

## NO SURRENDER

Jack Conrad

IN THE CLASS struggle there is no room for wishful thinking. The miners' strike is not just in its "final negotiating stage" but on the verge of collapse. Talk from the likes of Tony Benn that the "miners have won" now stands exposed, as do claims that there have already been power cuts because of this strike.

The truth must be faced no matter how painful: the NUM National Executive Committee is on its knees pleading for "honourable surrender terms" as opposed to the humiliation Thatcher is demanding. The Tories and the NCB know that they have the NUM NEC by the throat and they are determined to smash the NUM as an effective union, destroy the political credibility of Arthur Scargill, and decimate the NUM membership through a massive programme of pit closures. The more loudly the NUM NEC, Kinnock, and the *Morning Star* scream for a negotiated settlement the more Thatcher will press her advantage in the belief that the drift back to work by miners will sooner or later reach the point where the strike collapses.

The blame for this tragic state of affairs must be placed firmly at the feet of the leadership of our movement, and not just the TUC and Labour Party tops but all those who have contented themselves with acting as cheerleaders for the NUM NEC. For the blunt truth is that the NUM NEC, including Scargill himself, had no clear strategy for victory beyond miners gritting their teeth and waiting for power cuts.

But all is not lost. While there are well over 100,000 miners still on strike victory can still be snatched from the jaws of defeat. A clue to how this can be done was given by the Tories' friends at stockbrokers Phillips and Drew. In one of their respected forecasts they maintained that there would be no power cuts, no miners' victory even if they stayed out until 1986, but they also stated that this would change if the miners received "additional significant support". (*Financial Times* January 9 1985.)

The working class movement has a choice. It can, even at this eleventh hour, throw its strength into the fray, or it can let the miners go down to terrible defeat.

If we let this happen it will encourage the Tories to unleash a major sustained offensive against the entire working class: on our pay, conditions, rights, and organisations. With the miners down, the Tories reason, who could resist?

Because of this we have from the very start of the strike called for the mobilisation of the working class as a class against the Tories, the capitalist state, and those whom they represent. In other words, a strike wave of general strike proportions.

An assorted mish mash of opportunists, including the leadership of the Communist Party, the *Morning Star*, the Spartacist League, the Revolutionary Communist Party, *Socialist Action*, *Tribune*, the Socialist Workers Party, the New Communist Party, and the Revolutionary Communist Group argue in essence that a general strike 'is a good idea, but is just not possible'. These philistines are trapped in the art of 'what is



A clear message from militant miners

possible' and are incapable of confronting the Marxist science of what must be. By blinkering themselves, confining themselves to the situation as it is, the opponents of a general strike casually throw away the key to a victory for the miners. Because of this they slide into self-imposed pessimistic defeatism, sectarian disdain, or light headed official optimism.

For Leninists, as the general strike is an objective requirement of the situation, we commit our energies, our resources to winning the ideological and political battle for what is needed so as to make it possible. So, far from Leninists 'waiting for the TUC' as the lying bamboozlers of the Spartacist League claim we not only place the demand for a general strike on the official leadership but proclaim the slogan: *With or Without the TUC - General Strike*.

The central question is of course if the TUC won't call a general strike, who can? What body has the authority and above all the courage to grasp this dangerous question by its class war horns?

Certainly, the leadership of the NUM is ideally placed to initiate some sort of an alternative centre to the TUC General Council. A call to establish such a body from the NUM would certainly be greeted with an immediate enthusiastic response from militants the length and breadth of the country.

Will the NUM leadership make such a call? It seems unlikely. The NUM leadership is now increasingly characterised by the division between those who want an 'honourable settlement' (that is in truth 'honourable' surrender), along with those who are inching towards this position, and those who insist on remaining intransigent when it comes to their members' jobs and the necessity of winning the strike. Although the intransigents command a clear majority amongst the rank and file militants, something reflected at delegate conferences, they are now it appears in a minority on the executive.

At the January executive meeting not only did the compromisers have a majority but more importantly they had the initiative. Because of this the executive accepted the vague

suggestion emanating from Welsh churches that the strike could be settled through the establishment of some grand commission of enquiry consisting of the NUM, the government, the NCB, and 'representatives of the community', hardly a demand which will rally "additional significant support" from the working class. Indeed the fact that the executive decided that the whole of its membership should participate in negotiations with the NCB shows which way the wind is blowing and that the majority on the executive of the NUM have no thought, no intention of challenging the TUC traitors.

The other important executive decision, the one to expell the Notts Area from the NUM, while it will no doubt be well received by the heroic Notts strikers, is as clear a sign as is wanted that the strike is on the retreat. The emergence of a neo-Spencer Solidarnosc type union amongst the NUM's second largest concentration of membership, and the danger that this could be repeated in Leicestershire and other backward areas, should send alarm bells ringing throughout the workers' movement. The NUM is in desperate trouble, its integrity as a national union is at risk, it is in urgent need of help to turn the tide in the coalfields in order to bring out on strike those now at work, and indeed in order to win.

We all know that this help is not going to come from Judas Willis or Ramsay MacKinnock. Even union leaders like Jimmy Knapp of the NUR and Ray Buckton of Aslef, who have compared so well with the open traitors, the 'big bang' talking windbags, the spineless Labourite tub thumpers, have not been prepared to take on the Tories in open battle alongside the miners. Instead they have opted for the safety of tokenism. The leaders of the main rail unions have not even given those of their members who have stood by the miners, like the famous lads at Coalville, more than token support when they have been threatened with disciplinary measures including the sack. What is needed from the NUR and Aslef, in truth from all unions, is not one day protests but joint strike action with the miners, strike action in

support of their own members' sectional demands, and strike action against the anti-union laws.

So while we fight for workers to support the Yorkshire and Humberside action, we will, we must go on arguing for a general strike. This is something we will fight to get the Mineworkers' Defence Committee National Conference in Sheffield on February 9 to back. We will also argue that the miners have no need for another talking shop like its first conference in December 1984 or the January 12 Liaison Committee conference. The situation demands that a National Miners' Support Movement be established using the existing Miners' Support Committees as its foundation stones and building it with elected, recallable delegates from all working class organisations committed to "total physical support" for the miners.

Such a body must quickly seek to transform itself into something like the National Minority Movement of the 1920s. It must fully debate the crucial questions confronting our class and fight to organise under its banner the best rank and file militants, especially those from the NUM who have for so long acted as loyal but unconsulted troops. The militants organised into a well coordinated national body could both circumvent the TUC, the do nothing fat cat trade union leaders, and galvanise those intransigent NUM leaders whose only perspective is to call upon the miners to grit their teeth and see the strike on throughout 1985 and towards those elusive power cuts.

It has fallen onto the shoulders of the rank and file militants: those in the car plants, in local government, in communications, the docks, the power stations, the hospitals, the steel mills, the railways, and above all in the mining communities, to turn the tide of the strike and the broad class struggle itself.

They must organise themselves to stop the movement of coal, reverse the drift back to work, and provide the "additional significant support" in the form of a general strike that the Tories and Phillips and Drew dread. With this, potential rout can be turned into a magnificent victory for the entire working class.



## THE LENINIST

### Special Congress

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the Communist Party, at its meeting of January 12 and 13, declared open war on opposition forces above all those around the *Morning Star*. Comrades Tony Chater and David Whitfield, the editor and assistant editor of the paper, were expelled along with four of their leading supporters from the London District Committee: comrades Ivan Beavis, Tom Durkin, Mike Hicks, and Roger Trask. And in an effort to pre-empt the growing demand for a Special Congress the EC decided to turn the tables on the opposition and call one itself over May 18-20.

Given the growing tide against the Eurocommunist/McLennan leadership in key districts like London and the North West and the fact that highly respected figures in the Party like Andrew Rothstein and Robin Page Arnot, both foundation members and veteran leaders, and comrade Bill Alexander, former Assistant General Secretary and current Chairman of the Appeals Committee, have thrown their lot in with the opposition, a number of Euros on the EC were hesitant about calling a Special Congress. Comrades Philippa Langton, Joe Keith, Jack Ashton, Pete Carter, Gerry Pocock, and Arthur Adlen all expressed the fear that the opposition could win.

Most doubts were assuaged by General Secretary Gordon McLennan who promised decisive action against the opposition to ensure that they could never win. An unpresidential inner-Party propaganda campaign is to be launched. The Euro house-journal *Focus* is to go from a leisurely monthly to a weekly under the editorship of comrade Frank Chalmers. And with a shock brigade of forty Euros, and £28,000 specially budgeted, it will be sent directly by post to every single Party member using a new central membership list.

But if the last congress is anything to go by the main weapon in the McLennan armoury will be crude gerrymandering. The pre-Congress meetings will be carefully monitored so that "irregularities" can be "discovered" to invalidate meetings where oppositionists have slipped through the net and got themselves elected delegates. What is more the pre-Congress discussion will be rigged as usual so that the opposition tendencies are given the minimum possible opportunity to air their views in the official Party press. Already in London there are reports of election boundaries being outrageously manipulated to favour the Euros. But it's obvious that we ain't seen nothing yet.

There is of course the possibility that the tide of revulsion against the Euro/McLennan leadership is so strong that it could break the bureaucratic centralist stranglehold. Certainly the extent of the opposition was revealed at the EC by the substantial number of Party branches and organisations — including industrial advisories — who had written in expressing their disgust about the leadership's flagrant violations of Party members rights. And some EC members must have been shocked to find that long-time Party functionary and former Industrial Organiser Bert Ramelson had submitted a nine page document outlining his opposition to the leadership.

But one thing's for sure, whatever the Euros may hope, a gerrymandered Special Congress victory for the leadership cannot, will not, resolve the Party crisis.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### Scottish Question

Ronald Buchanan's letter (issue No 15) posed the "Scottish Question" as a "national question" which cannot be answered. This is an unsurprising conclusion, particularly as he asked no question. He merely gave us an excellent example of "Catch 22" proletarian internationalism.

Comrade Buchanan is such an old fashioned internationalist that the national question immediately becomes the English Question. His unease on the subject of Scotland and the national question includes mention of the Scottish proletariat, so he doesn't, he tells us about the English proletariat instead and how their morale would suffer without the militant traditions of Scotland. Comrade Buchanan, if you read your history books and look in our prisons you will discover that the struggle for national independence is Scotland's greatest militant tradition. Your cure for this militant tradition is to look to the English; however, I will not shy away from asking the national question by talking instead of your "British" nationalist demands.

The best way for Scottish communists to ask the question is in this way; why did "the great Marxist leader John MacLean" advocate a Scottish Communist Republic? Because (and not "but") he "placed the interests of the international proletariat first", and "looked to the Irish." MacLean, greatly inspired by the Easter uprising, went to Ireland during the Tan War, and although witnessing at first hand the terrible repression meted out to the Irish, saw their struggle as our struggle,

their revolutionary path as our only guarantee also of winning socialism in Scotland. In doing so, MacLean displayed the true nature of "old fashioned internationalism", a nature inspired by *revolutionary Bolshevism*.

Today's talk of parliaments, assemblies, and "congresses" will not shake off the rising spectre of a Scottish Republic led by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Ireland's men and women of steel, the IRA and the INLA, are showing us where our power will come from, not through the august portals of an Edinburgh palace, but out of the barrel of a gun. We, the people of no property in Scotland, must move forward under the red banner of Marx, Engels, MacLean, and V.I. Lenin, towards the historic goal of a Scottish Socialist Republic and world communism.

Yours fraternally  
James Maley  
Glasgow

### First Footing

This is my first letter of 1985 — perhaps akin to what we in Glasgow call "first footing" — so may I wish the comrades in *The Leninist* my very best wishes in the year ahead. I like the paper very much, because for the first time in all my years of association and deep involvement with the CPGB, the very competent writers for *The Leninist* delve into, at some depth, the problems linked with the struggle. This theoretical backing to our door-knocking, canvassing, etc. is an absolute necessity... otherwise we are robots. If the leadership of the Party can convince us that they are worthy to hold such important office, why do they not open the Party media to serious debate on subjects such as the relevancy of the *British Road*

to *Socialism* in a period when the bourgeoisie, not the working class of Britain, for sure, dictates the road anywhere.

I remember Aaronovitch in charge of one of the Party organs over thirty years ago. He only allowed into print the mildest "criticism" (what these fake, cardboard 'communists' pretend to regard as 'constructive', but what is in fact a licence for them to betray communism). They drove thousands of good comrades out of a Party which they controlled from the London HQ (with servile minions in Scotland and all over the country) while they retained in the Party ranks such scoundrels as Douglas Hyde. Nor can they plead innocence in the matter, for they were well warned years ago, and prior to defection, that the Party was harbouring these adders. James Reid of Glasgow is one of the latest gifts of the CPGB to the Tory establishment; he was molycoddled and brought to maturity in the Communist Party in Glasgow — an ardent supporter of the clique that produced Eurocommunist McLennan — and now his element supporting Thatcher's pal, MacGregor, against the brave, decent miners, and their wives and children. What a...! Such vipers does our Party nurture, but I am quite certain that a real Communist Party, with open discussion and study in all branches, could expose these scoundrels long before they do such damage. The leaders of the CPGB are scared of such debate — because it would also expose the government and (most probably) CIA agents amongst them. No wonder they are anti-Soviet.  
George McCullough  
Glasgow.

### A New CP

I find *The Leninist* helps me in my work and also keeps me informed of what is happening nationally. We do not get much information in our branch. I also read *Spartacist Britain* (now *Workers Hammer*) and find some of their articles and ideas quite good and useful, although at times I feel they are too simplistic. It often shows a lack of *real* knowledge of the British industrial and trade union scene. However I often find myself in agreement with them on a number of issues.

With the latest events in the Party and the position of the *Morning Star*, also the various factions that are developing, I am wondering if it is possible (or desirable) to reform and revitalise the CP. Would it not be better to break away and try to build a New Leninist CP?

Jim Singer  
Surrey

### A Real Fight

I have just read your January 1985 edition of *The Leninist*. I must say that it is refreshing to see a correct interpretation of the events that face the working class. Your call for Workers' Defence Corps is timely and accurate. Also the call to firmly support the

### Ode to Jimmy Judas Reid

His working days are over,  
He's sitting now in clover —  
He's left the working class so far behind;  
For the gutter press he'll write  
All kinds of bloody shite —  
They pay him, so the bastard doesn't mind!

His Party days, they made 'wise and sadder' —  
And they helped the crawling creature up the ladder —  
Pretending to be a 'Red'  
He's crept from 'neath the bed',  
For 'our Jimmy' is more slithery than the adder!

He doesn't like the miners any more —  
But he loves himself like any well paid whore,  
Though in the looking-glass  
He sees a puffed-up ass  
And a chancer who is rotten to the core!

The Clydeside workers know him as a rat  
And his big moustache will never cover that —  
For Jimmy Judas Reid  
Has proved himself a weed,  
And the liar now is talking through his hat!

Matt McGinn once told me Reid was junk,  
But he'd hardly credit now how low you've sunk;  
It must give the 'Record' joy  
To have in their employ  
A renegade, a traitor and skunk!

Should you chance to pass this scoundrel on the street,  
Decontaminate your clothes and wash your feet!  
With dignity and pride  
Cross to the other side!  
Hold your nostrils and be glad you didn't meet!

Roy Henderson  
Glasgow

liberation movements of the Irish people.

The miners' struggle and that for Irish self determination are interconnected and must be made mutually beneficial.

I was a member of the CPGB from 1960-66 but left, knowing that this was not a Leninist Party and fed up with the pandering to the Labour Party. I have followed the recent events re the London District Congress etc with utter disgust. I did not realise until I received your publication that there was a real fight within the Party to secure it for real proletarian aims. I would like to rejoin the Party and assist in the struggle.

Yours fraternally,  
Mark Killick  
Slough

### Hunger Strike

The Scottish Prisoners' Support Committee has been notified by Barlinnie Prisoner, Mick McCallum — number 517 — of his intention to commence a Hunger Strike on Monday 21 January.

Mick McCallum, a politically conscious Prisoner, has suffered continual harassment at all levels of the prison system for his long struggle in support of his, and other Prisoners rights. This harassment has ranged from petty restrictions and cell moves to solitary confinement and assault. Although due for release in mid-1985, there has been no let-up in the attempts to silence and 'pacify' Mick, due to his determination to expose the prison system from inside, and on his release. Therefore Mick has commenced on Hunger Strike in protest at the repressive prison system with the following demands put forward by him to highlight the issues:

1. An independent and public investigation into deaths and serious injuries in prison custody, as demanded by the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties.
  2. To be locked up, for his own protection, from assaults and victimisation at the hands of individual prison officers until his release mid-'85.
  3. An end to censorship of, and interference with, Prisoners' mail.
  4. An end to closed visits in Scottish prisons, particularly at Barlinnie.
- Yours in solidarity,  
Kirstin Crosbie (for SPSC)

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

## URGENT!

Because of the demands made on our organisation by the miners' strike and the growing inner-Party crisis in the CPGB we have been forced to amass a considerable debt with our printers. This now stands at well over £1,000. In order to help us maintain and above all increase the spread and impact of Leninism rush donations to us. Send cheques and POs to *The Leninist*, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

# Intransigent and still fighting



Jack Collins has earned a justified reputation amongst militant miners for being one of the most principled and intransigent leaders of the NUM. Of equal note is the strong current of internationalism which runs through his pronouncements. Not the 'see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil' variety practised by some sycophants, but the real proletarian internationalism which demands and combines criticism with unconditional defence. The fact that Jack is no longer a member of the CPGB is a loss for all genuine pro-Party communists and a gain for those who wish to see our Party transformed into a petty bourgeois neo-fabian rump.

**The Leninist:** If the strike has entered a new stage what do you see as the key task for this stage?

**Jack Collins:** Well, obviously it is important that we continue to receive food, that we continue to receive money, that we continue to receive hospitality: that's very, very important. But of course, industrial action on the part of other unionists is very important as well and I don't hesitate in calling on other workers to make a stand and join the miners.

If that is not possible, then the miners will still go on and the miners will still win. And in that sense if we get no industrial support it is important that we continue to get financial support because those people that support us financially will be attacked and that will strengthen the miners' hand. I think there are going to be more and more people arrested and jailed. The only dilemma that they must be in when they are thinking about jailing people is that OK, they are now not paying the miners' families social security benefits, once the man goes to jail they'll have to pay them and that's a bit of a contradiction. So in that sense also there are new developments.

I see the situation developing where not only will they be talking about taking away the trustees of the union but they will also be prepared, in my opinion, to take away the leadership generally. And so in that sense it's a new phase. They are obviously going to take the property, take the money of the union. The miners will then have to organise outside of those buildings in a legal way, but if that is not possible then we will operate illegally. We might just have to organise a clandestine trade union movement. I can see all this type of thing taking place as the strike develops.

But fortunately they are now, fortunately for us that is, taking on other trade unionists and trade unions who are prepared to make contributions to the miners. That in my opinion will have a unifying effect in the trade union movement.

**The Leninist:** Given the failure of most union leaders to organise meaningful acts of solidarity with the miners do you envisage an appeal over their heads to the rank-and-file?

**Jack Collins:** If we wait for blokes like Willis and all of these sort of people then we'll for ever. I've got no hesitation in appealing over their heads. The workers must realise that it's the miners today and them tomorrow. And so I would ignore the official leadership if that official leadership is not prepared to fight. I think the honourable examples in the trade union movement are the railworkers, the seamen, some

transport workers, and of the various other workers that are supporting us. But also the leadership of the unions I've mentioned have been very positive and we appreciate that, and so we know we won't have to appeal over the heads of them. But in many other unions we will have to appeal over the heads of the leaders. We urge anybody, wherever they have got any influence, a little influence or a lot of influence, then they should use that influence to get the workers out and fight for the miners.

**The Leninist:** Do you think there is a role here for the Miners' Support Committees, say along the lines of the Councils of Action in 1926?

**Jack Collins:** Yes, I think there is a role for all organisations that are prepared to be involved in the struggle and we welcome those organisations. But the situation is completely different to 1926; we can go ahead with the struggle and in this situation I think that you can see the possibility for social change. And lots and lots of people who are organising the support groups can also see that. There are many, many miners who have been politicised during the course of the strike and can see that.

**The Leninist:** The socialist countries have provided both very negative and very positive examples of solidarity during the course of the strike. Has there been an increased awareness in the NUM of the role of socialist countries?

**Jack Collins:** I think right from day one the Soviet Union has been true to its international creed if you like. They have stood by the miners, they have said that there is no coal coming in from the Soviet Union... we know that there was a little bit of oil coming in that was on its way from the Caribbean. That has now ceased, there is now no oil coming into Britain from the Soviet Union. We know the tremendous support that the Soviet people have afforded the British miners and indeed the support we have received from other socialist lands, with the exception of Poland, of course.

Poland has acted in a disgraceful manner. It reflects the sort of attitude that is attempting to appease and satisfy everybody. I think we might have said in the last interview [see *The Leninist* No 13] that I had spoken to Polish miners' leaders and they had said that they had got contracts to honour. And I reminded them: they've got a bigger contract, the contract to the international working class. Their international working class duty is to stand by the miners. Those people who don't stand by the miners, those people who are prepared to break the miners' strike would be guilty, if it

wasn't for the other international and national support we are getting, of lining up with Thatcher and would have been guilty of fratricide.

**The Leninist:** Could you comment on the moves towards a split from the NUM in Notts and elsewhere?

**Jack Collins:** This has been on the cards for a long time. There's been a tendency by some in the NUM towards moving away from the NUM as soon as it was controlled by the left. The Notts and Midlands coalfields as we all know assume they're independent from the crisis that is affecting British industry. They are insular, they think they won't be touched. But if we look at recent developments in the mining industry we see that it will be possible with the application of new technologies to do with relatively few miners in Britain. So of course they're not immune, they will be attacked.

**The Leninist:** We understand that you are no longer in the Communist Party, we can go into the reasons for this in a future interview, but we would ask you to comment on the rumours that are being circulated about you having joined the Workers Revolutionary Party?

**Jack Collins:** I'm no longer a member of any political party, but the party that I'm nearest to would be the New Communist Party. On the Workers Revolutionary Party: it has given outstanding material and other assistance to us in the miners' strike. Personally I don't owe them a debt, but it has to be said that the organisation that's given most propaganda, most space in its press, most assistance, is that organisation, and so I speak on their platforms, mind you I've also spoken to the local Chamber of Commerce. I've made my position quite clear to the WRP, I don't agree with their continuous attacks on the socialist lands, although they say of course that they don't attack them but the leaderships. But to show our appreciation of their work for the miners I'll speak on their platforms and welcome them to my house. Now I've been in the trade union movement since I left school and in political organisations for years, so the working class must judge me by what I do, not rumours.

Jack Collins has recently been ill; comrades will be pleased to know that he is nearly back to his fighting fitness. Messages of solidarity and donations towards the miners' struggle in Kent should be sent to Kent NUM, Waterside House, Cherry Tree Avenue, Dover CT16 2NJ. We will be carrying an important interview with Jack Collins on the situation in the CPGB and his attitude towards the current inner-Party struggle in *The Leninist* no.18.



"we've laid the foundations for a national women's organisation"

## Kent women: organising and fighting

This interview with Mari Collins, Margaret Densham, and Kay Sutcliffe, all leading activists in Kent Area's Women Against Pit Closures, shows not only their determination, their politicisation, and their magnificent fighting spirit, but their recognition of the necessity to spread the lessons they have learnt to other working class women. For us these women have pointed to a future mass working class women's movement. They have shown that the 'women only' stunts of bourgeois feminism have no place in the struggles of the working class which require unity between the sexes. Without unity defeat is certain.

**The Leninist:** Has the fact that you are women made any difference to the police's treatment of you? Have they been less violent with you than with the men?

**Mari Collins:** I don't think it's made any difference whatsoever to the police. The police are just as violent with the women and children as they are with the men. We had an incident in our village about two or three weeks ago where there was a small girl, aged six, knocked to the ground. We also had a little laddie hit on the side of the face. And this was done by the police.

**Margaret Densham:** Down at Snowdown last week some young students had come down to support us on the picket line. There was a bit of a push and this policeman got this girl and pulled her down to the floor by the hair. She fell to the ground, so she made a complaint about it...

**Kay Sutcliffe:** He actually punched her in the face.

**The Leninist:** So it's made no difference at all?

**Kay Sutcliffe:** I think it did at first. I think they were very, very wary. We went down to Wivenhoe docks to picket — there was about eighteen of us. It was quite early on in the strike and the police didn't know what to do with us. They surrounded us but wouldn't touch us. They told us to move on, but they were very, very wary...

**Margaret Densham:** We get young girls at night-time, you know kids — sixteen, seventeen years old, maybe down to the discos and they're on their way home. They shout from the police cars, "Hello love, you been on the game tonight to get some money for your dad?" And to kids they're saying that, too.

**Mari Collins:** They say anything they like to you and they get away with it. Yet if one of our men stick their two

fingers up, the police are straight over at them...

**Margaret Densham:** Down in Snowdown we've been told that there's got to be no violence because of the simple reason that the NUM cannot afford the fines. And also if they take ten men in, that's ten men less the next day to be on the picket line. That's what they're saying. The scabs are going in but they are not doing anything: they're not even producing a bucket of coal. All they're doing is having a cup of tea and doing some painting jobs. So why spend NUM money on men that are not even producing any coal? So we just keep a low profile and stand in protest and leave it at that.

**Kay Sutcliffe:** I'll tell you another thing I think is important. They keep saying that we should have had a national ballot, that a lot of the miners don't want to be on strike, but we've got men on our picket station that actually voted against the strike, even though the strike call was carried. But they're the first ones on the picket line because they can now see what is going on. They think now that the union is right to carry on this action. So all this stuff about the men not wanting to be on strike is wrong. Maybe they didn't in the beginning, but there are more now want to be on strike than there actually were at the beginning.

**Mari Collins:** Every day is making them more determined now.

**The Leninist:** Has there been a change in attitudes during the course of the strike due to the women's militant role?

**Kay Sutcliffe:** Yes, definitely. I think when we first started our activities in this strike, the men were all for it. They didn't realise we meant what we were doing.

**Mari Collins:** I don't think they

realised how far we could go.

**Kay Sutcliffe:** I don't think they realised we had such organising qualities really, and I think they're proud of us and glad that we've done it.

**Margaret Densham:** I tell you what it's done for me: before the strike I didn't know the meaning of left and right. I know I'm definitely bloody left now! I wasn't politically minded, you see? They'll find out which way I am now.

**Mari Collins:** I think there were very few women that were really very politically aware and as the strike has gone on they have become aware. I've noticed this in our village. We're only a small group and the women never used to speak about politics, in fact in one of our first meetings I was told to keep politics out of the strike. But now you can't go to a meeting without people saying that the strike is political, it was made political by Thatcher. They're not even just talking about the miners' strike anymore. They're going further and talking about other issues.

**Kay Sutcliffe:** I think that's true. Issues that have been in the news like the GLC, GCHQ, all these other different things that have gone on, it probably wouldn't even have got a mention before but now people are talking about it all the time because they understand that it is related to us.

**Mari Collins:** I think in a way Thatcher actually mobilised a lot of women against her when she decided that they were going to cut the social security benefits of strikers and their families.

**Margaret Densham:** She thought that the women would say to the men "please go back to work, we're desperate".

**Mari Collins:** And then she found out that people were not going to do that and because kids were starving we

had to go out onto the streets and organise collections. But after that we realised that we had to get out to the meetings and speak and let people know exactly what was happening in the strike to counteract the bad press.

**Kay Sutcliffe:** And I think it's made more of an impression coming from a woman rather than a miner standing up at a meeting because it was something that was completely different to what had been witnessed before, and I think that a lot of response has come from the fact that it's been miners' wives on the platform... I think a lot of people got a shock when a miners' wife stood on the platform and gave a political speech. They thought it was all going to be "Oh, we're feeling sorry for ourselves, we've got no money, we can't do this and we can't do that," you know. And now we've all done it, we've all gone out and given a political speech, and involved other issues.

**Margaret Densham:** We don't watch 'Crossroads' now, we watch 'World in Action', 'Panorama' you name it. We've forgotten all about 'Coronation Street' now.

**The Leninist:** Will the women's organisation continue after the strike?

**Mari Collins:** The answer to that has got to be yes, because we've laid the foundations for a national women's organisation. We have got to build the links between the women's groups and the Kent Trade Union Alliance, because there's no place that women can actually go to have a base to fight from. The men or women in the trade union movement have got the trade councils or whatever and they're supposed to use them to their advantage. We've got nothing. But now that the organisation of the Kent Trade Union Alliance has started up I think we have got to affiliate to that. We've got to encourage the unemployed people to affiliate and all the other support groups so that we have got a base and everyone in Kent, whether you be employed or unemployed, or man or woman, can fight within that organisation for the good of the Kent community.

**Kay Sutcliffe:** I think what is important as well as that with all the other groups that have been supporting us and the actions they've taken in support of our cause, we've been able to understand all the harassment that has gone on before and all the police activity especially against the gays and the lesbians and the black communities in particular and the people in Ireland. This was something we didn't really associate with before we didn't really consider it. But now we've got a basis of a group that, OK at the moment, is a miners' support group, but after the strike we are prepared now to go out, organise and campaign for these other groups, and give our support and relate our experiences to them.

**Mari Collins:** I think what we've got to do is to get into as many places as we can and encourage as many people as we can to come out and join in and start up their own groups... I think we've also got to encourage other housewives to come out, we've got to get to these people.

**Kay Sutcliffe:** I think what we ought to be doing as well is looking at the wives of other trade unionists and I feel sorry that we didn't contact the wives of the British Leyland workers when they had their industrial dispute, and also the dockers. I think we missed our chance there; we should have gone straight in.

**Mari Collins:** I don't think we've missed our chance, because we learn by every mistake we make. We've learned for the next time. I think the Cammell Laird women set up a women's group because the miners' wives had organised themselves in such a way; and I think in any other section of the working class women probably would come to the fore like they have in the miners' strike, and a little bit of encouragement from people who have already been through it would go a long way to help them.



# THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM

## Which Road?

Peter Butler

ACCUSATIONS fly forth from the pages of the *Morning Star* these days between members of our Communist Party. The long concealed differences amongst Party members are becoming clearer to growing numbers of Party members who formerly were used to giving only unqualified public support to the leadership simply because it was the leadership. Now that is all changed.

Many comrades look back only to the 1983 AGM of the People's Press Printing Society (PPPS) as the beginning of the Party's divisions. Others look to the EC's condemnation of the Soviet and socialist countries' action in Czechoslovakia in 1968 as the slippery slope which it had embarked upon. Leninists, however, have to look deeper and examine the causes of the conflicts in the Party, something the other currents have neglected to do.

The Party's crisis reflects the development of opportunism under British conditions. In its national characteristics it is specific but its general lessons are those widely perceived internationally in the world communist movement. The establishment of opportunism within the world communist movement, as has been examined in previous issues of *The Leninist*, inevitably carried with it the seeds of a disastrous future: annihilation of communist politics from within the communist parties themselves.

Policies in the 1930s which allowed communists to spout ideas of class collaboration in terms of the popular front were intended to protect established socialism, that is, the Soviet Union. The absence of any real desire to promote further revolutions so typical of the centrist form of opportunism that this represents was sterile and therefore incapable of protecting established socialism in the long term. Once compromised with imperialism opportunism's tendency is more and more to the right and to accommodation with the class enemy.

The real root cause of today's Party crisis, then, is to be found in our Party's more distant past. Whilst all tendencies in the Party can trace their pedigrees, if they dare, to the period before the first edition of the *British*

*Road to Socialism (BRS)*, tendencies other than that of *The Leninist* are condemned by their agreement with one or another version of this tawdry, opportunist document. The more closely knit centrists known as Straight Leftists are led by their blind tailing of anything Stalin inspired to support the first edition of the BRS since he did, too. Those centrists at present suffering the greatest attack from the Party Executive Committee (EC) have come to support *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater; from statements and published letters the adherents of this tendency largely support the latest edition of the BRS, at least publicly, though previous editions have their supporters. The remaining opportunist grouping takes in the Eurocommunist tendency of *Marxism Today* and the right opportunist Party *apparatchiks* in a deathly coalition rigidly controlling the EC; for their different reasons they adhere to the present BRS, that is in the case of the Euros, until a more rightwing version can be foisted on the Party.

### The Scab Centrists

Ever since Sid French led his centrist troops to form the liquidationist New Communist Party, the Straight Leftists have led a schizoid existence. Having set up *Straight Left* to compete with the NCP's paper *The New Worker*, ironically their paper was projected as just a left labour movement publication; it has never participated in the inner-Party debate. Those who formed themselves the Straight Leftists, however, continued their secret society mode of operation and manoeuvred their comrades into wherever they could. Their chosen method of struggle, inevitably hamstrung as it is by its lack of ideological openness has been an unqualified failure.

If you are in with the crowd, of course, then some of the Straight Leftists' machinations will be revealed to you; though 'Harry Steel' likes to keep a few cards up his sleeve. Their internal bulletin *Communist* certainly gives directions and a degree of explanation, but it fails to lay down any theoretical basis for the tendency's twists and turns. Put simply, this may

well be because its ideological base is very weak. A number of publications have had contradictory theses, ranging from the 'Charlie Woods' pamphlet (see *The Leninist* No 6, January 1984) to *Congress Truth to the Assessment of the 38th Congress*. Whilst we and other comrades welcome any manifestation of the Straight Leftists' thinking, it is disappointing that they continue the absurd fiction that they are not a faction. This evasion leads them to issue their material anonymously despite the fact that most of its recipients know very well that it comes from them. This is the case with this tendency's latest production, *Stop the Expulsions — Stop the Split*.

The Straight Leftists hit the pits at the London District Congress on Saturday November 24 when they accepted the EC's move to close it down and walked out with the EC supporters like scabs. In a vain attempt to explain it away, *Stop the Expulsions...* accuses those courageous comrades who stayed of "allowing themselves to be provoked" and, horror of horrors, behaving as though the Congress had not been closed down. That Straight Leftists were, and are, running scared in face of the EC attack is underlined by their persistent return to the theme of EC opponents not provoking mass expulsions by their opposition, since "open flouting of Party decisions gives them that excuse". Presumably covert flouting would be OK by the Straight Leftists.

The old idea held by those who were to become the Straight Leftists since before 1977 is that eventually, if they keep their 'power dry' by not engaging in open ideological struggle, they will inherit all the residue of opposition to the Eurocommunists. Even this halfbaked excuse for strategy is exposed by the London Congress betrayal by the Straight Leftists. The continued fear of a split is no excuse for laying down in front of an illegitimate EC: illegitimate by its very Eurocommunist complexion.

### The Thinking Person's Reformists

Bureaucrats such as comrades McLennan, McGahey, and Pocock, though brought up as well behaved right opportunists have, in their premature dotage, succumbed to the blandishments of the late '60s and early '70s bright young things, the Eurocommunists. Until recently the McLennan faction was staying the bloodthirsty Euro faction within the EC, hoping no doubt that a soft approach might bring the Chaterites to heel. When the Chaterites refused to bow McLennan gave way to Euro demands for 'firm action' — London District Congress was closed and the purge begun. This giving in to the Euros was only a matter of time, for comrade McLennan's faction had some time ago lost its activist basis outside Scotland and threw itself into the Euros' ghastly embrace in order to provide itself with grassroots Party support of some kind.

In a letter to the *Guardian* published on December 31 1984, the editor of *Marxism Today* frantically tries to deny that Eurocommunism is a rightwing force while continually using the phrase "Eurocommunist or Marxism Today" as a description of this position. The factional nature of *Marxism Today* is thus further confirmed, if such were needed, from the horse's mouth.

### Unarmed Oppositionists

The leadership factions of the Party have the national apparatus, they have seized London District (suspending 22 leading comrades in the process) and prevented the new North West District from meeting. What it lacks is a working class activist cadre. The petty bourgeois Euros are virtually absent from Miners Support Committees and are obviously happier in the company of bishops than of brickies or any other section of the working class present in the miners' solidarity movement.

Eighteen months ago an AGM of the PPPS saw the first open signs of the Chaterite tendency's open opposition to the Party leadership. For much of that time since there has been a reluctance on the part of this tendency to engage in open ideological struggle. This has been mainly due to a rejection, shared by the Straight Leftists, of Lenin's method of struggle in the Party. In the last six months especially, since the 1984 AGM of the PPPS, this tendency is accelerating its degree of direct challenge to Eurocommunism.

Of greatest importance is the fact that the Chaterite tendency has during December 1984 and January 1985 begun to exploit the essential weakness of the Eurocommunist position: its ideological basis outside the working class. This has been done on a wider scale in the columns of the *Morning Star*, particularly since the London District Congress debacle.

Substantial articles from two of the Party's founders, comrades Andrew Rothstein and Robin Page Arnot, appeared in the *Morning Star* in December 1984. These two comrades were even more forthright in their January 4 1985 response to an EC reply. They tore to shreds the doubts that any comrade might have harboured about the Euro's *Marxism Today* and castigated it as composed of "anti-Marxist twaddle". The problem, however, is that these comrades and others of the Chaterite camp still cling to the bankrupt, class collaborationist BRS: "we stand by our Party programme, *The British Road to Socialism*". The Arnot/Rothstein argument is based solely on the opportunist ground of criticising the EC for not supporting the BRS, and of how *Marxism Today's* articles "flout the basic principles of the programme".

The other important ideological contribution from the Chaterites was the Ben Fine et al pamphlet *Class Politics* (see the review in *The Leninist* No 16 January 1985). This, too, views the BRS as sacrosanct, and blames the Euros for not following it closely enough. Such acceptance of an opportunist programme removes all possibility of success against Eurocommunism.

### The Miners' Struggle

In the writings of no tendency other than *The Leninist* will you find the concept of widening the miners' dispute into a broad workers' offensive, the need for a general strike, or the absolute necessity for Workers' Defence Corps. Each opportunist tendency of our Party has its own way of approaching the miners' strike, but whether it is the Straight Leftists, the Chaterites, or the leadership factions they want only to tail the NUM. Raising the issues of spreading the strike and defending it properly are ways of resolving the Party crisis: we call on all comrades to aid victory to the miners by any means necessary and to recruit on that basis.

Far from being paralysed by fear of a split, comrades should be exposing the lack of real support for the miners' struggle within the EC faction. Far from fearing the lash of Euro expulsion comrades must consider how best to organise those expelled or excluded from our Party, and refuse to accept Euro diktat; it's our Party and the fact that a bunch of petty bourgeois revisionists have taken over the EC can never alter that. Let us recruit to our Party on the basis of Leninism, utilising the best elements of the class as thrown up during this miners' strike. That is how the Party will rid itself of opportunist disease.

Opposition to Eurocommunism is not enough. There must be total rejection of opportunism in all its varieties, otherwise comrades will be attempting the ridiculous task of fighting opportunism with opportunism. The next few months in our Party will be historically important: it is up to pro-Party comrades to rally against the opportunist liquidators of communist politics, for together we can be sure of success.

# Militant

## and the miners

Ian Mahoney

FOR MANY MINERS, a byproduct of this eleven month strike has been their first encounter with the seemingly bewildering number of groups and sect on the British revolutionary left. One group that by now practically all miners will have encountered is of course, *Militant*, the Labour Party's most infamous entryists.

This organisation has had some success in recruiting relatively large numbers of workers to the Labour Party during the recent period, but is *Militant* really offering anything to working class activists who want socialism?

### Leadership

Like many others on the left, *Militant* has specialised during the course of this dispute in telling workers what they already know and in attempting to bolster militants' confidence by telling them half-truths about the success of the strike. Not once have they set tasks for the movement which would take the struggle forward and onto a qualitatively higher level. Instead, *Militant* has been content to see activists tail the NUM leadership without setting independent tasks or encouraging a less hero-worshipping attitude to Scargill.

We have argued that there is a crying need for a new National Minority-type movement which would organise workers across industry independently of their leaders (including the leadership of the NUM). With this type of organisation paper solidarity can become real solidarity with or without the consent of the Sirs and Hammonds of this world. *Militant* however is limited in its outlook to the already existing official structures and to bureaucratic forms of organisation:

"It's up to the national

leadership of the NUM to make a clear call now — addressed in particular to the left leadership of the TUC, but over their heads to the ranks of the trade unions if necessary. The rank-and-file miners.. will find an avenue to the rank-and-file of other unions."

So now that the "NUM leadership" has not carried out this quite sound advice, what is *Militant's* conclusion? After all, it really is not good enough to just forlornly hope that rank-and-file miners will "find an avenue" to other militant workers by chance or accidents of geography; what is needed is an autonomous rank-and-file organisation to physically bring them together. In this context it is interesting that whenever *Militant* makes these pious, empty calls for solidarity, it never proposes that its Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) in the trade unions takes the lead in forging these links.

### Soviets

In theory at least *Militant* shares our belief that "Soviets (are) the indispensable instrument of revolution..." (*Militant*, 12 October 1984). Yet where has *Militant* attempted to develop such bodies as these in Britain? In its pamphlet *Militant: What we stand for*, rather than a revolutionary role for the workers it envisages our class being a pressure group on the Labour Party:

"A new Labour government could be compelled to nationalise one or two industries, including even profitable industries. In this atmosphere, the programme and policies of Marxism will gain great popularity with the Labour movement. The growth of a powerful Marxist tendency would be the means whereby the workers within the trade unions and Labour Party could exercise

pressure on the Labour Party." (p.17-18).

What an expression of bankruptcy! Nationalisation, or more accurately the extension of state monopoly capitalism, is seen as supplanting the revolutionary role of the working class in *smashing* the old state machine. The revolutionary crisis which will grip capitalism becomes an "atmosphere" and the workers are not set the job of sweeping aside the bourgeois institution of parliament and replacing it with genuinely popular Soviet-type organisations of mass rule, but instead they are to act as a radical ginger group on the parliamentary Labour Party to "compel" reforms! Despite *Militant's* 'revolutionary' pretensions, this really is the same old song that the Labour Party left have been singing for years.

### 24 Hours

*Militant's* major distinctive demand during the strike has been for the TUC to organise a 24 hour general strike. But would this *really* induce fear into the hearts of the British ruling class, a 'general strike' which announces before it even begins when workers will be going back? Is this really likely to make Thatcher and the Tories back down? Combine this strategy with the fact that *Militant* does not propose the independent organisation of the rank-and-file in any industry and it becomes clear just how disastrously bad an idea *Militant's* plan is. A 24 hour general strike run by the traitors in the TUC in the context of the current situation would probably simply spread demoralisation. Without the political arguments being won beforehand by a militant rank-and-file organisation, the ultimate effect of such a 'Royal Wedding'-type general strike could be to bring out very few workers and to behead rising militancy.

### Violence

*Militant* is nothing if not reasonable. "The cry that *Militant* would establish a socialist Britain by violence" they assure us, "is a red herring". (*Ibid* p.25) The inevitable resistance of the capitalist class is not to be smashed, but "cancelled out" by "mobilising" the British Labour Movement (p.27).

This sort of talk totally exposes *Militant*. *Militant* would simply throw masses and masses of unarmed workers against the highly sophisticated forces of the British state. Instead of arming workers both ideologically and physically, *Militant* would simply point the finger at the bourgeoisie and bleat 'You're not playing fair.' They come to the staggering conclusion that capitalists can frequently be 'dirty cads' and use violence against workers; "Is this not the lesson of Chile?" they ask.

For us the lesson of Chile is the burning necessity of *arming workers* to defend their revolution and of splitting and smashing the coercive apparatus of the old state machine, especially the army.

### Odd

Oddly enough, you can still come across many in the Communist Party who will describe *Militant* as 'ultra-left'. Certainly, this organisation is on the extreme left of the Labour Party, the party led by Kinnock, Hattersley, Shore, Healey, *et al*, but then what recommendation is that? Far from being 'ultra-leftist' this organisation shows all the hallmarks of being another Independent Labour Party and playing its role of putting a left cover on the betrayals of the working class by the Labour leadership. *Militant*, like the ILP before it, does not provide workers with the answers to their problems. It isn't even asking the right questions.

## Militant's Merseyside

"Liverpool council have won an overwhelming victory over the Tory government." (*Militant* 13 July 1984.)

*Militant* have won themselves a great deal of publicity through their control of Liverpool city council and that council's on/off battle with the Tories over rate increases. So is Liverpool, as some *Militant* supporters claim, Britain's Petrograd? On closer examination *Militant's* record in Liverpool is clearly one of defeat and betrayal. Rather than revolutionary leadership it is clear that their approach is firmly stuck in the good old British Labourite tradition of sectionalism and paternalism.

*Militant's* most prominent supporter on Liverpool council is the young, go-getting snappy dresser, Derek Hatton. It is interesting to compare Hatton's bluster and rhetoric to what in practice *Militant* ended up doing for the workers of Liverpool. The beginning of 1984, found Hatton with his 'uncompromising' hat on:

"Our rate increase that we are putting forward is there in black and white as 9% unlike other political parties... to talk about 25% rate increases (as was proposed by the Liberals on the council — IM) on the back of the people of this city would in many ways put them below the poverty line."

In the event, *Militant* decided to compromise and only burden the backs of the Liverpool working class with a 17% increase, a figure which was over three times bigger than the prevailing rate of inflation!

Hatton and his friends made no serious efforts to mobilise workers in the city other than to use the threat of them as bargaining tools against the Tories. Thus rather than initiate a city wide delegate based workers' council of resistance to organise action against the Tory attacks, workers were fobbed off with a number of stage-managed anti-Tory rallies which were dignified with the misnomers of "delegate

conferences" or even "Fightback conferences". Cretinously, not once did *Militant*, apart from in a number of rhetorical asides, seek to concretely link their Liverpool battle to that of the miners. Rather they were quite content to see it chug on as an isolated sectional fight.

This paternalistic attitude to the working class from the *Militant* 'vanguard' has in Liverpool split the local authority unions and united many against 'their' council over the issue of race.

*Militant's* decision to appoint a tame establishment black named Bond to head its race relations unit in preference to more qualified local candidates provoked a storm

of protest from the black and Asian communities. The hapless Bond's sole qualification seemed to be that he agreed with *Militant's* line on racism.

The real problem with all of this for Liverpool workers is not so much *Militant's* patronage, sickening though it is. The crux is that *Militant* seeks to cleanse Liverpool of racism not by mobilising workers across racial divides in a common class fight or by organising white workers to physically defend their black sisters and brothers against the attacks of fascists and the state but instead by bureaucratic stage-managing from the top. Evidently, for the Labourites of *Militant* rooting out racism is not linked to the revolutionary struggle of the working class to smash the old state machine. Instead the task seems to be to staff the administrative positions of the bourgeois state with *Militant* supporters and then *Hey Presto!* No more racism! *Voila!* Socialism!

*Militant's* shabby record in Liverpool has thoroughly exposed their revolutionary pretensions. Socialism will not come through the committee room intrigues and distrust of the working class *à la Militant*. Forewarned is forearmed. Workers should look closely at Liverpool and take heed of *Militant's* betrayals.



Liverpool blacks demonstrate against Militant dictat

## REVIEWS

## Our Fighting Ancestors

Peter Butler

**John Baxter** *Armed Resistance and Insurrection: The Early Chartist Experience* History Group of the CPGB, London. July 1984. pp38. 95p.

THE MOST interesting thing about any Party publication dealing with revolutionary violence is that it is published. Beyond that it is important to the degree that our understanding of the long tradition of revolutionary violence in Britain as elsewhere is deepened. The Chartists are a rich vein in the revolutionary struggles of past experience, and study of that period well repays the effort expended.

From 1836 when attempts were first made to introduce a New Poor Law there were calls in the West Riding of Yorkshire for armed resistance. But it was not until 1837 that the first Chartist organisations were formed to give voice to the rising discontent with the New Poor Law and to mobilise against it. Calls for working men's associations to be ready to fight were indeed timely, for as winter approached in 1837 the military were called in to impose the New Poor Law in Bradford.

The Canadian uprising of 1837 gave heart to the Chartists in their fight against the same enemy: the armed Canadian revolutionary democrats were cited as sterling examples at many a meeting, and indeed solidarity with their struggle was prominent at a large Leeds rally in winter of 1837-1838. At meetings in Halifax, Dewsbury, and Sheffield in early 1838 the use of arms in defence of rights was proclaimed from the platforms.

Late spring and early summer of 1838 saw resistance and insurrection in places as far apart as Newcastle and Kent. Today's militant miners in Yorkshire, remembering the long arm of the Metropolitan Police reaching out to beat them down, can see the latest of a long line of such 'community policing': the Mets were drafted into Dewsbury in August 1838 to enforce the New Poor Law. In September the Bradford Northern Union (of Chartists) discussed provision of arms to its members. In Dewsbury pistols were fired at a demonstration in August, and early autumn saw the Mets positively pursued by men armed with staves. Many banners at the 200,000 strong Chartist meeting at Peep Garden in October bore messages calling for armed resistance.

Darker evenings in late 1838 prompted the growth of torchlit demonstrations, and the growing strength of Chartism prompted greater efforts to arm. Magistrates and other notables began to receive reports of manufacture of pikes and subscription societies for the purchase of arms. Government proclamation against torchlit demonstrations was, however, sufficient to have the Chartist leaders call them off.

The run up to the Chartist Convention of 1839 provided the opportunity to renewed calls to arm the working class. Manchester delegates to the Convention heard at a January meeting how they should trust to pike and musket in dealing with the government. Other delegates, like those from Sheffield and Bradford, emphasised the inevitability of a resort to force by the working class, although various Chartist leaders were careful to underline what they saw as the defensive nature of any such force. Nevertheless, a January meeting in

Bradford heard the prominent Chartist Bussey encourage those present to buy a rifle, or a musket (cheaper), or pistols, or at least a pike.

Running through Chartist thought and speech in February were insistent self confident calls to fight for workers' rights with arms in hand. At a Leeds recruiting meeting for the Chartists shouts for all recruits to be armed were welcomed. And Bussey continued to stir his hearers in March in Bradford with derision of further petitions to parliament, and instead to fight more literally. Bourgeois papers carried stories of arms arriving in Bradford, arms from Birmingham, Chartists possessing large numbers of pikes, Chartists drilling, robberies ignoring valuables in favour of guns, and subscriptions for guns.

The *Northern Star*, a leading Chartist paper, developed its views on the right to possess arms and use them, and reported Chartist speakers declaring that nothing was obtained without force and that paper bullets (that is, petitions) were woefully inadequate. However, in most centres the restraint called for by Chartist leaders was observed, as the petition was to be presented to parliament in May.

Bradford continued to be the centre of disaffection. Women Chartists pledged support for armed struggle in April, public drilling started in April (soon with as many as 500 involved), and magistrates receiving reports of 400 sets of muskets and pikes held locally. Halifax saw drilling Chartists and wide arming; Barnsley Chartists were also avidly arming themselves.

The government responded to all these preparations for the presentation of the great Chartist petition by ordering yet more troops home from Ireland to the Midlands and the North, mobilising troops of yeomanry and special constables, and rounding up local leaders.

Parliament's deferral of consideration of the Chartist petition lent greater weight to the Whit demonstration. At West Riding meetings more emphasis was given to defensive use of arms, although many were still sure that there was nothing left but physical force. Imported Mets attacked a crowded meeting in Birmingham in July; at the same time the reconvened Convention in London heard of the rejection by parliament of their petition. There were protest meetings in Barnsley and Sheffield. Talk was of a general strike and armed self defence. The general strike due for mid August was however shortened to three days. Manufacture and repair of bayonets and guns was still being reported to magistrates. Weapons were openly displayed at a Sheffield Chartist meeting.

When the Convention broke up in September 1839 many delegates left to prepare for a rising. The *Northern Star* and more openly the *Northern Liberator* carried extensive articles on armed preparations. But when it came to the two occasions, January 11 and January 26, when risings took place, their small number of activists were insufficient, for the leadership vacillated too readily. Only 100-150 came out in the South Yorkshire villages and cities, but in Dewsbury about 1,000 mustered on the first occasion. Bradford Chartists rose two weeks later with 500 under arms. A total of over 2000 were prepared to fight in January 1840.

Whilst 'constitutionalist' to a large degree, the fact that important sections of the working class movement of the day, the Chartists, were able and willing to demand of its members that they arm at the very least in self defence shows how far their understanding of the class enemy had advanced. The importance for us over 145 years distant is that their lesson has to be relearnt. The ferocity of the state's attack on the miners and the importation of the Mets and other

police forces into areas of militancy is vividly paralleled by the Chartists' experience. Their response must be ours: self defence of the working class movement. This pamphlet from comrade Baxter is a worthy sword in our armoury with which to hack down the specious arguments of social pacifists in our Party and give our class the weapons it needs and wields so well given correct, clearheaded leadership.

## Feminism VS Revolution

Geraldine Duffy

**Linda Harriet Edmondson**, *Feminism in Russia 1900-1917*, hbk, pp 197, £16.50.

THROUGHOUT the existence of *The Leninist* we have maintained a consistent anti-feminist position because we believe feminism to be a separatist, bourgeois ideology. For this we have been vilified as anti-women by those who fail to appreciate the difference between feminism and a revolutionary approach to women's liberation. Anyone who still adheres to this view should read *Feminism in Russia* because, in her presentation of this history Linda Edmondson, as a feminist, draws the distinction between the "feminists" and the "revolutionary" or "working class women's movement". Unlike many feminists she is honest enough to present the extreme differences that existed between the two even though the purpose of the book is to present a feminist history:

"I hope that my book will be read as a sympathetic, if critical, account of a movement for women's civil and political equality, whose supporters trusted that a better world could be created without resort to violence, and a constitutional solution found to Russia's ills." (px).

As such an account Edmondson fulfils her task in a detailed and academic way although the book is largely bereft of political argument. Looking at the course of feminism in this period with hindsight it is obvious that the potential or threat of feminism (depending on your viewpoint) always seemed greater than perhaps it actually was. Prior to 1905 the feminist movement was very small and concentrated on the expansion of educational and employment opportunities for middle class and gentry women. It was only in 1905 with the revolution that a change in direction occurred, provoked by the awakening of millions of women. The emphasis was transferred to the acquisition of political rights. It was in this period that the Marxists really came into conflict with the feminists who were attempting to attract working women to their ranks. In this task the feminists were initially fairly successful but this tended to be short lived due to the huge gap that existed between bourgeois and working women. An oft quoted example of this gulf is that of a prominent feminist leader who, while encouraging her cook to hold meetings on women's equality, always ensured that these were confined to the servants quarters.

The First All Russian Women's Congress of 1908 exacerbated the differences between feminists and workers. The composition of the congress was overwhelmingly middle class and although it is unlikely that the organisers deliberately excluded working women the congress did take

place in working hours. The Bolsheviks were opposed to the congress but, because considerable interest was shown by a number of working women, they decided to participate. The working class women clearly had illusions as to what the congress could provide but, according to Kollontai (later to become the USSR's first Minister of Social Welfare), the congress exposed to these women the "futility of unity with women of other classes."

By 1912 the feminists, apart from being divided among themselves, had to face the mounting "challenge of the revolutionary women's movement, which was finally taking shape." (p 153). The triumphs of the revolutionary women's movement included the highly successful International Women's Day in 1913 and the following year the Bolsheviks' launch of *Rabotnitsa* — a journal aimed specifically at working class women. The abyss between revolutionary women and bourgeois feminists was further deepened by the war and finally the working women, starved by war, initiated the revolution which was to declare feminism redundant.

Such was the short lived fate of feminism in Russia. In drawing the threads together at the end of her book Edmondson is inevitably inclined to overestimate the impact of the feminists but she does point to some important effects feminism had on the Bolsheviks themselves. She does not cretinously argue, as some may, that feminist ideology changed and influenced the ideas of the Bolshevik women but on the contrary points to the problems Bolshevik women faced as a result of feminism. For example many Bolsheviks, influenced by their abhorrence of the separatism of the feminists, were hostile to the concept of special work and organisation among women and deeply suspicious that women such as Kollontai were contaminated by bourgeois feminism. This was indeed a great problem and not one that escapes the centrists in our Party eighty years on.

On the other hand Edmondson also poses the possibility that Lenin's realisation of the necessity of organising working class women had something to do with the feminist activity. She argues that one of the reasons the Bolsheviks became active in trying to win working women was that they were aware of feminism increasing its influence among these women and the dangers this contained. There is no evidence to suggest this was anything like the main reason for the increase in activity but it must have been a factor, as Edmondson correctly points out, "Not for nothing did Kollontai devote so many pages of her 400 page polemic, *The Social Foundations of the Woman Question*, to a demolition of the feminists." Indeed it is for the same reasons that we continue to polemicise against the dangers of bourgeois feminism taking root in the workers' movement.

However, unlike the Bolsheviks, we are faced with the additional and very grave problem of the feminist maggot eating away at our Party. Feminism has become so much the norm that, although the centrists attack the Euro feminists for their separatism, they too describe themselves as feminists. It is essential for this type of thinking by communists to be broken if the woman's question is not to remain in feminist hands in the Party and if a revolutionary lead is to be given for a working class women's movement. Given this we would urge Party members to read this book because, unlike many feminist writings, it does not disguise its class position and, although it is not the purpose of the book, it exposes the bourgeois nature of feminism.

# The world debt crisis

During the course of the miners' strike many on the left have come to think of British capitalism as near invincible with its array of draconian anti-trade union laws, its nationally organised picket busting police force, and its sophisticated contingency planning. But as our article by comrade *John Mann* makes abundantly clear the invincible image is deceptive. Beneath the veneer of power the system is in deep trouble. The recent sharp decline of the pound sterling against the dollar is a symptom of the gathering storm, a storm which threatens not just Britain but the entire post-World War Two capitalist order. This was built on an ever extending credit system and today this system stands like a house of cards.

THE WORLD capitalist system is on the edge of the precipice. This fact is now being accepted by a growing number of bourgeois pundits and 'experts' in the face of the stupendous debts incurred by multinational corporations and governments, especially Latin American governments, in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. Shortly before the Cartagena conference of Latin American debtor countries in June of last year *The Times* editorial warned both participants at that meeting as well as their bank creditors to be cautious as "There is the kind of banking collapse that will hurt all of us looming if things go wrong." And in opening the Cartagena conference Colombian President Belisario Betancur rightly outlined the stability of world capitalism as being at stake, when he compared Latin America's financial burden to the crushing debt and reparations problems after World War I which helped wreck the international capitalist economy in the 1920s and 1930s and laid the foundation for World War II.

Already the debt crisis and the austerity 'remedy' being imposed on debtor countries by the IMF is drawing the whole of the Latin American continent, from the Rio Grande to the Horn, into a profound political, economic, and social crisis. This situation, if we are to clearly understand the practical implications for the countries of this region, amounts to a *revolutionary situation*. Riots and street barricade fighting have erupted in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Brazil, and Peru, while the ruling classes of Argentina and Bolivia tentatively experiment with the 'democratic' option in an attempt to defuse the crisis but at the same time retain close at hand the alternative of imposing the fascist solution if necessary. The depth of the crisis in Latin America cannot be expected to improve but on the contrary is fated to get worse. Increasingly the stark choice facing the people of these countries is one of *revolution or counter-revolution*.

The reformist leaders of the British labour movement, including both the Eurocommunist and *Morning Star* factions of our Communist Party, portray the debt crisis as the tragic consequence of 'monetarist madness' and thus call for the resurrection of an alternative strategy of Keynesian policies 'before it is too late'. These include restructuring international capital and trade relations 'on a more equitable basis', with the IMF and World Bank taking on the role of "lender of last resort", and above all restoring the strength, competitiveness, and vitality of British industry by means of implementing controls on trade and capital export. This perspective does not recognise the inevitability of revolutionary situations developing, not just in the 'Third World', but eventually in all capitalist countries including Britain, and therefore does not pose revolution as the only real alternative to the horrific prospects of economic collapse, increasing political oppression, and world war offered by capitalism. On the contrary, it is a perspective for reforming and ameliorating the excesses of capitalism, which for the mass of exploited and oppressed can never be anything but a hopeless utopian illusion. Such a perspective must eventually lead the reformists and opportunists to betray and disarm the working class in the face of a rising revolutionary crisis, and, moreover, increase the probability of imperialism unleashing a global nuclear war as the final solution for a thoroughly corrupt and bankrupt system, which can no longer maintain its world dominance by any other means.

In this article we argue that contrary to the pious wishes of the reformists and opportunists the collapse of the world financial system is not only inevitable but is also possibly very close at hand. Today the integrity of this system is increasingly reliant upon international speculation in the credit-led US economic boom and in the dollar as the world's major reserve currency. With Reagan's 1985 budget

deficit predicted to reach over 200 billion dollars, the burden of debt, of interest payments, and of a massive 125 billion dollar trade deficit has put the US economy on course for another major recession towards the end of this year. The impact of this downturn will be to cut off Latin America's main export markets, which is also the main source of income for repaying its own debt and interest, and will thereby instigate the third round in the debt crisis. It is possible that this time, the world banking system may not be able to prevent Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico from defaulting on their interest payments and that the prospect of tens and hundreds of major international banks going bust will become very real. In fact such an ominous epochal event will signify, as did the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the reemergence of the *General Crisis of Capitalism*, which in political terms would mean the rise once more of revolutionary situations throughout the whole of the world capitalist system.

## The Latest Development of Imperialism

The latest catchword used by the bourgeois economic press and literature to describe monopoly capitalism's most recent development is 'Globalisation'. This in essence refers to the extremely high degree of 'socialisation of production' attained by present-day monopoly capitalism. As Lenin outlined in *Imperialism — highest stage of capitalism*, it is a process which stems from the concentration and centralisation of capital. Production and exchange of commodities are no longer carried out by individual producers, atomised and unknown to each other, but are increasingly transformed into an extensive division of labour, initially on a national basis, and then later on an international scale until finally they are organised with the purpose of producing "global products" for an integrated global market.

This last stage, in which the economic fetters of national boundaries are increasingly overcome, began after World War II when the imperialist conflict between Britain, Germany, and the USA for hegemony over the world capitalist system was resolved primarily in favour of the latter. In the new conditions of the postwar era US imperialism set out to weld the capitalist system into a political, economic, and military unity.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s US corporations such as Fords, IBM, and Du Pont dramatically expanded their

operations to Western Europe and elsewhere via the establishment of subsidiaries and thus became known as "multinationals". This was later followed by similar developments among British, West German, Dutch, French, and Japanese companies which, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, also established an integrated network of subsidiaries throughout the US, the EEC, and parts of the 'Third World'. Christopher Tugendhat, a Tory MP with close connections with the City and a former correspondent on the *Financial Times*, described this process in his book *The Multinationals*:

"The period since the end of the Second World War has seen a complete transformation from the situation prevailing between the wars. It has been marked by an explosive expansion in international direct investment, which for much of the time has been rising at twice the rate of the world gross national product. The international company with subsidiaries in many countries is no longer a rarity; it is well on the way to becoming the characteristic industrial organisation of the age." (p.45)

Initially, the 'multinational' subsidiaries produced commodities and services for the regional market in which they were situated, primarily to circumvent trade restrictions. Today, however, more and more 'multinationals' are following the example of the Japanese integrated trading monopolies or *sogo shoshas*; these giant holding conglomerates have rapidly overtaken many of the biggest American and British monopolies in turnover by means of global integration of subsidiaries. Companies like Mitsubishi manufacture components in several countries, assemble them in a central plant, and market the finished product throughout the world. In this way the monumental costs of a growing capital intensity in manufacture and of research and development are minimised through economies of scale, while the advantages of exploiting both Asian and Latin American unskilled labour in low technology processes is utilised to the maximum. According to *The Times* list of top 1000 companies, these massive Japanese monopolies have now risen to occupy ten of the top fifty places behind the US monopolies with twenty three, ahead of West German companies in third position and of British companies which have now slipped to fourth.

The growth of international integration in the world-wide operations of 'multinationals' has led



them to increase their share of trade in the imperialist countries. According to the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* (March 1980), eighty percent of UK exports are covered by 'multinationals', and thirty percent are accounted for by trade between affiliates of the same company; in the cases of the motor and chemicals industries, this figure is as high as sixty and thirty seven percent respectively. And in respect of the imports accounted for by trade between

communications, which enables trading in stocks to be conducted via computer and telex terminals and, furthermore, by the abolition of exchange controls in the US, Britain, and more recently Japan. At the end of 1983, total capitalisation of all stock markets around the world amounted to 3,100 billion dollars and is rapidly expanding with monopoly capitalism's growing need to export capital.

An additional and very important feature of the growing integration of

described by Lenin in his book *Imperialism*, only now can we truly say that monopoly capital has fully matured on an international scale. Only now are the banks in the US, Britain, and elsewhere really beginning to take on the same finance capital role, to the same high degree, as the German 'universal' banks referred to by Lenin and Hilferding. Only now can we really say that developments in the stock exchanges are completely subordinating those institutions to the needs of finance capital and destroying the last vestiges of the 19th century tradition of the individual entrepreneur as a significant participant in determining capitalist investment. In fact the 'financial revolution' that has been sweeping the world capitalist system during the last five years is effecting the most dramatic transformations since the first two turbulent decades of this century when monopoly capitalism first emerged. Today, as then, these changes do not only reflect a higher level of capitalist organisation, but are also a portent to a future crisis which threatens to shake that system to its very foundations.

The massive postwar integration of production, trade, and finance has increased the interdependence of all capitalist countries in the world capitalist system. A new General Crisis on the basis of this more closely interwoven system will have a far greater impact than the last General Crisis of 1914-1948. During the 1920s and 1930s the United States and Britain managed to shield themselves from the traumatic political and economic crises which beset the continent of Europe (apart from the two world wars) because they were cocooned by markets and resources in

borrowing vast amounts of money from the clearing banks via the international money markets. The latest threat of default on loans by governments in Latin America has highlighted this fact over the past two years. Yet the world's debtors are not only confined to those under and medium developed capitalist countries which have dominated the headlines, but also include major imperialist governments and 'multinationals' (not to mention socialist countries like Poland). The Debt Crisis is undoubtedly a phenomenon affecting the world capitalist system in general.

So what is the extent of the Debt Crisis?

The total external debt of all developing countries in 1984 amounted to 812 billion dollars, having risen as a proportion of their total Gross Domestic Product from 22 percent in 1973 to 35 percent in 1983. Furthermore, 350 billion dollars of this debt today is accounted for by Latin American countries, in the main being carried by Brazil (93 billion dollars), Mexico (90 billion), Argentina (45 billion) and Venezuela (35 billion), and is nearer 40 percent of that continent's total Gross Domestic Product.

The dramatic rise in interest rates over the past ten years has meant that annual debt and interest repayments have taken a growing slice of the national income from these debtor economies, with the brunt of the squeeze being met by painful cuts in living standards of workers and peasants. For example in Latin America actual debt and interest repayments rose from 30 to 55 percent as a share of total export revenue between 1978 and 1982, and today amount to a vast 30 billion dollar flow of resources being sucked into the coffers of American and Western European banks every year.

Although total net bank lending to non-OPEC developing countries has declined since 1981 from a peak of 40 billion dollars annually to just over 10 billion, this has not alleviated the debt burden of these countries. Principal repayments alone by the 25 biggest debtors will rise from 35 billion to 85 billion dollars between 1984 and 1987, during which time a further recession will yet again aggravate their ability to pay by reducing the size of export markets as the major source of income.

In the imperialist countries, a similar rise of indebtedness occurred between 1973 and 1983, when general government debt in the US, the EEC, and Japan increased on average from 42 to 67 percent as a proportion of gross domestic product. The Reagan administration especially is financing an annual budget deficit of 200 billion dollars by borrowing from the international money markets and has placed the US economy on a course to

### How Developing Countries Finance Their Deficits

Non-oil developing countries, figures in \$ billions

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Current account deficits	109	82	56	50
Capital inflows which do not create debt*	27	24	21	23
Use of reserves +	-5	4	-6	-13
Net external borrowing	103	73	51	45
Of which:				
Long term official borrowing	23	22	23	23
Errors & omissions	-16	-19	-10	-5

\* Governments' official institutions.

Source: IMF.

related companies, estimates for the US and UK economies are as high as fifty percent of the total.

As a consequence of this unprecedented rise in international integration of production, trade, and capital investment, the financial institutions of capitalism have also become increasingly internationalised. This is especially so for the major clearing banks in the US, Western Europe and Japan; particularly since postwar expansion in trade gave rise to the Eurodollar markets during the early 1960s.

At first, these banks lacked the international size or expertise, and found it necessary to deal in Eurodollars through joint ventures with several foreign banks. For example the Orion consortium was set up by the National Westminster, Chase Manhattan, and the Royal Bank of Canada, whereas the EBIC consortium was formed by the Midland, the Deutsche Bank, and the Société Générale. During the 1970s this consortium approach declined after individual banks began to acquire their own subsidiaries throughout the world and were large enough and experienced enough to conduct international transactions alone. Today the banking system is dominated by about twenty truly international banks, like Chase Manhattan, Bank America, Barclays, Deutsche Bank, and Société Générale, which are able now to handle massive cross border loans to companies and governments involving billions of dollars at a time.

By 1980 total bank claims due to international lending had amounted to the incredible figure of 1,248 billion dollars, according to the Bank of International Settlements, and moreover has actually doubled to 2,500 billion dollars during the intervening four years. This global financial market is so large today that it has displaced world trade as the major factor determining currency exchange rates.

Another important sphere of finance undergoing a similar process of internationalisation, through what is termed 'deregulation' is the stock exchange. Whereas the clearing banks traditionally deal primarily in the money markets, the stock exchange deals with securities, i.e. capital markets. And the fact that the three major capital markets of New York, London, and Tokyo are rapidly being integrated in a system of twenty-four hour trading is again a symptom of world capitalism's growing need for the unhindered movement and investment of capital from one country to another. Since 1979 these developments have been facilitated by the technological revolution in

production and finance on a global scale is the increasing domination of the banks overall. From simply dealing in the money markets the banks have become major investors in securities and bonds. This partly stems from the fact that banks have increased their share of corporate finance from 30 to over 70 percent in the past fifteen years and that whenever 'multinational' monopolies like Chrysler and Massey

### Developing Countries Debts

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total external debt (\$ billion)	329.3	559.9	767.6	812.4
Debt to official creditors+ (\$ billion)	111.0	169.1	229.6	254.4
Ratio of debt to total exports	125.0	109.0	151.0	145.0
Debt service payments (\$ billion)	40.3	87.9	114.6	122.6

\* Governments' official institutions

Source: IMF

Ferguson have been in danger of defaulting on bank loans, part of the rescheduling has meant transforming a proportion of the loan into equity shares. More important, however, is the fact that the banks are in the forefront of the stock exchange 'revolution'. Since 1973, the US investment banks have become some of the biggest dealers on the New York stock exchange and it is merely a matter of time before the London and Tokyo markets are opened up to similar interventions by both domestic and foreign owned banks. In the London exchange fixed minimum commissions will be dropped in 1986, allowing mergers between banks, stockbrokers, and jobbers to form 'financial supermarkets' capable of intervening and dominating all spheres of finance. For example, Barclays has launched a 100 million pound securities operation with stockbrokers de Zoate and Bevan and jobbers Wedd Durlacher, and National Westminster has launched a similar deal via its subsidiary County Bank. This confirms the recent trend whereby stock exchange share ownership by individuals has been reduced from 58 percent in 1963 to a mere 25 percent in 1983 with the growing intervention by financial institutions like pension funds and insurance companies etc. With these latest developments, the major clearing banks could soon become the largest investors and dealers in stock exchange securities.

Although all the features we have described were clearly visible as characteristic of monopoly capitalism from the very beginning of its development and were clearly

Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Today, however, the fortunes of all imperialist countries are intimately tied to developments within each other as well as the under and medium developed capitalist countries. This was never more so the case than with Latin America, where the fate of the whole world financial system could be said to be in the balance.

Developments in the structure of

### Changes in World Output

% change from previous year

	1982	1983	1984
Industrial countries	-0.1	+2.3	+3.6
Developing countries	+0.1	+0.9	+3.8
of which:			
Oil exporters	-4.3	-1.1	+4.7
Non-oil countries	+1.5	+1.6	+3.5
Others*	+1.4	+3.1	+3.8
Total world	+0.1	+2.1	+3.7

\* USSR & other East European non-members of the IMF

Source: IMF

world capitalism over the past thirty years have ensured that economic crises no longer remain confined to particular regions, but are very soon elevated to a global scale. This is the case with the current Debt Crisis, so let us now turn to an examination of that crisis.

### The Debt Crisis

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s capitalist reproduction has relied increasingly upon the mechanism of

easily surpass Brazil or Mexico as the world's biggest debtor.

Finally, in addition to the indebtedness of governments in the imperialist and less developed capitalist countries is the growing indebtedness of even the largest 'multinational' monopolies. These increased the proportion of their financing by banks from a mere 30 percent during 1960-1973 to over 70 percent during 1978-1983, thus reducing the level of funds generated through the stock exchange. In the UK,

for instance, the corporate debenture market ceased to be used after the early 1970s. Consequently, industrial monopolies have become more reliant on the banks to keep them afloat, as was the case with Chrysler and Massey-Ferguson, when the threat of bankruptcy hung over them during the depths of the 1980-81 recession. The *Financial Times* commented at the time: "The sheer size of the Massey and Chrysler problems has brought home to bankers that having big clients no longer provides a degree of safety... Moreover, international banks are viewing with a degree of anxiety the problems of several other large multinational enterprises, with the motor industry in particular still facing serious difficulties in the present field of international rescue operations."

"Certainly they have shown willingness to be flexible, and to accept a degree of long term commitment if they are to minimise eventual losses and avoid disruption which could have serious social and political consequences." (May 11 1981).

By "long term commitment" *The Financial Times* was referring to an aspect of the growing intervention by banks into the finances and capital investment of both industrial monopolies and more recently, 'sovereign' debtors, namely "the conversion of bank debt into equity-type finance..." (September 21 1981.)

It is clear from these facts that the mechanism underlying the Debt Crisis is the international development and extension of the credit system, in which the major clearing banks are predominantly instrumental. This is not the actual cause of the Debt Crisis but simply the means by which it has occurred. So before we look at the cause, let us briefly examine what the credit system is and how it has developed in the postwar era.

The normal role of credit in capitalist reproduction is to act as a 'lubricant' in the circulation of commodities. When a bottleneck or blockage occurs in this process, commodities or money accumulates at one point, and therefore credit is extended, i.e. money loaned, to facilitate the flow. Such problems can often occur, simply due to the complexity of the market because buyers and sellers are not always at the

same place at the same time. This is especially so in the case of the world market.

Postwar capitalist development has brought about a massive growth in world trade not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Between 1950 and 1982 trade increased as a proportion of gross domestic product in the capitalist economies from a level of 10 percent to 20 percent. Consequently the international flow of money, especially dollars, has also increased.

In 1958 the international monetary regulations adopted at Bretton Woods after World War II were relaxed to enable banks outside the United States to hold and accumulate dollars. This became particularly convenient for the Socialist countries, which deposited their dollar earnings with banks in Western Europe as a safeguard against any political sanctions the US government may impose, and for US 'multinationals', which needed to accumulate dollars in Western Europe to finance their operations there. These mounting deposits of dollars in Europe thus became known as 'Eurodollars', and could be loaned out to earn interest. This development therefore laid down for the first time ever the basis of a truly international credit system.

The difference between the Eurodollar markets and the loans used to finance trade through the stock exchange during the 19th and first half of the 20th century, is that the former are money markets and the latter are capital markets. Money markets are used to primarily maintain 'liquidity' and are loaned out for short term periods, whereas capital markets are more concerned with investing resources in productive projects over a medium or long term period. This division of labour is reflected at the top level by the respective roles of the IMF and the World Bank.

Moreover, the money markets are accompanied by an element of instability due to 'speculation'. Capital loans are invariably invested in production and usually earn a profit, part of which is taken by the creditor as interest. Money loans, on the other hand, are primarily used to maintain the chain of buying and selling intact and are not necessarily invested as capital. Such loans do not produce value or profit, yet the creditor still extracts interest. In the case of money markets, the rate of interest bears no

real relation to the rate of profit, but is determined by the demand for money as a means of exchange. The rate of interest can continue to rise even after the rate of profit has plummeted because it is at times of extreme crisis when debtors are unable to pay creditors that the demand for money is most acute. It is at times like these that speculators are drawn to the money markets by astronomical interest rates, only to find out at a later stage that the whole edifice of banking is built on fictitious 'capital'.

The Eurodollar markets were stamped with the mark of instability from the moment of birth, yet the emergence of crises and speculation in the money system did not arise automatically. The credit system remained stable so long as the flow of trade continued; but after 1968, growing trade surpluses in some countries and growing deficits in others became a permanent feature of the world capitalist system. This indicated that a more serious and more permanent block to capitalist reproduction was emerging.

Up to 1971 the differential between deficits in, say, the US and surpluses in West Germany could be temporarily overcome by the latter exchanging its surplus dollars for gold from the US treasury. However, the continuous imbalance of trade in the late 1960s drained US gold reserves to the point where this mechanism broke down. In August 1971 all gold payments were suspended, thus facilitating the growth of Eurodollar deposits; trade surpluses in Europe could no longer be exchanged for gold and had to be accumulated in Western European banks. Moreover, the Eurodollar market received a further impetus after 1973 when OPEC trade surpluses also began to flow into and dramatically swell the European money markets.

Between 1968 and 1973 the international money markets leapt from relative insignificance to become the most important phenomenon determining international transactions between capitalist economies, including trade. Net liabilities in all Eurocurrencies grew from a mere 11 billion dollars in 1965 to an incredible 277 billion dollar market in 1977. The factor promoting this expansion in international 'hot' money was unquestionably the appearance of permanent 'overtrading' after 1968, giving rise to irreconcilable deficits and surpluses throughout the world capitalist economy.

Whereas the system of Fixed Exchange Rates was sufficient to overcome all major imbalances between 1945 and 1971, all currencies now have to find their level by 'floating' up or down, depending on whether a surplus or deficit is held in that currency and whether it is being bought or sold by speculators on the international money markets.

The current Debt Crisis is the culmination of a profound and growing obstacle to capitalist reproduction giving rise to, continuous

overtrading and overextension of the credit system over the past fifteen years. This is the mechanism of the crisis, but we have yet to explain the reason for this development. Let us therefore now turn to the main question of the cause for overtrading, overextension of credit and growth of indebtedness.

### Fundamental Cause

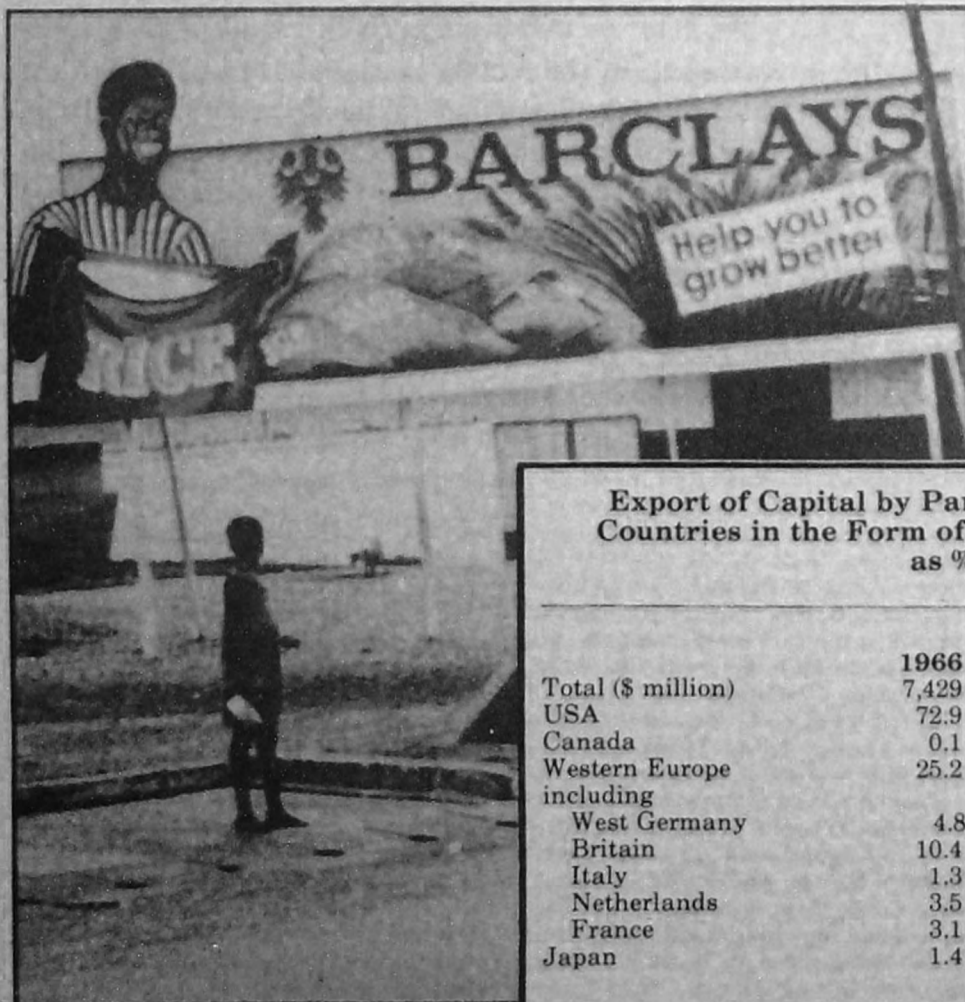
What is the fundamental cause of the debt crisis? Why has it only really emerged since the 1970s? The opportunists and reformists point to the problem of recycling Eurodollars, especially after the 1973 oil crisis when OPEC trading surpluses were channeled into the Western European money markets: the solution, according to this argument, is to revoke the monetarist policies which restrict the flow of money and to adopt the Keynesian policy of expansion through government-led spending.

Any attempt, such as this, to examine a crisis purely in the realm of fiscal and monetary policy merely scratches the surface and utterly fails to look at the real cause of the crisis. The monetary system is the most superficial sphere of the capitalist economy and crises at this level are predominantly only a reflection of the crisis situated within the underlying and fundamental sphere of material and value production. It is here that we must look for the primary cause of the debt crisis.

The most important indicator of capitalist production, as well as being the primary motive for capitalists, is the rate of profit. When it rises, capitalists are encouraged to invest capital and to expand production; when it falls, capitalists tend to withdraw capital and to bring about a contraction of production. Historically, the tendency is for the rate of profit to fall; Marx demonstrated this law of political economy in his classic work *Capital*, showing that the progressive rise of productivity reduces the proportion of capital invested in living labour. This is concretely expressed by the growing displacement of workers by machines in the production process. As living labour is the only source of profit, the reduction of labour tends to give rise to a fall in the rate of profit. This tendency can be periodically and temporarily countered by a cheapening of either the value of labour or the value of raw materials and machinery used in production, or both. But the eventual rise in productivity will again reestablish the general tendency.

An approximate idea of the recent trend in the rate of profit can be gained best from an examination of statistics relating to manufacturing industry, either by calculating the rate of profit for a single turnover of circulating capital invested in labour and raw materials, or for the annual rate of profit, which is the product of the simple rate of profit times the number of turnovers in the year. Let us therefore look at the figures for manufacturing in the US and UK.

Using 1951 as a base year, the simple rate of profit for UK manufacturing stood at 4.9 percent, and 6.3 percent for the USA. This rose in both cases to a maximum for 1968 of 5.6 percent in the UK and 7.7 percent in the USA, after which it finally began to fall throughout the 1970s, reaching figures for 1981 of 3.9 percent and 5.4 percent for the UK and USA respectively. A similar up and down tendency is found for the annual rate of profit, except that in the UK an increased turnover in the early 1970s was sufficient to delay the peak year until 1974. Although these changes are not quantitatively impressive and are far from giving an accurate estimate of economic activity, they give a consistently similar picture for both UK and US manufacturing on the basis of the best census statistics available. They also explain why the world capitalist system, of which the US and UK economies are two of the most important component parts,



The export of capital leads not only to super profits but to super exploitation.

Export of Capital by Particular Developed Capitalist Countries in the Form of Direct Overseas Investments as % of total

	1966	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Total (\$ million)	7,429	12,059	25,066	24,336	25,816	35,126	47,183
USA	72.9	62.9	56.9	47.7	47.3	46.7	51.7
Canada	0.1	2.5	3.1	2.3	2.9	6.6	3.9
Western Europe including	25.2	30.7	32.4	41.1	42.5	39.4	37.6
West Germany	4.8	7.2	8.0	10.1	10.7	10.3	9.8
Britain	10.4	10.9	9.7	15.6	12.8	13.1	12.3
Italy	1.3	0.9	1.4	0.6	2.1	0.5	1.2
Netherlands	3.5	4.3	5.3	4.0	6.3	5.2	4.9
France	3.1	3.1	4.1	5.0	4.7	5.8	4.3
Japan	1.4	3.0	7.0	8.2	6.4	6.7	6.1

Source: Salient Features and Trends in Foreign Direct Investments, UN Centre on Transnational Corporations, 1981.

experienced a postwar boom up until the late 1960s and has since suffered a series of intermittent crises with an overall low, faltering growth.

If we examine, from the same source of statistics over the same period, the proportion of capital invested in labour power, then it is possible to get some idea of the effects of productivity. For UK manufacturing, 'living labour' comprised 3.6 percent in 1951, 3.3 percent in 1968, and 2.0 percent in 1981 of total capital utilisation. The respective figures for US manufacturing are 4.6 percent, 3.7 percent, and 2.0 percent. Again the important point is the overall trend and the similarity between the two series of figures. As predicted by Marx's theory, both series show a progressive decline with rising productivity as an indication that capital is employing less labour in production due to automation, etc; but it is also important to note that there is clearly a steeper rate of fall after 1968. This we will return to later.

Another indicator of the effect of rising productivity is the rate of surplus value, otherwise known as the rate of exploitation. This is a measure of the time spent by the worker producing surplus value as against the time spent reproducing the equivalent of his own labour power, which he receives as wages. According to the series of statistics already used, the rate of exploitation in UK manufacturing rose from 135 percent in 1951 to 173 percent in 1968 and then further still to a figure of 198 percent in 1981. The corresponding percentages for the rate of exploitation in US manufacturing were 139, 209 and 264. These trends demonstrate that rising productivity is also expressed in the form of a growing share of labour time given over to producing surplus value. In other words, the time taken to produce the goods consumed by the worker is reduced, even when in some cases the standard of living is rising and the volume of goods consumed is increasing, as was especially the case during the 1960s. Incidentally, the above figures also show not surprisingly, that the rate of labour productivity in US manufacturing has risen twice as fast as in the UK, thus confirming a generally accepted supposition.

There is a direct relationship between the rate of profit (S/C), the rate of exploitation (S/V) and the labour composition of capital (V/C) as the following equation demonstrates:

$$S/C = S/V \times V/C$$

The rate of profit is therefore affected by any changes in these other two factors. The rate of exploitation tends historically to act in favour of a rising rate of profit, whereas the labour composition of capital tends to bring about a decline. Why, then, did the rate of profit rise before 1968 and thereafter fall?

The simple answer is that the rise in the rate of exploitation was sufficient prior to 1968 to counteract the gradual decline in the labour composition of capital and bring about a rising rate of profit, whereas after 1968 it was not. This was not due to any change in the rate of exploitation as this remained at an average annual increment of 2 percent for UK manufacturing and 4 percent for the USA both before and after the turning point in 1968. The change was due to a more rapid decline in the labour composition of capital for which the existing rate of exploitation was unable to compensate.

However, to stop at this point in the argument would not explain why world conditions were so favourable during the 1950s and 1960s, especially for the major imperialist countries, to enable the historic tendency for the declining rate of profit to be reversed. The reason ultimately lies with the massive expansion of raw material production by 'multinationals' operating in the underdeveloped capitalist countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This provided the

imperialist economies with a growing volume of cheap ores, food products, and above all cheap oil with which to reduce the costs of producing finished manufactured goods. By thus reducing the value of goods consumed by workers in the imperialist countries, it became possible to both increase living standards as well as maintain a rising rate of exploitation, and moreover attenuate class antagonisms.

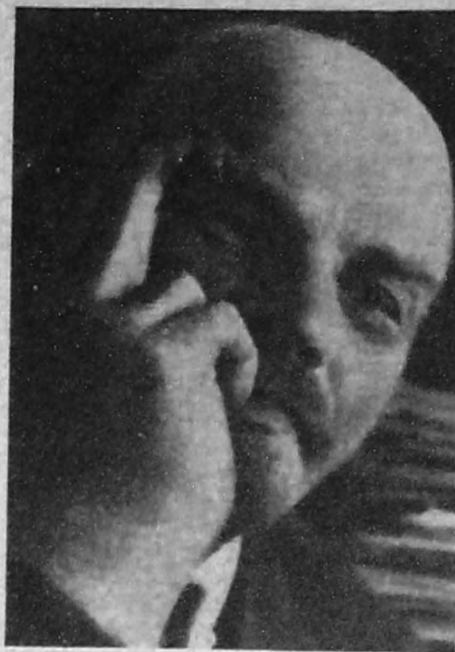
Productivity in the sphere of raw material production does not simply rely upon the level of technology. It also depends to a large extent on fertility of soils, good climate, and easy access to rich deposits of minerals. During the 1950s and 1960s the 'multinationals' were able to exploit all these factors and benefited greatly from the break-up of the colonial empires, which facilitated the flow of capital investment and trade. One only has to think of the giant oil companies opening up the easily exploited resources of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf and subsequently establishing oil production as the kingpin of the world economy to grasp the significance of these developments for the postwar capitalist boom.

However, the favourable conditions provided by postwar production of cheap raw materials could not last forever. By the late 1960s the gross world national product had at least trebled and many of the former underdeveloped economies of Asia and Latin America were beginning to industrialise. The growing pressure on the world's finite natural resources meant that less productive or more costly deposits of coal, oil, and metal ores had to be opened up, as was the case with the North Sea oilfields; or recyclable synthetic substitutes had to be developed in laboratories. The possibility of offsetting the cost of high technology in production with cheap raw materials had therefore become effectively exhausted by the beginning of the 1970s, thus giving rise to the increased fall in the labour composition of capital and the restoration of the declining rate of profit.

A further effect was to deprive the capitalists of the least 'painful' means of hiking the rate of exploitation in the imperialist countries. In order to sustain the same overall rate of increase they could no longer rely on cheap imports of food and consumables, but had to resort to methods of increasing surplus value at the expense of workers' wages and living standards. Consequently, over the past ten years living standards have tended to stagnate in the capitalist economies of Western Europe and North America and in some cases, like the US service sector, have been substantially cut. This has been brought about universally by reductions in the bargaining power of the working class, both through the mechanism of mass unemployment and through the political expediency of imposing legal restrictions on wages and trade unions, as is very clearly the case in Britain today.

The upshot of the falling rate of profit is overproduction. This is interpreted by reformists and opportunists to mean overproduction of goods in relation to those people with the money to buy the goods. This distortion is designed to fit in with their oversimplified Keynesian scheme of things under capitalism. The solution according to their argument is simply to give workers more money so that they can then buy the overproduced goods from the capitalists. Although workers must always strive to increase wages and living standards, this naive scenario utterly fails to really understand what overproduction under capitalism is really about and, moreover, explain why capitalism can never 'spend' its way out of crisis.

Overproduction implies not overproduction of goods as the primary problem but overproduction of capital in relation to labour. If the rate of profit falls from 10 to 5 percent, then a capital



We look to Lenin. Denis Healey, *Marxism Today* and the *Morning Star* look to Keynes.



of 100 pounds will only make 5 pounds profit instead of 10 pounds. To maintain the former mass of profit, a capital of 200 pounds is now needed. Yet because the rate of profit fell in the first place due to increased productivity, replacing living labour with machinery that capital of 200 pounds must now employ less labour at a higher rate of exploitation with more advanced technology, if it is to remain competitive at the new reduced rate of profit. Capital that is unable to exploit labour profitably under these new conditions, either because it is too small or fails to employ the most productive technology, is surplus to the needs of capitalist reproduction. It is overproduced capital in relation to labour.

What happens to surplus or overproduced capital? In the first instance it is withdrawn from production or more likely forced out by competition; and markets contract due to workers being made redundant and factories falling into disuse. Yet the spark of capitalist motivation is not completely extinguished at this stage, because there still exists an alternative channel for the surplus capital that cannot be employed profitably by itself. It can be deposited with the banks and made available to borrowers as credit for the purpose of making interest. It is thus the credit system which prevents capitalism from slumping under the immediate impact of the falling rate of profit and becomes, according to Marx, "the main lever of overproduction and overspeculation".

The underlying cause of the chronic crisis which has dogged capitalism throughout the 1970s and 1980s and given rise to the current debt problems is the overproduction of capital, in the sense that it is capital which is unable to exploit labour profitably by itself. The shunting of vast accumulations of 'surplus' capital into the credit system, where it is concentrated and exported to countries with a higher rate of exploitation, prevents capitalism from immediately contracting and slumping under the initial impact of the falling rate of profit. In fact so long as the credit system remains intact and continues to be extended, then it is the main means of expanding capitalist reproduction by way of promoting overtrading and overspeculation. Yet there are limits to the extent to which credit can be stretched.

The integrity of the international credit system today hinges on the possibility of continuing to extract profits from the intensive exploitation of labour in Latin America and Asia with overproduced capital from Western Europe and North America. How long this situation can last depends on how long the discontent of the working class in those countries can be contained before political unrest shatters all stability.

At the height of the second round of the debt crisis last year, a *Morning Star* editorial stated:

"Last week's events on the

financial markets certainly make the case for a radical restructuring of economic relations on a world scale.

"Unless this does take place, there will be further convulsions in the banking system". (May 29 1984)

A month later the editorial added:

"An equitable system of international trading relations with the developing countries like those in Latin America would open up enormous markets for our goods and help create the jobs we need." (June 6 1984)

This clearly illustrates the opportunist distortions and the muddleheaded thinking about the character of the debt crisis. For the editor of the *Star* the problem lies in the unequitable system of trade, which he demands be overcome by reforms. The plea of our comrade is to implement those reforms before the banking system crumbles. This both reflects the ignorance of opportunism in its understanding of capitalism as well as its desire to resolve such crises with reformist stability. Capitalism cannot overcome the debt crisis simply by reforming the system of trade because it is a system which can only operate on the basis of profit. The present predicament is not one of capitalism's choosing. It has been forced into that situation by the dilemma of being unable to expand by any means other than promoting overtrading, overproduction, and speculation through the extension of credit. It was inevitable that capitalism would develop a debt crisis and furthermore it is inevitable that the system of credit which upholds these debts will sooner or later collapse. This will not be prevented by any of the Keynesian solutions offered recently by Denis Healey, *Marxism Today*, or the *Morning Star*, all of which dogmatically stick to the idea that the debt crisis is a problem of blocked money and trade flows.

The crux of the crisis is that capitalism is increasingly unable to sustain economic growth and forestall its slide into a 1930s type slump, unless it forces drastic cuts in working class living standards in order to intensify the rate of exploitation. It is already doing this in Latin America to the point where the workers have no choice but to resort to open rebellion. And it will not be long before the workers of Western Europe and North America will be faced with the same dilemma, as is being shown by the miners' strike in Britain.

For the working class movement, the choice we meet is not between monetary madness and Keynesian utopia. The choice is whether we meet the coming revolutionary crisis as a movement dominated by cowards and class traitors who will stab us in the back at the first opportunity, or as a revolutionary movement committed to socialism as the only real alternative to the growing nightmare of capitalist world crisis.

# With or Without the TUC GENERAL STRIKE

Alec Long

"BUT if you do so (call a general strike)', went on Mr Lloyd George 'have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state itself, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state.'

"Gentlemen,' asked the Prime Minister quietly 'have you considered, and, if you have, are you ready?'

"From that moment on' said Robert Smillie 'we were beaten and we knew we were.'

(From *In Place of Fear* Aneurin Bevan).

During the course of the miners' strike a number of different political groups and individuals have toyed with the general strike idea, most without any real notion of what such a call entails. We, however, have been unique in the Communist Party in advancing this slogan. The *Morning Star*, true to form, has been so far behind the struggle that it has not even informed its readers as to why it would oppose the demand for a strike wave of general strike proportions. In this article we shall explain why we have called for this action and why we believe it to be both necessary and realisable.

For us, the general strike is an objective requirement of the strike in two ways. First, in the 'narrower' sense it is a need in order to win this 'sectional' dispute. The '70s are dead and gone forever: the crisis of British imperialism has upped the stakes and has led the bourgeoisie to sharpen its claws and stiffen its backbone. Increasingly therefore it will become necessary to mobilise the power of the labour movement as a whole in order to win sectional battles. This is especially so with the miners as their fight is in that sense a test case. The outcome of this dispute will set the tone for and the character of the class struggles to come. A defeat for the miners would mean a massive wave of demoralisation among the best elements of our class and consequently a stepped up onslaught from the buoyed up Tories on the living standards of all workers; a victory on the other hand could see our class imbued with a confidence and a militancy unparalleled possibly since before 1926.

This perspective has been fully recognised by the ruling class. The *Financial Times* of April 6 1984 reported the highly significant fact that the CBI:

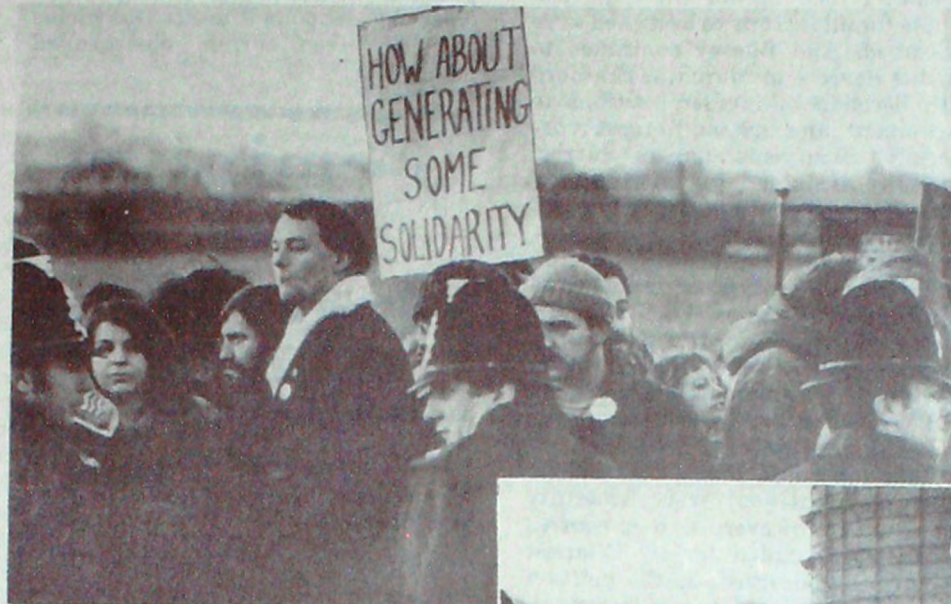
"is telling its member companies to aim for zero increases in unit labour costs during the next ten years and where possible to seek actual reductions of about 3 per cent."

Central to this struggle to drive down the living standards of all workers is the battle against the traditionally most powerful union, the NUM, and this explains why the full forces of the bourgeois state have been ranged against the striking miners.

*Militant* of 14 December 1984 cretinously claims that:

"To some extent it [the miners' strike] has already taken on features of a general strike situation."

What *Militant* is attempting to describe in its typically ham-fisted way



Food, money and clothes isn't enough. What the miners must have is industrial action.

is the feature of the strike we have pointed out above: the mobilisation and the placing on a 'war footing' of the full might of the state. So the miners have now been on strike for 11 months in defence of their jobs and communities, but this battle is only part of an overall offensive first to remove the 'bottleneck' of the miners and then against the living standards of the working class as a whole. Therefore to pit the undoubted strength, guts, and sheer will to win of 140,000 miners against the fully activated power of the bourgeois state is heroic, but inadequate.

In the wider sense also, the general strike is an objective requirement of this struggle. The miners' livelihoods and right to work is being destroyed by a moribund, irrational system which has moved into inevitable crisis. The phenomenon of the general strike is the highest expression of class cohesiveness and combativeness short of revolution itself. As Lloyd George knew (see the opening quote), such a mass action can paralyse not only the economy but also the normal administrative functions of the state. Workers are then posed with the practical difficulties of running a society day-to-day. In his book, *The Post-War History of the British Working Class*, Alan Hutt gives some idea not only of the confusion that can sometimes result, but also of the immense possibilities:

"When the Government rejected the General Council's offer to run food trains, this question resolved itself into the issue of permits for the road transport of food. Headquarters tried to systematise the business by instructing the localities that the only authority to issue permits was the Joint Transport Committee, to consist of delegates from the transport and railway unions. In very many cases however, this authority was assumed by the local Trades Council or Council of Action..." (p. 142)



The Councils of Action, which were themselves embryonic Soviet-type organisations, in some areas assumed responsibility for the administration of large areas of civil life, a prelude to and an augury of the way the working class will one day take control of the running of society as a whole.

Some in the workers' movement have timidly backed away from the perspective of a general strike for fear that it might prove impossible to win workers to back one. This of course is the totally wrong way to pose the question; we ought to think in terms of: we need a general strike, now how do we go about getting one? Concretely, we have argued that the ideal vehicle for winning this action is a National Minority Movement-type organisation, springing from a transformed miners' support movement.

The National Minority Movement (NMM) sought to bring together all the workers in rank-and-file organisations around a national structure and unitary demands for an unremitting fight for what the working class needs, not for what capitalism can afford. On its foundation in August 1924 it not only represented 200,000 workers but, as can be seen from its programme, it was under no illusions about the reformability of British capitalism. The NMM committed itself:

"... to organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism... to carry on a wide agitation and propaganda... against the present tendency towards social peace and class collaboration and the delusion of the peaceful transition of capitalism to socialism..."

The raw material for such a movement exists not only in the Miners' Support Committees but especially in the 25 per cent of workers that the *Sunday Times* revealed last year would be prepared to take industrial solidarity actions with the miners. This 25 per cent are the pacemakers, the opinion formers, the militant minority

who if nationally organised and given a cutting political edge, can sway the mood of the majority.

The TUC are not going to organise a general strike. What we need therefore is an alternative organisational centre that can establish sufficient authority with the class to win one. That is the key task and one that is intimately linked to the fight to reforge the Communist Party, the organisation that set up the original National Minority Movement.

It would be wrong to close this article without commenting on the idea floated most notably by *Militant*, but also by others in the Labour movement, that of a 24 hour general strike. In our view this would be, in the words of the great Polish revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg, to turn the "thunder of a general strike into a damp squib". Writing on the abortive 1902 General Strike in Belgium, Luxemburg effectively demolished those like *Militant* and *Socialist Organiser* who would seek to straightjacket such a mass upheaval even before it begins:

"A general strike forged in advance within the fetters of legality is like a war demonstration with cannons whose charge has been dumped into a river within the very sight of the enemy."

*Militant's* timidity is an inevitable product of its congenital Labourism. For this group, despite all its 'revolutionary' pretensions, the activity of the working class and its striving towards revolution must be subordinated to the election of the 'next' Labour government "committed to socialist policies" (with lots of *Militant* back-benchers, hopefully). This Labour government, like tomorrow, never comes of course. However in the meantime, *Militant* insists that the working class confront the capitalists with fists firmly thrust in pockets: it sets workers up for a real pasting.

Others on the left are actually actively hostile to the call for a General Strike. Yet the mere fact that groups as disparate as the staggeringly irrelevant Revolutionary Communist Party through to the economistic Socialist Workers' Party have combated the idea illustrates that the call is far more than a throw-away one-liner from the likes of Tony Benn. It is being debated, both pro and anti, because the struggle itself is throwing up the question as an objective need; we do not have to invent it. The lame-brains of the British left thus choose to ignore reality and vilify the call for a general strike as ultra-leftist. Instead, apparently: "It is more important to talk first of all about what the miners themselves can do to bring about victory." (Letter in *Socialist Worker* 22 December 1984).

As if the miners alone have not done enough already! We have called for a general strike in this dispute not to sound impressive or to warm ourselves with our rhetoric. We have called for it simply because it is needed. The miners' fight is a fight for all workers. Let all workers join the struggle alongside the miners. They have suffered alone for all our sakes too long and too much.

● DON'T LET THE MINERS STAND ALONE!

● FOR A GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST PIT CLOSURES AND THE TORY ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS!

● FOR A MILITANT ORGANISED FIGHTING MINORITY MOVEMENT!