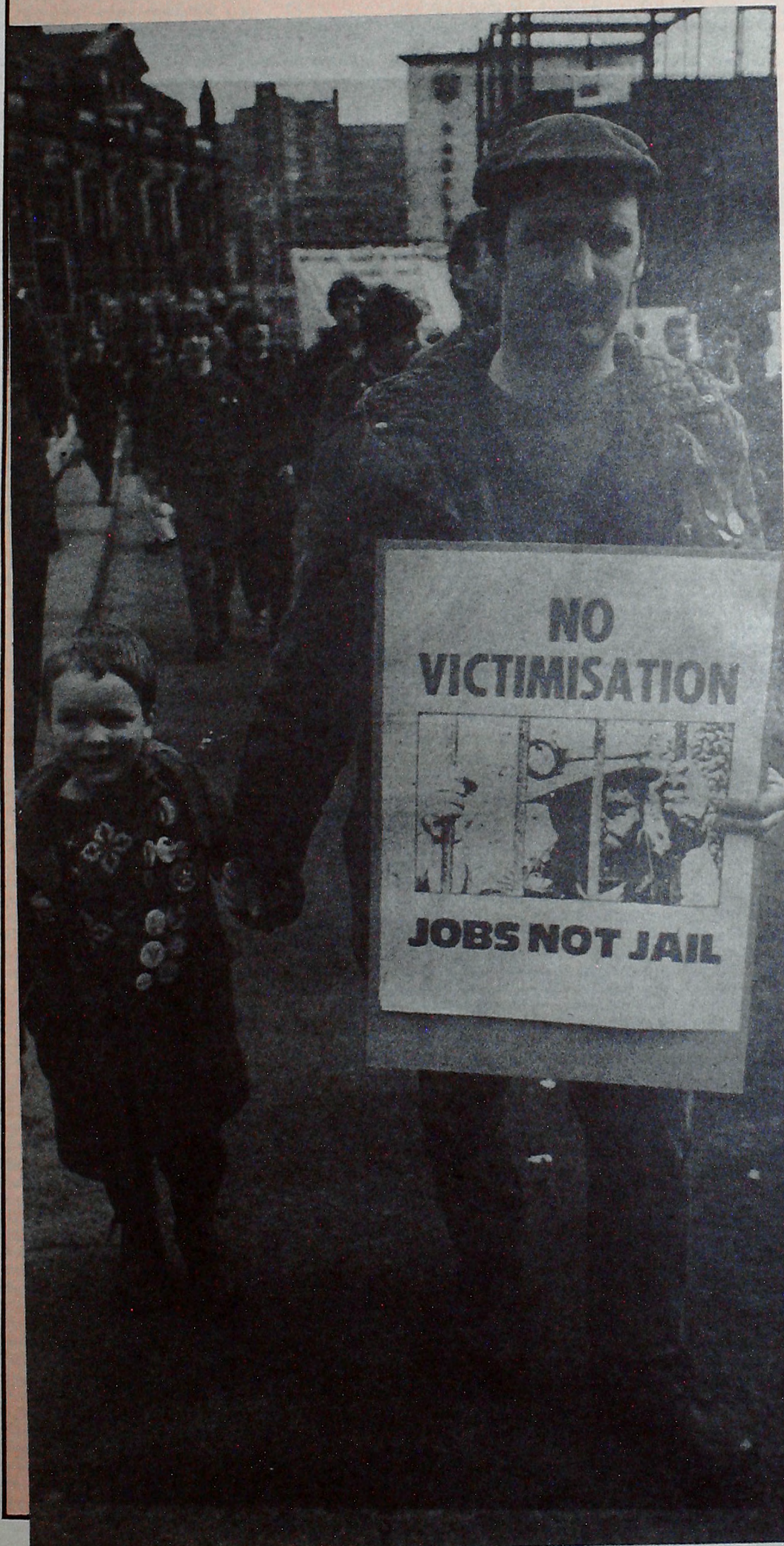


JACK COLLINS SPEAKS OUT

'Stand up and fight for them'



EVERY major battle in the class struggle produces its martyrs and casualties. We in the workers' movement remember and honour such figures as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Shrewsbury 2 and the Pentonville 5. The ruling class historically has spared no effort to crush the resistance and militancy of our class. They have mobilised the full force of their state machine in order to drive down workers' living standards and conditions. It is time the workers' movement responded in kind.

Today some 40 miners are in jail with many more awaiting trial. A further 700 miners have been victimised for 26 so-called 'criminal offences' committed during the course of the Great Strike of '84/'85. These people are the pride and honour of our union. While they remain incarcerated and victimised our union and the entire movement are disgraced.

The class war prisoners and casualties are a burning issue for the entire working class. We must now as a priority work towards mass industrial action from *all* sections of the workers' movement in order to release and reinstate our men, not simply from the National Union of Mineworkers alone. The Labour Party did not release the Shrewsbury 2, but the Tories *did* release the Pentonville 5. There are vital lessons to be learned here. First we must remember that there was a massive strike wave of many different sectors of key workers in aid of the Pentonville 5. The Shrewsbury 2 on the other hand were shamefully forgotten for the most part

by the movement. The ruling class does not understand or listen to reasoned argument; it understands raw class power. Very well, let the working class movement now show what it is made of on behalf of the victimised and jailed men of the pits.

Secondly, we must learn the bitter lesson of relying on others to fight our battles for us. It is no good just waiting for a Kinnock-led Labour Party to bring us justice, he is already boasting to the ruling class that he will let the miners "properly tried and convicted" by the bosses' courts rot in prison. We must look to *our* strength, *now!*

We must be prepared to fight the next round of the fight against pit closures with even more tenacity and determination than last time: but also we must protest and act for casualties from the class war. This is both the test and measure of our movement. Comrades, these heroic men did not fail us, not for a moment. Now it is time to stand up and fight for them.

- Fight for a mass militant wave of industrial action for the reinstatement of *all* victimised men and the release of *all* miners in jail.
- No relying on Kinnock! Let us look to our own strength to bring us justice!
- The battle is not over! Victory to the miners!
- Further we urge that the movement at every level assists those who are working to retain the NUM in every coalfield and reject totally any recognition of or contact with the scab led breakaway organisation.

Jack Collins



THE LENINIST

Don't Boycott 7 Days

OUR COMMUNIST PARTY'S new weekly was launched at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on October 24. A press conference was laid on with all the alcoholic inducements the 'gentlemen' of the press have come to expect and a panel consisting of comrades Temple, Jacques, Darke, Myant, Kirsch, and McLennan was there to answer the G and T-aided questions.

Comrade McLennan was quite right to insist that as the CPGB was for the first time in half a century without a daily paper to express its politics it was vital to "undertake this major new initiative of launching *7 Days*. The *Morning Star* has now become the mouthpiece for those intent on establishing a New Communist Party Mark II from the Communist Campaign Group and is therefore positively anti-CPGB.

Because of this the content, balance, and direction of *7 Days* will be disappointing to many genuinely pro-Party comrades. Its content is well intentioned but tending towards the insipid, its balance is definitely to the right of our Party and the Eurocommunist wing, and its direction is undoubtedly the same as *Marxism Today*'s.

But this should not be used as an excuse to back the *Morning Star*. All pro-Party forces should have come to the realisation long ago that attempts to justify the *Star* on the basis of some "lesser of two evils" theory are bankrupt and doomed to disaster. The *Morning Star* is no longer a Communist Party paper. As a result of this there can be no question that Party members no longer have a duty to sell or promote it.

On the other hand *7 Days* is a Communist Party paper and this must mean that Party members do have duties and responsibilities towards it. It was launched with their money after all and in their name and this means that all Party members have a duty to distribute and sell it. But it must not be allowed to become the property of one trend by default. And with this in mind it is essential that all Party members whatever their particular views consider it their duty to write for the paper, both in the form of letters and articles.

We must take comrade Myant at his word that *7 Days* will be open to "all who struggle for change, for jobs and for peace" and that "At all times our motto will be simple: Our paper is your paper". Let's take up the challenge; after all it is *our* paper isn't it?

It is our duty to infuse the content of *7 Days* with the wealth of experience and practice of the class struggle our Party possesses, it is our duty to provide *7 Days* with the arguments and views of all communists and it is our duty to counter the *Marxism Today* direction of *7 Days* through debate and discussion. Boycotting the paper, leaving it to the hard core Euros, stubborn insistence that the *Morning Star* hasn't changed, would be short sighted and an act of downright self-deception.

If all members of the CPGB sell the paper, finance it, it can become truly the paper of all in our Party. But this relies equally on Party members carrying out their duty as it does on comrade Myant remaining true to his promises. After all if *7 Days* refuses to print articles and letters from those who have different approaches on certain questions then it will be and can only be the paper of one particular tendency and that would be unfortunate indeed.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Chater's Titanic

Your article on the Communist Campaign Group and the *Morning Star* was spot on. The leadership of the CCG are cynically leading their followers up the garden path to an NCP type split. And although some of the CCG leaders will admit in private, certainly after a couple of jars, that they are aiming for a split, in public they deny any such suggestion.

Many comrades think the CCG group is OK simply because of its opposition to the Euros. This has led them to treat their membership of the Party with a casual disdain. The result is that the Euros are presented with a gift they can't refuse and the nuisance of formal expulsions becomes unnecessary.

It's time these comrades realised that they are being used by Chater, Hicks, and their ilk. A CCG split would not get anywhere anyway. It's not just a matter of looking at the NCP, its pathetic turnouts at demonstrations and complete inability to provide even the pretence of being a vanguard in the class struggle. The truth is that the CCG are united by one thing and one thing alone: opposition to the Party EC and *Marxism Today*. Officially they declare that they stand in defence of the *British Road*, a revisionist document if ever there was one, but again in private many of the leading CCG lights say that in the event of a split it would have to be completely rewritten. John Bowden at least had the honesty to raise this question at the CCG London meeting I attended last month. That is more than can be said of the platform.

Fraternally
Jane Ford
London

Get out

The membership of the Communist Party are fed up to the back teeth with self-styled Leninists like you operating in our Party. Lenin was completely opposed to factionalism and yet you have the cheek to call yourselves his followers. *Straight Left* and *The Leninist* ought to have the courage of the NCP and now the so-called CCG and get out of our Party. If you don't agree with our programme, leadership, policies, what the hell are you doing in it in the first place?

The Executive Committee was quite right to kick out those who won't abide by the rules of the Party. They should have started getting tough with the factionalists years ago. If they had we wouldn't have the problems we have today. And only when we get rid of the likes of *The Leninist* and *Straight Left* can our Party really get down to the serious business of building the anti-Thatcherite alternative. This is real politics not the hair splitting purity you engage in nor the useless airy fairy so-called theorising that fills the pages of your boring rag.

It is clear that your paper is not supporting the Communist Party but attacking it. I don't know where your money comes from, whether it's from poor fools that you exploit, the CIA, or what, but it might just as well be the CIA for you are playing their game. You ought to be kicked out of the Party and as a loyal member I'll do my best to make sure you are.

Bill Miller
Birmingham

Congratulations

I would like to congratulate you on producing such an outstanding and, in my opinion, genuine communist newspaper. Recently I applied for information from the CPGB and YCL. I found the literature they

gave me to have little or nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism. This put me off joining the Party; however, I could find no real feasible alternative. Other 'left-wing' parties were Trotskyite and sectarian in many cases. None of the parties had any real base of support in industry or from the working class in general.

Since coming across *The Leninist* I am once again considering joining the CPGB. *The Leninist* seems to be a genuinely revolutionary alternative to the Eurocommunists and other revisionists. I feel I would like to take part in the struggle. I would however be grateful if you could give me some more information about the Leninists of the CPGB and a brief description of their stances on the following topics:

'Trotskyitism', 'Stalinism', 'Khrushchevism', 'the NCP', 'the USSR', 'Albania', 'the *Morning Star*'. I realise this may take some time to answer. Perhaps you have some pamphlets, etc., which I could buy.

I look forward to your reply
David James
Scotland

Ian Mahoney replies:

You ask a number of questions:

1. We regard Trotskyitism as an impotent left-liquidationist split from the world communist movement. Like the 'ultra-lefts' of the Second International, Trotskyites have maintained (for the most part) formally correct positions on such basic tenets of Marxism as the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat and so on. However, the fundamentally flawed nature of their world outlook is revealed in that in contrast to the grandiose predictions of the movements' founder, the Trotskyite 'parties' of the world have remained small, isolated sects on the one hand, or on the other, in the search for relevance, they have become the left wing of social democracy *à la* Militant. Either way, there is nowhere in the world where they have led the working class to state power.

2. "Stalinism" and "Khrushchevism" We would be dubious of assigning individual comrades' names too exactly to the state policies of the Soviet Union at any one particular time, although we would recognise differences in the tactics and policies pursued by Stalin and Khrushchev which would still subsume both under the general category of 'centrist'.

3. The New Communist Party and the *Morning Star* are the heirs of the centrist degeneration of Leninist politics inside the Soviet Party. Both combine slavish or uncritical sycophancy to our Soviet comrades (an internationalism bolstered no doubt by the money they receive or hope to receive from these comrades) with a tailist and totally unMarxist attitude to the labour and trade union bureaucracy at home.

4. The USSR and Albania are two socialist countries which we therefore unconditionally defend. The Soviet Union is the world revolutionary centre and this has meant historically that the CPSU has wielded huge influence over the world movement.

Albania's party we would still classify as a party dominated by national-centrism, but one 'frozen', as it were, in the Stalin ideological outlook infused with the tradition of Albanian national liberation. Thus, although it is frequently able to make certain correct criticisms of the subsequent degeneration of our movement's politics and big nation chauvinist practices, it is unable to trace the disease back to its 'source' and thus expiate it altogether, as it is in fact part of the same 'disease'. Instead it has isolated itself and indulged in wild flights of fantasy such as claiming that it, a tiny, desperately poor country of two million, is the *only* socialist country in the world.

Non-SWP non-Euro

I wish to express my very strong disagreement with the article in your October 1985 issue entitled CHATER'S TITANIC (thankfully I managed to read page 4 with page 5 folded behind it with nobody looking over my shoulder to read the part of the headline on page 4 only which read CHATER'S TIT).
When I joined the Communist Party of Great Britain on October 22 1984, there were no quarantine restrictions on me, despite having previously been a member of the Socialist Workers' Party and having shown one of my finest possessions, a jewellery box that I had won from one of Radio Moscow's competitions. Both these can be classified as non-Euro; I should like to state that I have had absolutely no interest in the SWP's politics since January 1984. I have not been told that it is against the Party line to read the *Morning Star*; I would like to state that I have a copy of the *Morning Star* delivered daily which I read. I have not come across a Big Brother list of publications which Party members are forbidden to "sell, promote, or support". *The Leninist* was mentioned in the Final Resolution of this year's special congress, stating it was an attempt to undermine the Communist Party. I am not attempting to undermine the Communist Party by writing to you; writing to newspapers is a democratic right of press which is something I must work to maintain, defend, and extend in line with the Communist Party's rule 2(b).

If I believed all that you had said in your article I would regard what I have just written as sticking my neck out if this letter was published. I do not, and if this letter is published I do NOT want my name and address changed for political security.
Yours Fraternally
Keith Fernie
Ossett
Yorks

Ian Mahoney replies:
Comrade Fernie must be living on a different planet. If he were living on this one he would know that the bureaucratic approach by certain leading full timers and branch officials in many districts of the Party is designed to hound all so-called oppositionalists out. The comrade may not have "come across" a proscribed list of publications for Party members let alone its extension in practice to the *Star*; his shocking ignorance, however, does not alter the fact that such a list exists.

Given the comrade's evident support for the current line of Eurocommunism, his dashing Errol Flynn 'devil may care' stance, and his 'print and be damned' injunction to us is simply empty rhetoric. We have details of many instances of harassment of comrades: comrade Fernie should take out a subscription to our paper next time he visits earth and *really* find out what's going on.

Get Together
I enjoy reading *The Leninist* because it gives the Marxist-Leninist analysis of historical and current problems which one expects from a Communist Party leadership and which we have not had from the CPGB EC for years. Other comrades' letters in the *Morning Star* clearly indicate this.

What puzzles me, however, is in the current witchhunting climate how do you remain undetected members of the CPGB? (And why stay in?)
From the beginning of the year, since reading *The Leninist*, I have not paid any dues or quota. How can you continue to support such a bankrupt setup? We might as well

join the Labour Party or the SDP. The New Communist Party (NCP) correctly forecast that the CP would be a party without a daily paper and the *Morning Star* as a paper without a party. Also, they pronounce the *BRS* as reformist, as you do. They also cannot see how you can 'reforge' the CPGB as matters now stand.

I feel sure that sometime in the future your two factions must get together if the 'Communist Party' is to be saved.

I should be glad to have your comments on the above and why you are critical of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Allan Rodgers
Birmingham

Ian Mahoney replies:

Leninist comrades are unequivocal in our commitment to the Communist Party of Great Britain. Undoubtedly the current inner-Party atmosphere makes political work very difficult, but certainly not impossible.

We find it perfectly possible to continue working and fighting in our Party to return it to Leninist norms and we would criticise those like comrade Rodgers who fail to recognise the central importance of the CPGB and the fight to reforge it. Comrade, we call on you to resume your full financial obligations to the Party and to renounce any involvement with the moribund anti-Communist Party sect, the New Communist Party.

There is no foreseeable possibility that *The Leninist* would merge with the NCP; our differing approaches over the question of Afghanistan illustrates just how wide the gulf between us is. We regard the intervention of the Red Army against the imperialist-backed counter-revolutionary Mujahadeen as an act of proletarian internationalism which we unconditionally support and indeed we would have urged our Soviet comrades to respond earlier to the appeals of the Afghan party for military assistance. However, the murder of comrade Amin and 97 of his comrades from the revolutionary wing of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was in our view a crime and totally unjustified. The subsequent claims that comrade Amin was a 'CIA agent' or even a 'fascist' which were used to justify his execution are unconvincing and absolutely without substance. (See *The Leninist* No.2)

While we adopt this proletarian internationalist stance, the NCP has uncritically parroted the official line of the Soviet Party (including every twist and turn), refusing to independently judge matters for themselves as Marxists. The idea of us 'getting together' with these parasites on the power and prestige of the Soviet Union is as abhorrent to us as I'm sure it would be to them.

South Africa

I liked your article on South Africa and look forward to the next part. Your paper unlike most other left papers takes South Africa seriously and not just as a matter for superficial moaning about how bad Botha is and what a rotter Thatcher is for backing him. But one point you might consider is why your Party can so easily support the ANC when it uses violence, lets off bombs and preaches revolution? How can it do this when it attacks the Provisional IRA which has similar aims and uses similar methods to the ANC.

Why are you in a Party which takes such a contradictory position. If I were in the ANC I wouldn't put too much faith in your CP's solidarity; it can't be worth much when in Ireland they actually line up with Thatcher. If *The Leninist* were to lead the CP it would be a different

matter I might then even consider joining your Party. But you will never lead the CP, you have as much chance of doing that as *Militant* has of getting Derek Hatton into 10, Downing Street.

Dan James
Bristol

RCP

It was sad to read the letter from Gordon Lee in your last edition. How can anyone who seriously considers themselves to be a communist leave the CPGB and go and join the born again Trotskyite 'Revolutionary' 'Communist' 'Party'. Yes, there are very deep problems in the CPGB but our job is to overcome these problems no matter how long it takes. In the fight to change the Party we can, and have, recruited good new members on a Leninist platform. And if the Euros expel all of us we would not only have fought, but would have around us a powerful core of trained communists who could quickly overshadow a Euro-dominated rump.

But what of the RCP? Comrade Lee says *The Leninist* mainly criticised the RCP's international positions. Well comrade Lee obviously has not read the paper as closely as I have. On the miners' strike, racism and a host of other issues *The Leninist* has presented clear arguments against the idle chatter coming from the RCP. As to international questions does not comrade Lee consider Ireland, South Africa, the Soviet Union, and the socialist countries of importance?

Communism is international or it's nothing. Those who formed the CPGB did so because of the example of the Russian Revolution of October 1917. They considered it essential to defend the USSR against imperialism and spared no effort to do so. The RCP does not even consider the USSR a socialist country. Perhaps comrade Lee does not either now that he's seen the light. The RCP is nothing but the SWP of the 1980s. It is anglo-centric, publicity seeking, middle class, anti-Soviet, arrogant and stupid. It's not the party of the future but an example of British backwardness and British insularity.

As to a 'Revolutionary Opposition' which comrade Lee refers to as I understand it he was a supporter of Tony Chater and the *Morning Star*. If he thinks this was being in the 'Revolutionary Opposition' then no wonder he copped out. But comrade Lee is it seems eager to mix up the bankrupt Charterites who he supported with *The Leninist*, he also seems eager to give the impression that he is going from being a supporter of *The Leninist* straight to the RCP. I suspect his motives for doing so are far from honest. Perhaps he is trying to cover his backing of the Chater camp against *The Leninist* or perhaps he is trying to do a dirty on *The Leninist*. Whatever the truth is comrade Lee will learn that the RCP has little to do with working class struggle as he thinks it has and nothing to do with the struggle for the world revolution.

Comradely
Dermot Minkin
Oxford

Free Scotland

Recently I have been studying John MacLean's book *The Rapids of Revolution* which has set me on (new) trains of thought; also, I have read the Communist Party of Turkey (*Işçinin Sesi*) books which have if anything multiplied my growing conviction that the task for Scottish Communists is to forge a Communist Party of Scotland.

Scotland, I believe, is an oppressed nation (having the right to self-determination) and at the same time a junior partner of imperialism. This being the case, and referring to Condition 17 of the Third International, the "clear cut" policy of communists in the oppressing nation should be solidarity with the national struggle in the context of an uninterrupted revolution: to free Scotland and break up imperialism.

Your argument which appears in a previous *Leninist* under "Communists and Alliances" (a centre spread) (Oct/Nov), I think, that the Scottish people do not want independence is weak in its understanding and from that opportunistic. Firstly, this is not an eternal truth; it is populist; it puts the short term interests of the international proletariat before the longterm. "Do not crush our flower, it belongs to you." How can a crushed flower "see" the garden it is grown in? Only by education. We must promote the proletarian internationalist approach to the national question.

I hope we can resolve this question in a mutually beneficial manner; as such, I hold in regard *The Leninist* as much as I regard the CPT (*Worker's Voice*) as a working class gain.

The national question is very important. No communist can afford to make mistakes. I feel very strongly and I am (perhaps over) eager to see the promised centre spread in your paper (incidentally please do not make so many promises; I have been getting complaints) on the national question. I feel and I am confident that *The Leninist* will with its usual depth and clarity move from weakness to strength. Otherwise I am very interested in anything you have to say on this matter.

Pete Robinson
Glasgow

CND

After three years as Secretary of a local CND group, I have resigned. There are several reasons for my resignation—the most important being my personal political development over those three years. When I joined CND, I had no interest or involvement in politics whatsoever. I joined, like many others at the time, because of an ill-defined feeling that nuclear weapons were somehow "wrong" and that something should be done to stop the arms race.

Having joined CND with virtually no political understanding, it nevertheless seemed to me that in order to fight effectively for peace, it was essential to go to the root of the problem—what are the causes of war? What had led to the development of nuclear weapons? These questions might seem elementary, but a remarkable number of people within CND never actually get beyond the stage of vague moral outrage.

CND was at this time a gathering point for all kinds of views from Christians, anarcho-vegetarians and pacifists to Labour Party members and communists. Slowly, after much wading through the morass of conflicting ideologies, I began to identify myself as a socialist. It was then that I started to become increasingly impatient with the mystical, pacifist trend within CND and the lack of organisation and efficiency which generally seemed to accompany it.

Perhaps the example of Greenham Common best illustrates the trap which CND fell into. In 1981/82, several actions at Greenham attracted as many as 100,000 people from all over the country. Although largely

appealing to middle-class women, there were also some working-class women and men too who were drawn into activity because of these impressive demonstrations. An example of this can be seen in our town, where a young Sikh member of UCATT, sponsored by local Trade Unionists, ran a marathon to raise funds for the Greenham Peace Camp.

Unfortunately, this potential was not exploited by CND—instead of taking the initiative, they bowed down before the ruling clique of bourgeois feminists at Greenham and left all further organisation against Cruise missiles to these women with their elitism and crackpot obsession with "male violence". The net result of this has been the virtual collapse of the peace camp (not a bad thing perhaps), but more important the complete lack of any wider involvement with the organised working class in the campaign against Cruise e.g. mobilising the workers actually involved in building the missile silos.

Such lack of direction in CND is an obvious result of trying to operate in a political vacuum. In attempting to appeal to the largest cross-section of people, CND has to avoid drawing any political conclusions, which is why it now finds itself in a campaigning cul-de-sac. This was exemplified by its decision to have no trade union or party political speakers at the recent London rally.

The miners' strike helped to crystallise my political attitudes and also my growing alienation from mainstream CND. It became clear to me from the brutal treatment of miners by the police on the picket lines and in their pit villages, that the state knows that the real threat to its power and authority comes from the organised working class. The state can afford to treat pacifists gently; demonstrators lying meekly in the road or weaving wool round military bases are no threat—militant miners are. I realised this and the self-indulgent antics of some CNDers just seemed absurd.

Having said all this, I do not wish to sneer at CND—I do believe that it has performed a useful function—it has, to an extent, altered public acceptance and awareness of nuclear weapons. It has led to the political awakening of many people, myself included, but to my mind it can only be a stepping stone to greater political activity and involvement. As a new member of the CPGB, I now want to devote my energies to working locally as a communist and to help build a

strong and active local branch—a difficult task given the double millstone of the Euros and the *BRS*. Because to me the only rational response to the threat of nuclear war is to fight for the overthrow of the capitalist system and to fight effectively we must be organised in a Communist Party true to its Marxist-Leninist principles.

Gill Howarth
Birmingham

Ireland

I write to you as an individual member of the Irish Republican Support Group (CPGB) and not on behalf of the Group. I hope you will permit me to clarify a few points about the group in connection with your review of our pamphlet, *Ireland—a principled communist position*, in the October edition of *The Leninist*. First, although the group is entirely opposed to the kamikaze actions taken by the current Eurocommunist Party leadership, we all have different points of view on the correct methods of inner-Party struggle. Secondly, our individual politics merge on the recognition of the necessity of armed struggle in the fight for the liberation of Ireland.

On this second point, our views are similar and our motivation strong enough to enable us to unite within the IRSG to win the Party to a "Principled communist position" on Ireland. Our publications will play a major part in this. That is why I feel I should write to express my thoughts on your recent review on our pamphlet.

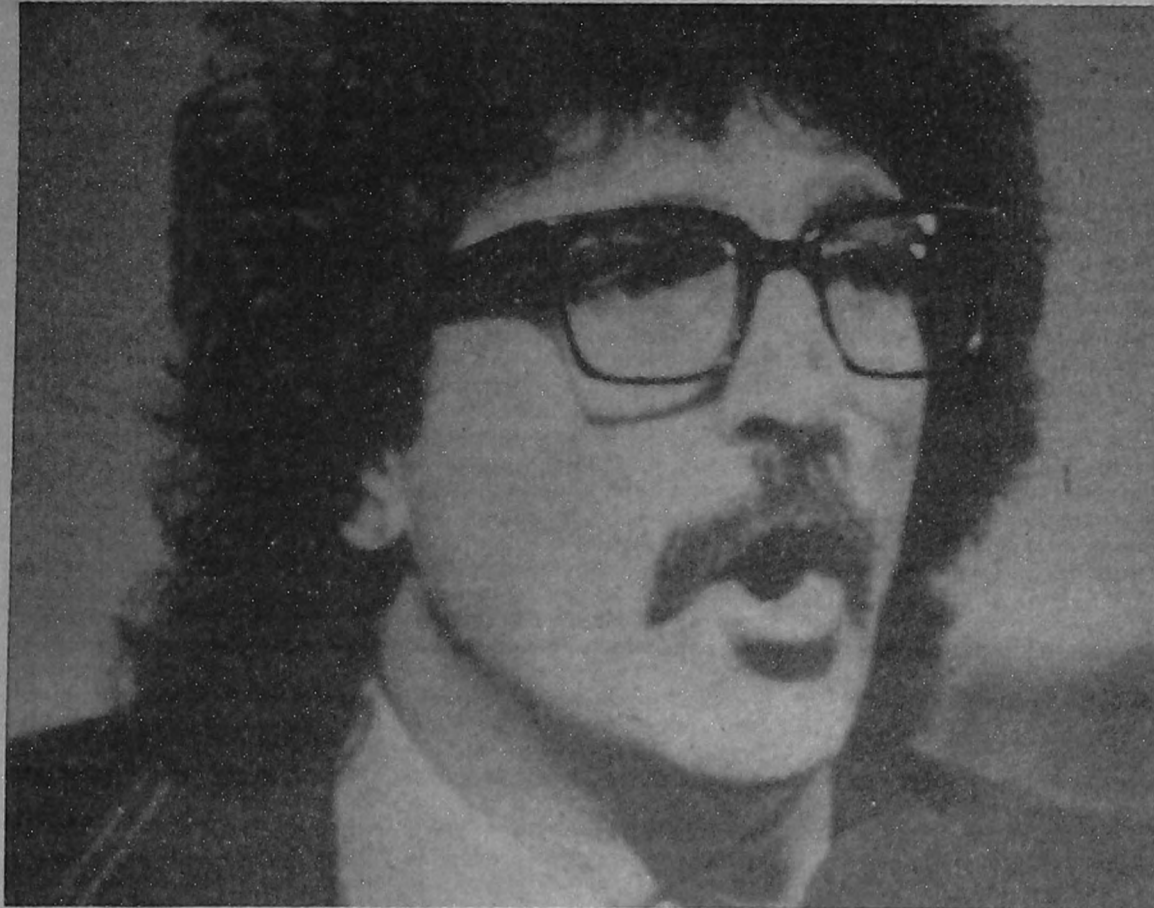
Whilst appreciating the integrity of your Leninist politics, I do think it was 'taking a bit of a liberty' to swamp the review with your general advice on the tactics needed to defeat Eurocommunism within the Party. It detracted from the main substance of what the review of the article should have been about (i.e. the IRSG's pamphlet).

You did, however, state that you look forward to more from the IRSG (CPGB); well, I am sure that you will be pleased to know that the October edition of our bulletin *Resistance* is now available from IRSG (CPGB), Box 13, Community Press, 2a St. Pauls Rd, London N1, for only 50p (+postage). Yours in comradeship
Chester T. Allright.
London

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

Three Funds

The unfolding revolution in South Africa is being eagerly watched by advanced workers throughout the world. Because at the end of the day the revolution hinges on the ability of the South African Communist Party to play the revolutionary vanguard role the Bolsheviks did in 1917, comrades around *The Leninist* are busily collecting money for the SACP's new paper *Umsebenzi*. Our readers are urged to do likewise. This can be done either through us or direct to Inkululeko Publications, 39 Goodge Street, London W1P 1FD. Another fund we are doing our best to aid is that of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Işçinin Sesi*). Their Autumn Self Sacrifice Campaign is nearly at an end. Our readers who have studied the development and actions of CPT (*İS*) will understand the need to back their campaign: this can be done through us. Lastly and not least there is *The Leninist's* own regular monthly £600 fund. We are now in sniffing distance of our typesetting machine. And with your money we can get it by the end of the year and at last end the delays that have dogged our paper coming out on time. Last month we were £56 in surplus; special thanks to comrades, JE, AL, OS, FY, WM, CH, HG, and BG.



Holding the line

We talk to Paul Whetton, former rank and file strike leader and now provisional secretary of Bevercotes NUM.

The Leninist: Did the size of the majority in favour of the breakaway surprise you?

Paul Whetton: No, not really. I was disappointed with the size of our vote. But when you consider the amount of resources they threw into the campaign, the money they spent, the backing they got from big business, from the media, from every quarter, then really it isn't surprising. The fact is that the Coal Board co-operated with them all the way down the line. They wouldn't give us facilities, couldn't allow us to distribute literature. They placed every obstacle in our way and bent over backwards to accommodate them; so, whilst being disappointed, I suppose it was to be expected really.

The Leninist: How firm is the minority that did vote for the NUM?

Paul Whetton: If you look at that vote of about 7,000, that's the sort of response we've been getting all through the strike and all through the campaign. It seems to me that that is a fairly hard core.

We've got to make sure that we differentiate between the strike and the campaign to keep Notts national, although they are obviously interlinked. We were appealing to people, whether they worked all the way through, whether they went back halfway through, whether they went back at the last minute, or whether they stayed loyal to the last. We had to talk to everybody and argue about the issue of remaining within the National Union of Mineworkers.

That 7,000 is a fairly hard core; we know that we attracted people who worked throughout the dispute, but there is a few that have been putting the argument forward that, never mind, they would vote alongside of us. But if the vote went the other way they were going to go with the majority. But that's not a great deal, it's just a few individuals that argue that. I'm fairly confident that we can get that 7,000. The point is that over the next few months Lynk and Co. are not going to be able to depend on slugging Scargill off in order to justify their existence.

I've no doubt that the Coal Board will try to put some sugar on the pill and bend over backwards to accommodate them in every way that they can in the very short term. But I think that history is going to repeat itself again and the Coal Board will soon ditch them once they've got what they want out of them. But I think we've got a good hard core with which to form a National Union of Mineworkers in Notts.

The scare tactics of the Coal Board were largely successful. A lot of men were frightened off. I've had men coming up to me this week and saying 'Look, I want to stop with National, but I don't want to lose service that I've accrued, benefits that I've accrued. I don't want to put any wage rises that may be coming my way in jeopardy.' It's very difficult for us to get the arguments over that we are the National Union of Mineworkers, the Coal Board is committed via the National Reference Tribunal in 1947 to recognising the NUM.

The Leninist: But what good is a paper agreement from 1947? If it suits the Board, surely they are simply going to rip that up?

Paul Whetton: Well, we've put an appeal into the National Reference Tribunal and I'm fairly confident that they will recognise the justice of what we're arguing. Now, whether Ian MacGregor will recognise that, that's another thing.

The Leninist: Hasn't the whole banner of 'democracy' been handed to the right in this battle? For example, you were quoted as saying that if the recent NUM rule changes had been proposed by the right wing you would have grave reservations, but as the Scargill leadership backed them, you would go along. Don't you think this type of approach hands the powerful democracy argument to the right wing on a plate?

Paul Whetton: I think that's putting it very glibly, actually. Let me first of all clarify what I said. Any criticisms that I have were not about the personality of Scargill. I would have liked to have seen the rule changes openly debated at great length. We were in a situation where personalities had got nothing to do with it, but the situation was

changing so fast that we had to do something immediately. Whilst I would have liked to have debated them at greater length and argued them through, we really could not afford that luxury, and in order to ensure the continuation of the National Union of Mineworkers it was expedient that we adopted those rule changes.

As to the argument about democracy: I think it's the most bastardised word in the English language and especially so in Nottinghamshire. There is absolutely nothing whatsoever 'democratic' about Lynk and his organisation. That is standing the word on its head. Of course, there are criticisms we can make of the NUM, the same as we can of any union organisation. But we are at the really sharp end. I think that what you have to do is adapt your tactics to the situation you find yourselves in and unfortunately at this time there has to be that little bit of Stalinism, if you like, for want of a better word, that says 'this is the only way we can go forward, the only way we can do it.' We've got to take firm and positive action and whilst we would like to argue the issues we are being pushed from so many different directions, the courts, the state, the employers, the Spencerites, that we are really not in that luxurious position and we have to take firm and positive steps immediately.

Right at the point of the pit, we've got ordinary rank and file miners who haven't got the time and the ability to deeply debate all the rights and wrongs of the direction in which the union is going.

The Leninist: But if you sometimes have, as you put it, a Stalinist approach to ordinary members of your organisation, the day may come when you turn around to find you are marching alone because the 'troops' simply are not convinced of the correctness of the war or your battle strategy.

Paul Whetton: I understand what you are saying, but again I disagree. The thing that reinforces our commitment to a leadership, not just the one, but the General Secretary, the President, and the Vice President, is that they are so hated by

the establishment. There are no arguments being put forward about the issues, it was all about personalities. That leads you to ask the question: why is the state being turned against those three individuals? The only argument that I can see is because they're afraid of them.

Now why the hell is the state afraid of Arthur Scargill. Or rather, why is the state so afraid of an NUM that is behind its leader? What you have seen is an attempt by the state to drive a wedge between Scargill and the rank and file who have shown great loyalty to him. I think that in that lies your answer. Under any normal circumstances there would have been great and lengthy debate, but the state is so vicious in its attacks on him because they are so afraid of him that that justifies to my mind us backing him up.

The Leninist: When Scargill says 'We weren't defeated' he is implying to us that next time there will be nothing done differently. Yet haven't these politics been found wanting and unable to bring victory for the miners?

Paul Whetton: It's more or less a psychological approach to workers, I think, to say 'Now is the time to come to the aid of the union', and we need not be distracted by internal tearing ourselves apart in order to examine the rights and wrongs of what we did and about what we are going to do in the future. We are in such a position now that we can't afford that luxury. We are in a position where we have to attempt to draw the union together and that means making sacrifices. Some of those sacrifices are very bitter to swallow.

Whilst you may be in a position to sit down with a pint and talk and argue about whether we need to go to get it over to the broad mass of the rank and file we have to show that whilst we are prepared to accept criticisms the overriding priority is that the union must survive, the union must go forward, and that is going to mean sacrifices in regard to arguments and debate and all the rest of it. We are in such dire straits with the attacks of the state that it is vital that we retain a National Union of Mineworkers.

The 'professional activist' looks at things from a very different angle to what the ordinary rank and file worker does, especially in today's materialist society... What the leaders of political parties and unions cannot afford the luxury of doing is running that fast that they leave the vast bulk of their supporters behind them in a mess. You've got to carry them with you. You can only go as fast as your slowest supporter. Certainly you can try and engender debate and argument and try to put the arguments forward so that the ordinary rank and file worker sees them in terms that he can understand and terms he can cope with. If you try and go for a very sophisticated analysis of the political system you are in danger of isolating yourself because you are going too fast for the ordinary rank and file. Now, that might seem a little bit patronising and I don't want to do that, but you have to recognise the reality of what's happening in the world today.

The Leninist: Moving on, let's imagine the worst possible scenario. What if the NUM in Notts is reduced to a rump? What if the danger arises from the militant minority being isolated from the mass of workers in this UDM, workers who may have started to fight on their own account? Would there then be an argument for militants to join the UDM in order to turn it on its head as an organisation?

Paul Whetton: I could see the logical and tactical reasons for doing that. Again, it's a matter of the pace at which you do it. I'm telling you now,

if I was to go and suggest at my pit that workers say 'We're on a loser, let's go in with Roy Lynk and try and change it from inside', then in 24 hours you'd find me hanging from the head stocks. And I think that's quite understandable. That's the sort of argument that Willis is putting forward. Willis is saying that there has to be some conciliation between the two; and if Willis was to come to a meeting of rank and file miners in this welfare and get up there and suggest that, they wouldn't just lower a noose over his head, they'd actually bloody well use it. It may well be that time again will be the determining factor. Sooner or later that may well be the last option that we've got, but there is no way that I'm going to put forward that argument at this time because I think there is a case for saying that we can exist as a National Union of Mineworkers. It may be an option we've got to come to eventually, but it will be as a last resort.

The Leninist: Spanish, Italian, and Turkish communists have at various times joined fascist or openly reactionary trade unions, but not in order to 'conciliate' and we don't advocate this for Notts militants. You emphasised, correctly, that you have to fight where workers are. We are not adopting a rigid position one way or the other yet, but for us this must remain an option. You mentioned that in your view Lynk will not be particularly adept at defending the pay and conditions of his members, but then, given the defeat and its backtracking, will the NUM act as a pole of attraction? Where under those circumstances should militants fight?

Paul Whetton: I think that that is going to be determined not so much by the action we take but by the action the employers take. We know that the threats that are facing the mining industry at the present time are new technology, government action, the Coal Board, and all the rest of it. One of the biggest threats facing us is the threat of privatisation. Many workers are going to find out the hard way exactly what it's all about. It may well be that they've got to go into the swamp before they can be persuaded to walk round it. That sort of thing is something they can relate to at their actual workplace. It is a very sorry admission that it may well be that we've got to go into that quagmire in order to teach workers what it's all about, but at the present time the aims and objectives of the Coal Board and the government are pushing us down that road and it's a road we've got to go down. Trying to lead the workers away from it is one thing but if they won't go away from it they've got to go into it. Then we've got to try to explain to them the way to get out of it. I don't think that's going to be very easy, but I think that's something that we've got to say is a possibility.

We intend to go ahead with our battle and make sure there is a National Union Mineworkers in Notts. Quite a lot of the lads have got their heads down because the Coal Board's not going to recognise us. But I mean, quite frankly we never expected that they would. It's going to be a matter of putting it over that this battle isn't going to be easy, the strike wasn't easy, the last 6 to 8 months since the end of the strike haven't been easy, and what's going to happen in the next few months isn't going to be easy. In fact it's going to get a damn sight bloody harder. We've got to tell the lads that and take them with us. It would be the easiest thing in the world for them to say 'Oh, sod it, I might as well go in with the other lot.' That's going to be one of our major objectives, that we've got to go out there, get hold of them, and show the men that we can deliver the goods. Lynk can't.

Notts after the UDM

Break the breakaway

THE Union of Democratic Mineworkers is a poisonous and extremely dangerous challenge, not simply to the NUM, but the entire workers' movement. The UDM breach could be used as a stepping stone towards an openly scab trade union centre and the creation of a British version of Solidarnosc. The dominant politics of the labour movement is entirely inadequate to deal with the UDM threat, preferring to hatch some rotten bureaucratic compromise than fight for the hearts and minds of the rank and file.

Undoubtedly we are seeing the consequences of defeat. Talk of the NUM not being defeated now stands exposed as the UDM cancer spreads. Like Spencer after the defeat of the 1926 General Strike, Lynk feeds on the bitter fruits of the defeat of the miners' Great Strike. Faced with this reality the left of the NUM leadership is retreating in disarray and has joined with the right to capitulate to the bosses' courts, agreeing to purge the union's contempt, and in the process they are prepared to reveal everything about the current state of the union's finances and its sources.

Predictably, pit closures and run downs are being pushed home by the Coal Board and resistance is sporadic and constantly undermined by miners' willingness to take redundancy rather than fight when the prospect of victory seems so slim. The national union is in no position either organisationally or politically to organise an effective fightback.

The UDM breakaway, of course, not only shatters the organisational unity of miners but dangerously weakens the NUM's fighting capacity, not least on the wages front. Until unity is reforged all miners are vulnerable to the dictates of the Coal Board and potential victims of its speed-up drive, which can only end in more deaths and injuries. As Notts miners will find, being in a profitable area will be no protection from the Board's determination to hike the rate of exploitation; high pay rates will be used to further divide the miners, but at the end of the day all will find their work harder and their pay packets slimmer.

In our view, Notts NUM loyalists and militants in other areas cannot afford Arthur Scargill's rosy, wishful thinking, "only 11% voted to split" juggling with figures. The truth must be squarely faced. The dangers and extent of the problems must not be minimised. The cancer must be stopped. The question is whether we look to the TUC and Labour Party tops to do it or the militant rank and file. In other words, what sort of reunification do we want and how are we going to get it?

Notts scene

The heaviness of the vote against the NUM in Notts came as a surprise to many people. Just before the ballot the ousted President of Notts NUM, Ray Chadburn, was predicting, at worst, only 60% for Lynk. That 72% did so shows the futility of official optimism and the full extent of the alienation of Notts miners from the NUM. And no dismissal of those who voted for the breakaway as scabs and Tories will heal the

breach; in fact, it can only widen it.

It must also be born in mind that the 7,000 minority who voted to stay national are not a solid, organised core. Many militants who we spoke to considered it their first task to actually win the 7,000 to the NUM. The possibility of breaking out and winning others was definitely considered a long term question. In other words, the aim is to simply hold the line. Paul Whetton echoes this essentially defensive perspective when he says towards the end of our interview with him that one of the "main objectives" is to "get hold of" and consolidate those who actually plumped for the National Union. Paul also frankly admits that in the strike they were not even able to hold 7,000 from scabbing, that there is a hard core, but also a large soft surround in the 7,000.

This lack of solidarity is compounded by the devious tactics of the Board in connivance with the UDM. It is doing its utmost to bludgeon, bribe, and hoodwink the soft element who voted from national into the UDM and there is little the NUM can at present do about it. So Notts militants face some very serious problems which unless overcome will become the problems of militants not only in South Derbyshire, but step by step Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Lancashire, and every super-pit.

Shilly-shallying

There has already been some big stick shilly-shallying from the Coal Board in Notts that they would not recognise the NUM in the area. And despite denials from the London HQ there can be no doubt that the Board is going all out to squeeze the NUM out of Notts.

'The cancer must be stopped. The question is whether we look to the TUC and Labour Party tops to do it or the militant rank and file'

A national spokesman stated that they would recognise any "duly elected representatives of the Nottingham area miners". (*Chad* [local Notts newspaper] October 24 1985) But in practice the Coal Board will of course deny that the NUM has any "duly elected representatives" and this will be abetted by UDM claims to be the sole representative for Notts miners (which in turn will be fuelled by the narrowest sectionalism, as exemplified by UDM official Neil Greatex who adamantly declared that negotiations on the bonus scheme was not for "Scargill's men". (*The Guardian* October 17 1985).)

The UDM has the short term edge over the NUM in that it is more than willing to accept incentive payments rather than fight for their elimination through consolidation. This narrow I'm all right Jack approach will be combined with and aided by Board, government, and media, backing and promotion of the UDM. And this poses real problems.

Trade unions are basic organisations of workers' defence. If the NUM can no longer defend jobs or advance its members' conditions and interests, its ability to hold onto the loyalty of the 7,000 Notts minority will be called into question.

The fragility of what is left of the NUM in Notts can be clearly seen in Ollerton, which was the only place where the NUM obtained a majority and where the majority of its committee came out in the strike. The Welfare became *de facto* a strike centre and after the strike it remained a 'citadel' for those who remained loyal to the national union. It is thus a vital centre of social and political cohesion for the militants. But how much longer can the loyalists hold it after the breakaway vote, and what would be the result if it was lost?

'Small victories'

There is a danger that militants could become enmeshed in the parochial perspective of only looking to 'small victories' and putting off the necessity of constructing a longterm strategy of reforging the unity of miners after the defeat of the Great Strike. If this happens the TUC and Labour Party "unity"-mongers will be given a free hand. Already the TUC General Council is floating rotten compromise deals which would inevitably mean making all sorts of concessions to Lynk and his scabby ilk while excluding the militant rank and file from having any say whatsoever.

This Willis 'good old British comromise' must be squashed flat. Spencerism last time round was unfortunately not smashed but insidiously incorporated into a federalistic structure in 1946. The NUM structure thus contained within it room for manoeuvre for scab leaders and was bound to produce sectionalism. This time round the NUM must be rebuilt on foundations which preclude dirty deals with scab leaders and this can only be done if the rank and file militant minority in the NUM as a whole asserts its independence and struggles to impose its stamp, its imprint, its terms, and its conditions.

Because of this we cannot agree with Paul Whetton, and other honest militants who think like him, that we should back Scargill, using the logic of whom my enemy hates I'll support. Workers must take a long hard look at Arthur's politics and confront the fact that they have important limitations, not least because of their Labourism.

Scargill is, as we all know, outstanding compared with most trade union leaders; his intransigence and fighting determination are rightly admired by militants in all industries. But Labourism is a fatal flaw in his rough diamond hatred of capitalism. This can be summed up in his own words. He is fond of saying that "My grandfather told me that if the boss supports you, you are doing something wrong." Fine sentiments. But what about the *Plan for Coal*? Was not this supported by the bosses? Of course it was. And what about our coal industry that Arthur keeps on about defending? Is it *ours* or is it the bosses'?

The logic of this class

collaborationist position was pointed out in a letter in *Chad* by a Mr B G Smith, "a paid up member of the Labour Party" and branch secretary of the Welbeck scab union. "Is there" he wrote "something wrong with being supportative of the NCB? It is after all a nationalised industry which belongs to all of us ..."

Such a lack of understanding of the nature of the state and the functioning of state monopoly capitalism can effectively cripple the most militant workers' fightback and exposes even the most intransigent to all sorts of ideological hocus pocus. If you tie workers' livelihoods to the profitability of the capitalist system you lose any possibility of building a systematic defence of workers when the system gets into trouble. Instead of looking to what workers actually need, and saying to hell with the interests of a crisis ridden capitalism, leaders are driven to argue that their members are profitable or can be profitable. And this allows the bosses to get away with all manner of divisive tactics, turning 'profitable' workers against 'unprofitable' workers, and all the time ruling the roost.

The fightback

In broad terms there can be no doubt that the call to isolate the UDM is a correct one. It is a scab union and should be treated as a pariah. In strong militant areas like Yorkshire it is possible that isolation could prevent serious UDM breakouts but this strategy will not work in South Derbyshire or Notts — the UDM horse has bolted.

There is a chance that with a drawn out struggle inside Notts through a war of attrition the UDM can be worn down and individual by

'If you tie workers' livelihoods to the profitability of the capitalist system you lose any possibility of building a systematic defence of workers when the system gets into trouble'

individual the NUM can be rebuilt. This perspective should not be dismissed, but it must be realised that in the economic and political climate ahead of us there will be growing pressure for scab unionism. As well as this, the longer the UDM lasts the greater the chances of the TUC/Labour Party imposing a sell out deal which the militant minority will be powerless to resist.

Most crucially, the formation of the UDM has created a situation where the militant minority in Notts are now organisationally separated from the non-militant majority. Because of this the task of swinging the majority or even sections of it back to the NUM has been made more difficult. It is because of this that we floated the tentative suggestion to Paul Whetton that the day could come when it could be correct tactically for the militant minority to enter the UDM in order to be able to work

with the majority and begin the fight to turn the UDM on its head, and thus create the *ideal* conditions for reunification with the NUM. While this suggestion might be greeted with astonishment in some quarters, especially from those who can see no further than trade union politics, it must be admitted that as a tactic it has its successful precedents. In Spain and Italy communists turned the fascist unions onto their heads. In Turkey too the Communist Party (*İşçinin Sesi*) has urged militants to go into the reactionary led trade union centre and resist the temptation of forming a new centre simply because of the advantage of the advanced workers becoming organisationally united with their backward brothers and sisters. Lenin's arguments in *Left-wing communism* about the necessity of communists working in reactionary trade unions (and that would mean the TUC in Britain) are also worth noting.

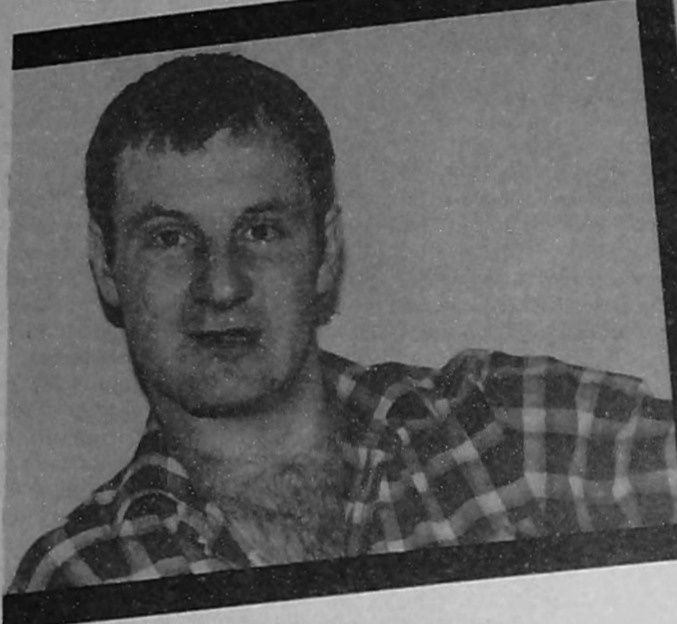
Of course, this question must be considered in the concrete. Whether or not the militant minority should or should not fight in the UDM will in the first place be decided by the numbers that can be won to the NUM. If the overwhelming majority of the 28% in Notts and the 48% in South Derbyshire who voted for the NUM can be won to the NUM, then there is every reason to fight a war of attrition with the full expectation of victory sooner rather than later. But if this proves impossible other tactics should be considered. Certainly, there can be no doubt that the Coal Board and Lynk would dearly love to see the militant minority permanently isolated and organisationally sealed off from 'infecting' the majority, and this is something the militants must not allow to pass.

The fact that Paul Whetton stated that the tactics of turning the UDM on its head could be considered is a testament to his political maturity. He knows that leaders have a duty to think with their heads and not their hearts. He is rightly committed to fighting to build the NUM membership and rightly calls for the isolation of the UDM. But he correctly understands that for the militant minority to enter the UDM in an organised fashion, with the clear and definite aim of reforging unity through winning the leadership of the backward majority, is a serious suggestion that must be seriously considered.

There can be no doubt that principled unity can only be secured by militants winning leadership through day to day struggle and practice. No reliance or trust should be placed in the TUC and Labour Party to do the job for us by their refusal to recognise the UDM. Kinnock and Willis have amply proved their worth in the miners' strike. Do we need yet more proof as to where their loyalty lies? Militants must win the hearts and minds of the backward majority. By doing this, unity will be won on the terms of the militants and not those of the TUC/Labour Party bureaucrats. The key question confronting the militant minority in Notts is overcoming their isolation from the majority and winning their loyalty. To achieve this strategic aim all tactics must be considered.

Mike Burgess

PETE GATES Class War Prisoner



Pete Gates is a member of UCCAT and the Rank and File Building Worker. Because of his activities in support of the miners during the Great Strike he was sentenced to one year imprisonment.

The Leninist: On what level did politics exist in prison?

Peter Gates: You are isolated, you are by yourself really. You have some very hard individuals. A lot of them are politically rightwing, but there are individuals who, for instance, are prepared to defend themselves against other prisoners or the state. It is a mixture; there are a lot of individuals with a very high political consciousness in there, but there are a lot of demoralised individuals.

When I was in prison I was getting letters from people all round the country, some from not very political people, some from people in political parties. It does give you a feeling, a personal feeling, that you are being supported outside, even though you still feel to a certain extent a bit isolated. I think it keeps the authorities on their toes: it ensures that they are not going to go over the mark with you. I got letters from Tony Benn and Stan Newens as well as all these other people.

There should be some sort of organisation, but it is also imperative for the morale of people who have been involved in disputes and a fight for their class. It is important for the morale of the people outside to think that if they do go down they have got some sort of support around them. It is really important we should look after our class prisoners.

The Leninist: Were you able to follow what was going on outside the prison?

Peter Gates: I got the *News Line* and I got every sort of leftwing paper: anarchist, Maoist, *The Leninist*, *Socialist Worker*, all sorts. *The Leninist* was the Communist Party paper sent in and somebody sent in *Straight Left* as well. Towards the end, in the last couple of months, I got *Militant* for some reason. But there was no mention of the prisoners in any of the papers apart from *The Leninist* and *News Line*.

The Leninist: How do you as a former

class war prisoner view the current Labour Party debates on the miners?

Peter Gates: It is quite clear that all the Labour Party workers, by that I mean the activists, have got a principled line, which is to support the prisoners and for amnesty and for no victimisation of sacked miners. The leadership takes the Tories' point of view.

The Leninist: Kinnock has said those "properly tried and convicted" will be left to rot in prison. The only hope being offered to prisoners is when and if 'the next Labour government' is elected ...

Peter Gates: I think that probably most of the prisoners are aware of that. It is easy for me now to say that, especially when those two Welsh lads might be banking on something like that. People would probably expect that but the worst thing about it is that to get those lads out of prison and to look after those prisoners you need some sort of movement outside the prisons of ordinary trade unionists and workers. The danger of having such a clear slap in the face from the Labour Party leadership is that people will give up on the issue. We should continue to agitate around the prisoners: I think we owe it to them.

The Leninist: Is it a question of industrial solidarity: one-day strikes and so on?

Peter Gates: Yes, that would be ideal. It was clearly the absence of that which left Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson and the rest of them in prison. Although there were many jobs in London at that time that were organised and had that policy: 'We'll strike to get them out of prison.'

The Leninist: Looking back over the miners' Great Strike, what went wrong?

Peter Gates: I went up to Mansfield where there was a big march and I think there were a load of lads done for rioting afterwards, which I didn't see. There were some sellers of *Troops Out* and I saw a miner, an oldish guy, walk up to one of them and say "We'll show you how to beat the Tories, you don't want to worry about the Irish." And I realised then there was a certain amount of arrogance, really, on the part of the miners. They had had some good victories in the past, '72 and '74, and it was a bit of a macho idea, an idea that the miners were invincible. It is good to have high morale, but it made me realise that if they weren't aware of the suffering that the Irish people have had to put up with, to casually dismiss the Irish struggle ... I realised that there was something

seriously wrong, that they did not really know what they were up against.

I started to think about it; it was then I started to take notice of the left press and realise that things were not going as smoothly as possible. More than that I listened to miners from South Wales and Yorkshire and I started getting stories of where the local lodges were sitting on the dispute, holding pickets back. Not bothering to talk about the strategy of the strike in meetings. It goes back to the old thing of loyalty to the union and loyalty to the leadership. Loyalty is a strength in the short term but I think unquestioning loyalty is what caused a lot of the downfalls, the downfall of many initiatives, that held it back.

The Leninist: You were active in Camden Miners' Support Group, one of the most advanced support groups in the country. How did you start off?

Peter Gates: We started the Holborn, St Pancras, and Finsbury Support Group. Camden Miners' Support Group was where lots of miners' support groups went to pool their activities and ideas; and to organise things together. But it was an amalgam of many support groups in one sense: I was one of the organisers of the Holborn and St Pancras Support Group, which was by far the most active on street activity. We had unemployed people and it was based around purely practical immediate organisation of collections, which was possibly a weakness in one sense. But then I think people found it a breath of fresh air. It was quite good to get some activity, even though it was quite a low level of activity, collecting money. What was lacking was spreading propaganda at the same time.

It was the activity which kept us going; there wasn't too much speaking. We joined up with Camden; there were a lot of people at the time who said that "they are the official labour movement because they are the trades council" (it was a sub-committee set up by the trades council). It did seem like there was a lot of blocking going on, a lot of people making suggestions which were not going to be realised because of the blocking activities of some members on the Support Group.

We should have kept on as we were going and built up our own links and dug out the best elements. We could have existed perfectly well without the people who were blocking any initiatives or new ideas, saying they were 'extreme leftwing' and all that claptrap. When in fact the suggestions were coming from people who really meant what they were saying: 'we've got to

intensify our part in the struggle'.

The Leninist: Who were these 'blockers'?

Peter Gates: You can basically say they were people who were CPers; *Straight Left* they came from. Also the IMGers were full of good ideas but round about the autumn they started getting into all sorts of deals with the GLC and the TUC instead of blazing away. There were these mammoth meetings of support groups and they didn't seem to get anywhere. The idea of walking about with dragons seemed a bit unreal.

The Leninist: Did Camden change?

Peter Gates: Every time miners came up to address the support groups they were pleading for things to help the pickets, like having direct links with the communities. The bureaucrats from the trades council who were holding us back couldn't actually resist the demands to start a picketing campaign. We were renewing picketing at power stations which the NUM had given up on simply because of the scabbing and lack of support which was always supposed to be forthcoming. At the end they appeared more willing to organise this picketing because they thought 'the miners have lost anyway so it is a safe bet to go on pickets and organise this and that'.

The leaflet for the first TUC Day of Action only became available two days before. On the Day (the day I was arrested) I had been up since half five in the morning at 3 or 4 different places in London giving out these leaflets. Shop stewards were stopping me saying 'we didn't know anything about this'. That was the SERTUC leaflet. It was totally unorganised.

The Leninist: What is now the role of the miners' support movement?

Peter Gates: Basically the struggle has gone back to the workplace now. The role of the support groups is to keep up the contacts between the miners and to support all attempts to keep a certain amount of organisation going. Having socials and so on to raise money for the prisoners; that is probably the main single issue.

Next time it is going to be a lot harder. But they know the people to come to; links have been established. **The Leninist:** Do you think the miners' strike would have ended differently if there had been an organisation of the working class to give a clear political lead and link up the struggle, an organisation like a mass Communist Party?

Peter Gates: Definitely. It would have won. I feel strongly it was always near to victory, and it was always far away because we had a mountain of bureaucracy.

The Leninist: Will that be the

struggle in the future?

Peter Gates: We have to build up the confidence of the working class. And they have to have an organisation they can turn to and trust, that to a large extent will be in their own hands, be answerable to the working class as well as being able to provide leadership and experience.

The Leninist: How are we to get this?

Peter Gates: I know there are all sorts of ideas, applications of various forms of Leninism, and so on. It has always been my view that you have to get hold of your own job if you are a member of the working class, and you have to score victories there, to organise and give confidence. I think there are signs of it now.

We have a lot going against us but we have a lot for us in the sense that we have a hell of a lot of oppression in this country. And a lot of injustice in one of the richest countries of the world. So there is a lot to be gained. I am confident this system cannot go on in the way it has.

London Miners Support Groups' Month of Action — Supported by Kent N.U.M.

Saturday 16th MINING WOMEN'S FILM/VIDEO SHOW with speakers from different mining areas and a special screening of the various videos and films made during the strike and others recently completed about mining women. With large-screen video projector. Creche. Food. Difficult wheelchair access. 11.00am — 3.30pm. Ritzy Cinema, Brixton. £2.50/1.00 cons. For details phone 278 2814/607 0283.

Thursday 21st BENEFIT with THE MEKONS, SEE YOU IN VEGAS, THE JUMPING JEHOSEPHATS and BLUES AND TROUBLE. Bar. 7.30pm. Islington Town Hall, Upper Street. £3/1.50 cons.

Thursday 28th RALLY IN SUPPORT OF THE MINERS' AMNESTY CAMPAIGN Speakers invited from NUM National/Area and rank and file, Women Against Pit Closures, black community in London and a Campaign Group Labour MP. Confirmation early November. Creche. 7.30pm. Camden Town Hall Chambers, Euston Road, NW1. Free.

Friday 29th BENEFIT with AFRICAN CONNECTION, JEAN BREEZE, LORNA G, ONE THOUSAND MEXICANS, plus DJ. Speakers from SACTU and South Wales NUM/WAPC. Bar. 8.00pm. Brixton Recreation Centre, Station Road, SW9. £4/2.00 cons.

Crisis in South Africa

Section 2

THE WINGS OF REVOLUTION

IN THE FIRST section of this study we showed how South Africa is gripped by a profound crisis which has led to the emergence of a revolutionary situation since 1976. Given the objective conditions for revolution we said the key question is the subjective factor, most importantly the determination, discipline, strategy, and tactics of the proletarian vanguard — the South African Communist Party.

In this the second section of our study we discuss the history of the SACP and the problems it has experienced. But as well as looking at it through the prism of its origins and development we will examine its programmatic positions and the tasks it now faces. This in particular means dealing with the whole question of stages in the revolution and the need for theoretical clarity.

Implicitly we answer the sectarian attacks on the SACP from those whose rabid anti-communism leads them to embrace the most dangerous positions, which do nothing to promote the cause of the working class in South Africa, let alone the world revolution. Far from calling for the creation of a trade union based workers' party like the Labourite obsessed *Socialist Organiser* and *Workers Power*, promoting the black separatists of AZAPO or the PAC as do *News Line* and the RCG, let alone careering off into the realms of abstract fantasy by refusing to see a revolutionary situation a la SWP, we prefer to deal with the concrete reality of the SACP. The hatred of the world communist movement by these 'leftists' means that most of these groups declare the SACP the greatest enemy of the South African masses and consider it their mission in life to split the ANC from its revolutionary alliance with the Party. Of course most of these 'leftists' have pipe dreams of giving birth to some clone in South Africa, but in the cold light of day they all suffer from the hangover of the growing power and influence of the SACP and the ANC and the realisation of their own utter impotence when confronted with a living revolution.

We will in our third and final section (not in this one as promised) turn to the question of solidarity, the form it should take, and the aims it should have. Our focus of attention will concentrate on the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the deceptively simple question of sanctions, and the knotty problem of the relationship between liberation movements and those fighting to generate solidarity in the imperialist countries.



We will emphasise that, far from solidarity with the masses in South Africa being an easy touch as the revolution evolves, it is almost inevitable that fair weather friends will run for the cover of respectability. Certainly when the black proletariat begins to realise itself as a class for itself, once the masses have been armed and turn their wrath against apartheid into effective military action, declare their determination to put down the apartheid beast and the system that gave birth to and feeds it, then many who have limited their solidarity to simply calling upon Margaret Thatcher to act and isolated individual gestures, could shift their whole emphasis from the horrors of apartheid to dire warnings about the danger of revolution and communism alienating sympathy in Britain. The Bishops of a Church of England

which is an integral part of British monopoly capital, Liberal MPs whose main concern is to stop revolution in South Africa, and the trade union tops who are equally committed to the continued prosperity of British imperialism are all likely to eschew the South African masses as their 'final battle' erupts and rocks the London Stock Exchange with its seismic shock waves.

Be that as it may, advanced workers in Britain should be acutely aware that South Africa, as well as being a revolutionary fulcrum, a living laboratory where various contending tendencies, shades, and theories clash, polemicise, and compete for hegemony, is also a struggle for liberation to which we are bound by particular and direct responsibilities. Because British imperialism is so important to the South African apartheid state and because South Africa is

of great importance to British imperialism workers in Britain have as a component part of their own struggle for socialism a vital concern to see the defeat of apartheid.

Thus, as well as drawing lessons from the concrete experience of revolution in South Africa, invigorating our body of political theory with the oxygen of reality, we must energetically take up our duty of building a movement against apartheid which does not flinch from the truth that to strike effective blows against apartheid we must do battle with British imperialism itself in a revolutionary fashion. To consistently oppose apartheid is in fact to oppose British imperialism in all its manifestations.

The fight against apartheid must therefore not be pigeonholed, hermetically sealed off from other struggles, but linked with them to the point where they are organically fused and our working class can truly be said to be consciously anti-imperialist. Such a development would enable the working class movement in Britain to deliver well aimed and meaningful solidarity to the worldwide struggle against imperialism, not least the victims of British imperialism in its oldest colony, Ireland. And in so doing the workers would take a giant stride forward towards their own liberation and the realisation of a socialist republic in the world's oldest imperialist nation.

1. Fraternal criticism

Before considering the SACP's contemporary positions and history it is first necessary to say a few words on the issue of criticism (in the broadest sense of the word) by communists of a fraternal party. There are some who are so wedded to diplomatic internationalism that they consider it a principle not to engage in open criticism, debate, or polemic with communists operating in other countries. For instance, the Straight Leftists stated in black and white in their 'Charlie Woods' pamphlet that it is a "principle" to defer "to a country's own Communist Party on questions mainly affecting it" (*Cause, Effect and Cure* p.9).

For us this diplomatic internationalism is a caricature of proletarian internationalism. Genuine proletarian internationalism demands the highest level of theory in all countries and this can only be achieved through frank exchanges, overcoming wrong ideas, and synthesising experiences from the world as a whole. Indeed, proletarian internationalism means seeing

the struggle in one's own country as part of and subordinate to the general fight by the working class on a world scale.

So when it comes to important principles, it is the duty of communists, all communists, to honestly and unapologetically state their views openly. We cannot remain true to proletarian internationalism, to our duty as communists, if we avoid thinking, if we have a 'they know the conditions best' approach, even when comrades are leading a ruling Party or are in the midst of the flames of revolution. No Party, no matter what its prestige, is automatically correct.

This approach is fully in line with the practice and spirit of Leninism. Lenin himself, of course, intervened and commented on the issues and controversies in countless parties and countries. Of particular note, in respect of this, was his statement regarding inter-communist relations when debating what was the correct attitude to take towards the British Labour Party with communists from Britain. Against those who protested that this was a matter for British communists alone, because this question mainly affected them, Lenin insisted:

"The old International used the method of referring such questions for decision to the individual parties in the countries concerned. This was a grave error. We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another, but in this case we are dealing with the principles underlying a Communist Party's tactics. This is very important and, in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist point of view." (V.I. Lenin *CW* Vol.31 p.257, our emphasis.)

For us, the dissolution of the Third International did not end proletarian internationalism and its vital importance to the class struggle. No, far from it. It is still necessary to state the communist point of view when it comes to the "principles underlying a Communist Party's tactics". So while we are not "fully familiar" with the details of the problems our comrades in South Africa have had to face, the "principles underlying" their strategies, and tactics demand fraternal though critical examination. This is not only legitimate, but our duty as communists fully committed to proletarian internationalism and the fight for world revolution.

2. The Communist Party of South Africa

Now, to come to grips with the present stance and outlook of the SACP it is essential to pay due regard to its setting in the world, the Party's internal contradictions, and the course the CP has plied since it was founded in 1921. Not to do this would be to fall victim to either preconceived dogma which pays no attention whatsoever to real life or equally myopic 'commonsense' snap judgement. Against these Janus faces of British political backwardness we recognise that only the historical, concrete, critical, and revolutionary approach of Marxism-Leninism can give us the ability to grasp the formidable complexities the comrades in South Africa have had to cope with. It will also give us an appreciation as to how effectively the Party has been led and to what extent international influences have been positive as well as negative.

Naturally, our examination of the history of the CP in South Africa will be brief. Nonetheless we trust that it will be instructive.

The Communist Party of South Africa (as it was then called) was founded at a conference in Cape Town over July 30 — August 1 1921. Those who came together to form the Party were overwhelmingly white, coming as they did from the radical strand of the labour movement (then almost exclusively white). Although these comrades were enlightened by the beacon of the October Revolution and agreed to accept the 21 conditions for affiliation to the Third International, including their stipulation about aiding national liberation struggles, the Party's first manifesto "appealed mainly to the white working man". It was to them that most CPSA leaders looked to bring about the socialist revolution and thus liberation and equality to the non-white races (Jack and Ray Simons *Class and Colour* p.261).

So although the Party savaged the South African Labour Party for its racist call for segregation and white workers' unity against blacks, although it was determined to break through the racial barriers, it retained elements of the mechanical 'Marxism' characteristic of the Second Interna-

tional, which was Euro-centric and ignored the yearning for national liberation by the hundreds of millions of oppressed peoples in the colonies. This was undoubtedly a direct result of the Party being formed out of the radical strand of the labour movement, which as we said was overwhelmingly white, but also and equally important out of what was a preserve of the labour aristocracy. Thus, although the formation of a Communist Party in South Africa must be seen in the context of the world wide split between social democracy, which rested on the labour aristocracy, and the communists, who stood for the long term interests of the working class as a whole, it was almost inevitable that there would be unhealthy carryovers, traces, and even links with the past simply because of the racial composition of the Party, not least its leadership.

Being based on the labour aristocracy had to have certain detrimental ideological effects blinding the CPSA leadership in its approach to the struggle for socialism. Fortunately the 1924 conference decided to concentrate work on blacks. And any organisation in South Africa which seriously and unhesitatingly proclaimed internationalism, the equality of all races, and fiercely called for the revolutionary destruction of the old order was bound to attract to its banner the most advanced elements from the oppressed.

Because of this as well as the steady proletarianisation of the black population and the 'historical compromise' between capital and white labour after 1922, the Party changed colour. By 1928, out of the 1,750 card carrying members 1,600 were African, a dramatic shift when one considers that only a year before there were only 200 African members. But this change did not fully reflect itself in the composition of the leadership, let alone the Party's strategy.

It was the Sixth Congress of Comintern, the Third International, that was to prove the watershed, which decisively changed the programmatic direction of the CPSA and gave it an entirely new role and outlook. Comintern leaders had long been disturbed by the delegations from the CPSA being exclusively white and understandably frustrated as to the Party's lack of progress. The three white delegates sent to Moscow in 1928 for the congress compounded the worries.

Since 1927 the CPSA had carried out a 'turn to the masses'. This did not just bring in hundreds of valuable African recruits but sparked off a debate about whether South Africa's road to socialism would be via working class unity and with, by implication, white working class leadership or through the overthrow of white supremacy and the establishment of a *native republic*. The overwhelming majority of Party members stuck by the traditional formulae, including most of the central executive. They feared that the native republic thesis was a nationalist deviation and smacked of Marcus Garvey's Pan-Africanist 'Africa for the Africans' slogan.

The Comintern resolution calling for an independent native republic as a precondition for socialism in South Africa therefore came as a shock to most SACP members, not least the delegates sent by the Party to Moscow. In vain they objected to it, declaring that the ANC was moribund, looked to Britain to redress native grievances and that, what is more, Africa was anyway a "white man's country". While it was protested that this was merely describing the facts Comintern leaders, notably Dunne from the USA, Bennett of the Anglo-American committee of Comintern (which had special responsibility for the black question), and Bukharin himself detected what they called a "survival of race prejudice" (*Ibid* p.407). Predictably it was the resolution of Comintern's Executive that won the day.

Back in South Africa, although the delegates loyally abided by the Comintern line, there was a storm of protest. Old Party stalwarts like Andrews, the first CPSA Secretary, and Tinker would have nothing to do with the call for a Black Republic and their doubts were shared by most Party white trade unionists and not a few of the black ones. Despite this the CPSA's Seventh Annual Conference in December 1928 voted by 11 votes to four to amend the Party's programme to include a clause on the "self determination of the African people" on the understanding that this implied a workers' and peasants' republic, "for practically all natives are workers and peasants". And although this meant that the Party lost many of its white members, this was more than made up for by the influx of Africans like

Edwin Mofutsanyana, J B Marks, Moses Kotane, and Johannes Nkosi. According to the already quoted and highly respected *Class and Colour* "They Africanised the Party; wrote articles for its paper in Tswana, Sesuthu, Zulu, and Xhosa; organised its branches in country districts or concentrated on the trade unions." The CPSA had "formerly been the left wing of the labour movement. The communists now became the acknowledged leaders of the militant wing of the liberation movement." (pp414-5).

From what we have seen so far there can be no doubt that Comintern played an extremely positive role in guiding it towards the broad masses and ending its debilitating false hopes in the white labour aristocracy. The contradiction between those elements in the Party who were based on the white working class, and who initially dominated the Party, and the black members fired by colonial as well as class oppression was with the aid of Comintern resolved in favour of the latter.

Unfortunately after the death of Lenin Comintern had been taking steps towards centrism because of the atavistic consequences of the isolation of the October Revolution. Of course, the path to the right was not straight. It knew occasional paradoxical turns to the left which had the effect and perhaps in part the purpose of breaking the leadership of affiliated parties into the centrist mould.

The adoption of the native republic slogan should have opened up to the CPSA the distinct possibility of gaining hegemony over the struggle for national liberation. And as long as no Chinese Wall was placed between the democratic tasks of the revolution and those of socialism the call for a native republic could have provided the key to winning socialism under the conditions appertaining in South Africa.

But it was not to be. Although the Sixth Congress of Comintern put the seal on the CPSA being based on the black population and not the white labour aristocracy it also ushered in absurdly sectarian and pseudo-revolutionary politics. Douglas Walton, an English communist, and Lazar Bach, a Lett who only joined the CPSA in 1931, were placed at the head of the Party essentially as Comintern nominees. Predicting an imminent fascistisation of South Africa and the urgent need for revolution, the new leadership pinpointed lack of progress by the Party in the so-called opportunism of the old leadership.

The white comrades were more or less universally branded as social democrats, black ones apparently suffered from a bourgeois nationalist deviation. To purge the Party of these faults Walton initiated a series of internecine struggles which not only saw many fine communists rudely expelled from the Party but the influence and effectiveness of the Party plummet "to its lowest ebb." (*African Communist* No.86 third quarter 1981)

The Seventh and last Congress of Comintern saw a violent reaction against the policies of the previous congress. Stung by the crushing defeat of German communism at the hands of Hitler's Nazis and the gathering storm clouds of war against the Soviet Union, Comintern swung to the right. In place of noisy chatter about imminent revolution, and flinging accusations of social-fascism at social democrats, communist parties were to do everything to support the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie which had previously been described as no different from Hitler or Mussolini.

Far from this bringing inner-Party peace to the CPSA a new round of faction fighting broke out. Though pledged to root out sectarian tendencies the leadership objected to all criticism of past policy because it was said to disrupt Party work. Two groups in the leadership emerged: one consisting of Kotane, Ngedlane, and Roux, the other of Bach, Marks, Kalk, and Edwin Mofutsanyana, the General Secretary.

Comintern was asked to intervene. It invited the two groupings to send representatives to Moscow to resolve the dispute. Comintern was determined to have no truck with those who showed traces of independence even if they were only resisting attacks on their role in carrying out the decisions of the Sixth Congress. This was not a time of tolerance. Bach and two of his close comrades were expelled from the Party by the Comintern Control Commission, put on trial, and duly sentenced to death and executed.

But the troubles of the CPSA were far from over; Comintern appointed George Hardy as its new representative. He was a

British communist who had a sacred mission to make the CPSA respectable: something not unrelated to Soviet diplomatic considerations. Substituting reformist notions for sectarian slogans, under the influence of Hardy the CPSA retreated from the concrete task of overthrowing the Anglo-Boer regime. In place of this everything was subordinated to the abstract (at least when divorced from the revolutionary overthrow of the state) struggle to ward off fascism and war. *Colour and class* correctly observes that Hardy "guided the Party into making great turn to the right" (p.477)

This meant downgrading agitation for black rights and a definite reorientation back to the labour aristocracy. And in an attempt to keep white workers out of the ranks of the black and grey shirts the CPSA "offered to back Labour candidates for the provincial council." As far as the Party was concerned: "It was a pity that they stood for complete segregation," but this minor consideration apart, "Labour was sincere in its endeavours to improve the lot of the poor." (*ibid* p.480)

Far from such opportunism enabling the Party to sprint forward it soon found itself bogged down in the quicksand of liquidationism. Membership plummeted, moves to form a popular front with Labour proved stillborn, and the CPSA's paper *The South African Worker* ceased publication — meaning that the Party was for the first time in nearly 23 years without a central organ. This downturn in the CP's fortunes opened up new rifts in the leadership and even strains between the organisation in the Cape, which was dominated by whites and Coloureds, and the Johannesburg area where the African membership was concentrated. Schism was avoided by moving the Party centre from Johannesburg to Cape Town where it was hoped factional tensions could be eased.

While the move did enable the Party to organise more effectively and reverse the decline of the previous years, it was undoubtedly a major retreat. Compared with the Johannesburg area, with its dynamic industries and massive gold mines, the 'fair' Cape was sleepy to the point of being a backwater. And although this was meant to be a temporary emergency measure, fear of new conflicts meant the Party's HQ remained there until the illegalisation of the CPSA in 1950.

The outbreak of World War II saw the CPSA, apparently without outside prompting or instruction, declare that: "The fight against fascism must start in our own country" and that the war was inter-imperialist. Despite this, once Germany struck against the Soviet Union and Stalin came into alliance with Britain and the USA the CPSA considered it beholden on it to back the war effort of South Africa and its Anglo-Boer ruling class. Because of this about turn and the enormous prestige earned by the Red Army the CPSA saw its membership and the circulation of its press soar as the Party at last gained the respectability Hardy had dreamed of.

Although the Party called for equal pay for black and white soldiers and agitated for the bourgeois state to ban the openly pro-Nazi Ossewa Brandwag it exhibited distinct rightist and perhaps even national nihilist tendencies. In effect it demanded that the black masses drop their struggle for national liberation until after the danger presented by the war had passed: a decidedly non-Leninist platform. But it did win it a certain amount of support from sections of the white labour aristocracy; after all, it was a social patriotic position — albeit motivated by an earnest desire to defend the Soviet Union.

The demand for the maximisation of South Africa's war effort through the dismantling of the colour bar did not lose the Party any friends amongst the blacks especially as the ANC was pursuing a similar line. Despite this there can be no doubt that the liberalistic and parliamentary illusions engendered by class collaboration was in time to cost the Party, and in turn the black masses, dear.

In 1948 the Nationalist Party was elected on a programme of far reaching institutionalisation of South Africa's racism and hysterical anti-communism. The strident Old Testament-inspired, messianic racism, the tub-thumping, almost possessed ravings against the now thoroughly unrespectable CPSA, and certainly the increasing tempo of the class struggle should have sounded like a klaxon bell to the Party leadership. But the creeping rightism of the previous period had dulled their revolutionary senses.

Faced with the Suppression of Communism Bill in 1950, a CPSA softened by opportunism, blinded because of reformist notions, and disarmed through commitment to legality did not feel able to go underground. Although its membership lists were seized by the police in 1946 and the danger of illegality was looming for many years, no measures had been taken by the leadership for the Party to combine legal with illegal work. The responsibility for this of course rests on the entire leadership and indicated the extent to which idealistic illusions had penetrated. With only two votes against, the Central Committee voted to dissolve the Party from June 20 1950, the day the Suppression of Communism Bill became law.

3. The South African Communist Party

That the leadership of the CPSA had not maintained an ability to work illegally was a profound mistake. In the conditions communists had to operate in in South Africa there can be no excuse for such an elementary organisational and political failing. Certainly the direct responsibility lies with the leadership of the CPSA, but the world communist movement including Stalin and the Soviet Party can hardly escape blame. They provided the impulses and not occasionally the instructions which propelled the CPSA through its tortuous course towards the liquidationist grave. So while the CPSA owed its very existence to international developments in the class struggle, which reached its highest expression in October 1917, there was, it must be remembered, a negative side. The sectarianism of the so-called Third Period, the fawning search for respectability of the Popular Front, and the naked class collaborationism of the war years were in truth not of the SACP's making and it was undoubtedly such externally inspired U-turns which lined up the Party for liquidation in 1950.

Of course, if a Party is deeply rooted in the national soil, if its membership has been steeled in militant battle, and its leadership retains some respect for Marxist-Leninist theory, then all is not lost. Communist parties are not sects, they are the organised vanguard of the working class with historic international connections, and through this they possess an organic relationship to the class struggle. Thus, even if cast to a liquidationist death a Communist Party can be made to rise again.

This 'miracle' may be worked by outside intervention, as was the case with the CP of the USA; the anaesthetic of diplomatic liquidationism may no longer be required, as in Egypt; or the struggle of the masses themselves can fire the frozen Party into life and open it up to the healthy blood of a new generation of revolutionaries as happened in Turkey.

Like Turkey, South African conditions needed no direct outside stimulus for resurrection. The fact that it had not been closed down because of diplomatic considerations certainly helped, but the mounting wave of Nationalist Party authoritarianism, apartheid legislation, and the desperate determination of the masses to fight back cried out for a Communist Party.

And only three years after the CPSA had died the South African Communist Party was born. It contained within its ranks the majority of former members. This is a glowing tribute to the working class vanguard. For despite having held liberalistic and parliamentary illusions, they had the cool courage and determination to overcome these opportunist mistakes and face up to the awesome apartheid state armed only with the heritage of Marxist-Leninist theory and the proletarian ability to organise.

So it is clear that like the rest of us, being of human material, our comrades in South Africa made important mistakes. It is of course the test of true communists not that they make no mistakes, but that they are able to rectify them. With this in mind it is essential to balance our criticism of the CP in South Africa with both the fact that it was reborn as an illegal Party three years after it was liquidated and also and not least its contribution to building and advancing the liberation struggle.

Communists were in the forefront of fighting for multi-racial trade unionism, they initiated new organisations that freed the black masses from the deadening influence of the white labour aristocracy and it was they who were elected to many leading

positions. Under communist leadership numerous militant struggles were fought culminating in the Great Miners' Strike of August 1946. Herded into wretchedly inadequate prison-like compounds, forced to engage in back-breaking and dangerous work, receiving miserable rates of pay, the miners' anger exploded against the millionaires of the Chamber of Mines. Led by the communist JB Marks, the African Mine Workers' Union fought tenaciously against the full force of the state. Armed police who batoned, shot at, and arrested thousands, broke the strike, but it shook the system to its foundations.

In the aftermath of the strike the Smuts government vented its full fury against all who had stood with the miners in particular the communists. JB Marks, Kotane, the Party General Secretary, and members of the Johannesburg District Committee were amongst the 52 arrested. Charges of sedition followed against the entire Central Committee and only after two long years did the prosecution, case collapse, and the charges withdrawn.

Intimately linked to this work in the trade unions was the broad struggle for national liberation. Having taken a qualitative step from being the revolutionary strand of the trade union and labour movement to the proletarian wing of the liberation movement meant searching for a revolutionary alliance with other forces of national liberation, most notably the ANC. This proved difficult on occasions, not least when the world communist movement was engaging in a frenzy of sectarian rhetoric in the early 1930s. But the problems were not all on the side of the CPSA. The ANC was a broad alliance of forces, some radical, but others conservative. So while communists were elected into prominent positions in the ANC relations were strained when conservative elements held sway. They preferred to place faith in gaining concessions from Britain through reasoned negotiations to a fighting alliance with the communists.

But in the late 1940s the radical forces grew in power and confidence. The rise to prominence of leaders of the ANC Youth League like Anton Lembede, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and Nelson Mandela heralded the opening of a new militant chapter in the annals of the ANC. Their efforts and those of the communists led to the formation of a democratic alliance combining the forces of the ANC with the Indian National Congress under Yusuf Dadoo, a member of the CPSA and later its chairman, and the Natal Indian Congress. The historic Dadoo-Xuma-Naicker pact paved the way for the revolutionary alliance between the CP itself and the ANC following its outlawing in 1960 and the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the People's Army.

So criticism of the course communists have travelled since 1921 and the pointing out of mistakes and opportunist errors must be balanced by a recognition of the muscle as well as the brain the existence of a CP in South Africa has given to the masses' struggle for liberation. Without the CP much would not have been possible and much would still remain to be done.

4. Programmes

Responding to the rising revolutionary tide which we see today, understanding the urgent need to give it socialist consciousness, the SACP launched the first of a new series of its paper *Umsebenzi* inside South Africa at the beginning of this year. This feat was possible only because of the new organisational strength of the Party.

Its ability to survive and operate under the harshest conditions, unlike in 1950, enables it to claim the position of a vanguard and act as a powerful wing of the ANC liberation movement. This is a fact courageously testified by the role of Party members in Umkhonto we Sizwe. It was comrade David Kitson who was assigned by the SACP and the ANC to work with other cadres to establish it and today many of its best combatants are communists.

No wonder the SACP's red flag with its hammer and sickle flies side by side with the black, green, and gold flag of the ANC at militant meetings, demonstrations, and funerals and that coffins are draped, some with the flag of the ANC, some with the flag of the SACP. No wonder the SACP is admired by the masses, reviled by the *verkrante*, and feared by the *verligte*.

The source of the prestige SACP members enjoy, not least in the ranks of the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe, their leadership of the underground South

African Congress of Trade Unions, is unquestionably the dedication, single-mindedness, discipline, connections, and sheer hard work of these comrades. But these qualities could only have been successfully cultivated and deployed as a direct result of the orientation away from the right after the inglorious events of 1950.

Of course the severity of repression in South Africa does not encourage liberalistic illusions. They are all too likely, as the CPSA found to its cost, to come up against the cold steel reality of a soldier's bayonet, to wilt after long years of solitary on Robben Island, or be swept aside by the desperate rage of spontaneous mass movements. The soil of reformism in South Africa is very thin, that of revolution has been deposited over many generations and is enriched with the blood of countless martyrs.

All students of Marx and Lenin will appreciate that although South African conditions are fertile for Marxism-Leninism and the shedding of rightist cataracts, the grasping of Marxism-Leninism and the vista it opens up is not the product of the scourge of defeat or the inspiration of a revolutionary situation alone. No, it results from the scientific method of dialectical materialism, its application to the concrete situation, and the training of the proletarian vanguard in its method and programme.

Conditions in South Africa are arguably just as tough but just as possibilities as Tsarist Russia. As we know, victory was only won there after an unyielding, uncompromising, and relentless ideological struggle. Through the vanquishing of all sorts of alien tendencies the vanguard was forged into the Bolshevik Party. Its ability to fight through the bleakest periods of reaction and shift tack with an unexpected revolutionary turn of events was only possible if inevitable manifestations of dogmatism or conciliation were overcome within its ranks. The role of Lenin in this was invaluable. It was he who took the great scientific discoveries of Marx and Engels and through the mastering of the highest achievements of contemporary science, philosophy, economics, and history was able to equip the Bolsheviks with a world view which could not only understand reality but when given life by the art of politics could change it.

It is no secret that not every country can produce a Marxian theoretician and proletarian leader of Lenin's stature; such people are rare indeed. But of course it is not necessary for every country to have their 'Lenin'. The fundamental teachings of Marxism-Leninism may have been penned by the most outstanding minds of our era, but they are available to all workers, intellectuals, and communists who trouble to engage in serious study and who dare unite theory with practice.

Thus, even if we have been following a course dictated by short term or diplomatic internationalist considerations there always remains the possibility of turning to the compass of true Marxism-Leninism to enable us to check our position and correct our direction.

From our readings of the publications of the SACP it is clear that this is what our comrades have done after the debacle they suffered in 1950. And if this is, as we believe, the case then it is both praiseworthy of itself and impressive, considering that the pull of attraction in the world communist movement has been to the right. Certainly today the SACP is on the left of what could be called the mainstream of our world movement. Its genuine revolutionism, emphasis on internationalism, and commitment to self sacrifice, hard work, and the highest level of discipline put many other comrades to shame.

Recognising important parallels between the tasks of the South African Revolution and those the Russian proletariat confronted, the SACP seems to have turned to the 'compass' and taken ideas of the Bolsheviks as outlined in Lenin's brilliant pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*. Although both wings of the RSDLP understood the fact that the main content of the revolution was democratic (i.e. bourgeois) unlike the Mensheviks the Bolsheviks placed absolutely no faith whatsoever in the bourgeoisie leading 'their' revolution. And far from seeking to support the bourgeois liberals in their opposition to Tsarism the Bolsheviks mercilessly exposed them as weak-kneed, pusillanimous, and ultimately treacherous.

In the light of the cowardice of the Russian bourgeoisie as revolutionaries, taking full cognisance of the ripeness of the advanced capitalist countries for socialism

and the possibility that as a result of the law of uneven but combined development Russia could act as a spark for the European revolution, the Bolsheviks developed their programme. Essentially what was put forward was the idea that the proletariat should fight to establish its hegemony over the vast peasant class and take the lead in the democratic revolution against Tsarism. Tsarism would be overthrown through revolution and replaced by a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Depending on the degree to which the proletariat had established its hegemony over the revolution the revolutionary government would act as an agent for carrying through the revolution uninterrupted to socialist tasks. This would, the Bolsheviks thought, rest on the Russian Revolution sparking off revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, for only with their aid would socialist measures become possible in backward Russia.

Because they are informed by this 'compass' position the SACP comrades do not fall headlong into the trap of putting off to the never-never land the struggle for socialism. This is a trap many in our world movement have been ensnared by, not least those in the advanced capitalist countries. By artificially separating the democratic revolution which still remains to be fulfilled in many backward and medium developed capitalist countries and the socialist tasks which are historically necessary in all capitalist countries the proletariat, the only class that can reliably act as the hegemon of the democratic revolution, is tied to the coattails of the so-called 'progressive' bourgeoisie and thus disarmed. As to CPs in the advanced Western capitalist countries who construct a rigid two stage theory, they do not have the slightest justification. In such countries the democratic (bourgeois) tasks have long ago been carried out: what is demanded is socialist revolution and certainly not left social democratic governments, let alone broad anti-whatever it maybe coalitions incorporating everybody. from brickies to bishops.

But let's get the SACP to speak for itself. In the *African Communist* No 101 (second quarter 1985) there is reproduced the January 1985 statement of the Central Committee issued after the Party's 6th Congress. Of particular note is the following passage:

"To be revolutionary to the very end means to fight for the victory of the socialist revolution, for the defeat of the bourgeoisie as a class, for the passing of power into the hands of the proletariat so that it becomes the ruling class. This is an historic task which faces the working class of our country, as it confronts the proletariat of all countries.

"Therefore in the struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution, the working class cannot lose sight of its obligations as the midwife of the socialist revolution. The proletariat is interested not merely in the success of the democratic revolution, but also that this revolution is thoroughgoing and goes as far as possible in undermining the position of the monopoly bourgeoisie and bringing the maximum benefit to the working class and the oppressed and exploited rural masses.

"It is for this reason that the working class cannot stand aside from the struggle to liberate South Africa. It is also clear that these workers must engage in struggle for a democratic South Africa fully conscious of their unique class interests, the necessity to make their imprint in the democratic revolution, and to prepare the conditions for an uninterrupted advance from popular democracy to proletarian rule."

While this perspective steers clear of the evolutionary communism of many comrades in both the so-called First and Third Worlds, it must be admitted that it and other statements of the SACP do contain contradictions and certain ambiguities. To a great extent practice itself will lead to clarification but this will not happen without ideological struggle.

What contradictions and ambiguities are we talking about and how did they come about? Well, the most important ones relate to the question of stages and the class content of the post-revolutionary government.

Although we do not question the revolutionary integrity of our comrades in South Africa for one moment, when we read statements from them that the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution are separate distinct stages guided by a "two stage theory" (*African Communist* No 103

fourth quarter 1985) alongside declarations about "uninterrupted" revolution, we must frankly say we see a contradiction.

At the root of this lies what we believe to be a lack of clarity on the class content of the post-revolutionary government. The SACP Central Committee statement of January '85 maintains that the democratic revolution would "prepare the conditions for an uninterrupted advance from popular democracy to proletarian rule". Surely this is ambiguous. What class will hold state power under popular democracy? Either it must be the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. This is what Marxism teaches and life proves.

If it is a native bourgeoisie emerging from the petty bourgeoisie that comes to rule then there can be no question of such a "popular democracy" uninterruptedly becoming "proletarian rule". On the other hand, if as the *Aims of the SACP* maintains it must be "the working class which will be the dominant force" over a "People's Power" government then we have an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat which can indeed "move uninterruptedly" towards socialist tasks as the Soviet State did and if this is the case it should be unambiguously stated.

It seems to be that although taking a great deal from the Bolsheviks, in their attempts to apply these lessons to South Africa some clarity has been lost because of a failure to ditch all the opportunist junk of the past which led to the 1950 liquidation. Thus the positions of the SACP contain elements of Leninism combined with non-Leninist elements. This is of course an oil and water mixture which produces by definition certain contradictions, ambiguity, abstraction, and lack of focus.

To some extent this is inevitable if we bear in mind the continued drift to the right by our world movement and the ideological confusion this engenders. Given its past it would have been surprising indeed if the SACP at its present stage of development had been able to make a complete break with all opportunist hangovers.

For similar reasons perhaps too little attention has been paid to the lessons the Bolsheviks themselves learnt during the course of 1917.

The February Revolution destroyed Tsarism and in effect replaced it with a government which relied on the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. But far from this "workers' and peasants' government" acting in a revolutionary manner it sought to stem the tide of popular soviet power and carry out the imperialist aims of the Russian bourgeoisie. Faced with the Provisional government and respected socialists sitting in ministerial positions most Bolshevik leaders were thrown into utter confusion. Some wanted to settle for being a party of opposition, others even tinkering with reuniting with the Mensheviks in order to shift the government to the left.

It was Lenin who had the courage and analytical vision to characterise the Provisional government as a socialist cover for reaction and call for its overthrow with a second revolution. Despite initially being considered slightly unhinged, even downright mad, by some Bolshevik leaders, and finding himself in a minority of one, ideological struggle and events quickly proved the correctness of his *April Theses*.

The Bolshevik Party having been ideologically reequipped and reunited after fierce inner-Party debate was able to place itself at the head of the revolutionary proletariat and rally the peasant masses to its banner under the slogan of Land, Bread, and Peace. The October Revolution had as its first aim the democratic tasks of giving the peasants land and pulling Russia out of the quagmire of bloody inter-imperialist slaughter. Of course this was only possible because the Bolsheviks had seized power for the proletariat and ushered in a proletarian dictatorship which soon looked to specifically socialist tasks. In this way the October Revolution was able uninterruptedly to go from the democratic stage to its socialist stage, something which Lenin emphasised relied no longer on the support of the peasantry as a whole but the poor and middle peasants alone.

Whether or not a democratic government in South Africa after the overthrow of apartheid is balanced towards the workers will of course result from which class establishes its hegemony over the revolution itself. This will be decided by the lever of the determination, theoretical clarity and ability to overcome all manifestations of bourgeois ideology in the ranks of the proletarian

vanguard by the Communist Party. And this in turn pivots on the overcoming of all loose thinking, traces of opportunism, and mechanical approaches, inside the Communist Party itself.

So while it must always be born in mind that the primary contradiction in South African society is that of national oppression, it is vital to pay due regard to the fact that the national oppression of the black masses is inextricably bound up with the capitalist system. As we have seen in Section I the development of South African monopoly capitalism relied on and has gone hand in hand with the institutionalisation of racism and national oppression. Because of this we can safely say that to strike at apartheid is to strike at the same time at monopoly capital. They are the same creature. This understanding is crucial when examining both the form and content of the South African Revolution. Without grasping it there is a danger of making the same sort of mistake as the Mensheviks who approached the Russian Revolution in a mechanical non-dialectical way and thus endangering the crucial need to promote working class political independence from the liberal bourgeoisie and hegemony over the peasantry.

Now, the working class in South Africa are far more numerous proportionately than in the Russia of 1917. The rural masses are to an important degree proletarianised, most are landless, most work in the cities when employment is available. The proletariat is thus, despite the treachery of the white labour aristocracy, in terms of social weight better placed to win hegemony over the anti-apartheid revolution than the proletariat of Russia was in its struggle to lead the anti-Tsarist revolution. The key question was and is leadership. In Russia it was the Bolsheviks; in South Africa it is the South African Communist Party.

If the SACP fails in the struggle to neutralise or even win sections of the white working class, if it fails to build revolutionary organs of power, if it fails to make the proletariat the dominant force in the democratic revolution, then obtaining proletarian hegemony over a democratic government would be very unlikely. Yes, a Cuba type interregnum is possible. A revolutionary government could then be pushed by a complex array of internal and external conjunctures, pressures, and impulses towards making the transition to becoming a working class government. But Cuba so far has been the exception that proves the rule. Far better to put trust in the proletariat liberating itself through its own direct strength than the decidedly uncertain prospect of another Cuba.

It should also be born in mind that in the event of the proletariat not succeeding in its attempts to lead the struggle to smash the apartheid regime then there is a distinct possibility that a post-revolutionary government could with relative rapidity evolve in an out-and-out anti-working class direction. Given the almost inevitably conservative instincts of an anti-working class government then a second revolution could well, like the October Revolution, have democratic tasks at the top of its agenda; after all, in South Africa the tasks of the democratic revolution can only be fully carried out through the agency of proletarian rule. But clearly, if a second revolution can be made unnecessary, all the better. This can best be done if the proletariat establishes its hegemony and if it does and it also stamps its hegemony over the revolutionary government we would in effect have a new state which is an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Such a regime, it can easily be understood, would not need to go "uninterruptedly over to proletarian rule" but would uninterruptedly go from carrying out democratic tasks to those of socialism.

While in part the ambiguity towards the coming democratic revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat stems from the dead weight of past opportunism and what passes for ideological orthodoxy in our world movement, there can be no doubt that the demands of working in alliance with the ANC do not play an insignificant role. Party members do, as is widely known, participate in the ANC at all levels including its leadership. But the ANC is no communist led front along the lines of the NLF in Vietnam. The ANC has a long and proud history and well established roots in South African society. True, conservative elements

like tribal chiefs have in the past dominated the Congress but today radical forces coming from the African middle strata hold sway. They look to revolution not cap in hand pleading as the chiefs did and have been influenced by the SACP not least in the recognition of the progressive nature of the socialist countries and the need to open the ANC up from top to bottom to men and women of all races. The ANC's firm anti-racism has won it the following of literally millions of black workers and rural poor to the point where it can legitimately claim to be the representative of the oppressed South African nation.

The revolutionary alliance between the SACP and the ANC has been positive for both organisations. The ANC has shed much of its parochiality and African exclusiveness and the SACP has gained immense respect as a trusted ally. Such a revolutionary alliance is thus perfectly principled as long as it does not lead to subordinating the working class in any way to the middle strata: the Leninist dictum *march separately, strike together* should always be employed. And it is in this light we would question one more of the formulations of the SACP. Both the already oft quoted Central Committee statement and the *Aims of the SACP* talk of the revolutionary alliance with the ANC and declare that the liberation movement is headed by the ANC. Yet surely this is confusing when we also read that the SACP is "the leading political force of the South African working class and is the vanguard in the struggle for national liberation, socialism and peace in our time" (*Aims of the SACP*).

It could be argued that statements about the liberation movement being "headed" by the ANC are simple descriptions of fact and that the SACP is the *conscious* vanguard, but this is nonetheless confusing and through the door of confusion comes the unwelcome guest of opportunism. Sophistry is no substitute for clarity. If the SACP aims to win working class hegemony over the ANC this should be clearly stated. Certainly no one has suggested that the ANC is today a working class organisation and it definitely has not got a proletarian programme or philosophy. Because of this, pledges about fighting for proletarian hegemony over revolution should be made crystal clear: ambiguity carries dangers.

5. Prospects

The SACP correctly sees a revolutionary situation in South Africa. The cardinal question under such conditions, the point on which the victory of the revolution hinges, is the SACP itself. As we said in Section I, it can truly be said that on "Its ability to lead the masses, its resourcefulness, and its tactical and strategic positions rests the fate of the revolution." We can conclude from the experience of the past, from revolutions that succeeded and those that failed, that no matter how favourable the objective situation maybe, there will be no revolution unless the SACP is able to act as the general staff of the proletariat and fights to see the democratic revolution uninterruptedly through to the tasks of socialism.

The revolution in South Africa is still at a spontaneous stage, but the funeral demonstrations, swift dealings with collaborators, and unprepared uprisings, which constitute the remarkable elemental power of the movement today, can in the future become a source of weakness. Unless the spontaneous actions which have played the role of awakening the masses are harnessed by the intervention of the leadership of the proletarian vanguard, there is a great danger of exhaustion or the energy of the revolution being dissipated by the diversions of clerical pacifism, black separatism, or workerism.

The brutal repression of the apartheid regime, the cat's cradle of BOSS (now NIS) spies and informers, and the necessity of safeguarding the Party leadership by keeping it abroad has of course kept the SACP retarded. This has meant that despite the mighty sweep of the revolution, the subjective factor lags behind to an extraordinary degree the tasks of the moment. The fact that the SACP has only just recently relaunched its paper is ample proof of this as is the continued influence of Bishop Tutu.

The leadership of the SACP is of course acutely aware of this gap between the objective situation and the level of SACP organisation inside South Africa. It will be

doing its utmost to close it and provide the masses with the strategy and tactics which can see them to victory. But there can be little doubt that time is pressing; the luxury of preparation has run out. Revolutionary situations can prove to be on occasion spread out, even lasting a decade or so, but sooner or later they have to be resolved either positively through revolution or negatively through counterrevolution.

Only the scientific method of Marxism-Leninism can successfully guide communists in South Africa to their destiny and guard the vanguard from slipping into opportunist mistakes. The revolutionary situation therefore magnifies the need for ideological clarity a thousandfold, but this can only be achieved through ideological struggle.

If the SACP does not assert working class political independence and 'seize the time' the revolution will risk going aground on the rocks of treacherous liberalism or losing direction by allowing the blind winds of opportunism to determine its course. On the other hand, the continued forward march of Marxism-Leninism in the SACP will allow the Party to arouse the workers and win them to understand their revolutionary tasks.

It must have the audacity and considered attention to detail to organise and arm the workers in preparation for a general uprising and thus give them the means to split and defeat the forces of the apartheid regime. The SACP must also take the lead in forming administrative bodies suited to the revolutionary situation, such as organs of people's power which can embrace all workers whatever their ethnic group, trade union, age, or sex. These soviet-type organs of struggle are demanded by the whole situation and could be the "embryonic forms" of a future revolutionary government, as comrade Mazala says in the *African Communist* (No.102 third quarter 1985).

The SACP must help the working class go into revolutionary action by overcoming all alien ideological manifestations.

To defeat counterrevolution, to win victory for the revolution the vanguard must as a matter of urgency be equipped with the correct ideas. Lenin did not say that without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement for nothing. The SACP has rightly trained its ideological heavy guns onto the economism of various emerging trade union bureaucrats in the democratic trade unions, the evils of tribalism, not least the sinister Inkatha movement, and the black separatist AZAPO 'socialism now' posturing.

But the ideological battle must be fought in the Party itself. After all, the Bolsheviks triumphed, not despite their ideological battles, most intensely fought in the Party itself, but because of them. The SACP is not and cannot be immune from being influenced by the dominant bourgeois ways of thinking especially if they express themselves in various centrist forms of playing clever.

The SACP faces the most important test in its history and communists throughout the world have the duty to do everything in their power to ensure that it successfully meets the challenge. In this, comrades in the socialist countries, most importantly those in the Soviet Union, have prime responsibility simply because they have the resources of powerful state machines behind them, but all comrades should be offering material aid as well as fraternal advice and criticism.

Under South African conditions it is essential to forge the most powerful fighting alliance between the revolutionary organisations. This carries temptations of tailism, but if the SACP carries along the Leninist road and unites around the Leninist ideas in its programme we are sure South Africa can become a shining light of liberation and socialism to the African continent and beyond.

The South African revolution could prove the key to building socialism in Africa. Its productive might and high level of technique could in the hands of the working class allow truly independent economic development and socialism in Africa would come to be characterised by advancement, efficiency, and wealth, and not the utopian 'socialism' of poverty we have seen in Tanzania nor the diplomatic state capitalist 'socialism' practiced by governments in search of Soviet military and economic aid. Forward to the Socialist Republic of South Africa. Long live the South African Communist Party.

Jack Conrad

Handsworth, Brixton, Tottenham...



RIOTS HAVE again set the major cities alight with the anger of youth, pouring onto the streets to take on the police. For communists, a section of our class declaring 'we've had enough', and physically confronting their oppressors can only be a step forward, a quickening of the tempo of class struggle, and we welcome it.

Black youth in particular has learnt many lessons as the riots progressed. In Tottenham the rioters were better organised and better disciplined than in the previous riots. Knives, machetes, molotovs, and (for the first time) guns were used. The only looting done seems to have been to provide tins etc. to hurl at the police. As one rioter explained, "People looted the supermarkets, but not to take things for themselves. They wanted weapons. They thought they were fighting a war." (Quoted in the *Financial Times*, October 8 1985.)

Arming plod

If the rioters thought they were fighting a war, the police are sure as hell tooling up for one. Metropolitan Police chief Sir Kenneth Newman (the 'Sir' presumably bestowed by Her Majesty for murdering Irish nationalists) has transposed the lessons he learnt in the Six Counties to Britain. With Newman threatening Londoners with plastic bullets, CS gas, and water cannon we are learning more than ever that when Marx said that a nation that oppresses another cannot be free, he was not indulging in a word play. Back in 1981 we warned that unless the working class rallied to defend black youth the methods used against them in the summer riots would be turned onto the working class: a prophecy chillingly fulfilled in the course of the miners 1984-5 Great Strike.

It may be safely said that the respectable social climbers in the black communities were made to shit bricks by the riots. These social workers, councillors and prospective Labour candidates are poison to any fightback amongst black youth. Bernie Grant, the Haringey councillor who was lambasted by the press for saying that the police "got a bloody good hiding", in a meeting after the murders of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett appealed for calm only to be told that it was "too late for words." (*The Guardian* October 8 1985). To court popularity they will, as Bernie Grant has, show their left face. But this face is just a cheap plastic mask, as has been shown. Pressure was put on Grant to retract his ever-so 'militant' statements, which of course he duly

did. Kinnock breathes a sigh of relief. Grant and Co. are utterly loyal to the Labour Party, in Lenin's words a bourgeois party, rejecting the anti-racist fight and conning black youth that the 'next Labour government' will be the answer. The only way to advance our struggle is to break those fighting from the influence of this party of betrayal, including its 'left' representatives.

In the USA in the '60s the ruling class used this respectable strata of blacks to divert the mass of black working class militants and youth. By offering crumbs to the black middle class the US bourgeoisie sought to forge an identification of black interests with the system, thereby buying off a whole section and depriving the movement of potential leaders. The dead hand of Labourism in Britain today holds the same fatal dangers.

Separatism

Fatal also was another facet of the struggle of US blacks in the '60s: black separatism, most notably the Black Panthers. They armed against the racist state, but they *purposely* isolated themselves from the white working class, which consequently immeasurably weakened them. A whole generation of black militants murdered by the police, the FBI, and the National Guard was the bitter fruit of separatism. The massacres of the Black Panthers in the States in the '60s may be repeated in Britain in the '80s unless communists intervene decisively to end isolation of militant black youth.

Party fears

"Ashes cry out for unity" pleaded the headline in the Communist Party EC weekly *Focus* after Handsworth. Okay comrades, but how? Racially integrated militias, councils of action, or what? Well, in the *Focus* of September 19 we read the following call for "a public enquiry ... proper community policing" and even "a proper anti-drugs drive". If we may be allowed to offer some comradely advice to the Party leadership. If they would only come to grips with the real world they might be quite surprised at what they find. Black youth does not want or need a public enquiry, it needs defence. To ask for that defence from the very police force it needs defending against is daft. The police, as servants of a racist state, are by their very nature racist. So we must look to our own strength for security. The call for a "proper anti-drugs drive" by the state can only be described as mistaken. The *only* purpose of the "anti-drugs drive" has been to

persecute black people in their homes and on the streets. If you need any further proof of this look to the death of Cynthia Jarrett during a search of her home.

On the afternoon before the the Broadwater Farm riot, police in riot gear were already moving into the area. The provocation did not end after the riot. Police broke into and wrecked the community grocers run by one of the men arrested for the killing of the cop in the rioting. Then they started on the Community Association. Neither of these had been touched by rioters. People are now moving off the estate not because of the riots but to escape massive police harassment. The filth now make house calls by kicking in doors, searching houses with no warrant and arresting whole families. With this sort of intimidation before and after the riots, especially after, it is no wonder that many middle-aged people on the estate give their full support to the rioters. What they are now experiencing is an attempt by the police to criminalise the entire black community on the estate. Readers from Northern Ireland may find the above description has an unpleasant ring of familiarity. The need for defence does not end after the riot.

What lessons, then, do the Euros draw from these riots? Comrade Dave Cook in the October 3 *Focus* reveals all: "...Brixton this weekend is an indictment of successive governments' failure to treat blacks seriously." With the introduction of plastic bullets and CS gas the Tories can at least be said to be taking black people 'seriously'. Happy now, Dave?

Left washed up

What is the rest of the left saying and doing? The Labourite left, Trotskyite and otherwise, is still cowering under the tables after the Labour Party conference, and there we shall leave them. But what of the left 'parties', I hear you cry.

The Socialist Workers Party has been truly embarrassing in its response to the uprisings. Indeed, I blush for them as I write. While correctly refusing to condemn the riots, finding a more concrete position in the pages of *Socialist Worker* was no easy matter. Except once. *Socialist Worker* on October 5 (after Brixton) whines "the social policy recommendations of Scarman have been completely ignored". Well, either the SWP would rather the peace of British streets not be broken, or they have discovered that Lord Scarman is a closet revolutionary socialist. You decide which.

On to those made of stronger stuff; enter the RCP. Its paper, *ins* of September 13 informs us: "White workers must ensure that the black youth of Handsworth do not face the full power of the British state alone." Yes, fine; but how? The only answer that these congenial sectarians can give is 'join the RCP/Workers Against Racism' (an RCP front). I do not want to knock the RCP for trying to build its organisation, but really it is going the wrong way about it, and certainly the wrong way to go about defending black communities. WAR is just a RCP front organisation used solely for the purpose of recruitment. Because of its cynical, sectarian nature it has no relationship with the people it claims to defend. The RCP is conspicuous in its absence from anti-racist campaigns not its own. Despite being held responsible for the Brixton riots of 1981 and 1985 by the media, as a consequence of its own narrow, egocentric outlook the RCP and WAR half the time do not know what the hell is going on under their noses. Like Sir Gawain they are pure, noble, and untouched, by nasty dirty reality. Short of sending its leader, Frank Richards, on a quest for the Holy Grail it is also useless. The RCP raises no concrete demands by which it draws workers into action. As one recent *ins* article put it, "Labour or the RCP". And that according to Frank, is that.

What we need

Having raised the question of concrete demands, *The Leninist* does not shirk from raising our own. While we agree with many others that we need defence we look to the actual situation confronting us rather than some artificially created front organisation (a la ELWAR).

Throughout the uprisings black youth has been learning the need to organise. We have seen a splendid example of this with the Newham 7. The danger of separatism has already been pointed out. Revolutionaries need to intervene to overcome this and to unite black and white workers in the defence of their communities. Embryonic fighting squads spring up wherever our class confronts the state on a violent basis. Black youth is no exception. It must be our perspective to win black youth into multiracial Workers' Defence Corps. This will not happen by itself. We have to fight for these ideas and the leadership of these movements whenever the need arises, and that is now in such communities as Handsworth, Brixton, and Tottenham.

Alan Merrick

& and...

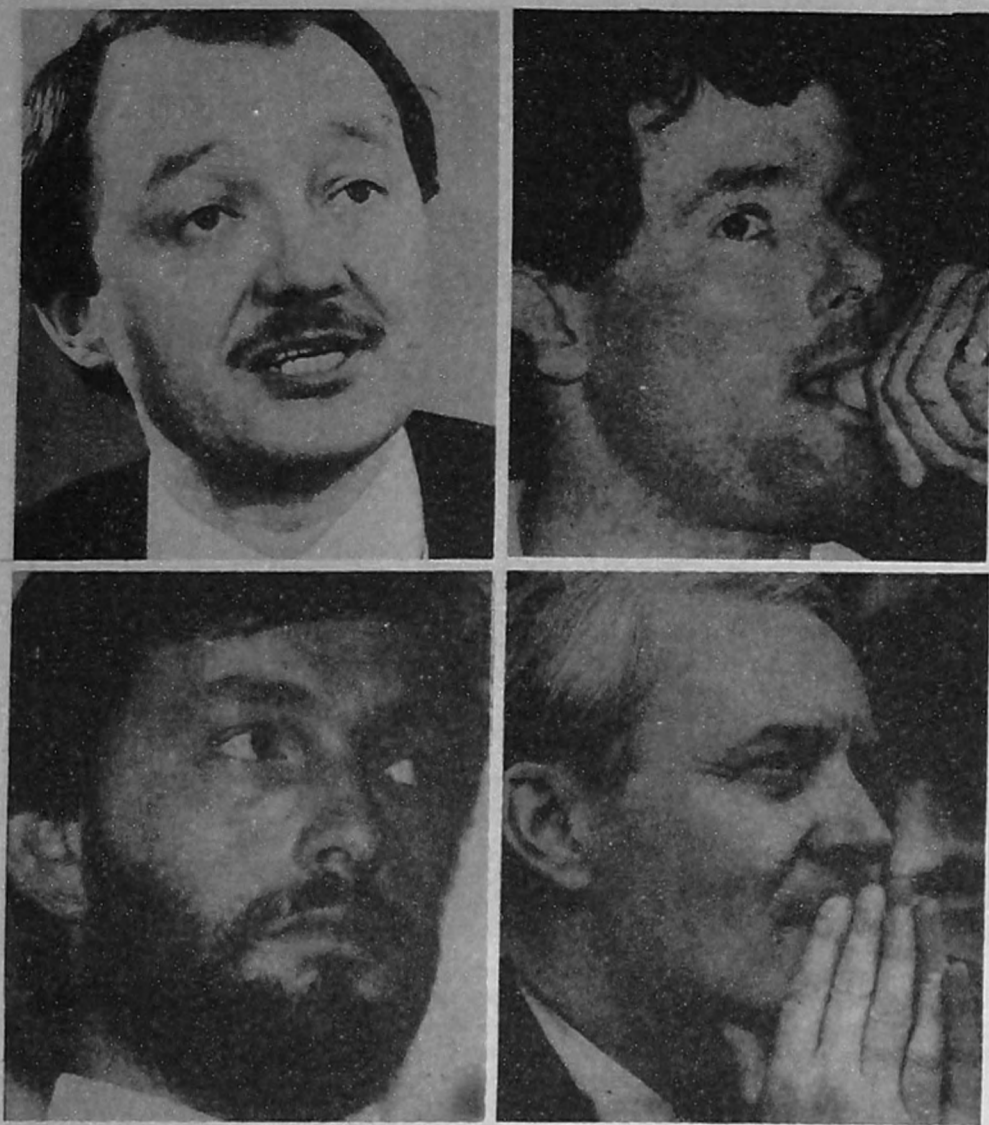
Ken Gill was the honoured guest at the Works Management dinner in Birmingham last month. As well as handing out awards he made a speech attacking the government and calling for more attention to be paid to the nation's manufacturing base. The *Financial Times* reported that the audience, "used to a confrontational attitude from union speakers", was vastly encouraged by Gill's speech; many of them said later that "they wished more union leaders would speak up as he had done."

October's edition of *Straight Left* contains a truly boring article by comrade Beatrix Campbell on what she calls "a remarkable heterogeneous gathering of feminists" from the North-West of England. Yawn. The fact that *Straight Left* carries such a dull article by Marxism Today's doyen feminist says everything about their unprincipled, eclectic, and dull approach to politics. But what of comrade Campbell? Does her article mark a political shift, an attempt to marry stodgy middle class feminism with stodgy Straight Leftist centrism, or an individualistic "I'll do what I want" two fingers up defiance of the Party Executive Committee's ban on members writing in publications such as *Straight Left* and *The Leninist*? We wonder what the odds are on The EC disciplining comrade Campbell; one thing's dead certain though. *The Leninist* will not be seeking the dubious respectability offered by comrade Campbell's reactionary writings.

Talking of October's *Straight Left* it's interesting to note that it carries an unreserved apology to Martin Walker after having branded him and NOMPAS as "thieves and splitters" and implying that he was involved in deceit and downright dishonesty in his work supporting jailed miners. *Straight Left* now admits that these allegations were "totally false". But hang on a moment: *Straight Left* also implied that the National Rank and File Miners' Movement was involved in deceit and downright dishonesty. Does the fact that *Straight Left* has not issued an apology to the NREMM mean that the accusations levelled against them still stand? *Straight Left* must be made to admit it lied about the NREMM as well as Martin Walker and NOMPAS.

Remember the hullabaloo that the *Morning Star* made about its intention of "printing its way out of crisis"; remember the rejoicing when the £1.5 million's worth of *Urbanite Mark II* was finally installed; remember when *Morning Star* readers were promised a revamped, new look, tabloid paper by the end of 1984? Yes? Then, you too, might be asking why it has taken a year for the Management Committee to announce the beginning of commercial printing, what interest has been paid on the new press, and what are the problems that make it impossible for the tabloid to be launched immediately? Surely the editor owes an explanation to all those readers who so generously donated their savings to the shares drive.

Kinnock Toad



A GREAT deal of nonsense has been written about the Labour Party conference, not least by the left. To be able to analyse the conference and its aftermath it is necessary to set it in the context of the other three party conferences and Britain's crisis in general.

The Tory conference was as usual a show for the TV cameras. Democracy is an unknown word at these grand puppet shows where hand-picked speaker after hand-picked speaker gets up to do their turn, including, for good measure, a token black to froth against the recent riots. Luckily for the media the unhappy Ms Keays stepped in once more to add a good human interest angle — 'Top Tory's little bastard tells all about Belgrano' (well, something like that).

The SDP and Liberal conferences were very similar to that of the Tories. The usual silly debates were pushed aside as the alliance partners determined that strong leadership performances were what went down best with the media. The two Davids, the prize mannequins of the respective shows, did their best to give the impression that they had together grown up into a serious 'party' of government; the hush puppies image was definitely out.

Kinnock's glory

'Neil Slays Em', 'The Courage of Kinnock', 'Lashing for Loony Left', 'Kinnock: It's War' — such was the way the bosses' media let Kinnock know he was on the right track when he cleaned the floor with the left of the Labour Party.

The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, former darling of the left, wiped their noses in it. "Principle without power is idle sterility" Kinnock declared and of course this is the key which he hopes can open the door to election victory. He realises, like every Labour leader before him, that he must convince the bosses that he can form, or be part of, a responsible government designed to dupe the working class into thinking they have scored a victory when in reality they have scored yet another own goal.

Inherently opportunist the Labour Party has always presented a more left face in opposition. Given Kinnock's unambiguous attacks on

both the Liverpool working class and the miners with two years still to go before the next election just imagine what will happen if the Labour Party gains the responsibility of office. The Wilson/Callaghan governments' sustained attack on working class living standards which led to the winter of discontent will look like a teddy bears' picnic by comparison.

This all seems rather different from the mood of last year's Labour Party conference, a point that Norman Tebbit, speaking at his party conference, chose to throw in Kinnock's face:

"I do have to say to Mr Kinnock — we warned you when the reds were climbing in through your window, we warned you when they were under your bed, we warned you not to invite them into bed.

"But all through the miners' strike you didn't just share the bed — you let them keep the pillow over your mouth. That was the time for brave words, so why did we hear nothing from you then, Mr Kinnock?"

Why indeed? So why are the left still allowed to operate in the Labour Party and why do they continue to do so?

The Labour Left

Kinnock's message cannot be termed ambiguous, yet at Bournemouth and after there was a deafening sound of the Labour left trying to convince themselves that victory was theirs.

Peter Hain of the Labour Coordinating Committee, and at one time close to Kinnock, was the worst to suffer such *folie de grandeur*.

After Kinnock's speech: "The left is now dominant in the party in a way that we have never seen before".

On Kinnock's speech: "the most radical, left wing speech made by any Labour leader for at least 50 years".

The final compromise: "those who decide to fight Kinnock are saying they don't care about winning the next election".

Kinnock's speech did not worry Hain and his ilk per se but his style, his obviousness, caused them some concern. It made their job of being a clean glove to a dirty hand so much more difficult. Ken Livingstone, another former darling of the left now known as Lord Red Ken, made

this perfectly clear at the *Tribune* rally:

"For those of us who have taken a lot of flack for supporting Neil Kinnock, it is unacceptable to make that sort of major statement without any consultation."

But of course this school still lines up with Kinnock to condemn the left for provoking the Prime Minister in waiting:

"The left cannot win by schoolboy Stalinist methods" (LCC conference bulletin)

"There has been a scale of poison on the left that could keep us in impotence for years." (Livingstone, *Tribune* rally)

The pièce de résistance of this 'cuddly left' troupe was of course pulled off by Blunkett. Before his little coup he had, in true Labourite style, issued a warning to those at the *Labour Herald* rally:

"Only by persuading people and drawing them back into the fold will we stand a chance of winning the next election."

His speech was in fact peppered with phrases that should be a warning sign to any self respecting militant, terms such as "common sense" and "the maturity of our commitment to socialism" — rotten in other words.

But of course he pulled it off in the name of this illusive 'unity' which keeps the Labour Party together. And Hatton, like the dog loyal to his master no matter how many times he is beaten, jumped through the hoops.

If was not, however, only the Militant outcasts that suffered at the hands of the conference; yesterday's heroes were stabbed in the back. In contrast to last year when Scargill was welcomed as a hero, this year he had the microphone switched off on him. For a year the Labour movement failed the miners, it failed them in meaningful solidarity action and left them to the Tory wolves. Scargill however went cap in hand to the Labour Party leaders, watering down his demands for total amnesty for sacked and jailed men to a 'review' for the cases and 'reimbursement' for the union. Indeed he even stressed the modesty of the demands claiming he didn't want to fight Kinnock.

The vote was won in favour of Scargill but it was a shallow victory. The Labour leader had already declared his intention to ignore it

and the jailed miners can rot if Kinnock has his way. The perspective of fighting for workers to take strike action in favour of the jailed miners seems something Scargill cannot lead, because he is still tied to the Labour Party — he too is cowed and demoralised by it. Cold comfort for those who sacrificed their jobs and their lives for the cause.

As for Benn, he cut a rather pathetic figure this year; tired or just confused, the old tricks and phrases of a clever politician cut no mustard.

The contradictions

Why is there this eternal division of left and right in the Labour Party? The answer is that they need each other, they play complementary roles. The right must present to the bosses the respectable face of alternative government, while the left allies support of militant workers for the party which they claim is 'theirs' — warts and all. However, these roles are aggravated in a period of crisis.

A crisis of capitalism demands an increase in the rate of exploitation of the working class; it produces mass unemployment and cuts in the incomes of the working class as a whole. The right must present policies in line with the interests of capitalism — they have no choice if they are to be an acceptable party of government. But these policies are ever more difficult to reconcile with the needs of the working class for jobs and for maintaining living standards. The right find themselves completely at odds with the demands of the workers.

In June 1983 Labour's vote slumped to only 28.3% (compared to the SDP/Liberal Alliance vote of 26.1%). For the first time in decades Labour failed to capture a majority of trade unionists' votes. It was a frightened party which subsequently elected the youthful Neil Kinnock as party leader.

Since then the left and right have been playing their respective roles to a tee. The left of the party has sought to recapture the lost voters by basing their appeal on the militant working class and in this they had some success especially during the miners' strike. The leadership on the other had sought to adapt the party's programme to the 'nation' rather than to the 'class'. There has been an

adaptation to the political values of non-socialist, non-Labour sections of the population. This strategy has, unfortunately, been advocated by CPer Eric Hobsbawm to whom Kinnock claims he owes a lot. According to Hobsbawm:

"... the future of Labour and the advance to socialism depends on mobilising people who remember the date of the Beatles' break up and not the date of the Saltley pickets ..." (*The Forward March of Labour Halted?*, Verso 1981, p181).

However, although the right may do its best to woo the middle ground and convince the bosses it can be trusted they realise that the Labour Party also needs the support of the working class to win the next election. This is why, especially in times of crisis, the right needs its left wing. In times of relative prosperity when workers can be bought off the left is far less secure, for example in the 50s Gaitskell expelled the likes of Michael Foot. At Bournemouth this year Militant may have been used as a whipping boy, but notice they are still in the party. In 1979 after the election debacle the left even won concessions because it was feared that they had become too disillusioned. These concessions have been hailed as great victories by the left which is what the right wanted, but what *in reality* changed?

For the left in the Labour Party life has all the qualities of *coitus interruptus*. Nothing, however passionately desired, has ever been pushed to its full conclusion. The rules of this game are designed to limit their capacity. They are required to behave 'loyally' and to accept compromise in order to help maintain the 'unity' of the party.

So how likely is victory in the next election for Labour? The last two elections have severely damaged Labour's claim to be the alternative party of government, but its pretensions to be the *natural* party of government have now become ludicrous. So what role can the Labour Party play? Increasingly it shows every sign of reverting to the role it played in the 20s and 30s when it was a party of crisis.

The natural party of government is the Conservatives, this is what the bourgeoisie would prefer if it can win the electorate to support them. The Labour Party has never been the natural party of government but unquestionably during the Wilson

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years it was the alternative party of government. Its success during this period, as a party of government at any rate, was based on the relative prosperity of the nation in the post boom years. In this period it had something to offer the electorate in terms of public spending and progress; Wilson could offer the nation 'the white heat of the technological revolution'.

What can the Labour Party offer the electorate now? Even its left wing warns us not to expect too much. Because of capitalism's crisis and because the Labour Party seeks to govern within the rules of capitalism it would only be able to attack the working class — a job the Tories are doing with great success. However if the Tories could not continue to govern in this way without significant and dangerous moves by the working class to fight back then the bourgeoisie would probably try to put the Labour Party into office. Far from this being a defeat for the bosses it is their trump card. Because most of the militant working class still has illusions about the Labour Party being a party for the working class, discontent is likely to be kept within safe bounds. This is what is meant by the Labour Party as a party of crisis.

The Labour Party is a party for the bourgeoisie, not for workers, despite the fact that it is mainly comprised of workers:

"Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are workingmen. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie which exists to systematically dupe the workers ..." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol 31, pp257-8)

The Communist Party

Unfortunately for many years now the CP leadership has failed to offer any real alternative to Labour. This

is a far cry from the proud traditions of fighting Labourism upon which our Party was founded.

The Eurocommunists, the dominant trend in the Party, stand by Hobsbawm's view of Labour's best way forward; Comrade Bea Campbell nails their flag to the mast: "What has emerged in 1985 is a sectarian alliance between Trotskyists, Bennites, fundamentalists within the trade union movement epitomised by Arthur Scargill and Ken Gill, and a sectarian minority in the Communist Party." (*Marxism Today*, October 1985)

With a few gripes the Euros align themselves with the 'cuddly left', the 'realists'. The logic following this Campbell Euro realism is of course retreat:

"A socialist agenda is almost inconceivable in the political conditions of the 80s, but a strong and sensitive intervention of the Left is imperative if Labour is to succeed where it failed in the 70s."

Given this perspective they regard it as necessary to contain industrial struggle to create the 'broad democratic alliance' which will undertake this "sensitive intervention". Comrade Pete Carter, Party industrial organiser, created furore among the left in September when he stated:

"There is too much readiness to condemn the AUEW and not sufficient thought about alternatives.

"Ballots are here to stay and because balloting incurs heavy cost for trade unions, alternatives for offsetting this cost should be found."

Such positions fly in the face of the role of the Party in the past and are unfortunate not least because they are regarded as 'easy meat' for the anti-Party Campaign Group set up by the *Morning Star*. In a half page article in the *Morning Star* Mick Costello attacked the party leadership for their industrial strategy. Ironically but not surprisingly Costello uses the Euros'

rightism as justification for the *Morning Star's* own support for the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats:

"The Party's industrial organiser clearly backs the right wing [of the Labour Party — *GD*] at a time when it was striving, unsuccessfully, to reverse Labour Party conference policy, which is in favour of the next Labour government reversing the effects of the Tory anti-union laws, by refunding unions which have been hit under that legislation."

So here we have it, this is the *Morning Star's* alternative, a 'left' Labour government which, despite any amount of declarations from Kinnock to the contrary, would refund unions hit by Tory anti-union legislation. What sort of ambition is this for communists? Moreover, this tendency has got its own soft spot for the 'realists' declaring Blunkett's peace move as a set back for the left: "It is strange logic" David Whitfield muses "which can operate only on Fleet Street, to present this as a Kinnock victory."

This trend is so tied to the Labour Party that they even suffer the same delusions as the Labour left. This is why the *Morning Star* was able to run the cretinous headline "Will Labour stand by its class?" It will of course but the problem is we doubt whether it is the same class the *Star* had in mind. Deputy *Star* editor Whitfield does his best to foster the illusion that the Labour Party is a party of the working class:

"The fundamental question under discussion will be whether the next Labour government will be a government of class collaboration, seeking to be a revamped version of Labour governments past with a leadership trying vainly to be better at making capitalism work than the Tories.

"Or, whether a future Labour government will try to break new ground, challenging the wealth and

power of big business and starting to implement policies which could bring about far reaching social changes — in effect, changes moving Britain along the road to Socialism."

It is an illusion opportunists cling to like death but the Labour Party has in reality been giving them the answer loud and clear for the last seventy odd years. The truth is that the *Morning Star* is itself so besotted with Labourism that it cannot conceive of any other method to achieve socialism. Their bluster about the Bolsheviks, Lenin, *Iskra* is just that — bluster. They are wedded to the labour bureaucracy, hence comrade Costello is bitten to the quick by comrade Pete Carter's claim that the leaders of the unions are out of touch with the membership; such views, he retorts "should be rejected as at best simplistic". Comrade Carter may well have been levelling his attack from the right but that is no excuse for rejecting what in most cases is so obviously true. But then the *Morning Star* and their pin up Ken Gill have their interests to protect.

For communists it is not a question of defending the 'hard left' trade union leaders in the Labour Party against the 'realism' of the 'soft left' in the Labour Party. The Labour Party in its essence is a bourgeois party; it is our job as a CP to win workers from having illusions in it as a workers' party, not to reinforce those illusions. Labour in office has proved itself enough times; it is the Labourite left, including some in the CP, that has kept its working class support.

What we need

The fact is that the decline of the CP is the reason why many militant workers have fallen prey to the Labour abyss. Workers looking for socialism see the Party nowadays as little different from the Labour Party, so why join the CP?

Those in our Party who continue along this path are in danger of sharing Labour's fate. Our Party's task, our communist duty, is to present a militant alternative to capitalism which will take the fight to the Tories with grit and determination. This alternative by necessity has to have an unbreakable commitment to shattering the bourgeois state and this means breaking through the constraints of Labourism.

Unless the Party follows this course the working class will continue to fight like an army with no generals. The miners' strike was an example of this *par excellence*. Resistance was heroic, but in the end it was a heroic failure.

The objective conditions cry out for a Communist Party that can equip the class for coming struggles, and build rank and file opposition to capitalism. The ideology dominant in our Party is not only falling way behind the working class needs but is a block to the class struggle. It is up to us to reforge the Party, we must win advanced workers to fight with us. We must reassert the vanguard role of the Party if we are to carry out our duty to the working class, to fulfil our tasks as communists.

The miners' strike gave us a taste of things to come. The period ahead promises fiercer battles.

Comrades, now is not the time to join the Labour Party or drop out of politics because of the state of our Party. On the contrary now is the time to restore our Party to its former glory and more. Our weakness in the Party is no excuse to seek comfort in illusions that the Labour Party can bring socialism — a claim which has no basis in reality. The fight for socialism, for revolution, has no easy answer, it is always a hard struggle. Genuine communists should join us in the Party, should join the struggle for the future of the working class.

Geraldine Duffy

Nation and class

John Gray *City in revolt: James Larkin and the Belfast strike of 1907* Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1985. pp.225 £6.95.

Peter Beresford Ellis *A history of the Irish working class* Pluto, London 1985. pp.372 £5.50.

THE LATEST addition to writings on the rich history of the Irish working class by John Gray and the reprint of Beresford Ellis's work provide an insight to the role the Irish proletariat has played. Although often having the appearance of being a sleeping giant, in the past it has been positively revolutionary.

At the beginning of the century the small socialist movement led by Connolly made definite steps towards intervening in the national struggle. Tentative links already existed but it was Connolly who foresaw the need for labour to play a central role in the national struggle. Connolly's work in such bodies as the Committee to Commemorate the 1798 Rising influenced many of the younger, more radical nationalists. This cooperation between militant workers and radical republicans became an increasing feature of Ireland before the Dublin 1916 Rising. In this way the small Irish Socialist Republican Party led by Connolly became a recognised champion of Irish freedom.

By the turn of the century Ireland had rudimentary union organisation centred predominantly on skilled workers, mainly in the north, and mainly Protestant. Larkin attempted to organise the unskilled. In the process he posed a direct challenge and threat to those trade union leaders who desired social peace. His first major test came in Belfast in 1907, which is covered in the John Gray book. So widespread did the dispute become that even the police became infected by the strike disease. The English dockers' leader James Sexton arrived terrified of the revolutionary force that Larkin had unleashed. He worked to settle the dispute in favour of the employers. A recurring feature from then on was to be British trade union leaders siding with their British bourgeoisie rather than supporting Irish workers. Defeat did not bring demoralisation. Union membership continued to grow and Larkin broke with the British unions to set up a revolutionary union, the Irish Transport and General Worker's Union.

Such was the success of the Irish TGWU that it united Catholic and Protestant workers. This was possible because it united them in a revolutionary and not a reformist way.

The peak of the Irish workers' industrial struggles came with the Dublin lockout of 1913. The strike gripped the attention of all class conscious workers throughout Europe and America, with Lenin himself hotly following events. With little preparation and without support from British unions, facing superior forces, the employers won, but only by using police terror. Beresford Ellis writes of the period that "In 1913 there were two paths confronting the workers of the United Kingdom — Reform or Revolution. The Irish chose revolution — the English, Scots, and Welsh chose reform." (p.202) As the Dublin working class returned to work defeated, the best militants were destined to resurface in a few years' time at street barricades to challenge imperialism in another more direct way.

The murder of Connolly following the 1916 Rising and the departure of Larkin for the USA deprived the Irish proletariat of its ablest revolutionaries at a time when it was to need them most. Without them the labour movement fell under the sway of centrist opportunists who worked quickly to uproot the militant class tradition of Connolly and Larkin.

During the national liberation war against British imperialism union membership continued to grow. Workers took strike action, carried out occupations, and even set up a soviet. Yet such actions were not the expression of the class acting independently but of tailing the national bourgeoisie. When in 1920 a general election was called the Labour Party stood back to

give Sinn Fein a clear run, arguing that "labour must wait." The Irish working class without Connolly and Larkin had become a bystander in the national struggle to be wheeled on and off stage whenever the Irish bourgeoisie felt the need. What was left of the Citizens' Army fought on the Republican side during the civil war, but without a mass communist party the fate of the working class was sealed for many decades.

With the working class dragged by its leaders behind the bourgeoisie and partition it was inevitably to divide along religious lines. Both Orange and Green governments in the island were hostile to organised labour. This provided the leadership of the labour movement with the excuse to become even more anti-Catholic in the north and even more docile in the south.

Beresford Ellis's work provides useful material to contrast the position of Marx and Engels and the *Morning Star* on Irish matters. Marx saw the interconnection of the struggle of the Fenians with that of the British proletariat. Both Marx and Engels participated in and worked their guts out to build mass demonstrations in support of Irish freedom. They took the battle for Irish freedom to the First International and inside the International they tenaciously fought opposition to Irish self-determination from the British labour aristocracy. The very people the *Morning Star* is so fond of today.



Marx and Engels exemplified real anti-imperialism. When the Fenians attempted a rescue of Irish prisoners in Manchester, in which a police officer was killed, unlike the hacks of the *Morning Star* Marx and Engels did not rush to print in order to condemn them. Even when later the Fenians attempted to free their comrades from Clerkenwell Prison and a number of people were killed, even with chauvinism running high Marx continued with a public lecture in support of Irish freedom and the Fenian cause.

The Irish Amnesty Movement had Marx at its head; he fought tirelessly to expose the plight of Irish prisoners, of whom twenty had died or been driven insane. Though the labour aristocracy in Britain was against the Fenians, Marx and Engels worked for their cause and managed to initiate mass demonstrations of up to 100,000 in their support. Flicking through the pages of the *Morning Star* one does not find a word on the treatment of Irish POWs in Parkhurst or Albany.

The circulation and content of Connolly's *Irish Worker* ought to be noted by those working to reverse the flagging fortunes of the *Morning Star*, and now even talking of building their own party. In June 1911 the circulation of the *Irish Worker* stood at 26,000, increasing to 64,000 in July, 74,000 in August, and reaching 94,994 in September. (Sinn Fein's paper at the time only had a circulation of 2,000.) Connolly's publication was of course a revolutionary newspaper which stood for class militancy; the *Morning Star* sides with reformism and class harmony.

Larkin and Connolly were outstanding revolutionary leaders. The *Morning Star*'s union pin-up, chairman of the TUC and "left socialist" Ken Gill, is a non-runner by

comparison.

In the sixty-four years since partition little of essence has changed in the relationship between Britain and Ireland. But today with the emergence of a mass Irish working class in the south combined with a revolutionary situation in the Six Counties the chances of full Irish national liberation have never been better. Connolly and Larkin linked the anti-capitalist and the anti-imperialist struggles. In the 70s and 80s, lacking revolutionary leadership the Irish working class was unable to bring the two strands of the Irish revolution together. Only revolution led by the working class will bring about the completion of the democratic revolution. This task requires not only a mass communist party but a programme which equips the proletariat to win hegemony over democratic revolution and split Protestant workers from loyalism. Beresford Ellis and Gray have pointed to important lessons from the history of the Irish working class. What the future holds rests with its ability to produce leaders willing to pick up the splendid tradition of Connolly and Larkin revealed in these books.

Kevin Sheahan

Hall on Reagan

Gus Hall *Fightback II: Political independence key to advances in '85-'86* CPUSA, New York 1985. pp.21.

REELING from the shock of Reagan's reelection last year, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USA had to try to reassure its members and supporters. They had been prepared by much pre-election CPUSA propaganda for an immediate lurch towards fascism and even nuclear war by Reagan and his administration. Far from dispensing with the former policy of hoping to destroy Reaganism by an "all people's front" this pamphlet unfortunately seeks to bolster this untenable idea.

Just as it may surprise some in this country so those in the USA who pick up this publication may wonder at some of its assessments. Apparently, "... most who voted for Reagan did so based on his peace rhetoric and campaign promise to negotiate with the Soviet Union. This reflects the peace majority who have demonstrated their support for such a policy." (p.16) Talk about official optimism! The same statement also defines the size of this peaceful bunch of citizenry as "the 89 percent US peace majority" (p.12).

Of course, the CPUSA's preferred candidate for the Democratic Party nomination, Jesse Jackson, and his associated Rainbow Coalition failed to achieve their initial object. However, they nonetheless "continued to raise the demands, the issues and problems faced by the people." (p.7) Not exactly a declaration that the Jackson candidacy was for a thoroughly bourgeois party, without any pretence of being even a bourgeois workers' party like the British Labour Party.

An "independent" structure came about through the trade unions, the "political action committees (PACs)" (p.7), but this did not link with the other "independence" movement, the Rainbow Coalition. That is what concerns comrade Hall. He even goes so far as to say that "the only 'law' the labour PACs broke was the law of class collaboration." (p.7). Labour's independence is not a matter of degree; it is a matter of separation from bourgeois parties and of organising as a communist party. That is real working class independence.

Both the CPUSA and the YCL organised around the CP's own candidates in the elections. This involved speaking to about 10 million people during petition campaigns to get the candidates onto different state's ballots. Comrades were involved in distributing over five million pieces of propaganda, as well as appearing on radio and television. So effective were these different strands that the CPUSA estimates that it reached the majority of voters. Quite an achievement for such a small party.

Self criticism should always be applied,

and this is something that comrade Hall does. In assessments of the election from Party members he points out that subjective reactions may be at work. But indeed "there are some who are influenced by ruling class interpretations in the mass media, polls, articles, and statistics." (p.2) And comrade Hall makes it clear he is talking about "leaders and members" (p.1) For the future, too, he has this to say: "We have to immerse ourselves in class struggles and industrial concentration in order to correct the anti-working class, anti-trade union weaknesses that came out in our electoral work. Whenever we permit ourselves to be isolated from the working class and every day class struggle, these weaknesses will resurface." (pp.19-20)

One thing that is quite clear is that the CPUSA was concerned in this election campaign with electioneering. It did not primarily seek to use the bourgeois elections as a platform and an opportunity to speak to a more receptive working class. To continually yearn for a 'better' result is understandable but there are opportunist risks. Thus, comrade Hall presents such gems as: "There was no swing to the right in mass thought patterns." (p.2), whatever they might be. Special pleading that Reagan's reelection "was a fluke of history" (p.2) explains nothing. To declare that "millions ... voted for Reagan but not for Reaganism, ... millions voted correctly on issues but still voted for Reagan" (p.3) helps no workers' understanding. Were it possible to accept that a slight shift away from Reaganism occurred in the elections to the Senate, there is still the illusion in the bourgeois Democrats. Illustrating this are such complaints as: "Mondale and Ferraro did not offer a clear alternative to Reaganism or Reaganomics." (p.4) Nor by all accounts did the CPUSA, if it simply contented itself with tailing the Democrats.

As for the struggles of blacks in the USA, the CPUSA positively welcomes the election of black bourgeois members of State Senates and members of the US Congress. Oppression suffered by US blacks will not be ameliorated simply by the election of black representatives of the bourgeoisie.

Exploitation and racism in the imperialist USA will not change because of that. Such blacks are equally wedded to the capitalist system as Reagan or George Wallace.

Criticism from "left trade unionists" about the role of trade unions in the election campaign is treated peremptorily. Comrade Hall suggests that because such doubters of the efficacy of electing bourgeois Democrats of whatever persuasion did not take part in the Democrat election bandwagon they are guilty of spouting valueless "rhetoric". "Their criticism comes from the left, but their actions come from right opportunism." (p.20); this is not treating the reader with respect. If comrade Hall wanted to make such an important attack (and it is important if it addresses criticism purportedly from the left) surely three sentences can hardly be considered an argument.

The greatest strength of the CPUSA, however, is its willingness to criticise at least some of its mistakes. In quoting approvingly from a 1971 CPUSA document, comrade Hall restates: "We must truthfully say what our weaknesses are without covering up" (p.20). It is a lesson that all too few in the communist movement are prepared to follow.

Peter Butler

Charity do-gooders

Alan Booth *Life on the margins: The politics of mass poverty* CPGB, London 1985. pp.33 £0.85

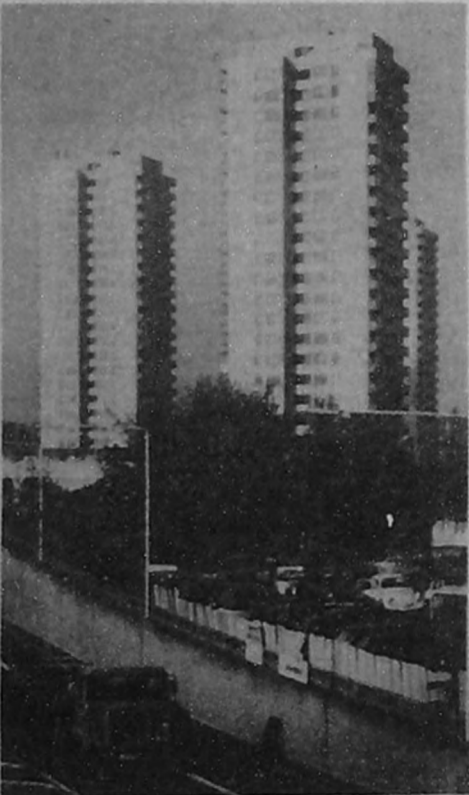
WANT TO GET away from all those charity do-gooders? Do you abhor the improving attempts of such groups as Child Poverty Action? Then you could do a lot better than pick up this pamphlet.

Imbue yourself with righteous indignation at the plight of the poor in Britain. Castigate the uncaring powers that be.

Demand that the position must change. But leave it there; do not suggest capitalism is to blame, or that it should be done away with. And most of all, hope to change the hearts and minds of the caring professionals, the well-paid bastions of the bourgeois state entrenched in middle class jobs: the administrators of the welfare system. There you have the approach of comrade Alan Booth.

Comrade Booth wants to persuade the well-heeled arse-lickers of the imperialist beast of the errors of their ways. This pamphlet is not really intended for the mass of the working class, far less the most oppressed sections of it such as blacks, women, and the unemployed. Far from it. Such as these are merely the recipients of largesse (conceal this view assiduously as the author may). If only those staffing the upper echelons of the DHSS, local authority housing departments, and the Department of Employment would buy this and inwardly digest, why then they would be convinced, wouldn't they? And who, once convinced, could do other than their liberal conscience must dictate and start to change the rules of (bourgeois) society?

Cloud-cuckoo land it may be, but comrade Booth is presently traversing the country expanding on this garbage. So what if there are 4 million unemployed and millions of others similarly disadvantaged because of ill-health (their own or a relative's) and poverty wages. As far as comrade Booth is concerned they are too crushed to fight. "Taking collective action or even joining an established organisation requires the sort of resources that the poor have least of." (p.20) And later he says that "Organisation takes time, money, and energy. The poor have least of all three. Most of their time and energy goes in managing their poverty. Little is left over for such high-risk activities as politics or campaigning." (p.30 — our emphasis) Presumably comrade Booth is trying to say that the poorest will want to hold on to the little they have so strongly that the risks of political activity are seen by them as likely to jeopardise it. Events in Handsworth, Brixton, and Tottenham in recent weeks may give him pause to think again. Youth is very ready to give as good as it gets.



Workers live in tower blocks but Booth lives in an Ivory tower.

The problem *Life on the Margins* really illumines is that of someone looking in on working class poverty. The poor are now deserving of a different kind of philanthropy than the Victorian days. Today, comrade Booth wants to offer the good offices of a Euro-dominated Communist Party so the modern middle class philanthrope can expend her or his energy on persuading capitalism's lackeys to ameliorate the nastiness of their system.

More money is needed by the poor, so a little juggling around with a billion here or there. Transfer (by means of a compliant bourgeois state) a few of these billions and the ideal, equitable system (under capitalism) is reached.

Pauperisation of sections of our working class will proceed. While those in work can see some slight increase in their living standards, the mountain of unemployed bursts through 4 million. Women in part-time work disguise further the extent of under-employment (and of women's role as the reserve army of capitalist production).

Description of symptoms and the suggested treatment of those symptoms is no diagnosis of the disease. Workers at the sharp end of the capitalist system have not given up as comrade Booth implies.

Palliatives such as "a national minimum wage" (p.29), "New and effective forms of wealth tax" (p.29), and a social security administration "decentralised and linked with the appropriate departments of local councils" (p.30) do not approach the central question of the need for revolution to destroy the capitalist state. Even assuming a (presumably Labour) government could be forced to carry out such reforms, there is nothing to stop a subsequent (probably Tory) government from reversing them.

To remove poverty and want we have to smash Britain's capitalist system, the foundation of our present society. When we achieve that we will be building towards a communist future in which caring about others will be the cornerstone. There are no shortcuts nor any means to lessen the burdens of capitalism while it exists other than the class struggle.

Peter Butler

Bleak warning

Katherine Burdekin *Swastika Night* Lawrence and Wishart, London 1985. pp.196 £3.95.

IT IS THE twenty-sixth century. Socialism has disappeared, on land and in virtually everyone's minds. Society is organised on the basis of capitalist, racist, and misogynist oppression under two global empires. Knowledge, even within the leadership of these empires, is limited to a bowdlerised *Mein Kampf* and technical matters; all books concerned with other things were destroyed centuries before.

Some comrades may have read this book when it first came out (1937) or was reissued (1940) by the Left Book Club, in both cases under the author's pseudonym of 'Murray Constantine'. This novel grasps the feelings of dread in that time before Nazi Germany had been defeated, when it was indeed the most rabidly counterrevolutionary state on earth.

Here is a theme that has been taken up elsewhere (for example, more idealistically if not optimistically in the film *Fahrenheit 451*). It is a time when authority's control is based on the absolute destruction of all foregoing human knowledge. In *Swastika Night* the Nazis of 1937 are lost in the mist of time and bathed in a 'Blood' myth that carries Nazism's foul ideas on race and women. Indeed, women are seen literally as soulless animals, fit only to bear male children (at best) or female children (in dishonour). At 18 months of age boys are taken from their segregated, shaven-headed mothers and brought up solely in male company. Rape has ceased to be a crime; only in the case of a German having sex with a 'Christian' or a non-German will he have a case to answer. All non-Germans are by definition those who perform manual labour only up to a certain level of skill. Aping of these German ways is the ultimate to which the subservient lesser nations can aspire.

In terms of allegory, the 1930s position of women in Germany, the annihilation of communist, socialists, and Jews, the destruction of working class organisation are vividly portrayed. Similarly, the removal of foregoing 'non-essential' knowledge and culture, and the institution of racist myths are all well served. As a plausible projection from a Nazi victory, though, the novel's futurism is misplaced. It is of course its very pessimism of the time when it was written that stamps its whole storyline.

Of the greatest importance is the single question of what would happen if established

socialism were to be destroyed. From this flow all other questions. It is this catastrophe for the world's working class that dominates Burdekin's view.

Far from being the feminist hatchet job solely against male chauvinism that some suggest, the novel vindicates the stand of Leninists in promoting revolution to prevent such a future darkness. Burdekin's vision is also unclouded by any nonsense that socialism, once established in any one country, cannot be overthrown by imperialism while it still exists. Her book gives today's reader a chilling warning of such complacency and of the direst consequences that would result from the extinction of world socialism.

We can avoid the Burdekin nightmare, but only if we fight tooth and nail to defend the gains of our working class worldwide, the socialist countries. That means Lenin's policy of peaceful coexistence must not be bastardised. No Leninist surgeon removed that part of Lenin's definition of peaceful coexistence, the fight for *more* revolutions. These are essential to the existence of living socialism, which can only be an unstable and threatened holding operation in the mean time. Peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems (i.e. socialist and capitalist) is striven for, and must be, by the comrades living under socialism. But we have our revolutionary job to do.

Awakening to the necessity of revolt, the novel's central character is sustained by the probability of a complete defeat for the oppressors' painful chain of developing struggle that we glimpse is unenviable. Such a bleak future will not come about because we will bring about further revolutions. It is our duty to lay the basis for such revolutions now: a strong communist movement throughout the world.

Hilary Fitzgerald

CINEMA

Pretty vacant



Rebel Without A Cause: 1955, director Nicholas Ray.

SINCE his death at the wheel of his Porsche in 1955, James Dean 'revivals' have become largely superfluous. Dean memorabilia has sold at prodigious rates in practically every advanced Western capitalist country in the world whatever the particular phase youth fashion has been passing through. In this his best film he creates the rebellious youth figure that has bestridden popular youth culture for the last 40 years like a blue-jeaned colossus. In the figure of the complex teenager hemmed in and oppressed by an insensitive adult world on one side and going through the agonies of trying to establish his standing amongst his intensely hierarchical peers on the other, Dean portrayed a figure that has struck a

responsive chord each successive generation of teenagers.

James Dean's prominence is undoubtedly partially accounted for by two personal characteristics. First, his truly remarkable (though sometimes overrated) acting ability and secondly, the fact that he was without question a very beautiful man. His stature as a figure in popular culture, however, is difficult to explain away simply as the product of either hype or hormones. Dean became the archetypal teen idol of a period whose explosion of youth rebellion was based on a very real material basis: the huge post-war boom in the capitalist world.

The massive expansion of real disposable income was a feature of the Western capitalist economies in the years after the war had spectacular effects on the prominence of youth as a distinct social stratum. Given that young people's expenditure was concentrated in areas which were by definition more highly visible (for example, music, clothes, films), inevitably the products of these mass cultural industries began to reflect more and more the concerns and preoccupations of this new, economically powerful audience. 'Juvenile delinquents' were introduced to the world in *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955) — a film which also featured for the first time the music of the world's most unlikely teen rebel, 'Kiss-curl' Bill Hailey. Of the same genre as *Rebel was The Left-handed Gun* (1958) starring Paul Newman as the emotive young outsider, Billy the Kid. Similarly, the 1957 *Don't Knock the Rock*, directed by Fred F. Seer for Columbia, brought the new 'nigger' music of rock-and-roll with its overt sexuality to a mass teenage audience which had the means to buy the records and the impulses to appreciate the sex.

The youth 'rebellion' of the 1950s, however, firmly espoused acquisitive and individualistic bourgeois values. Eddie Cochran's aspiring youth of the rock-and-roll standard 'Something Else' does not dream of revolution or social explosion, but of getting the car and the girl of his dreams (though not necessarily in that order). The oppression that existed in this world of bobby-sox revolt was parental oppression, experienced within conventional familial formations. Dean in *Rebel* became the archetype of this kind of youth (non-)rebel who would pout sullenly (and very prettily) at his overbearing parents and yell, "You're not listening to me!"

The truth was, of course, that the Dean character had nothing to say. Perhaps the best encapsulation of the '50s youth rebel ethos was made by Dean's cult rival Marlon Brando in the film *The Wild Ones* when he was asked "What're you rebelling against?" "What've you got?" he sardonically grunts.

It is easy to overrate Dean on the basis of this film and the two others he lived long enough to make. At our cruellest we could say that what we have here is a figure very much culturally and historically specific. A mumbling and squinting prima donna from the same 'natural' empathic school of acting that gave us the practically incomprehensible Brando. Would Dean, had he lived, have gone the same way as that other 'rebel', the obscene figure, Elvis Presley: from the truculent wild youth of *King Creole* (1958) to the inane and mawkish conformism of *Fun in Acapulco* (1963)? Perhaps Dean's death in that was as superby timed as his acting.

It may be a fairly banal point to make, but worthwhile nevertheless, that we as communists are interested in giving the rebellious impulses of youth a direction, a cause. Dean, Morrison, Hendrix, Rotten, and all those morose and self-obsessed figures like them stand as monuments to the futility of the type of tailing of youth trends and movements that our youth organisation, our Young Communist League, has been often guilty of in the past. When a particular youth fad or 'wave' has ebbed, of course, the League has been left high and dry, looking like last year's fashions: rather silly and out of place. We must work for the day when posters of Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, or Liebknecht displace the posters of James Dean on a million working class youth's walls. Dean was prettier than all of them put together: pretty, but very, very, vacant.

Alec Long

BANKRUPT: 'MILITANT'



IN LIVERPOOL

ON THE SURFACE it may seem incredible how Liverpool's Labour councillors came to issue redundancy notices to the city's 31,000 workers in a fight they claim is all about saving jobs and services. However, the logic went something like this. By issuing these redundancy letters the council placed itself in a legal position formally to have its coffers replenished by borrowing from the lender of last resort, the Public Works Loan Board. This was meant to buy 90 days' grace in order either to scramble together a deal with the Environment Secretary, Kenneth Baker, or else to prepare for action.

Both options were frankly rather 'iffy' given the current state of affairs. The Tory Party conference showed no sign of a softer approach to Liverpool coming from any leading section of the platform; the Tories smelt blood. The other, more preferable option, of workers preparing for a big showdown with the government also looked rather dubious. *Militant*, despite its successes and achievements in Liverpool as a political tendency, has conducted the battle for Merseyside in such a way as the effectively demobilise and demoralise workers and throw them to the mercy of Mr Fix It trade union big wigs. Unless workers now break decisively with their council's 'battle strategy' of relying on the 'leadership' of Neil Kinnock they will be defeated.

Isolation

A *Morning Star* editorial of October 3 1985 bemoans the "isolation into which the Militant Tendency has led the Liverpool Labour group." On the contrary, however, the results of the latest opinion polls (*Sunday Times* September 9 1985) show around 55% of Liverpool workers would now vote Labour, more than in 1983 when the current Labour administration was elected and indeed the first time in the city's history that Labour has gained support from the majority of the city's population. This is a major achievement and unquestionably reflects big reserves of support for the council and its stand among Liverpool's working class.

What the cretinously Labour Party-loyal *Morning Star* means by

'isolation' is of course that Liverpool by its stand may have alienated other sections of the Labour Party, particularly its leadership. For example, the *Morning Star* correspondent at this year's Labour Party conference was no doubt squirming in her or his seat during the debate on Liverpool until the slimy David Blunkett got up to patch together a rotten deal.

"Tactical differences were overcome by Sheffield council leader David Blunkett in a brilliant example of achieving unity around action." Blunkett's "brilliant" achievement was of course getting "Mr Hatton to withdraw a conference motion pledging support for industrial action in defence of councillors threatened by legal action." (*Morning Star* October 3 1985); that is, a defeat for a call for some sort of militant response.

Opening the books

The Labour Party conference climbdown by Hatton is typical of the bureaucratic and sectionalist way *Militant* and the Labour Party in Liverpool have run this campaign. Hatton responded to Blunkett's appeal and withdrew the motion calling for support for militant industrial action from the Labour Party in the interest of that terribly misused word 'unity'. Also it was agreed to open the books of Liverpool to eight national trade union leaders, Labour NEC members, and frontbench spokespersons in the search for a 'solution'. The *Militant* newspaper of October 12 1985 presented Hatton's rather shamefaced compromise as "astute tactics" which "restored unity to the conference"; that is, not such a very different line to the *Morning Star*'s!

Yet if this climbdown was so "astute", what have Liverpool workers gained from it? The finances of the city have been examined by non-Liverpool Labourite councillors and Labour's treacherous leadership in order to find a 'solution'. But surely there is no 'solution' which does not harm the living standards and conditions of the workers: isn't that the position on which *Militant* has fought this battle all along? If *Militant* was seriously preparing for the only 'solution' which means anything, that is, to defeat the

Tories, surely it would have 'opened its books' to Liverpool's workers to show them the real state of the city's finances, to show them that there was no way out of this crisis that did not entail depressed living standards and poverty for them and for their families. This would have had the effect of stiffening the resolve of Liverpool's working class, of making it even more determined to carry through its fight to the end. The Labour conference shenanigans and desperate attempts to get Kinnock to stand with the council may have been effective ploys in order to pass the buck of the possible defeat of Liverpool from *Militant* to the Labour Party as a whole, but what good is that to the fight here and now?

The Labour Party conference climbdown by *Militant* had been part of a bargain whereby a GMBATU emergency resolution condemning Liverpool's tactics was withdrawn earlier as a result of the sordid wheeler-dealing behind the conference platform between Hatton, Blunkett, and the retiring GMBATU general secretary Basnett. The workers of Liverpool remained the passive agents and spectators to this horsetrading with their livelihoods, as they have largely remained throughout the campaign.

Buying time

Militant and Liverpool council have been desperate throughout the campaign to buy more and more time. Now, tactics and manoeuvre are all very well, but not if they are used as a substitute for preparing to do battle and to generalise the conflict.

For example, way back in July of last year Liverpool councillors, instead of forging a second front linked with the miners and their demands, struck a deal with the then Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin. Ironically, the ink was scarcely dry on this compromise before the dockers came out on strike. Why didn't the council fight then? Not once, apart from a number of rhetorical asides, did *Militant* seek to concretely link its Liverpool battle to that of the miners.

At the beginning of 1984 Hatton was raising a lot of bluster and dust about proposed rate increases:

"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 Liberals on the council) "on the backs 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 three times bigger than the prevailing rate of inflation. Thus the council remained legal and put off the day of reckoning with the Tories.

In June of this year the council reneged on its previous position and set a rate entailing a 9% rates hike. This sellout came precisely at a time when council workers in other authorities were looking for an organised lead from some quarter as their own 'hard left' Labourite administrations caved in.

Then, in this stage of the battle, *Militant* originally did not want the Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC) of Liverpool to call an indefinite strike from September 24. Instead, it urged the Committee to accept its redundancy notice plan in order to prevaricate and buy still more time; and it only supported the idea of the strike after the decision had already been taken.

When balloted, some 47% of council workers voted to come out. Presumably because it did not have an arithmetic majority the JSSC called off the action to preserve (again that awful word) 'unity'.

With the defeat of the strike call *Militant* fell back on its stupid tactic of issuing redundancy notices to the council's 31,000 workers, a move, almost inevitably, which sowed divisions and demoralisation even further.

The options

So what options are left open to Liverpool's workers? The *Morning Star* (October 3) advised that the council spend some of next year's building programme money in order to buy yet more time. This of course is no option at all. Apart from not solving the basic political problems that exist in the campaign this 'capitalisation' trick would have the effect of freezing the much needed housebuilding programme and throwing 10,000 building workers in the private sector out of jobs. The *Morning Star* protested against *Militant*'s ploy of issuing redundancy letters on the basis that it would undermine 'workers' unity', it then proposed an alternative manoeuvre that would have built this precious 'unity' by throwing 10,000 out of their jobs. The 'capitalisation' option is, however, supported by leading Nalgo bureaucrats and will probably be the option that the treacherous Labour misleaders will pressurise Liverpool council to take. So, obviously, when the *Morning Star* talks of unity of course it actually means unity with the 'official' leadership of unions which have sold workers down the river so many times. When the *Morning Star* talks of unity, workers had better start worrying for their jobs ...

Before the recent Labour Party conference *Militant* was posturing with its 'left' face, claiming:

"... if defending working people's rights meant breaking Tory laws, which are designed to protect Tory privilege, profit, and rule, then it is right to break those laws." (*Militant* September 27 1985)

Yet, throughout the Liverpool fight *Militant* has been more than anxious to maintain its good name before the bosses' law. For example, after the JSSC climbdown *Militant* justified its subsequent actions thus:

"The legal position of the council, therefore, was such that it had to issue 'redundancy letters'."

Militant's preoccupation with

legality stems from the bureaucratic, typically Labourite way it has run the campaign. Instead of mobilising the workers independently on the basis of their own interests, it has consistently subordinated workers' actions to defending 'their' council, thereby suffocating the independent initiative and dynamism of the Liverpool working class. For example:

"If one single councillor is surcharged or disqualified from office an all-out strike by the council workforce must take place." (*Militant* September 20 1985)

Why tack the working class's mass action on to defending *Militant* and other Labour Party councillors? Why not mobilise them on the basis of defending their jobs and services now? If this have been done from the beginning there would now be a mass, dynamic, and confident movement of Merseyside workers ready to take on the Tories and indeed allcomers. Surely this was why the JSSC strike call was defeated. The majority of workers could not be mobilised simply to defend 'their' councillors. Workers do not (quite correctly) trust their employers, whoever they are, and cannot simply be mobilised on the basis of defending them. But they could and should have been won to defend their jobs and livelihoods.

Workers in Liverpool must now take a long hard look at the 'battle plans' of their *Militant* leaders. *Militant* (September 27 1985), in the true blockhead traditions of the British Labourite left, has presented the defeat of the call for an indefinite strike and the badly supported one-day token action which replaced it as "magnificent". Similarly, John Hamilton, another Liverpool council bigwig, described the disappointing day as "a very cool but determined response" (very, very cool, as we understand it from various reports). And Kinnock's treacherous fence sitting was portrayed as full support for Liverpool by Hatton. Workers in Liverpool can afford no such official optimism.

The Liverpool Communist Party has quite correctly complained of the "lack of consultation" in the way *Militant* has run the fight so far. To overcome this there needs to be pressure not simply for mass meetings of all council workers to explain the issues but also for an independent expression of workers' organisation. Way back in February we argued for a citywide, recallable delegate-based council of resistance that could start to link the struggle with workers in the private sector. To facilitate building a fighting workers' unity it was not only vital for the disastrous redundancy letters to be withdrawn but there must now be no further truck with backdoor ploys to win more breathing space. *The fight is on now.*

Above all, though, a successful fightback from now on must break with the left reformist arguments of the *Militant* Labourites. Workers must be mobilised to defend their jobs, not the jobs of their Labour Party councillors, nor Liverpool council which is part of the capitalist state machine. For *Militant*, despite its rhetoric about revolution and socialism, despite its many reformist achievements in Merseyside, remains committed to the same deadly perspective as every other section of the Labour Party left. *Militant* even boasts of it:

"*Militant* supporters in the Labour Party will be the hardest fighters for the return of a Labour government with Kinnock as leader." (October 12 1985)

While *Militant* and the Labour councillors of Liverpool have the politics which tie them in this way to representatives of the bourgeoisie in our ranks, how can they hope to effectively defend the workers in Merseyside or anywhere else?

Ian Mahoney