik Party was not a 'male' structure but a communist one and as such the liberation of women was something they were fully committed to.

Nevertheless, a struggle will have to be fought against "the most deep rooted, inveterate, hidebound and rigid" mentalities inherited from the old order, as Lenin (a man) put it. However, any suggestion that a second revolution, a women's revolution, is necessary fails to understand the nature of communism. If this is the case it makes a mockery of what being a communist means, and suggests that sex or for that matter colour, race, etc. is the motor of history not class struggle.

If the Soviet Union has failed to advance women as far as it could in both theory and practice (and it has) then it is our duty as proletarian internationalists to criticise them for this. In this way can we aid the advance of socialism and the position of women in socialist society. But advance for women in the socialist countries is not won by wearing blinkers or by promoting bourgeois ideology. Both fall into the same trap when they look at living socialism and the position of women — they do not in reality see socialism as *living*, they do not look at the advance of socialism culminating in communism as the answer. 'When the wise woman points to the future the fool looks only to the finger' — we are fighting for the future, the communist future.

## REVIEWS

## The Ireland Question

Peter Butler

London District Communist Party  
*Ireland: A Question for Us All* LDCP  
nd (1984) pp.32, 50p.

A LONG, BLOODY year after its 1982 Congress gave the go ahead, London District CP sent a delegation to the Six Counties. And now, mere weeks before the next District Congress, out pops the delegation's report in pamphlet form. Such is the relaxed approach to Ireland which typifies the opportunists in our Party's leadership both nationally and in London District, who like to dress up inaction as the height of communist achievement.

A decidedly shameful aspect of the delegation's visit fairly springs off the pages of the report: its discussion with the fascist Ulster Defence Association (UDA). That Party members could even contemplate sitting down for a meeting with the leader of the UDA, Andy Tyrrie, is incredible; to actually do so is unforgivable. The enormous ignorance, to the point of criminality, about the nature of fascism including the Strasserite current, is disclosed by the report's view of the UDA as seeking "to represent a working-class dimension" and which "expresses certain distinctive class views... in particular an apprehension of capitalist interests which was expressed in terms of a vague and hesitant 'socialism'" (p12). A hesitancy perhaps about whether or not to describe it as National Socialism in the presence of the delegation! However, in the absence of qualification of this assessment in the pamphlet, it is really not sufficient to then go on and simply regret the UDA's "remilitarisation" and "efforts" to forge links with overseas fascists, especially when anti-fascists have known about and publicised such connections for years. The UDA is a murderous product of British imperialism responsible for numerous assassinations of Catholics, and to deal in any way with these swine in discussions is an anathema to communist principle. Indeed, so embarrassed has the London District Committee become over our exposure of this gross error that its Report of Work just issued in readiness for November's District Congress fails to mention the UDA amongst the list of organisations that met the delegation.

There is indeed a deep misunderstanding of loyalism in our Party. This misunderstanding rests on the benign view of British imperialism as somehow the settler of what is seen as a grand Catholic-Protestant dispute in the Six Counties; it is an idea that has even lost some credence within the British Labour Party. Unequivocally we state; the loyalist tail does not wag the British imperialist dog. British imperialism did after all connive with the setting up of the whole Orange shebang as its ultimate protection device in Ireland; at no time has its bigoted creation been allowed more than a short leash. Since its birth Orange loyalism has been there to retrieve any situation dangerous to British imperialism, and its removal is bound up indivisibly with the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland. Sometimes the 'goodwill to all men' feeling which the broad democratic alliance of the *British Road to Socialism* produces in our Party's opportunists just bubbles over; we must assume something of the kind obscures their view of loyalism, since by implication 'left wing loyalists' must be considered more approachable as potential allies for peace in the Six Counties: "Under pressure from right-wing loyalists, London allowed the fragile truce to break

down." (p5). (This was a reference to the truce of July 1972 between the IRA and Britain.) Mistakenly thinking that loyalism, even the right-wing variety, can exert meaningful pressure on British imperialism when it doesn't invite it and that loyalism forced Britain to impose direct rule (when it was the success of Republicanism that was responsible for this retreat) are ludicrous suggestions. The failure of British imperialism's local puppets to contain the national liberation struggle led to direct rule, nothing else.

The Northern Ireland Assembly or any other 'power sharing' charade proved insufficient to deal with Republicanism. So far such blandishments, backed by naked state terror on the streets, have failed to undermine support for the national liberation struggle. All the while, of course, the struggle cries out for the participation of the working class movement it has been denied so long. While Leninists take this view, the delegation's report ties itself in knots in order to find a stick with which to beat Sinn Fein on this question (as on all questions): "Sinn Fein's view of the sectarian nature of the trade unions in Northern Ireland... while reflecting very real historical problems, nonetheless expresses a difficulty within the party in formulating a political role which can help to forge working class unity." (p10-our emphasis.) Aren't the Six Counties' trade unions dominated by loyalists then? Opposition to sectarianism can hardly be cited as valid reason for condemning Sinn Fein.

This report is really only a sop to the distinctly growing disgust amongst Party members at the opportunists' rotten positions on Ireland. (However, by all accounts its lack of sales are a reflection of its inadequacy in this respect.) The continued chauvinism of our Party's Ireland policy is pursued by all the opportunist trends, including the Chater/Costelloites dominating London District. The aim of 'making' British imperialism put things right in Ireland remains a strong cry with such demands as "make it a top priority to win a complete reversal of British government policy on Northern Ireland" and "normalisation" (p28) of Irish-British relations. For it can hardly be said that British imperialist domination of Ireland is a whim of policy of particular British bourgeois governments, whether Tory or Labour.

So out of touch with the Republican masses' experience are the report's writers that their list of poor conditions in Belfast's Divis Flats includes: "No police protection; no-go area for RUC". Since the Divis is a stronghold of the IRSP it is little wonder that the police do not enter casually — there is, after all comrades, a war going on in the Six Counties. And to add insult to injury the report has the effrontery to repeat without dissent a passage from a short story about the Divis in which it is suggested that "rioters" lay their lives on the line "for the thrill of it all" (p19).

Instead of cringing before the British imperialist beast and humbly asking for "a declaration of intent by the British government to withdraw from Northern Ireland" (p7) plus the usual load of social reforms, we could not do better than get Britain off Ireland's back by unconditionally supporting the IRA, the INLA, and Sinn Fein and the IRSP, whilst doing all we can to weld the Irish working class movement to the national liberation struggle. Such a perspective is opposed totally to the tenets of social chauvinism expressed in the report and indeed held by the Euros, their right opportunist allies in the Party leadership, the Chater/Costelloites, and the Straight Leftist fake lefts. It is up to Leninists to take this pamphlet and the case for opportunism it makes and expose it remorselessly.

## Big Lessons

Alec Long

A. Dabat & L. Lorenzano *Argentina, the Malvinas and the end of Military Rule*, Verso, pbk, pp205, £5.95.

HISTORY may repeat itself, but it never repeats itself in exactly the same form, taking the same outward appearance or indeed with the same end results. Thus, in relation to wars, it is necessary to learn the *basic lessons* taught by any conflict. In the current context of deepening capitalist crisis, one could say it is necessary for communists and the working class to learn the lessons of small wars in order to avoid the Big One.

When troops of the Argentinian fascist junta caught the world and indeed most of Argentina napping by their landing on the Malvinas/Falklands on April 2 1982, the responses of major sections of the Argentinian and British left were as predictable as they were wrong. For most socialist organisations and parties in Argentina, the fascist regime was transformed almost overnight into a force of national liberation which was waging a 'just' and 'anti-imperialist' war. Our fraternal Communist Party in Argentina simply bowed to social-chauvinism and assured the Argentinian bourgeoisie that it "fully (supported) the recovery of the Islas Malvinas after 150 years of imperialist domination by Great Britain." (Cited in *Comment*, May 1, 1982, p9)

The Leninist's position at the time stood in stark contrast to the majority of the British left. We called for the war to be turned into a revolutionary civil war in both Argentina and Britain. For both the Argentinian and British working class the main enemy was at home. Some groups in Britain however, in parallel with the stance of the Argentinian Communist Party, argued that Argentina, because it was a "colonial" or "semi-colonial" country, was an "anti-imperialist" power and thus should be supported in the war. Consequently, petty bourgeois revolutionary groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party and Workers' Power argued rather strangely that victory for Argentina would actually *weaken* the junta and aid the struggle to overthrow it.

A book recently published in English, *Argentina, the Malvinas and the end of Military Rule* by Dabat and Lorenzano, effectively squashes the idea that Argentina is a dependent country simply suffering from national oppression:

"Argentina is a politically independent country which is inserted into the world market in a way that combines financial and technological dependence with its emergence as a regional power." (p1).

Countries like Argentina which have reached a medium level of capitalist development and have seen the phenomenon of an indigenous finance capital emerge, inevitably have a striving, an internal drive to expand outwards.

Thus the Argentinian bourgeoisie has no progressive potential as a class. The Malvinas adventure was firstly an expression of a reactionary, anti-revolutionary project for strengthening the military power of the state and of the preparation for future conflict with the junta's Latin American capitalist rivals:

"Possession of the archipelago undoubtedly boosted the claim of Argentinian monopoly and finance capital to have a major stake in the world market and hence in the oppression and exploitation of

proletariats other than their own." (p79).

Secondly the decision to 'reclaim' the island was made under the pressing need to head off the incipient social explosion which threatened to engulf the Argentinian bourgeoisie and the need "to forge a new basis for consensus and to legitimise the state and the monopoly-finance factions controlling it." (p76). Thus the Presidential Secretary under Galtieri pinpointed some of the real motives of the junta's military foray far more succinctly than most left groups when he enumerated the three "achievements" of the annexation:

"... the defeat of subversion, the recovery of the Malvinas and, as a function of this, the establishment of the foundations for a lasting national political unity." (General Hector Iglesias, quoted on p181).

Any political position is in the end vindicated or destroyed by reality itself. Thus the perspective of the groups which supported the Argentinian bourgeoisie in the war like the RCP, WP or our very own tailists, the Straight Leftists, has been disproved by subsequent events in Argentina. Defeat breeds revolution. In the short-term, defeat for the junta obviously led to the disintegration of the fascist monolith and the collapse of the regime culminating in the general elections of October 30 1983, which the Radicals of the UCR (Radical Civil Union) won convincingly.

Dobat and Lorenzano make the point that the Argentinian working class was for the most part not carried away by chauvinist hysteria during the war:

"During the two months or more of the conflict there was not a truly proletarian mass demonstration, not a single pro-war demonstration emanating from the rank and file. The workers retreated to their factories and refused to involve themselves in the jingoistic fervour." (p109)

Had the Communist Party in Argentina stood on a principled position of revolutionary defeatism they would now be in the position of potential leaders of the mass movement instead of tailing it. On the surface the prospects in Britain for a policy of revolutionary defeatism were less encouraging. Nevertheless in principle it was the correct position and, in fact, Dabat and Lorenzano point out just how close Britain came to suffering some major setbacks:

"If the junta had been able to resolve its problems of maintenance and bomb-priming, it could have inflicted a crushing defeat that would have wiped out the core of the British fleet." (p96).

If large numbers of the task force had started coming home in boxes, then the position of ending the conflict through mass action would have started to have become a distinct possibility even in 'conservative' Britain.

There was a disturbingly novel feature in this war. The crisis of all medium level developed capitalist countries like Argentina is a prelude to the general crisis of world imperialism. What is new is that there are now an increasing number of both established and aspirant powers competing for slices of the world cake:

"The war did have a relatively novel feature in that a minor capitalist country used *military force* to challenge the hierarchy of states that emerged from the Second World War... It fell to the irresponsible and adventurist Argentinian Junta to take the step that the German and Japanese bourgeoisie had only attempted under the cover of the most subtle diplomatic manoeuvres." (p104)

Despite some shaky formulations, this lucid and well-researched book effectively backs up *The Leninist's* position on the Falklands/Malvinas war.

**POLISH COAL**

**Why the Silence?**

Alec Long

**“Odd for the cash-strapped Morning Star to turn away advertising. Yet the Institute for Workers’ Control has been unable to persuade the paper to accept an ad, signed by fourteen Labour MPs, protesting at the continued import of Polish Coal. Nor will the Star print a letter on the subject, though they promised to do so. ‘They told me they didn’t accept advertisements of a political nature,’ says Ken Fleet of the IWC.” (The Guardian, September 14, 1984).**

MANY militant miners may have asked themselves why no condemnations of the policy of the Polish authorities of exporting coal to Britain during the miners’ strike have been forthcoming from certain political quarters — notably from the leadership of the Western Communist Parties including of course, the British. After all, the Communist Party of Great Britain has in the past been eager enough to denounce the socialist countries, even taking a stand well to the right of major sections of the NUM when it supported the anti-socialist ‘union’ in Poland, Solidarnosc. Many miners may therefore have quite justifiably expected the leadership of the British party especially to protest in the strongest possible terms to their fraternal organisation in Poland, the PUWP — the Communist Party in Poland. ‘After all,’ they could reason, ‘it is their movement.’

This however, is the crux of the problem. The Eurocommunist and right opportunist leaderships of these parties have spent years distancing themselves from the ‘undemocratic’ models of the socialist countries and wrapping themselves in the cosy colours of their respective national flags. To call on communists in Poland to block coal imports to Britain during this dispute would be in effect to demand proletarian internationalism — that the forces of the Polish workers’ state be put at the disposal of workers in Britain. This principled and communist position runs contrary to every instinct of these tame political opportunists. For them, it is one thing to join hands with the ruling class to condemn martial law in Poland or the Soviet military assistance to the Afghanistan revolution, but it is very much another to criticise Poland from the left and demand that it takes actions which step on the toes of your ‘own’ bourgeoisie.

Thus for example, the *Morning Star* has refused to take any sort of lead in campaigning for the ending of this trade and the little anecdote quoted at the beginning of this article graphically illustrates just how unprincipled and anti-internationalist Chater and his clique actually are. Similarly, the leadership of our Party has responded to resolutions from branches demanding that it takes action against this shameful trade by simply reiterating its unpublished position, but refusing to fight publicly for an end to Polish imports.

On the recent General Council of the Young Communist League (the youth organisation of the Communist Party) a resolution proposing that the League take a principled position and call for the ending of these scab imports received only two votes and was overwhelmingly defeated by the combined votes of the Euros and the supposed ‘hardliners’, including the Straight Leftist faction. And speaking of *Straight Left*, comrades who feel themselves unable to plough their way through their paper every month (our sympathies are with you), will have missed the fact that their incondite publication of October 1984 takes up the issue of Polish coal. Predictably however, the Straight Leftists do not even come close to a principled line. They instead carry a letter from Elsie Watson, the National Organiser of the National Assembly of Women, which excuses the Polish communists’ actions thus:

**“... the Polish government had a contract to supply 400,000 tonnes of coal a year to Britain... Poland has already received credit for this contract and hence feel they must supply this years’ quota. They have not increased the quota and it will end with this years’ supply... The Polish people and government have every sympathy with the British miners...”**

“This years’ quota” may be just enough to defeat the miners’ struggle of course, but let us not quibble over details with Elsie — our main complaint is against *Straight Left*. It is utterly disgraceful that *Straight Left* feels itself justified in excusing scabbing, even when it is just scabbing for “this year” only. The Poles should not have “sympathy” with the British miners — that is what we expect from vicars and from pop groups. We expect from the Polish party *international class solidarity*. *Straight Left*, by printing this inane comment from Elsie Watson, imply that all we can expect from Poland, a workers’ state, is the same we get from the Bishop of Durham or the pop group *Wham!* who plan to do a benefit for the miners — “sympathy” And as for the argument that Poland must honour its contracts with capitalist states regardless of the consequences for the international working class, we think the observations of comrade Jack Collins, Secretary of Kent miners and Communist Party member, are worth repeating:

**“I do not accept the reasoning that says ‘we have got contracts that must be honoured’. I do not accept that reasoning. That’s the same sort of reasoning that people use when they are trading with Chile and places like that.” (Interviewed in *The Leninist* no.13)**

Thus, while starting from a different opportunist position, *Straight Left* in essence finds itself ending up with the same vile line as the Eurocommunists — something they are increasingly doing if the recent debate on feminism in the *Morning Star* is anything to go by.

Fortunately for the future of the British revolution, the Communist Party does not simply consist of these type of spineless political opportunists. The Leninists of the Communist Party have fought not only for every ounce of working class’ strength in this country to be bent towards winning this key struggle, we have also

demanding that the resources of our workers’ states be put at the disposal of the British miners. In the pages of *The Leninist* we have devoted thousands of words to the task of winning the argument that Polish coal *must be stopped now!* And that Polish communists break any contracts signed with capitalist states and start agitating for a levy among Polish workers to bolster up the hard-pressed NUM.

In our previous issue we reported what seemed to be a healthy development. A leading Polish coal industry trade unionist had pledged at gathering in France to return to his country and fight for an end to coal exports to Britain. However, judging from our Polish comrades’ rather tarnished past record in international solidarity, we felt justified in greeting this news with caution. Unhappily, recent reports have indicated that our caution was justified. The *Financial Times* of September 24, 1984 reported that Poland had in fact abandoned the 705,000 tonne limit to coal exports to Britain in 1984, agreed between Polish officials and Arthur Scargill and confirmed by Mr. Antoni Karas, Poland’s deputy trade minister, in May.

In fact, Poland’s throwaway promise to Scargill that imports would not exceed 705,000 tonnes seems to have been totally worthless and contradicted by their other statements:

**“Poland’s contracts with the UK had called for deliveries far in excess of the limits set by Mr. Karas. Its contracts with the BSC calls for 1m tonnes to be delivered this year, plus hundreds of thousands of tonnes which have not been delivered since 1976.” (Financial Times, September 24, 1984).**

So simply by ‘honouring their contracts’, the feeble justification used by the Polish communists and their apologists in this country for continuing to scab, the Polish authorities will break their undertakings to the NUM. This fact is confirmed by at least two international sources — the current issue of International Coal Report and the European Commission’s statistical office. It seems that rather than any nagging and inconvenient vestigial feelings of guilt or international solidarity, the main limiting factor of Poland’s exports to Britain “is not so much fraternal solidarity of the Polish government with the British mine-workers as infrastructural problems in Poland”. Apparently the main coal loader at Gdansk has been out of order causing the Polish authorities to renege on contracts to BSC and others. That, frankly, is sickening. Similarly, the news that Northern Ireland coal importers’ search for alternative supplies to substitute for the suspended NCB deliveries has resulted in them recently signing a long-term contract with the GDR is extremely disturbing and should make British communists’ demands for international solidarity all the more strident.

The issue of Polish coal has been an important one for *The Leninist* as it has fully vindicated our international perspectives. It has been proved correct to place demands and pressure on the leaders of the socialist countries for solidarity with the miners. These communists in the Soviet Union or Poland are not counterrevolutionaries

as the Trotskyites cretinously claim. In Poland, of course, they were the very people who *stamped out* counterrevolution in the form of the anti-socialist Solidarnosc — Margaret Thatcher’s favourite union. We defend Poland and all socialist countries because they are *ours* — the property of the world’s working class. The response of the Soviet Union to the strike, while we would not claim that it was *ideal*, nevertheless illustrates what is possible.

The issue has also proved just how vital it is for communists to stand on a position of principled proletarian internationalism. It is *required* of us as communists to criticise when our comrades in Poland adopt such short-sighted, self-defeating and indeed, *stupid* policies. Others simply deny reality if it presents them with such inconvenient options. In *Communist* of May 3, 1984, the internal faction document of *Straight Left*, these centrists assure their readers that “coal described as being from Poland was, in fact, South African.” This assurance of course is a little difficult to square with the Pole’s promises to the NUM not to *raise* coal imports, but again let us not quibble over ‘details’ with the Straight Leftists. ‘Defending Poland’ for them evidently is a question of calling truth “anti-socialist” and thinking “Trotskyite”. Militant miners must look to the Leninist tendency of the Communist Party to see who really fights for their interest, whether on the question of violence or Polish coal.

Miners generally are beginning to look at the Communist Party with renewed interest. The Communist Party is not a sect — the miners’ strike has shown that it still, despite decline, organises a significant section of the vanguard of the British working class. The Leninist section of it is a growing, vital, and dynamic one which objectively represents the interests of the entire working class *as a class*. In this light we would ask Paul Whetton, the Secretary of Notts Striking Miners who was interviewed in *The Leninist* no.12, why he chooses to write in the disgustingly right-wing Trotskyite newspaper *Socialist Organiser*? It genuinely mystifies us.

*Socialist Organiser* worships the counterrevolutionary rump of Solidarnosc — Paul Whetton and most miners do not.

*Socialist Organiser* does not recognise that there are *any* socialist countries in the world and indeed seems to be edging towards defining the socialist countries as some strange hybrid of “Stalinist” countries — Paul Whetton and many miners recognise that the socialist countries exist and, despite problems must be defended.

*Socialist Organiser*, because of its congenital anti-communism, ends up bizarrely writing that *Frank Chapple* has a *good line* on international affairs — we would sincerely doubt whether Paul Whetton or indeed practically any striking miner would agree!

We call on all militant miners, Paul Whetton included, to seriously consider joining the Communist Party under the banner of Leninism. The miners’ struggle is not a vehicle for the self aggrandisement of any sect — but if the battle has cried out for one thing since day one of the dispute it is for a revolutionary, vanguard Communist Party. Join us in the struggle to reforge just such a party.