

Turn the tables on the press barons

BRING OUT FLEET STREET

DO NOT permit the enemy to choose the time and place of battle. This is the first rule of war. The second is that it is fatal to enter a war without a single-minded determination to use all means necessary to achieve victory.

On the first count the leaders of SOGAT and the NGA have miserably failed in the struggle against Murdoch. For a year they dithered and simply watched him carefully prepare the union busting Wapping plant.

All the while the leaders of SOGAT and the NGA proved incapable of creating a united front. On the contrary they vied against each other in traditional fashion with all the petty craft sectionalism typical of the print unions and SOGAT even offered Murdoch a no strike deal. Then they let their members be manoeuvred into a strike at a time of Murdoch's chosing which allowed him to trigger into action the carefully planned mass sackings and the whole Wapping operation, legal writs, scabs recruited with the aid of EETPU officials, barbed wire, massed police and all.

So Dean and Dubbins let Murdoch choose the time and place of battle. And against Murdoch's ruthless will to win they have proved both hopelessly defensive and disorganised.

When the conflict reached the stage of mass sackings the whole of Fleet Street should have been brought out. In fact Fleet Street should have been brought out long ago to ensure that new tech printing techniques were not used to the detriment of the printworkers and their organisations. That the whole of Fleet Street was not mobilised before Murdoch had Wapping ready for production was at the very least negligent. That they were not brought into the fray the instant Murdoch sacked the 5,000 can only be considered a dereliction of duty bordering on the criminal.

Tokenism

Dean and Dubbins say they have no choice but to break the law. This is true. All effective industrial action is now more or less illegal. But instead of making breaking the law meaningful and worthwhile they have kept the whole struggle to the level of tokenism.

● Instead of overcoming sectionalism through announcing moves towards a national printworkers' union the old craft divisions are perpetuated and those sacked are atomised and sealed off from each other while fulltime officials try to negotiate their future. Fearing the legal consequences of rank and file action every move has to have the stamp of official approval—a conservative dampener on grass roots initiative and determination to win.

● Instead of organising massive industrial solidarity by their own

members, especially the 20,000 or so in Fleet Street threatened by the other press barons with the 'Wapping treatment', they have called off actions after court in junctions. And having succeeded in staging token gestures of defiance to the courts costing their unions fines totalling tens of thousands of pounds Dean and SOGAT in particular did everything to smooth the path for the sequestrators.

● Instead of facilitating and sustaining an all out strike in Fleet Street by seeing to it that the unions' money was withdrawn from banks and equities and released in the form of cash into the hands of the rank and file strike committees where the money could be put to good effect and out of the courts' way Dean and Dubbins have preferred respectability, sequestration and paying fines. The on/off defiance of the law and limiting the scope of the struggle is not only costly, it is bound to lead to demoralisation and eventual despair.

● Instead of organising effective picketing they have meekly complied with 'TUC guidelines'. The mass demonstrations they have sanctioned have been for form's sake and ineffective. Acting like grand old Duke of Yorks they have marched thousands around Wapping under the supervision of the police and done everything to 'keep the peace'.

● Instead of calling upon all of the working class to rally to the printers' cause and organise blacking and physical support they have sought to shift the struggle to the bosses' courts and onto the shoulders of individual *Sun* readers. Sentimental PR is substituted for working class solidarity and singling out Hammond and the EETPU is used as a smokescreen to obscure the responsibilities of the leaders of other unions whose members are scabbing or not providing any meaningful support.

Great Strike

For Dean and Dubbins the lessons of the miners' Great Strike consist of bowing before the courts, preventing picket line violence and doing nothing that might upset the opinion poll ratings of Neil (scab) Kinnoek. But in truth the struggle at Wapping has exposed the fact that where the gothic structure and hard left Labourite politics of the NUM was inadequate for the challenge of MacGregor's class war in the Great Strike the medieval structures and soft left Labourite politics of the print union are woefully inadequate for Murdoch's class war.

Unfortunately we do not just have craft narrowness of many printworkers to contend with, their distrust of 'politicos' and their subservience to the fulltime officials. Most of the left is con-

tent to pressurise the soft left Labourite leadership of Dean and Dubbins as they were prepared to tail the hard left Labourite leadership of Scargill. But where the SWP, *Socialist Action* and *Militant* are prepared to venture criticism the *Morning Star* and the centrists of our CPGB have true to form considered it their heavenly blessed mission to follow the print unions in all their respectable twists and indecisive turns.

The mentality of this worship of trade union politics was illustrated in a letter to the *Morning Star* of February 24 from Carol Howe, Richard Barnett and Paul Clarke. While naively and erroneously believing the *Morning Star* is spearheading a 'rejuvenation' of communism in Britain these converts to Chaterism accurately point to the lack of a 'large organised' communist contingent on the Miners Support Committee in Hackney during the Great Strike. In place of drawing the inescapable conclusion that this treacherous absence was proof of opportunist bankruptcy par excellence the blinkered trio expose their own economism by stating in black and white that the task of a 'large organised' communist presence would have been to ensure that the 'union's line was maintained'. So much for the vanguard role of the communists.

Thus today when the *Morning Star* is not bemoaning the police turning 'a blind eye to dangerous driving' by TNT scabs it is backing the official 'union line' along with its Communist Campaign Group lodgers. It can even be said that in a sense Wapping is the *Morning Star's* strike and thus an acid test for its economistic politics. Leading CCGers have been prominent in the Wapping dispute and the paper's Management Committee has close relations with print union big wigs.

What then is the record of the CCG so far? Well apart from simply echoing the 'union line' Mike Hicks and Bill Freeman both prominent CCGers and print union officials have been widely praised in the 'quality' bourgeois press as having played a responsible and moderate role in co-operating with the police in their efforts to restrain 'unruly' demonstrators outside Wapping. Hicks in particular has excelled himself as a minor bureaucrat sorting out Trot, anarchist and SWP 'troublemakers'.

But Hicks has his eyes on bigger things for himself so he magnifies the importance of the Wapping dispute to epoch making proportions. To puff up his own standing and to achieve izzat he foolishly declared to the so-called Strategies for Socialism conference staged by pro-CCG elements in February that: "Without understating the miners' struggle the struggle of the printworkers is the most important dispute facing the trade union movement."

Despite this silly self serving

hyperbole he and the CCG have probably not learnt a thing from the defeat of the Great Strike for they have not even thought of having a stab at developing a position independent of SOGAT and NGA officialdom let alone a communist strategy for victory.

And what goes for the economic Labourphiles of the CCG goes for the centrist Straight Leftist Labourphiles. February's edition of *Communist* finds them trailing not attempting to lead the printers' struggle. All that it can come up with is lame and hardly original calls to "support the boycott of the *Sun*", etc., "distribute" SOGAT and NGA "publicity material", getting trades councils to pressurise the TUC "to bring the EETPU into line" and "prepare for mass picketing".

In other words narrow trade union politics which present little or no obstacle to Murdoch, backed as he is by the full might of the bourgeois state and the panoply of anti-trade union laws. After all if Thatcher and MacGregor could see off the intransigent and militant Arthur Scargill and the mighty NUM under the present misleadership why will the printworkers prove any different?

Because of this it is essential that the rank and file place no faith whatsoever in either the tailist left nor the leadership of SOGAT and the NGA. In point of fact it is essential that a break is made from the backward traditions of reformism left and right and the confines of craft unionism.

Rank and file

The Fleet Street rank and file know if Murdoch is allowed to get away with Wapping their jobs will be next. But they also instinctively recognise that if the fightback is left to the likes of Dean and Dubbins, left to token gestures, left to the courts and the bosses' tails we win, heads you lose law, defeat is inevitable. So why risk fat redundancy payments for a futile struggle?

It is though crystal clear that an all-out united printworkers' offensive could snatch victory from the job slashing jaws of one paper at a time defeat. This is therefore the main plank for a fighting strategy. The rank and file transparently need such a lead and they could surely be quickly and enthusiastically united around such a serious fightback, in fact they will only respond to a strategy that looks like it's got a chance of victory.

The rank and file must be won to take the running of the struggle into their own hands. Joint strike committees must be formed across sectional divisions at every Fleet Street paper and a no holds barred struggle begun which will turn the tables on the press barons who along with Thatcher are cheering on Murdoch and itching

to follow his lead.

Joint strike committees and a national organisation of militants would not accept TUC guidelines nor leadership. Such a militant movement would certainly not let the TUC get away with its gentle rebuke to the EETPU for its openly scabbing role. It would demand that the EETPU be expelled something many EETPU militants have argued for—not merely instructed to inform its members at Wapping that they are scabbing (as if they were not aware of this).

A rank and file campaign to demand the expulsion of the EETPU must be linked to a militant fight to overthrow the Hammond leadership and the rolling back of plans for a British version of Solidarnosc. Certainly the TUC will do its best to resist such demands fearing for its new realism, its reversal of the Wembley decisions, along with Kinnoek's crawling efforts to convince the ruling class of his use as a future prime minister.

Far from the rank and file joint strike committees wanting to limit solidarity to tokenism they have every interest in mobilising the broadest possible support and demanding that the language of solidarity used so freely by trade union tops like Todd is turned into action. The Printers' Support Committees could play an invaluable role here. The model of the Miners' Support Committees is fresh in the memories of countless thousands of advanced workers. We know the main fault of the Miners' Support Committees was not their independence from the official machine as some suggest but their lack of revolutionary direction. So with this in mind the immediate plan of action for Printers' Support Committees is relatively straightforward.

As in the Great Strike support committees drawing in all local activists and militants have the possibility of raising large quantities of money; of great importance with sequestration and the freezing of union funds. These committees should also be used as coordinating bodies for organising picketing of local wholesalers, visiting newsagents and arguing for individuals not to buy the *Sun*, *The Times*, etc.

Moreover a national network of Printers' Support Committees must provide massive physical support for picketing at Wapping. While today we see 5,000 turn out to march round Wapping we could, indeed we must, see 50,000, or 60,000, or even 70,000 turn out determined for militant direct action. Then we could at last begin to seriously talk about shutting down Wapping. Certainly if this were combined with closing down Fleet Street the tables could be turned on the whole gang of press barons. And that would be a victory for the whole working class.

Jack Conrad



THE LENINIST

Class justice

ONE YEAR after the defeat of the Great Strike hundreds of miners remain victimised and nearly 20 languish in jail including Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland with eight year sentences in front of them. True some just happened to be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time', victims of police arbitrariness. But most were the outstanding militants of the strike. They were the ones with the courage to meet police violence with workers' violence, who dared form hit squads, who understood that the miners had no choice but to break the bosses law if defeat was to be avoided.

Whatever offence they committed, for whatever reason the NCB or the courts have singled them out, they are heroes of the class war, whom the entire working class has a sacred duty to stand by. We must insist on their unconditional release and the re-employment of all those sacked. On this elemental demand not an inch must be given.

But how are we to ensure that these brave fighters are not left as Thatcher's object lesson to the working class, a warning to those who dare fight for their rights? Certainly not by appealing to the liberal sensibilities of the establishment and its notion of fair play. The whole of bourgeois society, from the SDP at prayer in the C of E to the Institute of Directors, won't let pleas for justice, no matter how heart felt, divert them from making the lessons of defeat stick. The ruling class is determined to wreak vengeance on the miners and determined that vengeance be seen to be done.

Neither is it any use looking to the leaders of the official labour movement. Beyond the token gesture, they are prepared to do nothing about our class war heroes. In point of fact they have in the main turned a blind eye to them fearing the wrath of media opinion. For most of them the jailed and victimised are an embarrassment, as was the Great Strike. Its splendid militancy, its near insurrectionary aspects, terrified them as much as the bourgeoisie. Now its over they would prefer to forget all about it along with any human reminders. These fat cats are concerned with having a quiet life and getting back into the corridors of power, not those in Maidstone Prison or standing in the dole queue. 'Realistic politics' for this parasitic strata means doing nothing to damage the chances of Neil Kinnock and the "next Labour government" and this definitely negates making a firm stand on a basic working class principle.

As to the "next Labour government" this offers not a thing to the jailed and victimised miners. Kinnock took great pride in boasting, and was supported in this by comrade Pete Carter, that whatever Labour or TUC conferences may vote for, if he becomes Prime Minister he wouldn't lift a finger for our heroes; not a review of all cases of those sacked and jailed and definitely not the reimbursal of NUM monies the bosses, courts legally robbed from it during the strike. A typically arrogant position but undoubtedly true to Labourite form; after all Wilson's government let the Shrewsbury 2 rot in jail and refused to interfere in the 'due process' of law.

So if we can't rely on the labour movement tops what can we rely upon? We say that the miners should look to their own strength and that of the militant minority in the class as they did in the Great Strike. It was the militant support committees which sustained them for 12 long months not Labourite hot air. With this in mind let's remember that while Wilson left Ricky Tomlinson and Des Warren to rot, Heath decided in the face of militant strike action to release the Pentonville 5. The lesson is obvious. Mass working class action can make the bourgeoisie discover almost overnight fair play, justice and legal loopholes. This is something years of reasoned argument and pious pleas of assorted clerics and Labourite windbags could never do.

The Editor

Correspondence to: The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5.00, Institutions £7.00; Europe £8.00, Institutions £10.00; All other countries £10.00, Institutions £12.00.

Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1.00 each plus 25p p&p. Issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p.

All cheques payable to *The Leninist*.

Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St. Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16 2BS.

Published by: The Leninist Publications, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX © World copyright March 1986.

LETTERS

Investment

I enclose £5 to renew my subscription and £5 for your plan to publish fortnightly. I became aware of *The Leninist* soon after joining the CPGB about 16 months ago, later getting all the back numbers, which I found to be a worthwhile investment. Indeed, having recently cleared out the usual pile of accumulated material I chose only *The Leninist* to retain (because of the high standard of analysis it usually demonstrates), and *Marxism Today* as a reminder and indictment of how the Eurocommunists have got themselves in such a confused and unprincipled state.

Revisionism has had its chance, and under Thatcher in particular, has failed to meet the challenges. Within the present day capitalist world there will no longer be space for effective social democracy—the rich are no longer convinced that they need pay the price for maintaining the facade of egalitarian redistribution.

I was interested in the short comment upon Band Aid in No. 26 and would like to see a thoroughgoing analysis of the political issues for Leninists in the Ethiopian context, particularly touching upon the problems of Tigrin and Eritrean Marxists. Yours in comradeship
Colin Lee
East Midlands

Fortnightly

I must say I am delighted at the decision to attempt to go fortnightly. And unlike Fred Richards of London (see Letters in last edition) I think the article on Band Aid and also the one on Jesus Christ are most important even though they may not be the first priority.

The articles on the CPSU's Third Programme and the one on the AES were however most timely and my only criticism if any is that we should be considering a weekly or even a daily. Keep up the good work.
Yours in comradeship
M.Coats
Co. Durham

Building Fund

Please find enclosed my £20 contribution to the £2,000 building fund. I wish to sell a small number of the paper at work for which I will pay in advance. Please let me know how I should arrange this.
Colin Knight
London

Fortress Wapping

What is fascism? It is a special form of counterrevolution against the working class, it happens in the period of deepening general crisis of monopoly capitalism. It is part and parcel of the decay and progressive dissolution of the capitalist economy and the disintegration of the capitalist state. The police are used as counterrevolutionaries and become part of the state machine. The use of the police during the miners' strike was an example of this, all in the name of "democracy"—as a cover for attacking the militant section of the working class.

And what finer example can there be of fascist terrorism than "Fortress Wapping" with its razor sharp barbed wire, protecting working class traitors and scabs,

robbing the working class of their trade union funds, passing laws to weaken and try to destroy the inevitable advance of the working class towards revolutionary socialism? Monopoly capitalism eventually turns to fascism. It is left to the working class to unite and destroy this evil, before it is too late.
Yours sincerely
Tom Hopkins (retired miner)
Caerphilly

USSR I

First of all, we wish to congratulate you on the fine prospect of a fortnightly edition of *The Leninist* and needless to say we will give you all the support we can. Most of *The Leninist* we agree with and the article on the Irish struggle by comrade Conrad was, in our view, first rate. However, we are somewhat puzzled by a number of his assertions in the article on The Gorbachev Edition in the February issue of *The Leninist*.

It appears that comrade Conrad thinks that the Soviet Union's World Peace Programme is at variance with Lenin's Decree on Peace. "We" said Lenin, introducing the draft decree to the Congress of Soviets, "are combating the deception practiced by governments which pay lip-service to peace and justice, but in fact wage annexationist and predatory war..." but, he continues, "we should not and must not give governments an opportunity of taking refuge behind our uncompromising attitude..." An ultimatum would make the position of our opponents. But we shall make all the terms known to the people...

Is that not precisely what the USSR has done since the end of World War II in particular? It has unceasingly championed the cause of world peace in the United Nations and elsewhere, at the same time encouraging the liberation movements of all capitalist and colonial countries. It forced into the open imperialist America which has consistently used nuclear blackmail—an ultimatum that Lenin would surely regard as a million times more monstrous than any ultimatum of his era.

The Soviet Union is quite correct in exposing the warmongers and it is up to the working class and progressive people of all capitalist countries to disarm their own bourgeoisie. The Soviet Union cannot "export" revolution, but their contribution to world socialism, despite civil war, foreign intervention, a vicious Nazi invasion, bourgeois slander and lies, has been magnificent. We are not saying the USSR is anything like perfect. Its own internal organs carry a great deal of justifiable criticism, and the working class of the Soviet Union will correct its own defects. We would like comrade Conrad to elucidate a bit more on the subject in the same friendly spirit of self-criticism which he advocates and perhaps we can open up a more advanced in-depth discourse on this very important subject.
Roy and Stuart Henderson
Glasgow

Jack Conrad replies:

The Henderson comrades will of course be aware that we promised a serious examination of the USSR and the CPSU 27th Congress at our third Conference and in *The Gorbachev Edition* article. This will be published in the near future.

In the meantime let's briefly answer the most important point.

The comrades quote Lenin's Decree on Peace and maintain that we consider that this contradicts the USSR's World Peace Programme. Well we haven't said that. But what we did say is that the new draft programme of the CPSU contradicts the programme drafted by Lenin in 1919.

The thrust of our criticism of the new draft CPSU programme is that the Soviet comrades have been one sided in their approach to peace. In other words what of Lenin's insistence that without revolution imperialism will unleash war? Surely unless peaceful co-existence is balanced with this fundamental tenet of Marxist-Leninist theory it carries all sorts of dangers.

For example who would deny that it is a principled Leninist tactic to stand for election to the bourgeois parliament? Certainly not us. And yet if this tactic were not linked, nay subordinated, to a strategy aiming for revolutionary insurrection and proletarian dictatorship it must be said that the tactic would no longer be a revolutionary one. Thus our Party leadership are for standing candidates in elections but with them this is parliamentary cretinism not Leninist tactics. The same goes for peaceful co-existence. It must be subordinated to the goal of world revolution. If it is not we have a problem.

We do not advocate the "export" of revolution, we do not for one moment suggest that the CPSU comrades abandon peaceful co-existence but we do suggest that they reintroduce into their programme the fundamental aim of world revolution they had in their first two programmes.

USSR II

You misunderstand my letter published in *The Leninist* No.26. I realise that the Comintern made drastic mistakes. However, an attack on Stalin is also an attack on Marxism-Leninism. Stalin's views are clearly expressed. Don't let us fall into the trap of saying that Stalin dictated the policies of Comintern!

You fail to make a political criticism of the Party of Labour in Albania. They correctly expose the revisionist policies of the USSR. They do not cut themselves off. Khrushchev expelled them as they would not accept the Soviet diktat. If you refuse to distinguish between the socialist system of Albania and the revisionist USSR it is clear that you are not examining the facts.

I continue to support the positions of *The Leninist* on other questions. Your views are very similar to those of the Albanian party in Britain, the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). Perhaps your dislike of Stalin could be related to the following statement he made:

"The theory of 'defeating' opportunist elements by ideological struggle within the party, the theory of 'overcoming' these elements within the confines of a single party, is a rotten and dangerous theory, which threatens to condemn the party to paralysis and chronic infirmity, threatens to make the party a prey to opportunism, threatens to leave the proletariat without a revolutionary party, threatens to deprive the proletariat of its main weapon in the fight against imperialism."

Is this not the Leninist position on the CPGB?
Yours in comradeship
Al Donaldson
Glasgow

Jack Conrad replies: Comrade Donaldson is we are afraid suffering from self inflicted political blindness. The twists and turns of comintern from the mid-1920s till it was liquidated in 1943, whether they were right or wrong, must be laid at Stalin's feet. He was the undisputed leader of not only the USSR but Comintern. If the comrade admits that Comintern made "drastic mistakes" he must summon up the courage to recognise the simple fact that Joseph Stalin had the major responsibility for them. Not to do so is foolish to say the least.

Some of Stalin's views were "clearly expressed" but often he disguised his real meaning in a cloud of pretension. Thus when he argued against overcoming ideological differences within the Party what he really was doing was justifying the physical elimination of perhaps a hundred thousand communists and the imposition onto the Party of a dictatorial regime. His argument and of course practice was against the tradition of the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership and was a monstrous crime which did nothing to further the cause of socialism or the world proletariat.

It was Stalin who junked the Leninist theory of world revolution, who erroneously branded all social democrats as social fascists in the early 1930s only to fight for workers to unite with 'progressive' imperialists a few years later, and who effusively welcomed the first edition of the opportunist *British Road*. These are the facts. In light of them it has to be said that to defend Stalin is to defend revisionism.

The comrade seems to be a devotee of Enverism. For them adulation of Stalin is an act of faith as is the damnation of the USSR and its leaders since 1953. The Albanian comrades declare the rest of the socialist countries capitalist and attack the world communist movement as counter-revolutionary. These views might have been provoked by Khrushchev but they are nonetheless a case of idealism dressed in pseudo Marxist rhetoric.

It is nonsense to describe the USSR as revisionist. What does a revisionist mode of production look like comrade? We can certainly have a revisionist Party leadership but not a revisionist system. And given their present world view and their iconisation of Stalin it must be admitted that the leaders of socialist Albania are revisionists and, comrade Donaldson, so therefore by definition are the tailist RCPB(ML).

Broken Reed

Leninist comrades have cast their net wide when collecting for *Umsebenzi*, the paper of the South African Communist Party. Contributions have flowed in from rank and file miners, trade union bureaucrats, actors, actresses, MPs and clergy amongst many others: a real "Broad Democratic Alliance" in practice! Individual donations have also come in from all sections of the Communist Party of Great Britain, from Labour Party members... and even from the erstwhile Trotskyites of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG).

Or at least that is, from individual members of the RCG. In a recent public meeting to celebrate Dr. Maire O'Shea's victory over a PTA frame-up however, the chair, leading RCGer Maxine Williams refused point blank to announce a collection for our comrades fighting the apartheid regime. This

snub to South African communists came after David Reed, the organisation's leading theoretician, had refused to part with any of his cash for our comrades' struggle and had even 'bad-mouthed' the party as "Menshevik" and "not revolutionary".

Although the RCG has formally dropped the petty bourgeois anti-world communist movement ideology of Trotskyism, its leadership seem to remain imbued with its sectarian attitude towards or movement, even to the point of attacking the giving of aid to those in the vanguard of the struggle against apartheid. This attitude contradicts the more 'open-minded' approach of other RCGers who have given quite generously to our appeal. However, potential splits in the RCG are not really of interest to us: we are rather too busy giving all we can to the fight of our South African comrades to be overly concerned with the internal affairs of a group that stands today so full of contradictions that if it ever sat down to seriously debate its world view and the nature of the international communist movement, it would surely explode into a thousand different fragments (or, rather, at a push, fifty). To those RCGers who gave to our appeal, thanks: to David Reed and Maxine Williams, thanks for nothing.

Mark Fischer and David Rhys
London

Bloody Sunday

In the January 1986 issue of their paper, *Workers' Hammer*, the Trotskyite group the Spartacist League scandalously equate "Orange and Green terror" in the occupied Six Counties of Northern Ireland and call for "anti-sectarian workers' militias" to be built against both. This aloof and therefore chauvinist position probably accounts for this organisation having no banner on this year's Bloody Sunday demo. In welcome contrast the Irish Republican Support Group (CPGB) rallied 30 comrades behind its banner the majority being supporters of

The Leninist; our comrades ensured that the IRSG had a militant contingent.

And speaking of this year's Bloody Sunday demo, one of our comrades asked leading *Proletarian* honcho Alison Fowler when their number three was coming out. "In a few months", replied the normally more verbose Alison. What is a little tricky about this is the fact that *Proletarian* No.3 has been advertised as being available for a few months already! Either there has been a bit of a cock-up on the advertising front or this is yet another example of the Proles' interesting slant on 'dialectics'. We're always prepared to learn from others, so rush in your orders for issue number 100 of *The Leninist*—but allow three years for delivery.

Alec Long
London

Strip searching

British imperialism is never simply content to imprison its enemies and those who fight against its barbaric rule. The Irish people in particular have had to endure the most humiliating torture in the prisons and detention centres of the British state. Torture takes many forms, but an important component part of it is simply the physical degradation involved; the sheer affront to human dignity in the invasion of one's body and its systematic and cynical mistreatment. Strip searching in this sense is a particularly unpleasant and devious form of torture.

Women in Armagh prison in Northern Ireland have been harassed in this degrading way since way back in November 1982. In the 24 months from November 19 1982 to October 1984, an average of 24 women were strip-searched 1,899 times. The 'search' part of the title in fact is a misnomer. Metal detectors, a simple piece of technical surveillance are of course available. They are simply never used. In any case, all these searches have ever revealed were

two keys, some money and a phial of perfume; items which do not exactly present much of a threat to the internal prison security regime.

Now this oppression has moved inexorably across the channel to mainland Britain. Since July 1 of last year two Irish female prisoners on remand in Brixton prison Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, have been strip-searched on average 50 times a month each. In fact, being regularly attacked and humiliated in this way is practically the only way that these two women experience the world outside their tiny cells. From January 1 of this year, they have been caged in their separate cells most days for up to 21½ hours. They thus suffer isolation and sensory deprivation, but they certainly get no privacy. Being category A prisoners, they are checked on every 15 minutes during the night (for some strange reason). A screw lifts the flap on the outside of the cell door, a harsh white light clicks on automatically and the women are woken up.

You try closing your eyes under a harsh bright white light and see if you can manage to get to sleep. No matter which way you turn your head or how tightly you try to screw your eyes up, the dull glare of the artificial light penetrates beneath your lids and irritates and exasperates you into insomnia. Every 15 minutes of every night, Ella and Martina have their nerves jarred and their sleep ruined by this systematic harassment.

Martina and Ella face charges arising out of the police and media fabricated 'seaside bombing conspiracy' of July '85. The women are unlikely to come to trial on these charges before May of this year. In other words after some six months of continuous sexual and psychological torture. Unsurprisingly, their lawyer feels that press and TV lies will seriously affect their chances of a 'fair' trial. The two women at the moment need to put all of their mental energies into simply holding their nerves together. The prison authorities seem determined to harass Ella and Martina into breakdowns to ensure they have no chance of presenting a coherent case in their defence.

The British working class movement has an appalling record on Ireland. Essentially, it has acquie-

scend in British imperialism's rape of the country. The bloody consequences of this shameful bipartisan approach however, have 'come home' to Britain and the working class in this country. Black youth of the inner-cities, the miners and even the print workers to a certain extent, now understand a little of what it is to be Irish. Similarly, the scope of the infamous Prevention of Terrorism Act has been expanded to intimidate all friends of Ireland and also to police the cadres of other liberation movements such as SWAPO. Until the working class of Britain adopts an independent revolutionary line on Ireland and breaks from its 'own' bourgeoisie's outlook, it will be unable to adequately even defend its own interests as a class. It must make itself the champion of democracy in order to rally all oppressed people under its hegemony.

Without making itself the tribune of all the oppressed, the proletariat cannot win socialism without the social weight and power of the working class, the oppressed can never win their struggles for equality and justice.

The workers' movement around the country should be shaken into action for these two brave women:

- Pass resolutions condemning their torture.
- Build for the pickets of Brixton and Holloway prisons for International Women's Day, March 8.
- Organise letters of support to the women in prison; Ella O'Dwyer D25 135
Martina Anderson D25 134
HM Prison Brixton, PO Box 369, Jebb Avenue, London SW2 5XF.

In particular, the Irish Republican Support Group (Communist Party of Great Britain) must take the cause of these women into the very heart of the Party. The time is overdue to rescue our Party's good name as far as Irish solidarity work is concerned; long, long overdue.

Ian Mahoney
London

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

Turkish Embassy Picket



I am writing on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey to warmly thank *The Leninist* publication for the pre-publicity given to our call to picket the Turkish Embassy on February 18 to protest against the visit to this country of Turgut Ozal, Prime Minister of Turkey and enemy of democracy. Also, I would like to thank your comrades for turning out in such numbers on the day of the picket and for providing such a vocal and lively contingent of the protest!

We were pleased with the size

and the impact of the picket and we were particularly pleased with the gesture of solidarity given by friends in Britain with the struggle for genuine democracy in Turkey. Our Committee and all those fighting in Turkey to smash the rule of the criminal Ozal and the forces he represents thank you. We look forward to further cooperation in the struggle to win a genuine democracy of and for the working people of Turkey. Once again we thank you.
Yours in solidarity,
Max Hiron General Secretary,
CDDRT

Nearly half way

They've called us "sectarian" because we stand on rock hard Marxism-Leninism, they've said we alienate workers because of our serious financial and organisational demands, the cowards have flinched when we said *The Leninist* had to go monthly, now the traitors sneer when they read about our plans to launch *The Leninist* as a fortnightly. But since we announced our £2,000 building fund in the last edition you have raised £978. A splendid effort. But let's do more, let's show the doubting wiseacres what genuine communists can do. Let's see to it that next month we can report a large surplus, let's see if we can treble what we've raised so far. This will give the paper a firm financial foundation from which to go fortnightly. All we need to do then is to get our technical act together, fully master our newly purchased typesetting equipment and eliminate those silly proof reading mistakes which still mar our paper. As soon as this is done *The Leninist* will be ready to go fortnightly. Then we can free ourselves from the frustrating time delays and inherent political limitations of monthly publication, then we can really get down to the serious business of putting a fighting communist position in the class struggle, then we can begin to fuse the task of reforging our CPGB with the thoughts and aspirations of advanced workers.

WHEN THE Labourites in parliament and at the top of the trade union movement priggishly talk about 'educating' workers they usually mean pushing legalistic illusions through the WEA, Ruskin College, and company sponsored shop steward courses. In this way working class trust in its present reformist misleaders and faith in the bosses' law is instilled and strengthened.

In contrast, for Leninists the real education of our class is bound up with the class struggle itself. "Struggle", as Lenin wrote, discloses to the mass of workers "the magnitude of its own power, widens its horizons, enhances its abilities, clarifies its mind, forges its will." (CW Vol. 23 p.241)

So for us the 1984-5 miners' Great Strike which ended one year ago was a tremendous opportunity for our class to equip itself, not with certificates of academic excellence, but with a firm grasp of the antagonistic class nature of modern capitalist society. This is something which the preceding near sixty years of relative social peace could never allow. So although it was defeated, invaluable lessons are there for every section of our class, not least the printworkers who are at present confronted with a well planned offensive against their wages, jobs, and organisations.

We all know that some feel the need to deny the reality of defeat, but the pit closures, the jailed and victimised miners, and now indirectly Wapping prove the opposite. Though far from allowing this to lead to despair and demoralisation, we recognise the fact that beaten armies learn well.

Before the strike, fallacies about the benign and neutral nature of the courts and police were near universal. Then came the year long strike, the ten thousand arrests, the Six Counties' style occupation of pit villages by the police, the mendacious press campaigns, and the legal robbery of the NUM funds by the courts.

As a result, countless miners and their supporters learnt via bitter first hand experience the state's class and violent essence. They, not least the pit women, went through the practical school of organising physical, ideological, and moral resistance to the state and its plans to starve, batter, and hoodwink the miners into submission.

These lessons have undoubtedly entered into the collective consciousness, the very life blood of the striking mining communities who for twelve long months stood up to all the terror, lies, and bribery the state organised against them. An important blow has therefore been struck at the reformist softness and flabbiness of the 'brigade of guards' of the working class in Britain. Whether or not these lessons have been absorbed by other sections of the

WAPPING

Lessons of the Great Strike

class the unfolding battle of Wapping will show.

A test

Murdoch's determination to break SOGAT and the NGA on his News International papers threatens not only all print workers, but the entire working class. If Murdoch wins, all other press barons will follow his lead and bosses in other sections will see it as a green light to hike the rate of exploitation and attack union organisation.

As during the miners' strike, scabbing has proved a central problem. The EETPU leadership are playing the same role at Wapping as Lynk and the Notts Area did in the Great Strike. The 'honest broker' approach of the TUC has proved useless in combatting the scab cancer. The pledge not to recognise the UDM has not noticeably affected its growth, and the rap over the knuckles the EETPU suffered at the hands of the TUC can do nothing to lessen the danger of Hammond moving towards the creation of a British Solidarnosc uniting all scab unions.

The TUC solution of leaving Wapping as a non-union cordon sanitaire is a premature declaration of defeat. Far from relying on the TUC, it is therefore a requirement of the first importance that militants look to their own power and abilities to cut across bureaucratic appeasement. The EETPU should be expelled from the TUC, not to frighten Hammond, but to unleash a rank and file campaign to get a new leadership of the EETPU and the TUC itself.

The law

The fight against the scab EETPU must be linked to a hearts and minds battle against the scab UDM and the plans for a British Solidarnosc. Shilly-shallying over expelling the EETPU can only encourage the general rightward drift of the trade union bureaucracy and cement its compliance

with Tory anti-union law.

The Great Strike showed how the law can make all effective industrial action illegal even against a single employer and Murdoch has cleverly organised his companies to take full advantage of the law against 'secondary action'. Because of this, all talk of complying with the courts is tantamount to unconditional surrender. If the News International printers are to get anywhere the law must be broken.

But the root cause of the miners' defeat was not the law or scabbing; no, it was their isolation. The lesson for print workers is simple. The struggle against Murdoch must be spread, first of all to the whole of Fleet Street. A Murdoch victory will see all Fleet Street print jobs on the line, so these workers have a direct interest in coming out. And if for one reason or another Dean and Dubbins prevaricate, unofficial action must be taken. Of course, even with all of Fleet Street out Murdoch could still win.

For this reason other workers must join the fray. Mass picketing at every Murdoch concern, at every point of production and distribution, is essential, but workers in transport, print raw material supply, telephones, maintenance, and every other conceivable sector that keeps the Sun, The Times, and other Murdoch titles coming out must organise solidarity blacking.

To do this the local boycott committees that have been called for could prove an ideal vehicle. They could become very broad and very effective if they take a leaf out of the miners' Great Strike and learn from the Miners' Support Committees. In other words they should be open to delegates from all working class organisations, drawing upon all available activists and militants to carry out picket duties and agitation in favour of blacking.

Workers' defence

As these lines are written we have

already seen the first use of riot police outside Murdoch's Wapping fortress. The miners' Great Strike did not show that mass picketing was outdated, as some have suggested, but that mass pickets have to be protected by Workers' Defence Corps. Unless they are, mass pickets are easy prey for police snatch squads, massed cavalry charges, and riot shield carrying, baton-waving, blue phalanxes, and of course the always present reserves ready to fire plastic bullets.

Faced with a battle that demands the utmost seriousness and courage, the leaders of SOGAT and the NGA appear to be backing off where Scargill refused to budge. The sequestrators have been given every assistance by SOGAT and the emphasis is being shifted away from spreading and generalising the strike to fighting in the bosses' courts and doing a PR job to get public sympathy.

Dean and Dubbins must not be allowed to trap the struggle in the web of legal gobbledygook and then pass the buck to the newspaper buying public. So while calls for readers of the Sun and The Times to stop buying them are worthwhile, such a campaign must not overshadow or substitute for the necessity of industrial action. It must be understood that although public sympathy can be of some value, this sympathy comes as a direct result of working class strength and without that strength all that can be obtained is pity; and that is next to useless in the class struggle, as union members at GCHQ have found to their cost.

Labourism

Almost because it ended in defeat the 1984-5 miners' Great Strike provided a searching, if not final test, for the theory and practice of the various parties, groups, and shades in the workers' movement which all print workers would do well to heed.

The Labour Party and TUC top echelons certainly thoroughly

exposed their treacherous crypto-bourgeois face, their role as pro-capitalist fifth column in the workers' movement. For Kinnock the whole strike was an acute embarrassment. Though in order to prove his use and fidelity to the ruling class he did all in his power to avoid being seen to stand alongside the miners.

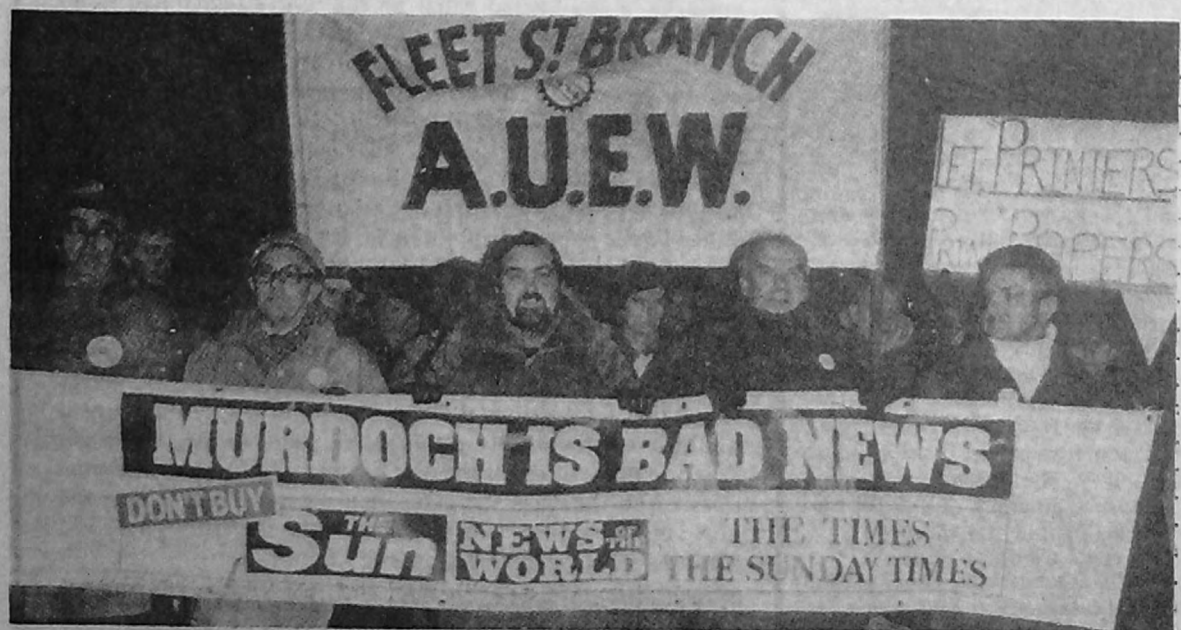
Part and parcel of this was the frantic attempt by this verbose, former stand-up comic at the annual Tribune rally to strike an Olympian 'statesmanlike' pose. Having duly achieved the status of a moral pygmy he monstrosly equated Thatcher and the police with Scargill and the militant miners: something which could only weaken the morale of striking miners.

Now this perfidious Labourite rat is joining Thatcher in denouncing workers' violence at Wapping. This shyster even has the cheek to present himself and the "next Labour government" as the only hope for the working class. That he declares that the "next Labour government" will not release the imprisoned miners, reinstate those victimised, or reimburse the NUM says everything about the worth of this reformist nostrum, which does not promise elementary justice, let alone socialism.

The TUC

As to the TUC, despite congress resolutions to "give full support", as today, it was never willing to defy Tory anti-union legislation. And again, as with today, what went for the TUC went for most of its left-reformist led affiliates.

Always ready to make grand tub thumping promises and issue dire 'big bang' warnings, the leaders of the TGWU, NUR, Aslef and many other unions refused to link the struggle of their members in the docks, at Leylands, on the rails, in local government, and in the schools to that of the miners, despite numerous opportunities to do so; and SOGAT and the NGA were not innocent on this score either.



The miners stood alone while left reformist union leaders accepted paltry 1% extra wage deals on the back of the Great Strike in the full knowledge that they were getting a Judas payment and that once the miners were down the bosses would seek other victims for rationalisation, privatisation, and deunionisation; something print workers know all about today.

In the midst of this treachery by a thousand acts of sectional narrowness, never to be delivered promises, and fake solidarity Tony Benn assured the working class that the miners "had already won", that Thatcher was on the run.

Dear old Tony, who as a whiz-kid energy minister introduced the divisive productivity scheme which lay at the heart of the Notts scabbing, sat in the cabinet which sent British troops to Ireland, introduced the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act, and used troops to break strikes was full of such useless wishful thinking. Not surprisingly he and the Campaign Group huffed and puffed in parliament and proved neither able nor willing to stage a head on challenge to Kinnock or the openly pro-scab Labour MPs whom they willingly sit with on the opposition benches, the NEC, and at annual conference.

Revolutionary left

What about the revolutionary left: was it of any more use to the miners than the reformist left?

While in the main individual revolutionaries did sterling work, the organisations proved tailist with few exceptions, theoretically barren with hardly an exception, and hopelessly impotent with no exception.

The Labour Party entrysts, most notably *Militant*, *Socialist Action*, and *Socialist Organiser*, sought as always to channel the energy of the class struggle into their futile project of making the Labour Party an instrument of socialist change. Thus, far from proving 'ultra-leftist' in the Great Strike, these groups proved pathetically inadequate. At best they acted as a pale if adulatory echo of Arthur Scargill's more radical statements, but often they found themselves being outdone by him in terms of militancy, such was their conservatism.

Militant could never bring itself to go beyond the call for a 24 hour general strike. Its blockheaded commitment to the mechanical one reformist step at a time world of Labour Party committee room politicking meant it was unable to confront in theory what was needed in the class struggle and therefore inevitably where they had some influence, such as in Liverpool, it did not even attempt to fuse the struggle against rate capping with the miners' fight, except of course when it came to

platform rhetoric.

Deafest

The SWP was if anything even more craven in its conservatism. Tony Cliff, chief SWP ideologue head in the clouds of SWP ideological orthodoxy, dogmatically and amazingly brushed the Great Strike aside as an "extreme example of the downturn" in the early months of the strike. In his masters' footsteps and with a true petty bourgeois determination to submit to defeat before it had happened, his number two Chris Harman declared as the strike neared its end that 1985 was more like 1927 than 1925. Put another way the SWP was defeatist from the beginning to the end.

So the SWP did little or nothing to generate meaningful solidarity even to the point of arrogantly boycotting Miners' Support Committees for the first half of the strike. And being utterly besotted with traditional trade unionism, especially mass pickets, it condemned the miners' Hit Squads as counterproductive and refused to fight for their transformation into Workers' Defence Corps which would make mass pickets effective and safe given that the police had tooled up for the class war. In true cowardly fashion it did its best to limit solidarity to collecting money and baked beans, all the while letting the trade union and labour bureaucracy off the hook by denouncing as unrealistic emphatically realistic and vital calls for joint strike action up to and including a general strike.

The strike brutally tested the revolutionary pretensions of such groups and revealed them to be little more than left adjuncts to the labour and trade union bureaucracy. Success for them rested on persuading or pressurising the existing structures, not creating the best conditions for independent working class action free from the fetters of Labourism. Because of their lack of revolutionary vision and erroneous theory these groups acted as an economic or tailist, conservative brake on the working class.

Aftermath

The aftermath of the Great Strike has greatly speeded up the degeneration of most opportunists. In periods of relative social peace and prosperity it is easy for all sorts of frippish intellectuals, humbugging cult founder/leaders, and loudmouthed, hard-drinking labour movement bureaucrats to lay claim to revolutionary credentials. Come fierce class struggle and the decay of social peace, these pretensions are either cast aside as dogmatic sectarian baggage, the naive illusions of a working class laddy yet to walk in the corridors of power, or theory loses all connection with the real world.

The explosive result of the

divorce between theory and reality is best seen in the collapse of the Workers' Revolutionary Party. Some groups avoided this fate by not exaggerating their own clout and the imminence of revolution. This did not, unfortunately, curb leftist sectarianism with the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Spartacist League. As an act of self preservation these idealists were forced into some strange, almost laughable, flights of unreality, not least the ignoring of Hit Squads, on principle refusing to demand anything off the TUC while demanding everything off its left affiliates (and even some of its right ones), and above all the boycotting of the Miners' Support Committees.

While it is important to point out the ideological and organisational failure of the petty bourgeois left in the strike, this must not be done in order to gloat, but because this has important lessons for the conduct of the Wapping dispute and above all the future.

In a sense the Great Strike pointed to what can be said to be a profound general crisis in all the left and right opportunist and reformist trends in the workers' movement and a collective inability to deliver the goods in terms of practical solidarity, clearheaded leadership, or the pointing to lessons of the past. Despite this it must be understood that with the case of 'infantile leftism' it is very much a symptom of the rightist domination of our workers' movement, not least the opportunist sins of our Communist Party of Great Britain.

The CPGB

Surely one of the reasons for the defeat of the Great Strike despite the heroism, the widespread sympathy, and its unprecedented duration was the decline of the CPGB, its lack of a firm Marxist-Leninist perspective, its weakened roots in the working class, and the disarray in its ranks.

During the strike most of the 'revolutionary democratic' tendency in our Party known to us as the Euros decided to keep a diplomatic silence on the key questions like violence, balloting, and the treachery of Labourism. But in the wake of the bitter defeat the revisionist knives came out.

Not content with attempting to cut the circle of the proletarian Women Against Pit Closures movement into the square of petty bourgeois feminism, some insisted on expanding on the fatuous thesis that the violence and perhaps the strike itself was nothing more than a result of male hormones or childhood socialisation and leftist posturing.

This meant in hindsight denouncing attempts at the Labour Party conference and the TUC to commit the "next Labour government" to legislate for a review of all those sacked and imprisoned

and the reimbursement of NUM funds. Mass picketing was described as out of date and male (by neo-Fabian/feminist definition, bad) and post-mortems which condemned Kinnock and Willis were dismissed as "sectarian".

For many of these comrades the failure of the strike lay in the lack of involvement of the SPD at prayer in the Church of England and apparently the inability of the NUM to win 'public' support because it did not paint the entire strike sufficiently in gaudy social patriotic red, white, and blue.

True, the pamphlet on the miners' strike by Pete Carter, Industrial Organiser, proved too far-out for an Executive Committee still wanting to retain some links with the trade union hierarchy. Nonetheless the strike itself and the aftermath has propelled our Party to the right. From touring the country in 1984-5 putting the NUM case the leadership is being craftily manoeuvred into a position where it will spurn all industrial militancy, blame violence on men or 'outside forces', and look to the future of the Party as a neo-Fabian "think tank of the left" which favours an Alliance/Labour coalition, EEC membership, and an incomes policy. All of which is about as much use as a hole in the head for sacked printworkers and the working class as a whole.

CCG

Naturally the Communist Campaign Group depicts its *Morning Star* as having played a truly principled role during the miners' Great Strike as it is now doing for having blown the gaff on Murdoch's union busting operation. The paper is even compared with Lenin's *Iskra*. Yet in truth the Great Strike exposed the *Morning Star* as the antithesis of *Iskra* and genuine communism. In the whole 12 months of the strike not once did the *Morning Star* warn the miners about the limitations and dangers of the NUM leadership's left reformism: not once did it agitate or propagandise for the necessity of communist leadership in the class struggle.

Indeed, far from simply being content to act as a cheerleader for Arthur Scargill's left reformist semi-syndicalism, *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater went to the greatest lengths to praise openly pro-capitalist elements like Kinnock and Willis. No one should ever forget the *Morning Star* headlines proclaiming Kinnock was giving "full backing" to the miners and that Willis "fully supported" the strike. So, far from even performing the role of the left of the trade union and labour bureaucracy, the *Morning Star* doggedly praised every official 'initiative', all in the cause of the thoroughly un-*Iskraite* worship of trade union secretaries

and trade union politics (*ie*, the very economism *Iskra* directed most of its fiery polemic against).

Will CCG printworker leaders like Hicks and Freeman provide communist leadership at Wapping or will they merely act as left trade unionists? Certainly if the Great Strike is anything to go by these comrades do not even see the need for a specifically communist input into the struggle.

Leninists

Faced as we are with the most reactionary government this century, the portentous and unmistakable signs of a new general crisis of capitalism, and the certainty that this will bring with it a great intensification of the class struggle, there can be no doubting that our class will require the strengthening of the CPGB, its re-forging into a Bolshevik organisation. This is what *The Leninist* is uniquely dedicated to achieve.

Although *The Leninist* is in many ways a political organisation still in nappies, we discharged our communist responsibilities with honour during the Great Strike. More importantly we were ideologically equipped for the strike and understood its significance. We stated that the strike not only revealed the existing balance of class forces, pointed to the nature of the class battles to come, but even gave us a glimpse of the form that working class state power in Britain could take.

Because of this we saw the strike as an historic turning point on a par with 1926 in its significance, but with one crucial difference. 1926 marked the desperate end to a period of working class militancy which stretched back to 1910. 1984 was the explosive beginning of a new wave of sharp class battles like Wapping, which because of the decline of British imperialism and its growing inability to manoeuvre will not only transform the face of British politics, but will sooner or later pose point blank the question of which class rules. Because of this the strike itself and its aftermath has exposed all that is weak, all that is rotten in the workers' movement.

What the miners' Great Strike was lacking was not determination or courage; the miners showed truly heroic determination and magnificent fighting grit. What was lacking was revolutionary communist leadership. Certainly the existing leadership of our class was tragically found wanting even when it came to fighting a sectional economic struggle. So if we are to deal with the Tory government and meet the challenge of the future there can be no question that our CPGB must be forged into a mass revolutionary Communist Party. This provides the most important lesson of the Great Strike.

Jack Conrad



PARTY PIECES

London

February's issue of *Communist*, the Straight Leftist's samizdat publication, reports that delegate elections for the London District Congress to be held in March show that a majority will be for the EC. *Communist* comments that this is "unsurprising", not least given the fact that 20 of the district's 90 branches have been subject to "administrative measures—re-registration, removal of committee, liquidation—over the last year." The congress, which is being boycotted by the Chatterites remaining in the Party, will elect a new District Secretary and comrade McKay will return to the job of National Organiser.

We already have in our possession the CCG's response to the London District Congress in its draft form. The 14 page document is written by Tom Durkin, Roger Trask, Bernie Steer, and Ivan Beavis. It is open to amendments by CCG groups, though who exactly decides what is and what is not acceptable we do not know, although it makes truly boring reading; for information's sake we will review it in both draft and finalised forms in a future edition.

Yesterday's revisionism

We have long maintained that the CCG was not only preparing for a breakaway party like the NCP, but that its ideological platform is little more than yesterday's revisionism. This was confirmed by reports of Tom Durkin's speech to the Glasgow CCG meeting in February. According to Tom, "The main aim is the return of a Labour government, committed by mobilised mass pressure to carry out left policies." This Kinnock-led, pie in the sky, parliamentary road to socialism necessitates defending the "labour movement's alternative economic strategy", which would allow the bourgeois party of the working class to "regenerate" British imperialism's "manufacturing base, and open up new trading prospects world-wide." This isn't just 1970s style social patriotism, but straightforward Bernsteinism.

Visits

Comrades McLennan, Johnstone, Pocock, and Glen are to represent the CPGB in an historic delegation to China in April. This will mean a resumption of CPGB/CPC relations which were severed 25 years ago. Another delegation consisting of comrades Gibbs, Richards, and Cunningham will be going to Nicaragua, while comrade Ashton will attend the Communist Party of India's congress over March 12-17, comrade Darke will be in Italy for the PCI congress in April and comrades Carter and Malley will be in Berlin for the Socialist Unity Party's congress, also in April.



COMMUNIST Meetings and matters

THE TEMPO of the crisis in the Communist Party has slackened somewhat over recent months. This does not of course mean that the crisis is coming to an end, but there exists something of an interregnum.

At the Party's January Executive Committee comrade Dave Priscott made an impassioned plea for tolerance in our ranks. Having declared that "comradely human relations inside the Party have been the worst casualties of the inner-Party struggle" he went on to say that "whatever our differences, all those of us who base ourselves on the BRS must set the whole Party an example of openness, honesty, and humanity in our relations with each other if we are to win the day and restore the unity this Party so desperately needs."

Transparently, one thing that comrade Priscott had in mind was the personal vendetta some district functionaries are carrying out. Expulsions and suspensions at a district level have soared, as have unofficial ways of getting rid of members whose politics are not liked through simple refusal to recard them. As if this were not bad enough, some branch officials are refusing to give certain recruits cards if they suspect them of having the wrong friends or reading the wrong publications (and that now includes not only *The Leninist*, but the *Morning Star*).

Such actions have not only played into the hands of the Communist Campaign Group and its plans for a pro-*Morning Star* split, but have seriously damaged Party organisation. The EC was

told that the most precipitous drop has taken place in the North West District. It has only managed so far to recard 35% of its old membership, much to the delight of the CCG. But this dismal picture is not confined to the North West. South East Midlands recard figure was also reported to be only 35%, while Sussex stood at 36%, Wales 39%, Midlands 44%, and London, Eastern, East Midlands, and Yorkshire 45%.

This drop in membership, which after all must be seen against a back-drop of long decline, has created an increasingly tight financial situation. The number of full timers have therefore "reluctantly" been reduced by two immediately (Graham Harker the Student Organiser and door-keeper Ben Withen), and one later. Although it must be noted that despite this the EC agreed to increase the wages of all Party staff and launch a new Party monthly.

More importantly membership decline has, according to comrade Priscott, limited the Party's ability to engage in public activity. Unfortunately the EC could come up with little to overcome this problem. The usual call to "turn the Party outwards" was issued, but responsibility for "raising the level" of Party work was handed to the District Committees, which will no doubt pass the buck in turn to the branches.

On the brighter side the EC was told that the circulation of *Marxism Today* continues to creep up and that *7 Days* had sales hovering around the 9,000 mark compared with the EC's target

figure of 6,500. Of course when we compare it with the 1985 membership figure of some 12,700 this is a poor effort. In part this reflects the general state of Party morale and organisation and the fact that *7 Days* gets no massive bulk orders from the socialist countries. This said there can be no doubt that a wide swathe of Party members considers *7 Days* nothing more than a mouthpiece of Eurocommunism like *Marxism Today*. In truth, *7 Days* offers a very bland diet with none of the cunning self-publicising heresy of comrade Jacques' journal; in fact, it is widely considered to be very much like the old *Morning Star*.

This has led to rumblings of discontent in the camp of hard line Eurocommunism. They do not like comrade Myant's style and feel that this former deputy editor of the *Morning Star* has forgotten nothing and learnt nothing. The Euros are not only unhappy with *7 Days*, but the lack of a full blown assault against all non-Euro elements and the failure of the EC to embrace all their petty bourgeois fads and causes.

The EC agreed to measures designed to ensure control of former dissident London and the North West districts by "reconstituting" certain London branches in preparation for March's district congress and giving the provisional North West Committee the "same powers as the rules accord to a district committee". Despite this many Euros are not satisfied. They want a far reaching purge. This was implicitly rejected by

comrade Priscott who, speaking for the majority of the EC, urged a softly, softly approach.

This does not mean the EC will stop its clamp down on centrist elements. The East Midlands District, which has been sympathetic to the *Morning Star*, is to be investigated by comrades Dave Priscott and Tony McNally (the hard line Euro district secretary in Midlands) after "complaints relating to the work of the District Committee" had been received. But clearly the majority of the EC want to return to 'normality', not deepen the divisions in the Party.

What we are thus seeing, as we have always predicted, is the first sign of divergence in the pro-EC alliance between some of the various strands of Eurocommunism and the Party machine. Because it never had a firm ideological basis this was always not just a possibility, but a matter of time. Commitment to an anti-opposition platform was a short term compromise, which by its very nature is unstable and doomed to shatter once the cause for their unity is removed.

At the recent seminar on the AES (see this edition's supplement) called by the Economic Committee, long a bastion of the extreme right in the Party, it was evident that the vast majority attending this Euro rally wanted a definite shift to the right in Party policy. That comrades Dave Priscott and Monty Johnstone stood against the Euro tide illustrated the potential for divergence and shows that the Party crisis was never a simple matter of a split along the *Morning Star* fault line.

WHAT IS THE AES? And why they want to dump it

"Congress instructs the Executive Committee to launch a Party discussion as provided for in Rule 17 (b) on Britain's economic situation and prospects, on our immediate economic demands and the Alternative Economic Strategy and on all aspects of campaigning on jobs, on unemployed rights and on poverty."

IN THIS way the 39th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain called for a debate to be launched on economic policy. That debate is now fully under way. *Marxism Today*, the flagship for the Euro faction in our Party, has carried major articles on the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) by Robin Murray and by Sam Aaronovitch, as well as shorter pieces in the *Viewpoint* column. A two-day seminar, *The Great Economic Debate*, was held in London in February, with extracts from contributions to the seminar appearing in *News and Views* of the new Party monthly paper. In addition, there have been public meetings up and down the country featuring prominent members of the Economics Committee of the Party.

As far as the debate within the Party goes, this is a strictly Euro/EC affair, but the Communist Campaign Group have not been silent on the matter. Rather, they have come forward as the true defenders of the old AES, through their own meetings and articles published in the *Morning Star*. There are clear reasons for this, and the debate itself is indicative of the liquidationism of both these factions. As was argued in last month's edition of *The Leninist*, the old AES was never so much the economic policy of the Party, as the economic policy of 'the Left', which means economic policy to be implemented by a Labour government. The faction around the *Morning Star* want to pose as the left-wing of Labourism, the Euros are far more interested in coming over as the 'sensible left'; neither faction attempts to offer a communist alternative to the reformism of the Labour Party, but instead are engaged in a squabble over which constituency within Social Democracy to offer their services as ginger group. The CCG is cultivating the union leadership, the Euros have their eye on Kinnock and the 're-aligners'.

But this is not to say that the debate is irrelevant. On the contrary, we in *The*

Leninist have always advocated an open ideological debate within the Party, and we relish the opportunity to debate the AES. We hold no illusions in the likelihood of the editorial board of *Marxism Today* giving us a platform for our revolutionary ideas, but we will take every opportunity to air the revolutionary alternative within the Party, taking advantage of the level of interest in economic issues that the launching of a debate by the Party leadership will have stimulated.

The Leninist has broached the subject of the AES before, and in far greater depth than will be possible in this supplement. The reader is therefore directed to the articles by Comrade Frank Grafton in the first three issues of *The Leninist*. Our task here is rather to trace the origins of the AES and to analyse the arguments around both in the debate as it is unfolding.

1. The long boom and consensus economic policy

It is extremely difficult to locate precisely the origin of the AES. This is so for two reasons. On the one hand, there is not now, nor has there ever been, one AES, but always an unfolding debate, different drafts, different emphases. On the other hand, what came to be referred to as the AES around the end of the 1970s was a development of the ideas that were emerging without any such grandiloquent title as early as the mid-1960s. Ron Bellamy argued in the *Morning Star* (February 10 1986) that Bert Ramelson's pamphlet *The Great Wage Freeze Trick* of 1966 already included the AES as such, and he went on to argue that the left of the Labour Party were also developing the AES in response to the initiatives of the Labour Party right around Barbara Castle's *In Place of Strife*, culminating in the Labour Party programme of 1973. Nonetheless, the impetus to the development of the AES given by the advent of the new economic policies of monetarism, first implemented by Labour with Healey as Chancellor, and extended and deepened by the Thatcher government, make it legitimate to talk of the AES as being a child of the late 1970s.

Prior to the advent of monetarism, it is fair to talk of a consensus on economic policy between the two parties of government. The name given to the economic policies of the 1950s and 1960s, 'Butskel-

lism' is itself derived from the names of Tory chancellor R A B Butler and Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. Both the economic policy consensus and the breakdown of that consensus have a material basis: the long boom ushered in after the close of the second world war, and its subsequent breakdown by the 1970s. The period in question can be seen as one of full employment capitalism coupled with social welfare programmes in the imperialist metropolises, a period of reforms and wage rises, made possible by the high profits that capital was able to earn. The conditions which made this exceptional phase in the development of capitalism possible could not last forever, but lasted a sufficiently long time to give rise to a plethora of theories which regarded the post-war period as the advent of a crisis-free capitalism, or the emergence of 'industrial society', or even post-industrial society, which made any talk of 'capitalism' as such obsolete. Nor were Marxists free from such talk.

Leading theorist of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, Ernest Mandel, could see fit to talk of 'neo-capitalism', while in America independent Marxist economists Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran wrote of the replacement of the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall by the law of rising surplus as the fundamental law of capitalism, locating the central contradiction of capitalism as a mode of production within the sphere of exchange, rather than production, seeing the problem of an insufficient demand leading to stagnation as the central characteristic of post-war monopoly capitalism. Despite the fact that both Sweezy and Mandel were later to return to more orthodox Marxist positions when the crisis began to bite, it remains the case that only a minority, such as the Left-Communist Mattick, stuck by the fundamentals of Marxist political economy.

2. The relative Decline of British Imperialism

British imperialism after WWII had to face some startling choices. It emerged from WWII in a much weakened state compared to its position prior to the war. Britain, the foremost capitalist power from the industrial revolution onwards, had begun its relative decline as other nations, Germany and the United States

in particular, began to emerge into the modern arena as capitalist powers. As capitalism developed into monopoly capitalism, that is as the further development of capitalism in the rising capitalist powers increasingly took of necessity the form of outward expansion, the scene was set for a struggle over the re-division of the colonial world.

This struggle had two phases. In the first place, there was the period where the imperialist nations expanded their colonial possessions to cover almost the entire globe. This is the period of the Conference of Berlin (1884/5) which carved Africa up between the European powers. The nations which remained uncolonised in this period, the capitalist powers themselves excepted, can be divided into two groups. On the one hand, there were those countries which had gained their independence from their colonial masters, only to enter into a relationship of neo-colonial dependency with the then dominant power, Britain. This essentially was the fate of the Latin American countries, with the United States playing a similar role to Britain, in central America in particular. The other nations were those sufficiently powerful, or sufficiently resilient, to resist attempts at full colonisation, but which maintained their independence only at the price of major concessions to the capitalist powers. Thailand and China in Asia, Ethiopia in Africa, are prominent examples.

A fundamental law of capitalist development is the law of uneven development. Britain throughout the 19th century remained by far the most powerful capitalist power, but as we have noted, its power was nonetheless declining relative to its rivals. The period in which the full division of the world between the capitalist powers was consolidated, was one in which Britain remained the hegemonic power. Britain's empire was by far the largest of any of the powers. As other nations rose to the point where British power was increasingly under challenge, the scene was set for a major struggle over the re-division of the world. The strains in the world capitalist system finally developed into a full scale imperialist war of re-division in 1914, predominantly between Germany and Britain, with other powers having to take sides.

The irony of this war is that the rising power, Germany, was ultimately to prove unable to wrest the empire from the

declining power, Britain. Thus post-war, Britain's colonial empire remained intact and Germany's was dismantled. In terms of economic power, German imperialism was catastrophically impaired by the settlement after the war, while Britain's relative decline continued apace. The nation which benefited most notably from the war was the USA. The significance of this situation has many aspects, but for our purposes here it is sufficient to highlight one in particular, namely that the forces and tensions in the imperialist world which lay behind the war of redivision were not settled by the war to which they had given rise. Still the power with by far the largest colonial empire, Britain, was declining rapidly relative to its rivals, the US in particular. In other words, a redivision of the world between the colonial powers was still an objective necessity for the capitalist system.

If the result of the First World War was an irony of history in the way we have argued, the result of the Second World War was even more so. When the second war of redivision broke out, it was again between Britain and a resurgent Germany, and again the war ended without the defeat of Britain. But if the First World War had accelerated the relative decline of British imperialism, the Second World War pushed this process to a qualitatively higher plane. The USA emerged as the only capitalist power to unequivocally gain from the hostilities. Largely unaffected by the destruction which accompanied the war in Europe and Asia, the US economy was in a position of such unchallengeable dominance within the imperialist camp that it was in a position to dictate the shape of the post-war settlement to no small degree.

What this meant in concrete terms is both simple and far reaching. America's dominance within the imperialist camp was such that it did not require formal colonial domination of territories in order to dominate them economically; US capital's relative strength precluded any serious threat of competition. Instead, the USA could rely on neo-colonialism as its preferred mode of redividing the world. In this respect, one may legitimately compare the scale of the clear dominance of US capital with that of the British economy in the mid-19th century. So great was the economic superiority of US capital that it could afford to offer the other imperialist nations a role of junior partner, partaking of the benefits of joint exploitation of the backward countries, though this was by no means free of inter-imperialist conflict. The conditions that had to be met by the other imperialist powers to embark on this new settlement can be summed up in a word: decolonisation, or the dismantling of colonial empires.

The choice was stark, but reality allowed for no real options. Faced with the two major military powers in the world both siding with the process of decolonisation—the USSR to integrate national liberation with the transition to socialism globally, the US to foster a tame neo-colonial empire—Britain could not for long deceive itself that it could continue to stop the holes in the dam. The decision taken, the British ruling class entered headlong into the role of junior partner with a relish.

3. Full-employment capitalism in Britain after WWII

There were political questions to solve internally as well. The pre-war years of depression and unemployment, followed by the full employment war economy, put government intervention into the economy to maintain the level of economic activity firmly on the agenda. The massive destruction of capital during the war, which had the effect of reducing the organic composition of capital, and of creating a market for investment in infrastructure, laid the foundations to make this policy affordable. Renewed profitability gave capitalism the capacity to offer major reforms to meet the tide of working class demands. Throughout the buoyant conditions of the 1950s and 1960s governments in Britain and elsewhere intervened to offset the vicissitudes of the business cycle, dampening down the economy at times of extremely high levels of economic activity, boosting demand

when a recession approached. These policies, known together as the 'stop-go cycle' characterised a whole period of economic policy making.

There was a full blown economic ideology to back up the policy. Keynes had argued that the tendency towards slump in capitalist economies could be averted within the confines of capitalist society by means of demand management. The business cycle was seen as a result of the anarchy of capitalist production, but as being located in the sphere of the circulation of commodities alone—too rapid growth could lead to oversaturation of markets, and a decline in investment could filter back through aggregate demand to stimulate a generalised recession. By intervening to control demand, or rather to regulate the uneven pattern of expansion of demand, the state could put an end to slumps forever. No contradiction in the sphere of production itself was acknowledged, production being seen as a technical rather than a social process.

On one level, one may look at the period of the long post-war boom as one of successful counter-cyclical economic policy by the state. But the success was relative and limited. No amount of offsetting, delaying or dampening of short-term fluctuations in the level of economic activity can change the underlying fundamental laws. The period was one of full or near full employment, but was equally one of rising organic composition of capital and growing centralisation of capitals. As the period wore on, the world capitalist economy showed itself to be increasingly incapable of maintaining full employment, even in the imperialist metropolises. Looked at in global perspective, the law of tendency of the rate of profit to fall asserted itself through three manifestations: the re-emergence of insoluble unemployment, the advent of severe general price inflation and the growth of debt and the creation of fictitious capital—paper claims to productive capacity which bear no direct relation to actual physical res-

ources, and which accumulate without any necessary expansion in the physical capital to which they ultimately bear title.

But this is not to say that British capitalism had no problems prior to the 1970s. On the contrary, the relative decline of the British economy continued apace. The economic problems faced by Britain in the present period are therefore a combination of two elements—the growing crisis of capitalism internationally, and the relative decline of the British economy. This duality is the source of a central ambiguity in the writing of Britain's economic performance in general, and in the debates around the formulation of the AES in particular.

There can be no doubt about the poor performance of the British economy relative to that of the other imperialist powers in the post-war period. Throughout the post-war period the British economy has been subject to two sets of inter-related problems: a chronic instability in the foreign exchange value of sterling and a perennial balance of payment crisis, and slow growth in output and productivity relative to the other major capitalist powers.

A run on the pound on the foreign exchanges has become a regular feature of the economic situation in Britain. The Bretton Woods system, which sought to peg each currency against the dollar, with the dollar fixed in terms of and freely convertible into gold, allowed for periodic devaluations and revaluations in the parity values of each currency should circumstances demand this, but with the proviso that exchange-rate stability and fixity were the goals to which each country should aspire for their currency, and that the member countries should defend their currencies through buying and selling in the open market. No major currency made such dramatic and frequent use of the devaluation and emergency borrowing facilities as did the pound sterling, with the possible exception of

the Italian lira.

One may identify two currents within the weakness of the pound. On the one hand, the current account of the balance of payments, which is the measurement of the trade in goods and services and the balance between the two, showed increasing and permanent problems as demand was expanded and unemployment fell towards the full employment level during the cycle. Government stimulation of demand in the economy tended to suck in imports, precipitating a current account crisis. The response was to put the brakes on, reduce government budget deficits, and hence reduce demand for imports, bringing the current account back into balance. As this process involved reducing demand for domestic produce as well as imported produce, this also meant a rise in the unemployment level. As government action to offset this meant demand stimulation, the whole process was repeated in the 'stop-go cycle.'

A movement towards stimulating demand could be expected to precipitate a balance of payment crisis, and so such policies entailed pressure on the pound, as foreign exchange reserves dwindled, reducing the ability of the government to maintain the exchange rate through purchases on the open market of pounds sterling. On the other hand the pressure on the pound in response to balance of payments difficulty was worse than for other currencies because of the important role that sterling continued to play as a major trade currency and as an international financial asset. Overseas holding of sterling added volatility to an already unstable situation, and the resulting pressure led to devaluations in the exchange-value of the pound in 1949, when sterling was devalued by over 30% from \$4.03 to \$2.80, and in 1967, when it was devalued further to \$2.40.

The story so far as growth rates are concerned can be seen readily from the tables below. Britain's rate of growth in output and in output per person compare with other European countries has been slow. The picture in terms of industrial output is as bad as can be seen from table 2.

4. The end of the post-war boom

As time went by, the ability of Britain to maintain full employment and a balance of payments equilibrium declined progressively. In terms of the 'stop-go cycle', two elements may be identified. On the one hand, at the end of each 'go' phase, the economic problems started to set in earlier, and were more severe, than for the previous one. Thus inflation became over time steadily worse, and balancing payments required even lower levels of economic output. On the other hand, at each 'stop' phase, the period when government intervention sought to deflate the economy, the measures required to bring payments back into balance and to reduce inflation became progressively severe, and the level of unemployment at the end of each such phase rose as the post-war period moved on.

There were other aspects to the growing economic problems. Most fundamentally, the rate of profit earned on investment in Britain suffered a secular decline, culminating in the picture highlighted by table 3.

But what can also readily be seen from table 3 is that this process was by no means confined to Britain.

The Break up of the Bretton Woods System

Nor indeed can one talk of the problems of international payments being confined to the British economy. On the contrary, the entire post-war international payments system moved into crisis with particular force in the 1970s. In this we can identify two dates as landmarks. As noted above, the international payments system, known as the Bretton Woods system, was a system of fixed exchange-rates which allowed for some adjustment of parity levels, with these parity levels being denominated in terms of the US dollar. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had the role of giant clearing-house for payments settlements between governments. The underpinning for the scheme, the element which was to guarantee stability and viability, was the free

Table 1 Output and productivity growth in manufacturing industry, 1960-73 (per cent per year)

	Output	Productivity
UK	03.0	3.6
USA	04.9	3.4
Canada	05.9	4.0
Japan	12.0	8.8
West Germany	05.3	5.0
France	05.9	5.6
Italy	06.1	5.2

Source: Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin, March 1979

Table 2 Growth Rates of Real National Income (Total, per Person Employed, and per Capita), 1950-64 and 1955-64 (Percentages)

Country	National income					
	National income		per person employed		National income per capita	
	1950-64	1955-64	1950-64	1955-64	1950-64	1955-64
Germany	7.1	5.6	5.3	4.3	5.9	4.3
Italy	5.6	5.4	5.2	5.4	4.9	4.7
France	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.7	3.8	3.7
Netherlands	4.9	4.3	3.7	3.1	3.5	2.9
Norway	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.7	2.9	3.0
Denmark	3.6	4.8	2.7	3.5	2.9	4.1
United States	3.5	3.1	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.4
Belgium	3.4	3.5	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.9
United Kingdom	2.6	2.8	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.1

Source: Edward F. Denison, assisted by Jean-Pierre Poullet, *Why Growth Rates Differ: Postwar Experience in Nine Western Countries* (Brookings Institution, 1967), Table 2-3.

Countries are listed in the order of growth rates of total national income from 1950 to 1964. German data refer to the Federal Republic; series excluding the Saar and West Berlin from 1950, and including these areas from 1960 to 1964, were linked.

Table 3 Rates of profit for industrial and commercial companies in the main imperialist countries, 1960-75.

	1960	1965	1970	1973	1975
UK	14.2	11.8	08.7	07.2	03.5
USA	09.9	13.7	08.1	08.6	06.9
Japan	19.7	15.3	22.7	14.7	09.5
West Germany*	23.4	16.5	15.6	12.1	09.1
France	11.9	09.9	11.1	10.2	04.1
Italy*	11.0	07.9	08.6	04.5	00.8

Source: A Glyn & J Harrison, *The British economic disaster*, Pluto, 1980

*Note: not strictly comparable to other figures

convertibility of the dollar into gold.

Thus the Bretton Woods system relied on the dollar, backed by gold, to provide the necessary liquidity to make the system function smoothly. The central role for the dollar meant that no weakness in that currency, no instability in the value of that currency relative to other currencies, was compatible with the functioning of the system. And yet the law of uneven development asserted itself behind the backs of the policy strategists of international capital.

If one talks of the relative decline of the British economy, then one must also talk of the relative decline of the US. Throughout this post-war period the US was undergoing slower output and productivity growth than its main rivals, Federal Germany and Japan in particular, and ran an overall balance of payments deficit which had the effect of greatly increasing the amount of dollars held overseas. This outward flow of dollars culminated in a situation where there were more dollars being held abroad than there was gold held in the vaults of Fort Knox, so that there emerged the distinct possibility that the free convertibility of dollars into gold might have to be suspended if there were to be a run on the dollar. This 'dollar overhang' was a constant potentially destabilising feature of the international payments system from the early 1960s on. The overhang was only *potentially* rather than *actually* destabilising at this stage, because so long as the dollar was needed, and was accepted, as a liquid international asset, as a means of payment or settling of accounts, then the situation could continue. But the acceptability of the dollar to other countries and institutions internationally is not a purely subjective affair.

The reason why sterling had played the role of major international currency was historically because of the dominance that Britain had had in the world economy. The post-war instability of sterling, as we have argued above, was in part due to the continued international role of sterling being in contradiction to the underlying strength of British industry. Similarly with the USA. So long as the USA dominated the world economy, so long as the USA was not under any serious economic threat from its rivals, then this continued domination would have its reflection in the financial role of the dollar. But this is precisely what could not be maintained indefinitely. The growth in international trade continued to increase the demand for an internationally acceptable currency, and the rising economic power of Japan and Federal Germany meant that the currencies of these countries would increasingly come to be rivals to the dollar.

This culminated in the first of the two dates we wish to identify: given the nature of the dollar-gold standard, pressure against the dollar took two forms, upward revaluation of currencies such as the yen and the Deutschmark, and the pressure for an increase in the price of gold, the latter being how the value of the dollar is expressed. In March 1968, this pressure resulted in the free-market price of gold being allowed to depart from the official rate of \$35 per ounce. This reflected the reality that the dollar was now no longer 'as good as gold', and the US decision to cling to the rate of \$35 per ounce for official transactions was not a viable option. A dual market in gold exacerbated pressure on the dollar, and in August 1971 the US was left with no alternative, faced with dwindling gold reserves, but to suspend the convertibility of the dollar into gold completely.

With this decision, the Bretton Woods agreement was effectively terminated. In December 1971 a new set of parities were introduced, known as the Smithsonian Agreement, but further attempts to maintain a system of fixed exchange rates without a currency able to play the role that the dollar had played in the 1950s and 1960s was doomed to failure. Instability in foreign exchange markets has been the norm throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

5. Responses to the end of the post-war boom

We can identify three main responses to the exhaustion of Keynesian policies and

the growing economic crisis globally: monetarism, the new Keynesians, and a growing interest in Marxism.

Monetarism

Monetarism as a body of economic theory was developed in opposition to the Keynesian orthodoxy, and is associated above all else with the name of Milton Friedman. The basic tenets of Monetarism are: (i) That there is a natural rate of unemployment to which a capitalist economy will tend if left to itself. (ii) At best, any attempt to move the economy away from this natural position through government economic interventions, will be ineffective, at worst downright destabilising. (iii) Stimulation of demand by governments, designed to bring down the level of unemployment leads directly to price inflation, because it involves increasing the quantity of money in the economy. As the level of economic activity cannot be permanently shifted away from its natural level, this must ultimately mean too much money chasing too few goods—a relative oversupply of money, which can only be resolved by a reduction in the value of money—that is, a general increase in prices. (iv) The economic problems of the 1970s, in particular the existence simultaneously of inflation and unemployment, can be traced to government interventions in the economy.

In essence, two policies follow from monetarism. On the one hand, inflation must be squeezed out of the system, by reducing the rate of growth in the supply of money and bringing it into line with the growth of output. On the other hand, obstacles to the free operation of market forces have to be dismantled. As the economy will of its own accord tend towards its natural level of activity, through the operation of markets, it follows that anything which obstructs their free operation distorts the economy, making it less efficient.

These obstacles in the eyes of monetarism have two basic components. On the one hand, there is government legislation on minimum wages, and, even more importantly, state provision of unemployment benefits and welfare services. On the other hand, trade unions prevent the free operation of the labour market. Unemployment benefit means paying people to be unemployed—and, like any other 'commodity', putting a price on unemployment will call forth a supply. Unemployment benefit raises the natural level of unemployment by making unemployment an attractive proposition. Trade union activity and state minimum-wage legislation both serve the purpose, in the final analysis, of causing unemployment to be higher than it would otherwise have been. The former pushes up real wages, causing a substitution of capital for labour, while the latter makes those firms which depend on low wages go out of business, reducing the number of jobs on offer.

In terms of government economic policy in Britain, monetarism made its debut with Healey as chancellor, and has amounted in essence to a prolonged 'stop' phase of the 'stop-go cycle'. With the defeat of the Callaghan government in the face of working class revolt these policies have been extended and deepened by the two Thatcher administrations, which have stepped up the attack on unions to accompany the austerity.

The New Keynesians

The growing economic problems of the post-war period did not lead to a complete rejection of Keynesianism. There are two schools of Keynesianism, in essence. Firstly, there are the orthodox Keynesians, who argue for the same old policies, but for them to be applied gently. This is the position of the economic gurus of the SDP, such as Prof. Hahn from Cambridge or the old Keynesian James Meade. The other school, in Britain represented by Cambridge University, argue that the failures of Keynesianism in Britain result more from the failure to adapt Keynes's arguments to the reality of an open economy, than from errors in the arguments themselves. The arguments of the Cambridge School centre on a cumulative process of decline, in which there is seen to be a relationship linking slow growth

to slow productivity growth.

This relationship is known as Verdoorn's law, and amounts to the argument that an economy which gets caught in a pattern of slow growth will tend to get trapped there, becoming progressively less competitive, as slow growth and slow productivity feed on each other. Britain's tendency to suck in imports of manufactured items is linked to this relationship: the penetration of foreign manufacturers into the UK domestic market is increasing over time as the exports of the faster-growing economies become increasingly more competitive. Thus the Cambridge argument is that conventional Keynesian policy when a balance of payments crisis developed—namely to reduce demand—actually led to a deterioration in the long-term competitiveness of UK manufacturing industry, as it reduced growth in output, and this forces the UK even further behind its rivals.

The new Keynesian policy prescriptions were for a combination of measures to protect the UK home market which do not rely on reducing the rate of growth of demand and hence output—that is, import controls—with a policy of sustained growth and investment stimulation to break out of the pattern of low investment, slow growth and declining competitiveness.

The Resurgence of Interest in Marxism

Again, there are two strands to this resurgence. Our concern here is above all with the centrist tradition represented by our own Party's intellectuals such as Fine and Harris, whose analysis has led to the development of the AES, but there is another strand, too. The movement towards crisis in the world economy has led to a resurgence in interest in Marx's writings on crisis, to examination of questions of the law of tendency of the rate of profit to fall and its manifestations on a global scale. But in Britain, and within our Party, emphasis has been more on the particular features of the British economy, and the central question has been the reasons for the decline of the British economy in general, and of British manufacturing in particular.

There has been a remarkable degree of agreement among a wide range of writers on this latter question. The relationship which lies at the centre of the debate is that between 'the City' and 'industry'. Starting with Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, the argument has developed that the interests of the City as a financial centre have predominated over the interests of industrial capital. The former is essentially interested in financial stability, fixed exchange rates, and above all free trade. The latter's interests lie in fostering the domestic market, the subordination of trade policy to industrial policy, and long-term planning of investment and the provision of finance for such long-term plans. A contrast is drawn between Britain's banks and those of Germany, the latter with their large industrial research departments, the former with their interest in the overseas interests.

6. The Emergence of the AES

The AES is above all a response to the crisis, and a reaction to the austerity package of economic policy advocated and implemented first by Labour and then by Thatcher. As the crisis of British capitalism developed, and as governments attempted to resolve that crisis at the expense of the working class, the AES emerged to put the case that there is an alternative. In reality, the AES marks the convergence of the new Keynesian and the centrist analyses of the economic decline of Britain. Both strands of thought focussed largely on the de-industrialisation of Britain. Both argued that a strategy must and could be articulated which combated the neglect of manufacturing investment lay at the heart of the problem. What is more, both argued for the need to move away from free trade and a liberal foreign exchange regime. But above all, both agreed that expansion of output and expansion of investment could bring unemployment down and make space for reforms and protection of welfare services. In short, both converged in their policy requirements and in their characterisation of monetarism as catast-

rophic for the British economy.

A convergence it was, but from very different angles. On the side of the new Keynesians, no fundamental contradictions were thought to exist in capitalism as a mode of production. As with all forms of bourgeois economics, the social relations of production are left out of the picture, and conflict, to the extent that it exists, does so in the realms of distribution of income only. A frequent argument employed by the Cambridge Keynesians was that the problems of 'industrial relations' could be alleviated by faster growth, which would entail faster productivity growth, enabling both wages and profits to rise simultaneously. Whatever weaknesses they might possess in terms of depth of analysis, centrists such as Fine and Harris would at least locate the conflict between classes in the realm of production, and would locate the source of the crisis of capitalism in the nature of capitalism as a specific mode of production.

Similarly, although the Cambridge Keynesians could believe that increased productivity through increased investment would raise profits, a consistent centrist (a contradiction in terms, perhaps!) would at least recognise that to raise productivity by replacing workers by machinery, that is by replacing living labour by dead labour, could only lead to increased profitability to the extent that it was accompanied by an increase in the rate of surplus value, that is, through increased exploitation.

But what made possible the convergence was two sets of parallel ambiguities. On the one hand, there was the question of the relative decline of the British economy, and the growing crisis of capitalism internationally. On the other hand, there was the question of whether what was being proposed in the AES was a strategy to enable British industry to catch up with its rivals, that is, to bring British capitalism into the modern arena, as it were, or a strategy for the transformation of society away from capitalism. One could go further and locate a further parallel ambiguity in the programme of our Party, the *British Road to Socialism*.

For this programme, which argues for a peaceful transition to socialism through parliament, and through a procession of Labour governments of a new type, calls for a government which, although not committed to the transition to socialism, will carry out reforms and revitalize the economy, even within the confines of capitalist relations of production. That is, the *BRS* sees as a critical stage in the strategy for socialist transition a period of boosting capitalism, pandering to the interests of capital.

The ambiguity, then, is this: does the strategy involve a conflict with the interests of capital or not? Centrism evades the question. And it is able to evade this question because it evades another one of equal importance, namely the nature of the state. At the heart of the *British Road to Socialism* is the notion of employing the power of the bourgeois state to carry out the necessary tasks during the transition to socialism.

If this is accepted, there can be a degree of lack of concern as to whether what is being proposed is against the interests of capital, for whether it is or not does not alter the prospects of its being capable of being implemented as a strategy by a Labour government.

The *BRS* argues that there has always been a contradiction within the Labour Party between its left and its right, between those who offer a strategy of managing capitalism and those who want to eradicate it. The contradiction exists, true enough, but it does not exist at this level. The contradiction exists within the project of reformism itself. Governmental power—the ability to form a government—is a far cry from seizing state power. A government is able to put forward a set of policies within the confines of capitalist relations of production, but the state apparatus as a whole is designed to defend and extend these relations of production, and can in no sense be wielded by the working class to attack capitalism as a mode of production. At best, the election of a Labour government could lead to reforms which did not cut against capitalist relations of production reforms which the bourgeoisie could afford to

concede. But prior to a settling of the question of power, prior to the smashing of the old state apparatus ("bodies of armed men" in Lenin's words), to expect more is utopian.

7. The AES as a Strategy for Socialism

To the extent that the AES was a strategy for socialism, that is to the extent to which it sought to eradicate capitalism, then it was a reformist strategy pure and simple. This is clear from the words of one of the most influential drafts of the AES, *The Alternative Economic Strategy: A Labour Movement Response to the Economic Crisis* by the CSE London Working Group. While arguing that their proposed AES was not in itself a strategy for introducing socialism, and even acknowledging that "any strategy for socialist advance will meet with political opposition from those whose interests are threatened" (p. 138), they go on to argue that the AES represents a "transitional socialist strategy" in which "the state has an important role in seeking to democratise the process of (especially economic) decision-making" (p.139). The nature of the opposition which is envisaged from capital is gained from reading further down the same page: "The AES starts from concrete problems like jobs, living standards and public services. A direct attack on these problems is not a technical exercise: it will run into political and economic obstacles inherent in the nature of capitalist society. The combined forces of the press, the City and the Civil Service will at the same time attack the strategy, and try to divert and co-opt it." (p.140). It is revealing that no mention should be made of the repressive state apparatus in any of this. One can only draw the conclusion that the authors of this strategy either have evidence that bodies of armed men no longer exist in modern Britain, or that they have the most gross illusions in British bourgeois democracy. In either case the role of communists should be clear—to forewarn the working class against these dangerous misleaders who are taking them into a battle without arms.

8. The Communist Party and the AES

The role of the Communist Party was of course nothing of the sort. Rather than exposing the dangerous illusions of these reformists, it was the intellectuals of our party who were in the forefront of developing the strategy in the first place. Far from exposing the AES as a strategy which ties the working class to the interests of its own bourgeoisie, our Party has been in the vanguard of the call for import controls, which can serve but one purpose in a capitalist society—to protect the profits of the bosses. Far from demonstrating the need to smash the state, far from organising the workers and educating them on how they must defend themselves against the police thugs, our Party has been in the forefront of creating illusions in the ability to 'democratise' these bodies of armed men. Far from distancing itself from the AES, the Party has adopted it as its own strategy.

The Present Debate in the Party

On one level it is difficult to see what the Euros could find in such a programme to object to. It is especially strange to see them so committed to its removal when one recalls that it was largely they who were its most adamant adherents not so very long ago. But on a closer examination, their response is not so difficult to decipher. This can be summed up in a phrase: it now looks far too radical to them.

Just as it would be wrong to see the debate as irrelevant, so too would it be wrong to see it as no debate at all. There are real differences of opinion, and quite what will replace the AES is far from having been worked out. At the 'Great Economic Debate' seminar, there were sharp differences, with some within the EC camp trying to maintain some link between the programme and Marxism, while the others, who appear to be in the minority among the leadership, although by no means necessarily so even among the rank and file of the pro-EC wing of our Party, going about their revisions of

Marxism with much more vigour and much less self-consciousness.

The irony is that the former, such as Monty Johnstone, appear to be pulling back from the implications of the direction they have been pushing the Party, ending up sounding like our sorry centrists of the CCG in appeals for the relevance of class analysis. But while it is interesting to see the likes of Johnstone floundering uncomfortably among the likes of John Grahl and Mike Bleaney, it is the latter who have the distinction, like Bernstein did in his day, of at least being consistent and open in their revisionism. As with Bernstein, it is in the views of this latter type of hardline Euro that the full implications are drawn out.

There are two components of the hardline Euros' critique of the old AES. The first identifies the inadequacies of the old strategy, gaps that need to be filled, or revealing silences in the old schemas. But, there is another altogether more fundamental critique. True to the nature of revisionism, the majority of the time is spent discussing the former, which, if anything, could only lead to a reformulation of the old AES, when the clear intention of the organisers of the internal debate is to go much further and to ditch the whole strategy.

Within these broad streams of critique, there are many currents and inflections. And many of the arguments which are dressed up in the form of the more limited 'reform the AES' argument in reality go much deeper. Thus if we take the four main critiques of the AES as identified by comrade Sam Aaronovitch in February's *Marxism Today*, each in its turn, we can see how much padding is inserted to disguise the real content. Aaronovitch identifies the four critiques as the anti-statist critique, the environmentalist critique, the internationalist critique, and the feminist critique. The 'Great Economic Debate' gave over much of its time to 'green' and 'women's issues', while everyone cries mea culpa for having been so ignorant of the issues before, or for having left them out of the reckoning. Speakers from the rostrum pointed to the neglect of part-time work, the 'tacking on' of women's issues in the AES rather than their integration on an equal basis with men's issues, all of which may well have been true in the early days of the AES, but these arguments were used at the time, and resulted in the explicit inclusion of these concerns into Party policy.

There may be truth in the argument that lip service has been paid to issues affecting women, rather than real attempts to integrate these issues with the overall strategy, but there was nothing in what they said which could not have been said by a critical supporter of the AES. The same goes for the 'environmentalist' critique. No fundamental critique of the AES as a strategy can be advanced from these perspectives. The so-called internationalist critique is an intriguing little number. One would be forgiven for expecting a communist subjecting the AES to an internationalist critique to be arguing for proletarian internationalism rather than pleading for British capitalism to be able to insulate itself from unfair competition through protectionism, but then that would be a bit much to expect from the likes of comrade Aaronovitch & co. For the nature of this internationalist critique is that the old policies of withdrawal from the EEC would actually weaken the British economy.

It is strange that Aaronovitch & co should have taken so long to realise this. As long ago as the first issue of *The Leninist*, we argued that the EEC was an instrument for fortifying and extending British imperialism through alliance with the other imperialist bourgeoisies of Europe, and that therefore communists should call for the withdrawal of Britain from the EEC precisely because this would weaken British capital, and not because British capital would benefit from such a move. In counterposing our perspective to that of the AES, we argued that in this case the latter called for the correct measure, but for the wrong reasons. The Euros, having learned that British capital needs the EEC, jump into the pro-EEC camp.

But the 'internationalist critique' goes further than just questioning withdrawal from the EEC. In the *Marxism Today* art-

icle in question, Aaronovitch points out that the AES in general has too little to say about the kind of international economic policies that should be fought for. He advances the correct argument that the power of British capital has declined sharply relative to others, but moves on to a truly remarkable argument. "The UK, though a fourth rate power, still has wide international interests and concerns and must have alliances to protect them and to influence the world economy." (p.26). Aaronovitch, in an earlier work, *The Road from Thatcherism*, talked of outdated imperialist 'policies' being pursued by British governments. It would appear that he has now learnt that British imperialism is still alive and kicking, and, good little social chauvinist that he is, he wants to make sure that the interests of British capital overseas do not get neglected by a Labour or any other government.

When one looks at the reality of the situation, one sees that British finance capital is still with the USA the most important in the world; are these the legitimate interests which our comrade would seek to see protected? If so, he has come a long way from the days when he and his friends used to whine about the role of the city in sabotaging British industry. Come a long way, that is, in two senses: in terms of realism, as he learns of the importance of our capitalist class's overseas imperialist interests, and also in terms of blatant chauvinism. We argued in the first edition of *The Leninist* that the AES, in counterposing 'the City' to 'industry', was passing over the real point about the particularly parasitic nature of British imperialism, for far from the process of de-industrialisation and the export of capital demonstrating that Britain's imperialist 'policies' were outdated, rather they demonstrated that British imperialism, as the oldest and therefore most developed imperialist power, was also the most parasitic, and pointed to Lenin's arguments as to the inevitability of decay under imperialism.

But what of the 'anti-statist' critique? Last issue we looked at an extreme version of this argument, from Robin Murray. His argument boiled down to emulating the Greater London Enterprise Board on a grand scale, and forgetting about 'state power' on the grounds that it is too remote from people's everyday lives. What we need, the argument runs, is some socialist enterprises, some alternative production. This argument, reminiscent of nothing so much as Owen and the utopian socialists of centuries past, contains more than utopianism when fully reflected upon. For what is argued for is leaving capital alone, not attempting to confront it at all.

Another version of the anti-statist argument which was aired at the two-day debate, was that we should recognise the role which markets could play, and must play, in the transition to socialism. What the advocates of this view had in mind was of course not Lenin's NEP or any such thing following a revolution and under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Rather, what was being advocated was a retreat even from the reformist illusions of the AES. Confrontation with capital is simply not on comrades. We have long known that our revisionists have no intention of taking part in a revolution. It would appear now that they no longer have any intention of taking part in any reforms either. They have correctly learnt that reform in the present setting means confronting capital, and so they back away sharpish.

No greater indication of the eagerness with which our revisionists wish to abandon any formal commitment to the everyday interests of the working class than Comrade Aaronovitch's bland statement that the "opinion is growing that full employment in the '50s sense is not attainable" in the aftermath of the Thatcher years. What this means is that as such a strategy has clearly been abandoned once and for all by British capital, "the number of new jobs created should not be the main criteria for the left's policy on manufacturing." (*Ibid* p.23).

The Morning Star and the AES

What, then, has been the response of the Communist Campaign Group to the on-

slaught on the AES? One need not ask, of course. One will find nothing but a defence of the old policies in their writings on the matter. In their recent book, *The Peculiarities of the British Economy*, Ben Fine and Laurence Harris offer a defence of the AES lock, stock and barrel. In answer to critics of the AES, they offer nothing except an assurance that the AES can be made socialist, rather than just a plan of managing capitalism, by the strength of "left wing parties, the labour movement and other socialist forces in Britain." (p.336). Thus all they offer to counter the class nature of the state is an ill-defined alliance in which no mention is made of the need for communist leadership whatsoever. Far from having recognised the reformism and liquidationism inherent in the AES in the first place, our centrists have taken it a step further; even the *BRS* tried to make a case for the specific role of the Communist Party.

The same perspective is in evidence in Ron Bellamy's articles in the *Morning Star* (February 10-12). Using the language that is characteristic of centrism—revolutionary sounding rhetoric providing a facade behind which lies the most timid reformism—Bellamy correctly identifies the export of capital with imperialism, points out the need for centralism if the working class is to confront the interests of international capitalism, and then proceeds to slide into all the old corks about the need for more state intervention in industry, the need for import controls, and about the 'progressive movement' rather than the need for proletarian revolution.

Conclusions

The dire straights into which opportunism and revisionism has plunged our Party are reflected in concentrated form in the debate on economic policy. Our Party has espoused a thoroughly opportunist, chauvinist and reformist economic policy which has fitted in only too well with our Party's thoroughly opportunist, chauvinist and reformist programme as a whole. As our Party lurches even further to the right, so it now turns to economic policy to push that to the right as well. The response to the crisis in our Party on the part of the Communist Campaign Group has been to hijack the Party's daily paper, and to head ever more hurriedly towards the swamp of the Labour Party. Their response to the initiatives of the leadership of the Party on economic question has been to swagger forward as the true defenders of the Party orthodoxy.

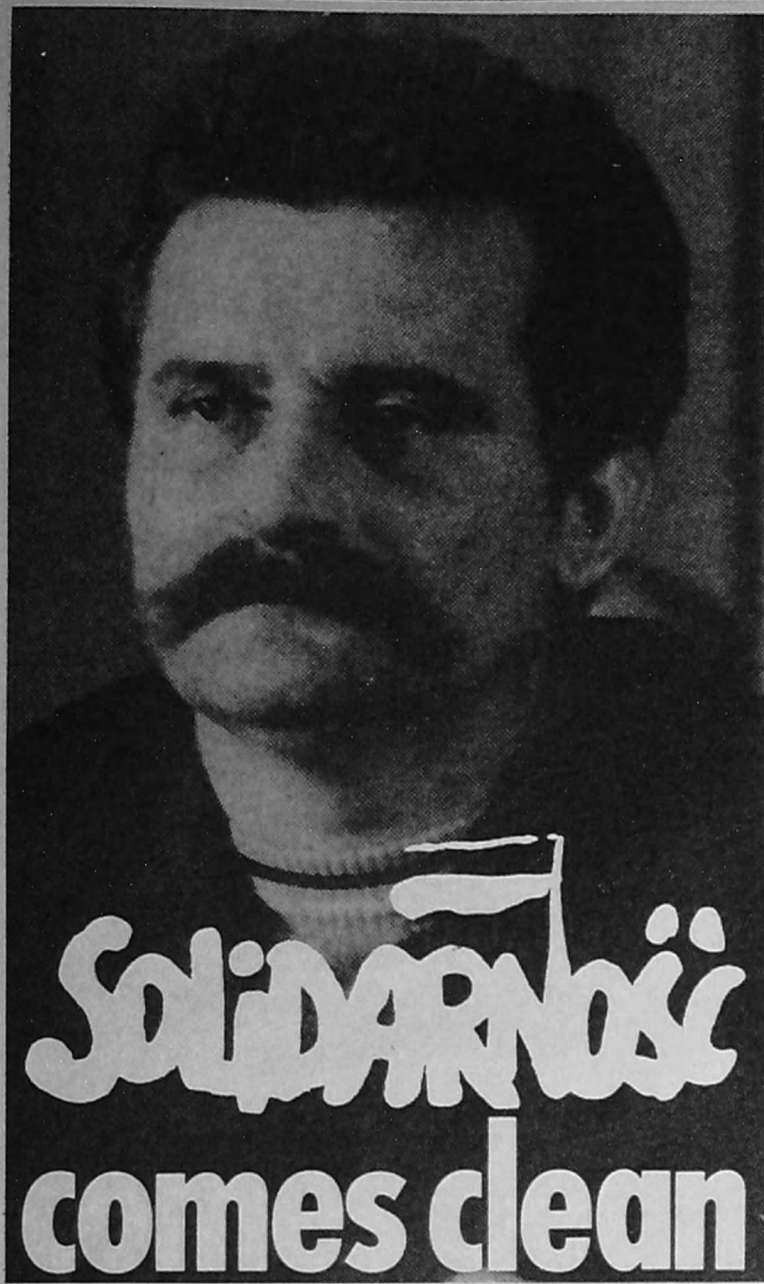
Just as they base their claims to be the true Marxist-Leninists on their interpretation of the *BRS* being the true one, the one which continues the traditions of the Popular Front years, so it was inevitable that they should show how they are loyal to the AES, as well as the *BRS*. For our part, we recognise that they do have a point in this, but then we would question how they, the true continuation of the class collaboration of the Popular Fronts, if that be what they are, can sustain their claim to be Marxist-Leninists. They are true to tradition, all right, the tradition of centrism, a tradition which is rotten to the core.

There are real differences between the centrists and the Euros, but not the difference between reform and revolution. The crisis of our Party cannot be solved along the lines of a choice between the two evils of a petty-bourgeois radicalism of the Euro kind, and the Labourite reformism, which is what the Chaterites offer in practice.

The centrist Bellamy argues correctly that "the root causes of the (Alternative Economic) Strategy have not changed in kind" (*Morning Star* February 10 1986) and the Euros are right when they claim that the constraints on the AES are now greater than ever. But whereas the former believes that this means that a reformist strategy must still be adhered to, and whereas the latter believe that the AES would now be too much like hard work, we Leninists insist on the need for the slow grind of building and reforging our Party, educating the working class in revolutionary politics, and fighting all forms of revisionism and liquidationism.

To use Thatcher's phrase, There is No Alternative.

Brian Curran



swamp that its members must have webbed feet, performed the most amusing gyrations about some of Walesa's more flagrant faux pas. For instance, during the miners' strike Walesa expressed his support for the "wise and brave" Thatcher in opposition to the "violent" miners. "Ah, but", said John O'Mahoney, the editor of *Socialist Organiser*: "Walesa may well think Margaret Thatcher is 'wise and brave', because of her strident rhetoric against the USSR". (*Socialist Organiser*, October 11 1984)

Oh well, that's all right then! It's a perfectly innocent mistake for the leader of a Polish "workers' movement" to make about a politician who was trying to crush the British miners' union at the time, and who in the process went on to oversee the deaths of 5 miners, the imprisonment of over 100, and the sacking of thousands. But at least she is viciously anti-Soviet: wouldn't it be a terrible world if you couldn't find something good to say about everyone, eh John?

Socialist Organiser was always simply more explicit in its communism than other Trot sects. So rabid is this group's hatred of living socialism and the communist parties of the world that they guaranteed Solidarnosc support whatever its politics were:

"Suppose that movement were, in reaction to Stalinism, to advocate restoring capitalism—though Solidarnosc did nothing of the sort—even that could not lead working class socialists to side with a Jaruzelski standing for nationalisation and 'socialism' against 'counterrevolution'." (*Ibid*)

And you cannot really put it much plainer than that.

Underground

Socialist Organiser's pledge to support Solidarnosc come purgatory, hell or high water was put to the test early this year, when the English bulletin *Voice of Solidarnosc* translated the new economic programme of the Solidarnosc underground leadership in which they finally, unambiguously call for capitalism to be restored in Poland. Here are some of the points from this dirty sickening document:

● "In the cases of unprofitable enterprises, the principle of bankruptcy and insolvency should be rigorously adhered to."

● "The majority of state agricultural farms should be parcelled out to private farmers."

● "There should be a stock market enabling anyone to buy stocks and bonds, to become one of the sources of capital for the development of enterprises."

The programme calls explicitly for the abolition of all central planning and for the market mechanism to be made supreme. This according to these vermin is the only "realistic" choice in Poland. *Socialist Organiser*, faced with this test of their abject loyalty to the scab Solidarnosc first whine and wheedle about how "understandable" such a reaction is given the suppression of Solidarnosc and how the "grass always looks greener on the other side" of the Iron Curtain to workers in struggle, and then predictably, despicably come down on the side of the real counterrevolutionaries in Poland, the enemies of the Polish and world working class, the leadership of the pro-capitalist Solidarnosc yellow union:

"So maybe Solidarnosc, or a central section of it, is now advocating the restoration of a capitalist market economy in Poland. Does that mean that the western left should support Jaruzelski?"

No... we should defend Solidarnosc even under pro-Western leadership."

The Trotskyites have come a long way: from their origins as a leftist split from the world communist movement and they stand today as a monument to the type of rightist conclusions that left sectarian politics can sometimes lead you to. *Socialist Organiser* calls on British workers to line up beside Denis Healey, Margaret Thatcher and the Vatican to back overt counterrevolution inside the Polish workers state:

"Unequivocal and unconditional support by Western workers for the rights of Solidarnosc is the best way to help the Polish workers sort out these contradictions and find their way back to a programme based on solidarity and workers' control." (*Ibid*)

Do us a favour SO! There are no contradictions in this programme; it is quite clear what Solidarnosc is calling for and consequently what side of the barricades you would be on in Poland.

EETPU

For SO and their ilk, anti-communism and frothing hatred of the socialist countries are the criteria for having 'good politics'. You think not naive reader? Well, this is the group that claimed that Frank Chapple (or Franko Chapelo, as some militants more evocatively call him), had a "good line" on international matters, by which they meant he despised the Soviet Union and loved Solidarnosc. The dovetailing of many Trotskyite groups behind the new Cold War drive against the Soviet Union, a revanchist lust most graphically displayed so far in Poland, will render them useless to the working class in the socialist countries.

After all, the spread of scab Solidarnosc-type unionism is now becoming the key issue facing the British working class movement as the UDM cancer in the coalfields becomes an organisational focus for the breakup of the institutions of the old labour movement. Likewise, the EETPU in its overtly pro-boss, anti-militancy stance is echoing the comments and the positions adopted by Walesa during the miners' Great Strike, Solidarnosc calls on socialist Poland to join the CBI. Solidarnosc invites the two heads of the bosses' trade union centre AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland and Irving Brown to its congress, the EETPU invites Norman Tebbit to its gatherings. The organic tie up is further consolidated by the fact that the EETPU has appointed a permanent 'liaison officer' with the UDM, who in turn have close links with Solidarnosc. In fact, the Solidarnosc leadership made absolutely plain its violent hostility to the miners' strike in Britain. Not only did Walesa condemn the violence of the NUM miners on the picket lines, the Solidarnosc 'union' also warmly welcomed a delegation from the National Working Miners' committee (the forerunner of the UDM) during the course of the strike. The British scabs, who called Walesa a "great fighter for democracy" received a message from Walesa (delivered through his personal priest) who assured them:

"I am very sympathetic to your movement. My greetings to the British miners who are fighting for democracy in their union."

Now we are not trying to imply the creeping organisation of some kind of scabs International: all we are saying is 'by their friends, so shall you know them.'

We would ask honest militants in *Socialist Organiser* or in any Trotskyite group who supported Solidarnosc, how can you be against scab bosses' unionism in this country and pro it in Poland?

Ian Mahoney

and...

Oddly enough, both the anti-Communist Party Morning Star and the Euro-communists back the Mensheviks of the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey against the Leninist Communist Party of Turkey (Iscinin Sesi). Yet reports reach our ears that should make these self-professed 'feminists' squirm. A Turkish woman recently visited the Mensheviks' workers' 'drop-in' centre in North London. There, however, she was told that convention prevented her from mixing with the men in the main part of the building and she was segregated along with the rest of the women-folk to a sideroom!

There once was a time when the closest thing you could get to a political argument out of an RCP supporter was: "And anyway, you lot just copy our design."

Now though, the tns team has introduced a daring new innovation: a pink (that's right, PINK!) paged supplement! Are there no limits to the innovative genius of this group?

Under 26, some experience of communist work and looking for something to do? Then why not become the General Secretary of the Young Communist League? According to the 7 Days ad the job will be "demanding". It certainly will be. Under Euro misleadership paper membership has plummeted to a couple of hundred with no genuinely active branches now remaining. And having not got out a copy of its Challenge for the last seven months of the miners' Great Strike, the last year has only seen two instantly forgettable editions. Want to work hard to break the lazy, tired, declining Euro mould? Want to build a YCL that pulls no punches on its Marxism, that can offer our working class youth a real future by giving them a world to win? If the answer is 'yes' then after you've written to 16, St John Street, London EC1 for an application form write to us at BCM Box 928, London WC1.

One YCL former Gen Sec in the Euro mould has been given his own chat show by Grampian TV. Despite this creature's well paid treachery not least his vicious attacks on Arthur Scargill (another former YCL leader) during the Great Strike one recent guest on 'The Jimmy Reid Show' was Mick McGahey. Reid introduced our comrade by saying that many see him "as a subversive hard man, a dangerous red, a wicked militant. What's he like they ask? And I tell them truthfully, you may disagree with him politically as I do but he's personally a nice man, socially a good companion and a rare fellow to have a pint with and swap jokes." The two greeted each other like long lost friends swapped a few lame jokes and never mentioned the 120 Scottish miners still victimised as a result of the strike Reid worked so hard to weaken.

YOU never had to be a towering genius to work out the fact that Solidarnosc was a counterrevolutionary movement through and through. Trotskyite groups like the Labour Party-obsessed *Socialist Workers' Power* however, were determined to support them anyway. At the time of Solidarnosc's genesis in the huge upheavals of Polish workers' unrest in the Baltic ports in 1980, there was a real basis for seeing the whole movement as a contradictory phenomenon. On the one hand, there were the legitimate grievances of many workers offended and alienated by long years of bureaucratic mismanagement by the Polish Communist Party (PUWP) which acted as an impulse to the actual formation of the Solidarnosc. On the other hand, however, was the channel through which this unrest expressed itself: clerical nationalism and pro-imperialism. By the time of Solidarnosc's first congress in 1981, it had consolidated a programme for counterrevolution in Poland. A 'taster' of this had been given in April of that year when Solidarnosc had unveiled an economic package of 'reforms' that proposed the abolition of centralised planning and the autonomy of enterprises on the basis of market competition: in other words a recipe for the mass unemployment and the impoverishment of the working class of Poland.

Just how long Polish socialism, which after all is an achievement for and the property of all the world's working class would have lasted if these scum had come to power does not really take too much imagination to work out. At a secret meeting of the Solidarnosc leadership on December 2 1981 however, it was decided to take more drastic measures than simply waiting for a never-never "free election" to one day arrive. The head of the Warsaw region, Zbigniew Bujak demanded that

"the government should be finally overthrown" and proposed setting up a Solidarnosc militia to do the job. With very little time left, the leadership of the PUWP at last moved to make the best of a bad job. They imposed martial law and thankfully snapped the back of Solidarnosc's counterrevolutionary bid for power.

Sickening

There is a long and sickening list of the pro-capitalist statements and actions of the Solidarnosc leadership cabal, made before the movement was crushed. For example:

● Internationalism—Walesa aped the bosses' lies when he claimed that western workers had "too much affluence" and that there was "too much laziness in the West."

● Reagan—Walesa hailed the 1980 electoral victory of Reagan as "a good sign for the world and for Poland." (Sure Lech, just tell the Nicaraguans and Grenadians).

● PACTO—Solidarnosc was "one of the few labour movement organisations in the world not to condemn" Reagan's vicious smashing of the air traffic controllers' union. Presumably, it was a case of knowing which side your bread is buttered on, ("I'm Lech—Buy me"?).

For the vast majority of the Trotskyite groups of the world however, Solidarnosc's open record of pro-capitalist treachery mattered little: as long as they were giving the 'Stalinists' in Poland a hard time who really cared? They fell on the occasional 'left' utterance from some Solidarnosc official as 'proof' of the 'socialist' nature of the movement, and performed profoundly unconvincing rescue jobs when some leader openly expressed his true reactionary views.

Socialist Organiser for example, a Trot group by now so acclimatised to the Labourite

THE LIST of organisations on the radical left placing their faith in "the next Labour government" leading us, like a latter-day Moses from the horrors of Thatcher's Britain to the neo-Keynesian promised land, runs longer than the castlist of *Ben Hur*. Within our Party they range from the *Marxism Today* brigade, to the r-r-revolutionary Straight Leftists, and without, a plethora of Trotskyites plus the NCP, that well known retirement home for aged and weary-minded centrists. Joining these are many more, but luckily space prevents a full listing.

But, gentle reader, what is this touching faith, so naively placed in Labour (whether they call for Benn, Livingstone, or just settle for good old Neil for PM) founded on? Sad to say, precious little. Its record has been one of class collaboration and treachery—counter-revolutionary to the core.

Unlike many European social democratic parties the Labour Party was *clearly* bourgeois in its origins—stemming from the left wing of bourgeois liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century. All attempts by revolutionaries to give the party a sniff of 'class war' politics were decisively rejected at its formation. In fact "the leaders of the Labour Representation Committee (precursor to the Labour Party—AM)... all found it much easier to contemplate association with the Liberals than with the Marxists of the Social Democratic Federation." (Milliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, p.20). Still, the leadership was not above using a little pseudo-Marxist demagogy to rally rank and file militants at times. And what worked for Hardie then works for Tony Benn and suchlike today.

The mainstream leaders of Britain's workers' movement acted as indispensable recruiting sergeants for the bourgeoisie throughout two world wars, and all other times the ruling class has taken up arms to protect the interests of British imperialism, including the intervention to crush the young Soviet state.

Labour first formed a government in January 1924, and the party leader, Ramsay MacDonald, was quick to assure the king that his "earnest desire was to serve King and Country." (*Ibid*, p.102). And indeed he did: the working class had as much shit heaped on it by Labour as it had under Tory or Liberal, setting the trend for things to come.

Later, out of office and in the run up to the General Strike "the Labour Party Conference of October 1925... (had) the leaders well in the saddle, and much more determined to guard their followers from communist contamination than to warn them of the dangers to come." (*Ibid*, p.128) The malignant tumour of the Labour Party and its cohorts in the trade union bureaucracy were central to the defeat of our class in 1926. So what has changed? Did they play any better part in the miners' Great Strike? The questions are rhetorical, the answers are obvious.

Today's Labour Party promises to relieve unemployment, as it promised through the Great Depression. They came to office in May 1929, with unemployment at 1,164,000 and were replaced by the MacDonald led National Government in 1931, leaving more than double that number on the dole. It was the communist led National Unemployed Workers' Movement which fought for the rights of the unemployed *against* the Labour government striving to erode them.

To atone for this the left always presents the post-war Attlee government as a glimmer of

the bright socialist future awaiting us with the umpteenth Labour government.

Few things are further from the truth: "the nationalisation proposals of the government were designed to achieve the sole purpose of improving the efficiency of a capitalist economy." (*Ibid*, p.288) This, remember, was introduced by the people who sanctioned the butchery of the ELAS freedom fighters in Greece by British troops. Labour was as great a proponent of Britain's imperialist interests as were the Tories, and was enthusiastic in its pursuit of imperialist war in Malaya, and its support for the Korean war.

Back home things weren't so rosy either. With the introduction of the Labour budget of April 10 1951 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Gaitskill, found himself in unseemly company for a representative of the toiling masses of Britain. "Mr Gaitskill," wrote the *Daily Express* the following morn "introduces a Tory budget". It was Labour who began to dismantle the welfare state, not the Tories. What on earth makes anyone think they will rebuild it *now* if they are re-elected?

Back in power in the sixties Labour set about diffusing the tide of workers' militancy on which they had come to power whilst supporting the USA's war against the Vietnamese NLF and pursuing its own war against the people of Yemen. Maudling, the previous Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, was able to comment in 1964 that "it is true that the Labour Government have inherited our problems. They also seem to have inherited our solutions." (quoted in Milliband, p.365)

Immigration and Ireland— Labour's record

If Labour is no less anti-working class or pro-imperialist than the other bourgeois parties, it may be safely assumed that it is no less racist. This has been proved for us by Labour governments' practice. Their White Paper on Immigration in 1965 proscribed entry of migrant unskilled workers, and the Home Secretary was given power to deport blacks without going through the courts.

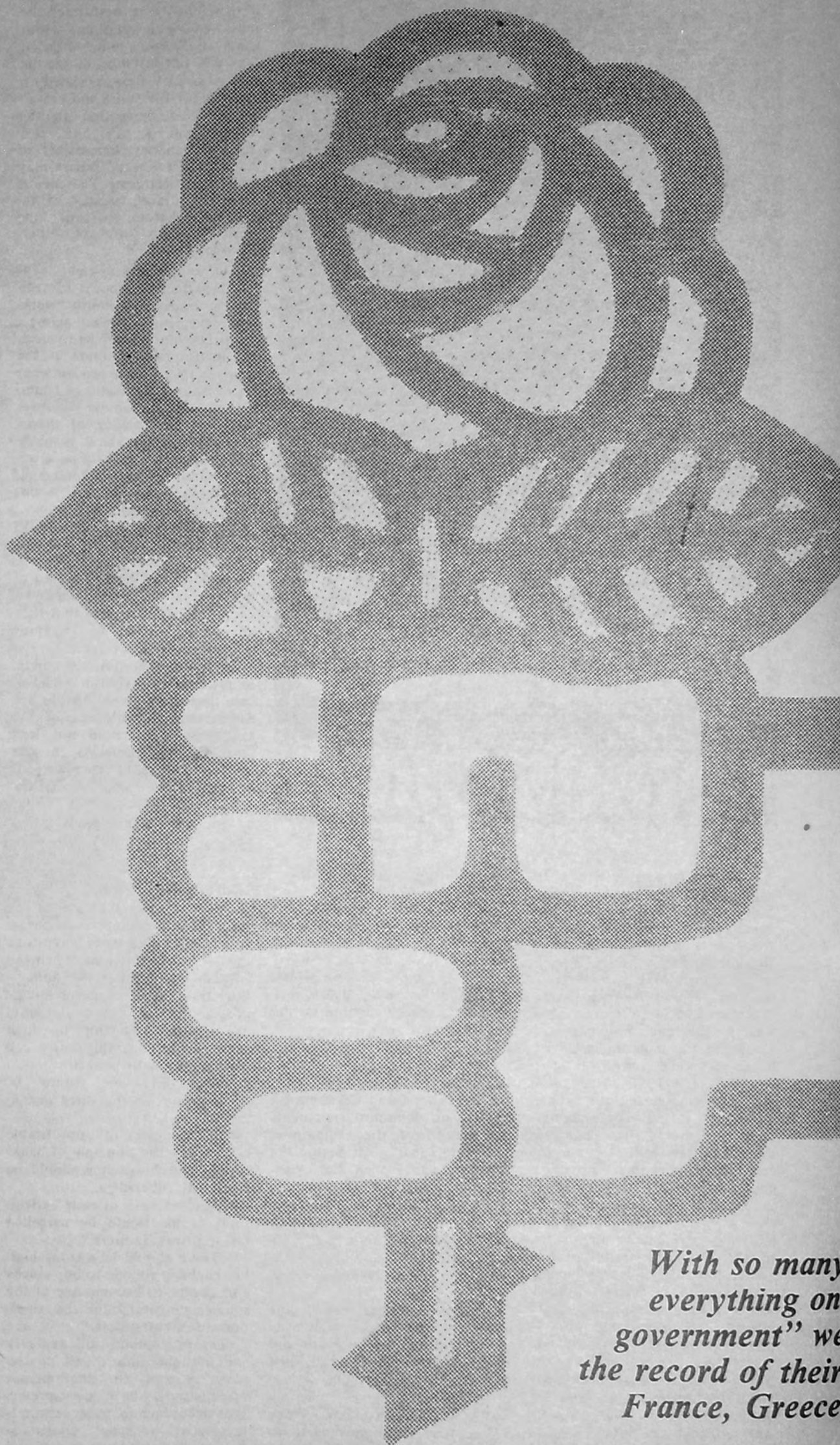
In 1968 Labour passed the Commonwealth Immigration Act, which restricted entry to those with one grandparent or more already resident in Britain, and in 1977 introduced a probation period of twelve months on the marriages of immigrant husbands.

Throughout, when in office, Labour has been active in its harassment of black people, particularly through immigration raids on their homes and workplaces.

There should be no love lost between the Irish people and the imperialist British Labour Party. Labour leader Arthur Henderson was on the war cabinet which crushed the Easter Rising of 1916, and led the applause in parliament at the announcement of James Connolly's execution.

Labour supported partition, and forty-eight years later sent the troops into the Six Counties to reinforce Britain's domination of the whole Thirty-two Counties maintained by that partition, to crush the burgeoning revolutionary situation there. Even the Labourite self proclaimed 'Marxists' of the Militant Tendency lined up four-square behind British imperialism over the intervention, as they have so many times since.

It was Labour who introduced the oppressive and racist Prevention of Terrorism Act in November 1974 to terrorise the Irish in Britain and sent in the san-



*With so many
everything on
government" we
the record of their
France, Greece*

POWER TO THE

guinary SAS to terrorise the Irish in the Six Counties. The list goes on and on; the torture of republican POWs under Roy 'Butcher' Mason, the opening of the H-blocks, withdrawal of special category status for POWs, leading to the blanket protest and yet further attacks on the rights of prisoners.

This, it must be stressed, is just a 'taster' of the crimes of the Labour Party against the working class, black people, and revolu-

tionary nationalists, whether in Ireland, Malaya, Yemen or wherever British imperialism's rapacious plunder is threatened.

Can we expect different from Kinnock, or even Benn or Hatton? To answer those still with doubts we will take a brief 'around the world in four parts' tour of social democratic parties now in office in Western Europe.

France
"Mitterand's victory creates an

opening towards the possibility of real, lasting, fundamental change.' proclaimed the *Morning Star* editorial of May 12 1981, heralding in the new PS/PCF coalition. Ah, the *British Road to Socialism* in the colours of France!

These illusions were to quickly disintegrate in the wake of the actions of this 'socialist' government, and such naive trust hung like that well known albatross around the necks of those that had welcomed it as the harbinger

of the world commune, or such like. But to give *Star* editor, Tony Chater, his due, it was indeed the method of the *BRS* (which ever version you care to choose). The editorial ends with an ominous threat: "Mitterand's breakthrough might be emulated here." God forbid!

The PS had no sooner got their feet under the cabinet table than they reneged on their electoral platform and started introducing 'austerity measures'—austerity, that is, for workers, not capitalists. Faced with growing economic problems the PS has played a useful role (for the bourgeoisie) in diverting capital in to more productive areas and restraining workers counter-action. "M. Laurent Fabius, Minister of Industry... seems ready to push rationalisation still further into sensitive areas like steel—counting on the acquiescence of unions and their rank and file towards measures by a government of the left that they would have fought tooth and nail under the right." (*Financial Times*, September 20 1983) The French socialists, like their British counterparts, consciously disarm workers in the face of the bourgeoisie.

The PS' anti-working class stand has facilitated a growth

Star could still declare that the actions of the PS/PCF government showed the way to "take firm action on the export of capital and import controls to protect our economy and our government if Labour comes to power." (our emphasis-AM). CCG supporters should be warned of this chauvinist scumball and his centrist sycophants.

The PCF's tailism of the bourgeoisie PS has led to its drastic loss of support. After all, why vote for a pseudo-social democratic party when you can have the real thing? Workers have deserted the PCF at the polls, and flocked from the communist led union CGT in disgust. When the PCF finally left the government it was not because of resolute, lofty principles, but a desperate bid to regain lost 'street cred' amongst militants. But the leadership has still in practice accommodated itself to social democracy, and can offer no real resistance.

Chater was right. This is the *British Road to Socialism* and the *Alternative Economic Strategy* in practice. Take it at your own risk.

Spain With the disintegration of

right, leaving no space for us between it and the Union of the Democratic Centre." This obviously says more about the rightism of the PCE than the 'leftism' of the PSOE, but Carrillo's statement is an interesting illustration of the reality of social democratic 'left' talkers out of power being transformed virtually overnight into respectable bourgeois politicians when in power, and its effects on a transparently opportunist Communist Party.

In 1979 the PSOE passed a resolution at its congress "reaffirming the party as a class party adhering to class principles", which provoked the resignation of party leader, Felipe Gonzalez. However in order to present itself as a trustworthy party of government to the bourgeoisie the left had to be kicked into line, and this was duly done, as they lined up with the now re-enstated, and sitting pretty, Gonzalez.

In the meantime the political jugglery of the PCE had taken its toll. The Party lost heavily in the 1979 election and Carrillo resigned in disgrace, to be replaced by Gerardo Iglesias. Spanish workers, it seems, had little use for the 'statesmanship' of Carrillo. But Iglesias was in the same mould and no less the opportunist. As the saying goes, Iglesias had forgotten nothing and learnt nothing from the errors of his predecessor.

The PSOE's return to respectability left the PCE in limbo. As Carrillo had indicated there was "no space" for two social democratic parties, and fair's fair, the PSOE was on the scene first. Iglesias tried to chisel a niche for the PCE through attempts to cobble together a shoddy alliance with greens, pacifists and so on, which only had the effect of increasing the rate of social democratisation and furthering the marginalisation of the Party. Down went electoral and trade union support, down went Party membership.

The PSOE surged forward to power in 1982, leaving the PCE to submerge in the mire of its own opportunism. But all the Party's 'leftism' had been dumped way back. Again, as in France, 'austerity measures' was the most common phrase on the lips of the socialist ministers, their commitment to reduce unemployment shoved back in the vaults by a now more realistic PSOE. Not much to cheer about for the working class, and still less for the PCE.

The misguided faith placed in the PSOE by Spanish workers was of course betrayed. The most disturbing thing is the PCE's role in this. It could act as no pole of attraction for militants, and could provide no answers. By default it was forced to fall back on pacifists and greens; no stable base at all. There is not only a lesson here for militants with illusions in Labour, but those of our Party who carry illusions in the orientation of *Marxism Today*. But I fear here, in all probability, our warnings fall on deaf ears.

Greece
Andreas Papandreu's Pan Hellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) was elected in 1981 on a ticket to index wages, increase the number of schools and hospitals, plus other reforms. All these were quickly shelved once in power, with PASOK confronted by all the nasty little conundrums that reality is wont to pose to those chock full of noble, but insubstantial, promises. It was therefore no surprise when they later backed off from their promise to remove all US bases by 1988. They were still able, with no alternative obvious, to fob off Greek workers

with enough to get them re-elected in 1985. Since then, however, things have taken a turn for the worse economically, forcing PASOK on a different tack: "Under the new austerity regime, the government has substantially remoulded the system of wage indexation which was first introduced in 1981, and imposed a two year freeze, to the end of 1987, on any other salary and wage increases." (*Financial Times*, February 3 1986) So who has to pay? You guessed it, the workers again.

PASOK lost support rapidly, and provoked a wave of unrest amongst its once mass proletarian base. To try to demobilise such action Papandreu threatened workers with a re-run of the 1967-74 military dictatorship if they did not keep quiet and take their medicine.

"If the warnings of destabilisation do not serve to halt the protests, Papandreu already has at hand harsh legislation to suppress them. For example in 1983 the government introduced legislation requiring that strikes in the public sector must be approved by 51% of all the members of a union to be legal. In addition there is a law on 'civil mobilisation' with which PASOK has already suppressed several strikes in recent years. Papandreu has indicated he will not hesitate to use these laws." (*Turkey Today*, January 1986)

Unfortunately Greece's Communist Party, the KKE, cannot be held blameless for such a situation. The KKE until very recently had a position of 'compromise' with PASOK, covering its left flank with 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric. This has effectively neutralised the KKE, putting it in a very difficult position to make the transition from PASOK's left apologist to left adversary. Of course with this idea the KKE was merely following the normal politics of the world communist movement and world socialist system in subordinating the class struggle in a capitalist country to its supposedly 'progressive' foreign policy.

This is a glaringly clear example not only of the treachery of the social democratic parties, but also of the incorrect course pursued by communist parties.

Social Democracies fall from grace
One supposed democratic success story held aloft by their British counterparts is that of Sweden, where the Social Democratic Party held office for forty-four unbroken years until 1976, and again from 1982 onwards. They established a welfare state that Tony Benn only dreams of, "Under the Swedish model of free collective wage bargaining the unions and employers establish the wage level. The government has to ensure full employment at the levels set by the unions and employers... in general, economic policy has to be formulated after the wage level has been determined." (*Financial Times*, June 17 1981)

Sounds awfully nice doesn't it? And no doubt it is at times of world capitalist stability. Unfortunately when capitalism moves towards crisis the welfare state starts to fall apart. And this is just what is happening.

The recession of the early seventies hit Sweden hard because of its dependence on imported oil. This of course caused unwelcome instability in the economy. Hence the SDP's first election defeat in forty-four years. In between 1976-82 two non-socialist coalitions held office. It is ironic that it should be these governments who should nationalise Sweden's two major industries, shipbuilding and steel, in order to save them.

Growing economic difficulties produced massive strike waves in this period, at one time with an estimated fifty per cent of Sweden's four million strong work force out.

The social democrats, led by the recently assassinated, and not mourned by us, Olaf Palme, were returned in 1982 to try to manage the economy and marshal the working class, on a programme to restore spending cuts, and other reforms, to be financed by "excess profits". Problem. These "excess profits" no longer existed outside the SDP's manifesto.

The level of capital invested in the public sector as a percentage of Gross National Product at this time was just below seventy, with a small but rising number of unemployed, and an ever increasing budget deficit.

Sweden was being forced out of its foreign markets by more competitive capitals, so the SDP grew less able to alleviate their multiplying economic problems through super profits. To keep down unemployment they borrowed heavily. Such methods however, cannot be sustained forever. The foreign debt increased, as did inflation. Productivity and investment continued their decline.

The SDP are increasingly being forced to counter this by diverting capital from the public to the more profitable private sector. This shifts the balance of capital versus labour in capital's favour. Unemployment goes up, wages in relation to a (declining) rate of profit go down, and therefore the relative level of wages falls, the welfare state continues its disintegration. This is but the beginning. To maintain profitability the SDP is going to have to increasingly use such methods.

The social democratic utopia is fast decaying, not because Olaf Palme was a bastard (though he may well have been) but because the world capitalist economy can no longer afford such luxuries.

So what is Social Democracy?
Firstly, such parties are not true 'workers parties', they are *bourgeois* parties, as they have unstintingly defended capitalist property relations, and the interests of their own national bourgeois against all comers. But bourgeois parties can not just retain the allegiance of the bourgeoisie to maintain capitalism. They must be able to mobilise other classes, down to the proletariat. Hence the very nature of the social democratic parties, the medium through which workers are mobilised or neutralised in defence of their national bourgeoisie.

This is achieved by the imperialist bourgeoisie buying off the leading strata in the workers movement; the labour bureaucracy/aristocracy through the benefits derived through imperialist exploitation. By their domination of the workers' movement this strata systematically dupes the working class.

Lenin therefore labelled these parties as "thoroughly bourgeois" but nevertheless containing a contradiction between their leadership, definitively reactionary, and their proletarian base.

Critical support, affiliation and so on are *tactics* by which communists approach these parties, not to ingratiate ourselves with their misleaders, but to win their rank and file to communism. To forget this is to become marginalised, as with the communist parties of France, Spain, Greece and Sweden, or to just become the left cover and whipping boy for mainstream social democracy, as have *Militant*.

Alan Merrick

ing the working class to bank
e fight for "the next Labour
k at Labour's past record and
rades in office today in
ain and Sweden.

PEOPLE?

in racism, which the socialists have eagerly grasped, using immigrant workers as a scapegoat, vying with the fascist Front National for the votes of a significant strata of racist workers. Instead of combating this, the PCF has in true opportunist style accommodated to it, trying to paint a thin coat of red over the chauvinism and racism of the PS.

But Chater still has his heart set on that seat in the cabinet. On November 22 1983 the *Morning*

Franco's regime there emerged Spain's social democratic party, the PSOE, bubbling with lots of lovely 'leftist' rhetoric. So much so that the PCE General Secretary of the time, Santiago Carrillo felt moved to comment in hindsight, that in the 1977 post Franco elections "we were faced with an immature and ultra-leftist PSOE, and we had to adopt an attitude of statesmanlike responsibility to get the country out of the rut it was in. Then, the PSOE slid to the

From the frontline

South African Communist Party, *Umsebenzi*, Vol.2 No. 1, 1986, pp.20

IN BRITAIN we all know of publications proclaiming loyalty to the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin doing their utmost to win a middle class readership by promoting the latest demolition job on current orthodoxy. We are fed with communist publications which berate the Tories for being unpatriotic and those which call for a 'left' realignment with Messers Owen, Steel, Hammond and Kinnoch. We are all used to communists not stating their views openly but hiding under the cover of the "broad labour movement" and patronisingly producing a "working class version of the Daily Mail" which gives more regular space to sport than anything else.

With this in mind it is informative to take a look at the latest issue of the South African Communist Party's paper *Umsebenzi*. Coming as it does from the midst of the flames of revolution *Umsebenzi* makes fascinating and refreshing reading. It combines like *The Leninist* immediate questions of action with the understanding that it is vital for the working class to grasp Marxist-Leninist theory. Far from this producing a bland publication every page comes over with energy and as a serious revolutionary weapon: what the content of a communist publication should be in other words.

Of course articles on political economy, the question of stages in the revolution, the importance of theory and practice do not make easy reading for British or South African workers. Marxism is a science and must be studied like any other science.

But then as sure as eggs is eggs the revolutionary South African workers are yearning to get their hands on banned political material and willing to strive might and main to master the complicated ideas and concepts of Marxist theory.

Once in South Africa, as today in Britain, there was almost universal theoretical poverty and abstention from serious study. This has changed. South African workers are now arguing about the question of revolutionary alliances, the theory of stages and the nature of South African capitalism. In South Africa the new serious theoretical approach is a mass phenomenon. Why is this the case? Why are badly educated blacks in South Africa burning to study when workers in Britain are still arrogantly untheoretical.

The reason is simple. There is a revolutionary situation in South Africa that demands and brings forth a determined, theoretically well educated mass vanguard. So while in Britain revolutionary theory and publications like *The Leninist* are the diet of a small strata of advanced workers, in South Africa the question of

revolution and the need to use theory is a matter of life and death, a matter for literally millions.

Because of this the South African Communist Party must make the greatest effort to clarify its own theoretical understanding and extend its propaganda material from its close circle of advanced workers to the newly politicised masses who are being drawn into struggle.

This is what lay behind the decision to launch *Umsebenzi* alongside the quarterly 'heavy' the *African Communist*. *Umsebenzi* is not less theoretical but it is more immediate. And in a revolutionary situation this is essential.

Likely the comrades of the SACP are far from happy with *Umsebenzi*, they are undoubtedly its greatest critics. Its lack of a mass readership and the long period between issues are important drawbacks. But more crucial is the lack of really reliable, really spot-on first-hand information. This is a drawback of long periods of repression and the infuriating and hair pulling lot of exiled revolutionaries in a revolutionary situation. As soon as the situation allows, they know *Umsebenzi* must be published inside South Africa not smuggled in. As soon as the situation allows it *Umsebenzi* must greatly increase its frequency and grasp of immediate questions.

After all revolution demands more than courage, courage which the cadres and militants of the SACP have in large quantities. It demands audacity and it demands an intimate knowledge of the ruling class and its mood, it demands the ability to smell the shifting tempo of the revolution and the level of the masses revolutionary understanding. Only in this way can full theoretical clarity truly be achieved and united with the heroism and fighting spirit of the masses.

It is to aid this process that we have outlined our analysis of the South African revolution and the tasks of communists. It is to aid this process that we have made the call for all communists throughout the world to do their utmost to raise money for *Umsebenzi* so as to ensure that money is no block to its growth and development.

Jack Conrad

Blood from a stone

Charles Longford, *Black blood on British hands*, Junius, pp.68, £1.50.

REVIEWING RCP apartheid expert Charles Longford's exposition of 'the line' on South Africa is a little like trying to catch water in a tea strainer. Oodles of valuable economic facts plus a good old go at the Anti-Apartheid Movement leadership and a call for workers' sanctions. All good knockabout stuff; in fact, I disagree with barely a word.

Black blood is more important for what it does not say rather than what it does. Even allowing for the fact that the pamphlet correctly orientates itself to generating solidarity from British workers, there are some quite staggering omissions. Apparently workers in Britain have no business knowing the differences between the ANC, PAC, and AZAPO, or even of the existence of the South African Communist Party—or so we are to believe, as all this passes unmentioned. Surely we are entitled to know what we solidarise with? Proletarian internationalism is not just a 'nice' sentiment that we should kindle in the hearts of our fellow man, it has a material basis, meaning that who leads, and how, the South African revolution affects not only the masses there, but here also. In light of this, surely some comment is necessary. So why the silence, Charles?

To rectify this 'oversight' I spent a rainy afternoon ploughing through dog-

eared RCP/T literature into the murky depths of past history. Success (of sorts): *Revolutionary Communist Papers 5* (its old theoretical journal) states "Revolutionaries in Zimbabwe" (okay, it's not SA, but you get the idea) "have an obligation to insure that the working class is organised as a class and not as an appendage to the petit-bourgeois leadership of the nationalist movement." (pp.3-4)

Surely this is a general principle, and not only true of Zimbabwe in 1979. After all, the Comintern was created to put into practice such high-minded ideas on a world scale. But it seems the best we can expect from the RCP today is vague pontificating, such as "the danger remains that the moderate influences which prevailed in the ANC's early history may still hold back the liberation struggle." (*Ins* August 9 1985) We share its concern, but we do not believe that just by supporting radical bourgeois nationalists against conservatives we are fulfilling our internationalist duty.

Neither did the RCP once. It was not above joining the rest of the petty bourgeois 'lefts' in sticking pins in the 'Stalinist' doll. The South African Communist Party, said the next step of October 1981, "has ended up denying any distinctive role to the working class in the liberation struggle in South Africa", and goes on to talk of "the SACP's notion of a peaceful democratic revolution." This is news to us and no doubt to our SACP comrades, who contrary to the fantasies of the RCP believe "the working class cannot lose sight of itself as the midwife of socialist revolution." (*African Communist*, No.101) And the most ardent proponents of the armed struggle may well be said to be none too peaceful. The RCP takes the lead role in its own worst nightmare as 'the stagist'. It is now reduced to hanging onto the coat-tails of those fighting for bourgeois democratic revolution, burying its head in the sand to avoid the reality of the militant cadre of the SACP. If you have nothing good to say about folks, it is best to say nothing at all, I suppose.

It would be unfair to review this pamphlet without looking at its perspective to mobilise British workers against the British capitalists and their state who back apartheid. As an abstract concept we have no disagreement, Shame they bugger it up in practice.

The RCP's inability to come up with the goods is exemplified by its 'Anti-Apartheid Action' campaign, which goes in for periodic frenzied factory picketing (RCP only). It gives its rank and file something to do to keep them happy (and maybe a dose of 'flu on a lonely windwept picket) and doubtless leaves the factory workers wondering who the odd looking people were outside the gates, appearing from who-knows-where, chanting some, then disappearing, never to be seen again. Sounds a little WRPish, doesn't it?

While formally adhering to Lenin's concept of a vanguard built from the most advanced sections of the working class, the RCP has in fact abandoned it. The Revolutionary Communist Tendency, forerunner of the RCP, held that building 'the Party' necessitated "confronting chauvinism to win and train a vanguard in the working class." (*Revolutionary Communist Papers*, No.1, p.20) This was to be done mainly through intervening in solidarity movements such as the AAM. It was expelled from the RCG in 1975 for defending this perspective, attacking the RCG leadership for its "orientation to reformists in the movement instead of one to those who have begun to break from reformism." (*Ibid*), and opposing the RCG's turn away from joint work with the radical left.

That the RCP should have once attacked the RCG for its rejection of joint work today seems laughable. After substituting 'Party' for 'Tendency' it seems to have convinced itself that it really is the Party, and need trouble no more to "confront chauvinism" in the advanced section of the workers. It had arbitrarily decided it is the vanguard, and rejecting all joint work in solidarity campaigns, brings

forth its own from nowhere, of which the meagre 'Action Against Apartheid' is just one of many.

The total isolation of this insular solidarity campaign is proof of the falsehood of the RCP's claims to be 'the Party'. Instead of fighting its position through in, say, the AAM, it goes off at a tangent over the heads of militant workers; that is, ignoring the very people who could mobilise such action against British capitalism. For the RCP it now seems that a potential vanguard constitutes anyone who can be cajoled into becoming an RCP supporter. Building effective solidarity with the South African masses in this fashion is like trying to squeeze blood from a stone.

Some time ago when we stuck the label of the "SWP with hair gel" on the RCP we were not just exercising a little polemical flippancy. It is not the "Party of the future" as it claims, but merely the SWP of the eighties—if it is lucky. The choice for RCPers is simple: follow the road already trod by so many other radical sects, or break from it and walk the road to revolution with *The Leninist*, and build the real party of the future.

Alan Merrick

Bad communist



Churchill: who was using who?

Richard Kisch, *The Days of the Good Soldiers* Journeyman, London 1985, pp.179, £5.95.

THE WORKING class is the force that can overthrow capitalism. The working class is gathered in workplaces in large numbers by capitalism. Communists should organise there.

This argument seems simple and clear. Capitalism gathers workers in large numbers in the armed services.

Elementary understanding of organisation should mean a party which intends to lead the working class to overthrow capitalism should propagandise, agitate, and organise in the armed services.

About 80 years ago in London a congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (attended by Lenin) passed a resolution on... the Army. "The congress calls the attention of all party organisations to the importance of... propaganda and agitation in the army... The congress considers it desirable to form special groups... serving in the army..."

In 1905 Lenin called for all the soldiers' demands against their "convict life in the barracks" to be brought together to result in a call for the abolition of the standing army, and the arming of the whole people.

In 1920 the Communist International at its second congress laid down clearly: obligation to spread Communist ideas includes "persistent, systematic propaganda in the army... The abandonment of such work would be equivalent to the betrayal of revolutionary duty."

Our young Communist Party in

Britain, born of international class war following the inter-imperialist world war, took up this task. In its first years special leaflets were targeted on barracks and garrison towns. A paper *Soldiers' Voice* was published. "Our guns should be turned against the real enemy", said one leaflet "the thieving, robbing ruling class". An *Open Letter to the Fighting Forces* said: "Soldiers, sailors, airmen... the Communist Party calls on you to... let it be known that neither in the class war nor in a military war, will you turn your arms on your fellow workers, but instead will line up with your fellow workers in an attack upon the exploiters and capitalists and will use your arms on the side of your own class".

Unfortunately, by World War II opportunism had the CPGB in its grip. In the first days of the war the armed services were painted as part of the forces against fascism, against Hitler. Work among servicemen and women, if it occurred at all, was of a non-revolutionary character. Territorial volunteers were told "Good luck to you. You want to see the people defended against Fascism".

Then came conscription. Hundreds of YCLers and young Party members went into uniform. Shooting war came, and the Party was told by Comintern that the war was an imperialist one.

But it had disarmed itself. Most comrades went into uniform politically naked. They were advised to leave their party cards with their branches. Many of them left their politics there, too. Some branches did keep in touch (for a while). Some packages of *Daily Workers* and *Labour Monthlies* did arrive in barrack rooms.

Occasionally comrades were put in touch with others in uniform or they ferreted them out for themselves. Occasionally comrades were put in touch with civilian Party members in garrison towns, or found them by chance.

It was always haphazard. Certainly there was no directed agitation on a large scale such as ten years before.

The *Good Soldiers* is a write-up of interviews with old soldiers and gatherings from documents. It tells of bunches of individuals (mainly base wallahs) running pinko workers' circles in Egypt; and later of these and others engaged in post-war demob protests.

Hardly any mention of activity by communists in Britain, where some five million service men and women passed through training camps. Hardly any mention of action in the women's forces.

It is no more a narrative of communist activity in the British armed forces, than it is of a communist trip to the moon. It ignores the whole period from 1939 to 1941 when the Party characterised the war as imperialist.

It does give a glimpse of some international solidarity with Greek partisans, communists in the Middle East and India, and the Indonesian national liberation struggle. And of course one should not sneer at those taking part, who in their light and sometimes at great risk, were furthering the cause of the workers.

But the base wallahs largely talking to themselves did not have the aim of the overthrow of their own imperialist ruling class, the Churchills and the Chamberlains, and their Labour and trade union collaborators.

The aim was to talk about what Britain "would be like after the war", and they sold their pie in the sky pretty effectively.

The jewel in their crown, the Cairo Parliament, shortlived though it was, has become a legend of supposed work in the services. But the Parliament ruled out any discussion of current events or matters concerning the conduct of the war. Any talk of political agitation was abhorrent.

The Army Bureau of Current Affairs, set up to counter defeatist boredom, and ostensibly designed to inform the soldiery about current affairs was the inspirer of these officially tolerated discussion circles. ABCA was itself the khaki-clad child of the Workers' Educational Association.

And today? There are still men and women in the armed services. There is a war in the Six Counties. What should be

the stand of a Communist Party toward the young men who go to Belfast and Derry to be wounded, and sometimes die, in the service of British imperialism?

These young men are our neighbours, our relatives. Their parents and relatives are our neighbours and workmates. Do we buy the young men a drink in a pub, pat them on the back, listen to their moans, then tell them to write to their MP about it, or even just to wait for a left Labour government with socialist aims? Do we?

Does the struggle for socialism come to a halt outside the barrack gate?

Our brother party in South Africa has no doubts.

Victory, they say, requires that units of government troops begin to side with the revolution and what is true of South Africa is equally true for Britain.

Tony Eastman

Leadership challenge



National Rank and Miners Movement, *Rank and File Miner*, No. 3 (undated) pp.8, £0.25p.

We consistently warned through these pages and through the interventions of miners sympathetic to us at the conferences of the National Rank and File Miners Movement (NRFMM) of the crucial need for political clarity. Without this there is a danger of the NRFMM evolving away from what the miners who originally set it up hoped it would become; an independent mobiliser and organiser of the rank and file. Unless the Movement clarifies exactly what it is about then there is a danger of it following the other 'rank and file' movements that have existed in the past and becoming little more than simply a machine to get another set of left wing officials firmly ensconced in the bureaucratic apparatus.

Dave Douglas of the Yorkshire Area Executive Committee uses the pages of this issue to call for "the reconstruction of the Broad Left" in the NUM, for example. He goes on to qualify this by defining the "Broad Left" as he sees it as "a united Marxist and militant platform." We remain suspicious of "Broad Lefts", however. In the past these types of organisations have played precisely this role of electoral machines. Without a clear revolutionary perspective what is to stop new "Broad Lefts" becoming this again?

Certain important ambiguities and contradictions exist in this issue of *Rank and File Miner*. There are healthy statements such as "(the NUM) should campaign for improved basic pay for all its members—regardless of productivity" which coexist uneasily beside reports from coalfields where the men, encouraged by the union, have busted a gut over productivity in order to stave off closures. On the front page, there is a call for miners to "unite and reorganise alongside" Arthur Scargill. That's fair enough, just so long as the NRFMM does not start to play the role of foot soldiers for the initiatives of Arthur. And anyway, let's

not forget that it was the backsliding of the NUM leadership, including Arthur Scargill, over the issue of the sacked and jailed men that led to the independent rank and file initiative of a number of miners to set up the NRFMM in the first place. As an excellent letter in the paper from Rouen Miners Support Committee in France points out:

"In our opinion, you [the NRFMM-IM] are the only people fighting in the NUM to maintain and spread the lessons of the strike. Furthermore, as a result of the NUM leaderships' behaviour (during the strike, at the end and since then...) we have no confidence in its ability to defend the working class."

The NRFMM must take up the challenge of leadership in a more dynamic way and combine two elements in it. First, the mobilisation of the potential power and granite resolve of the rank and file: as Neil Harrop, a leading Kent activist and one of the outstanding new militants thrown up by the strike writes in the paper, "it's now up to the rank and file to take the fight for jobs and to defend the union into their hands. That's the only way to stop the retreat." But also, alongside that, and as Neil himself has pointed out in numerous conferences, the Movement needs hard, clear-headed politics with a revolutionary perspective.

Malcolm Bride, a Communist Party member active in Camden Miners' Support Group during the Great Strike pens a rather tame piece in this issue reviewing Wal Hannington's account of his work in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement of the '20s. Comrade Bride make a surprising omission for a communist: he actually fails to mention Hannington was a member of the Communist Party, and that it was the Party that gave the NUWM its clarity of purpose and dynamism.

It is not 'sectarian' to point this out; it simply underlines the crying need for the same degree of political clarity today. We congratulate the Movement for a well-produced and interesting publication and we hope they accept these criticisms in the spirit in which they are made: our common desire to rebuild the NUM as a fighting union from the bottom up.

Ian Mahoney

Love her?

Julie Burchill *Love it or shove it* Century Publishing, £3.90, pp.148.

BURCHILL is at her best in this small collection of her essays as a witty and acerbic dissector of the ephemeral trash culture of bourgeois society and of the whingeing pretensions of some 'serious' pop stars that their three minute warbles can ever actually change anything in the real world:

"The Angry Crooner, the Thinking Crooner—what a nonsense he is! As if one could be 'angry' and get work in the profession of Liberate and Terry Wogan, the profession of Showing Off every day of the week." (p.70)

Or again:

"Pop is a bauble, a streamer, a ticker-tape: serious feelings should be spent on serious things—to use serious anger in pop/on pop is debilitating, distracting, destructive. One could almost believe that the first protest song was a CIA conspiracy." (p.71)

She is such a good, caustic writer with a spot-on turn of phrase when it comes to tearing into pop trash, one of her "choice items of tack" being the Bay City Rollers (surely one of the ugliest and most non-descript bunch of lunk-heads ever to be acclaimed as teen sex idols), that it is with heavy heart that I have to admit that this ex-Communist Party member has politics that stink.

She at least does not have the audacity to present her 'renegation from Marxism'

as its 'creative development' or even as its final refutation as others before her have: Burchill is too honest and far too shallow politically for that. She makes it quite clear in the first essay of this anthology that hers was never a scientific understanding of communism. As she puts it: "The working class were my religion, and I know I have lost my faith." When one 'supports' the proletariat like one might support say Manchester United or Duran Duran, such a 'loss of faith' will one day inevitably come.

The superficiality of the reasons she now marshals for 'loathing the proletariat' are truly not worth commenting on. Burchill has her head stuck either in Marks and Spencer's (though never Marx and Engels; she admits to never having read a word) or Virgin Records and when she tries to apply her finger-nail deep mega-store 'Marxism' to the world the results are excruciatingly embarrassing. (Someone should tell her that rubbishing the seedy individual pretensions of pop culture figures is one thing, but trying to explain wars or revolutions using the same 'pen-portrait' approach is way off course: Galtieri and Simon Dee, or the CIA and Bananarama just do not mix.) The bad sections of this book therefore come when we have to sit through Burchill as Churchill cheering on the imperialist slaughter in the Malvinas or Birchill the Brit, bewailing how "Catholic" Northern Ireland makes "us" (that is, British imperialism) appear "the most blundering, brutal ineffectual country in Europe," (and why, pray do you think that is, Julie?)

Perhaps, though, it is wrong to criticise Burchill for her politics. Her position as a bourgeois woman of letters on the eccentric left of the British establishment (significantly, the lengthiest quote in the book is a 'pro-Soviet' piece from Enoch Powell, another establishment maverick whom she dubs a possible "death-bed communist") is a difficult one nowadays. In the past when the Communist Party had sufficient social weight to reach out and 'tinge pink' such left(ish)-leaning figures her politics would have been given more stability and less of a 'mad-cap' feel. In the absence of this, her writings take on a strange, fatalistic, and almost despairing flavour symptomatic of the malaise that the petty bourgeois individual is thrown into as the crisis begins to unravel the social fabric of Britain.

For instance, Burchill foams (correctly) against the anti-human ideology and practice of Catholicism and the despairing writers and artists such as Graham Greene whose "feeling that everything was useless, worthless and hopeless was at last confirmed for him in the Church of the original sin..."; that is, in Catholicism. Yet has not Burchill also in her despair found her corresponding God in the social power of the "vengeful" Soviet state? She is a product of a society that she rightly despises for its superficiality and ugliness, but adrift without any Marxist understanding of what makes the world tick; she seeks her absolution and redemption in the prospect of invasion from the Soviet Union:

"There is nothing wrong with any country on earth that is so serious that it cannot be cured by a ruthless Russian invasion followed by a brutal suppression of all dissent."

Of course, these views have a certain shock value that Burchill plays on as a writer: outrage is a better response than apathy to someone whose bread and butter comes from selling her words. But Burchill's social masochistic yearning to be oppressed by the brutal Russian bear is symptomatic of more. The world is looking an increasingly cold and frightening place for those like Burchill caught between "Marxism" and the "discreet charm of the bourgeoisie" as she admits. So Julie plumps for the Soviet Union: it is big, it is there, and it is even useful to more firmly ensconce yourself in the tame but lucrative British tradition of a bourgeois eccentric "on a sofa somewhere in SW1": another nice clever young working class girl gone bad.

Ian Mahoney

People's sanctions and workers' sanctions

South Africa



And how some who should have known better rejoiced at this shift in the ruling class.

What motivated the Heaths, Owens and Kinnocks, as well as sections of big business, was not of course the plight of the South African masses but a deep concern to save capitalism in South Africa in general and foreign investments in particular. Now that the South African economy has at least temporarily stabilised and the immediate threat has somewhat subsided the response to Botha's 'Rubicon II' reforms have changed markedly. Faced with almost exactly the same reform package—which do indeed give very little if anything to the masses—the very same concerned statesmen and managing directors have fallen over themselves to offer praise for Botha's courage and vision.

So imperialist sanctions are and can only be designed to serve the interests of imperialism. No imperialist government can be persuaded or pressurised into supporting a national liberation struggle. This does not mean that as a by-product of mass protests and direct action by opponents of apartheid Thatcher might soften her stubborn, intransigent position against sanctions. She could be forced to take token measures similar to Reagan who with one eye on his opinion poll ratings imposed limited sanctions under the blaze of TV cameras.

But imperialist sanctions are and can only be a sop. The AAM should be exposing them not creating illusions in them. If they are an example of the AAM's 'people's sanctions' this is a shame to say the least. Does this mean that all AAM movement campaigns should be denounced as diversions. No, but it is essential that militants constantly fight to raise the idea of workers' sanctions becoming the central plank of 'people's sanctions' and the main thrust of solidarity work.

It can easily be seen that the struggle against apartheid can draw into action many different sections of the population. But there are important limits to what various sections can deliver.

While isolated pensioners or housewives can refuse to buy, say, Cape oranges, this will never rock the apartheid state. On the other hand workers' sanctions can provide the cutting sanctions edge of a mass anti-apartheid campaign. If workers on the docks, in banks or airports could be won to take direct action for the cause of the South African masses, we could start to really put our ruling class,

the most important overseas backer of apartheid, on the run.

This is the communist fighting approach in the tradition of the magnificent Hands off Russia campaign; it recognises the common interests of the proletariat of South Africa and Britain as proletarians. As such this approach will inevitably involve different emphases and most importantly results to those of the leadership of the AAM.

While the AAM leadership will subordinate mass actions to their parliamentary project and tone down militancy for the sake of maintaining churchmen and liberals at the honorary top of the movement, Leninists are not afraid of frightening bourgeois public opinion. Far from this damaging solidarity with the South African masses it will lead to a movement which can really deliver the goods.

In *AAM News* Thabo Mbeki, a National Executive member of the AAM noted that: "Important progress has been made. An atmosphere for sanctions is building up in Britain, which has undoubtedly prompted the Co-op to take action and is now reaching the boards of directors of institutions such as Sainsbury's" (December 1985). Quite right! But how to develop this "atmosphere for sanctions"? Should we direct it to shifting the balance of opinion in the cabinet and the boardrooms or should we go down to the masses above all the organised working class?

Clearly for the AAM it remains a question of winning a reasoned argument with the ruling class. Four of the five points in the AAM's programme for 'people's sanctions' are directed to the government and big business; only the last point actually deals with 'people's sanctions'. In other words 'people's sanctions' is the new radical packaging for the old respectable pressure group politics of the AAM. And as such it is doubtful if they will produce any better results.

Our approach is unambiguous. We must go to the workers. As a by-product of their actions in collectively blacking and refusing to handle South African goods Sainsbury's might decide 'on balance' or even in the name of 'humanity' to take South African goods off their shelves but this would be a by-product. Workers' sanctions would be effective, they would be genuine solidarity, they would be real 'people's sanctions'. They are the way forward.

Ian Mahoney

THE LEADERSHIP of the Anti-Apartheid Movement has responded to the growing demand for action which bites against the South African racist regime by developing the concept of 'people's sanctions'. These sanctions apparently embrace everyone and everything from the workers' sanctions of Portsmouth dockers to individual boycotting of South African peaches.

A short time ago there were those who were insisting that "all the activities of the AAM should be aimed at compelling the British government to implement and strictly enforce comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid regime". After the AAM's AGM this hopelessly one-sided, thoroughly liberal doomed-to-fail recipe seemed to have been replaced with 'people's sanctions'.

If this is a tentative step towards workers' sanctions it is to be welcomed. Unfortunately it must be noted that the balance of AAM work and propaganda remains unmistakably tilted towards parliament and big business and changing ruling class opinion. 'People's sanctions' might be designed to involve all strata, all

groups and traditions in the battle against apartheid but the truth is that the AAM leadership is wanting to channel the massive popular groundswell against apartheid between the safe banks of parliamentarianism in an effort to win Thatcher's ear so she will see the logic of sanctions. This attempt to win Thatcher and her government to 'people's sanctions' is the aim of the lobby of parliament on March 19, the planned week of trade union action against apartheid over April 14-20, and even the praise of the brave Dunnes workers and the support for British workers in local authorities, hospitals and the docks following suit.

This is an important political mistake in our view. It must be transparently clear to even the most sappy liberal that if Thatcher were to impose sanctions they would be to serve 'British interests' ie the interests of British imperialism. Last year when the Botha National Party government was beset with problems from every direction some Western establishment politicians were arguing for sanctions in one form or another. They even declared that his crossing the 'Rubicon' speech and its pro-

mised reforms were too little too late.

Voice of revolution

IN FEBRUARY we received the following letter.

"Dear comrades,
The editor of Umsebenzi has asked me to thank you very much for your donation of £165 to the journal.

He was very pleased to hear about your kind remarks and I hope that in the future we shall be able to continue sending you the 30 copies for which you asked.

He and all those responsible for the production and distribution of Umsebenzi send their best wishes."

South Africa is today gripped by a profound revolutionary situation. It unleashes millions of blacks onto the streets, fires the people with courage and even splits and confuses the ruling class as well as driving it towards fascism. We have already seen

foreign minister Pik Botha and education minister FW de Klerk openly fall out over the future of apartheid, the leader of the opposition Dr Fredrick van Slabbert resign from his party and parliament in despair as well as the ominous rise of the far right.

In such conditions the role of the revolutionary vanguard is pivotal. On its ability to provide a clear revolutionary lead the future depends. In the words of Umsebenzi: "Our working class, in alliance with the landless and rural poor, holds the key to victory and real people's power. Strengthen the workers' vanguard—the South African Communist Party!"

This is what communists throughout the world should be helping to do through fraternal advice and criticism and material aid. £165 is of course only a

token amount. Nonetheless the fact that our donation came from not only our supporters but members of other groups, workmates and not least Kent miners is of great political importance. So far from resting on our laurels we will lift our proletarian internationalist campaign to raise money and thus solidarity for the SACP.

Of course we are aware that our efforts alone are far from adequate. For this reason we make the call for all communists and militant workers to help build Umsebenzi. Take collections for it at every Party, AA and trade union meeting, in workplaces and on the streets. Copies of Umsebenzi and donations to: c/o, Inkululeko Publications, 39 Gooch St, London W1. or c/o The Leninist, BCM Box 928, London WC1.