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The **LENINIST**

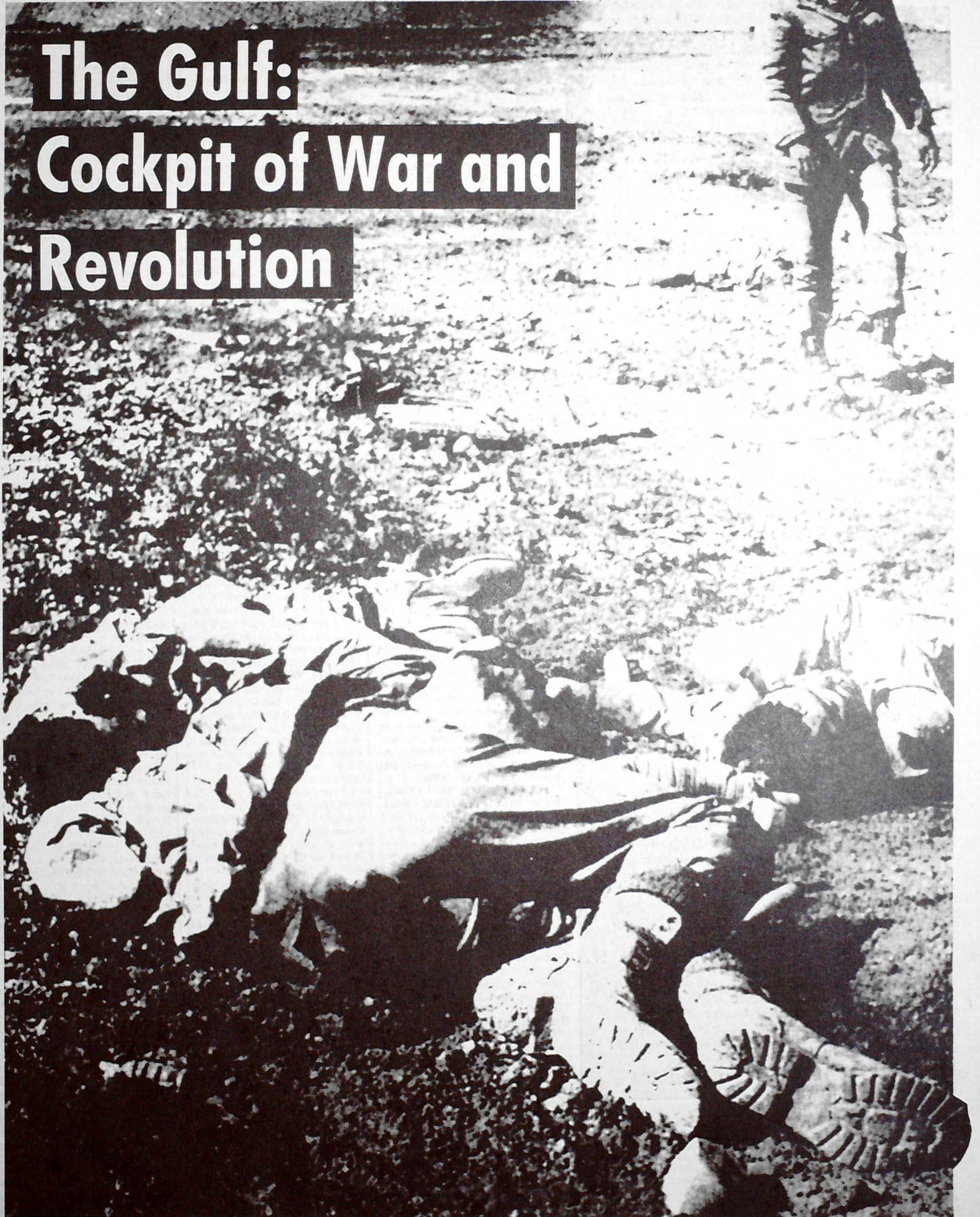
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LETTERS

Fightback in the Pits

As soon as Arthur announced to all the media that a national ballot on the question of an overtime ban was to be conducted, then the carpet was taken, not only from under Frickley's feet, but also the feet of the other branches striking with Frickley, and the left members of the executive in Yorkshire who had been advocating support for the strike.

Once the NEC met, and the Yorkshire area executive committee were called to an emergency meeting on July 18, the question was now on the national stage. Frickley could not run the entire national dispute from South Emsall, nor could it unilaterally dictate the tactics to be employed, even if some of us preferred Frickley's to the NEC. It was a national question now demanding a national response. It was inconceivable that Frickley could continue its action while the bulk of the union was marching at a slower pace.

The EC had nothing but praise for Frickley's action in providing the rapid and united response of the Doncaster branches, and subsequent South Yorkshire branches. The work that had been done was felt to have built up a head of steam which would reflect well in the forthcoming ballot.

But even without the NEC stepping in, there had always been an inherent flaw in the strategy, and that was opened up by the 1984 Trade Union Act, precisely as it was intended to. The action could continue only so long as the Barnsley officials didn't get involved or be seen to support or encourage the strike. For them to do so, would immediately open the union up for castration in the courts. For this reason, Taylor had stayed out of it, dodging all press questions and avoiding official response.

Clearly he knew of the joint North Yorkshire/South Yorkshire Panel meeting and the unofficial nature of the meetings of executive members, but did nothing to prevent them. That in itself is refutation of the standard charge of 'sellout' aimed at the Barnsley leadership on this occasion. But there were a number of forces trying to pull Taylor off the fence and not onto our side of it either.

Disgruntled branches had written to Barnsley demanding a council meeting on the subject and demanding that it took charge of the situation. The weight of these demands had now grown so heavy that an EC meeting would have to have been called, and once called, the issue had to be balloted on, whether for strike or whatever. That option was taken from us by the national conference and the NEC.

The only way open to us given the fact that we had been officially involved was to comply with the NEC recommendation, urging a return to work pending the ballot. That resolution read:

"The Yorkshire Area Executive Committee recommends a total return to work in order that the Yorkshire Area is able to play its full part in the forthcoming ballot regarding opposition to the Disciplinary code and procedures, in line with the unanimous decisions of both the National Conference, and the National Executive Committee decisions. We understand the anger and frustration within the coal field at the present time, but it will need discipline and unity

throughout the coal fields if we are to achieve the desired ballot result, in order to defend the best interests of our members. We call on all branches to campaign and all members to support the National Executive Committee's recommendation and give the national union the authority to establish an agreed procedure."

Meantime the Coal Board, just to demonstrate how they weren't in fact implementing the new code, sent the 900 men in Frickley a registered letter each, telling them they were in breach of their contract of employment, a breach for which they could all be sacked.

It was the view of the Doncaster EC members that given this and the sacking of Ted Scott in North Yorkshire, an overtime ban was a wholly inappropriate response. Vic Lindsey from Rossington joked that if they started to sack a branch official every week, maybe the NEC would consider it urgent enough to call a one day strike, saving our energies in case something important happens.

The South Yorkshire panel meeting following the EC recommendation reported all but four branches (all of whom were in Doncaster - Goldthorpe, Hiculetton, Bentley and of course Frickley) had at their mass meetings decided that there was now no option but to go back pending the ballot.

Frickley refused at their meeting to accept this verdict, and resolved to carry on picketing, despite, or maybe because of, an appeal by the four area officials plus the Doncaster agent Frank Cave.

Frickley's mood of hostility towards the union leadership at all levels was pronounced and they had an extraordinary (compared to the feedback coming from other branches) resolve to strike indefinitely even at the risk or threat of the pit being closed. The branch meetings around Doncaster that weekend with the exception of the pits named above, had resolved to go back to work. In many cases it was a unanimous decision.

But at the same time we continued to preserve our sacred principle not to cross picket lines, even the ones we disagreed with. To argue like hell this side of the line if necessary, but not to be found working that side, the gaffers side of the line. My own Branch of Hatfield at its mass meeting drafted an explanation to the Frickley men, to demonstrate our continued comradeship and the reasons for complying with the EC's recommendation. It read:

"To our fellow miners at Frickley. Dear Brothers. Hatfield Main's decision to endorse the Executive Committee's call for a return to work pending the national ballot, should not be seen as an abandonment of the Frickley men, or the struggle to defeat the anti-strike clauses in the Boards disciplinary code. We express our wholehearted support for you and that cause and are proud to have stood alongside you. However we do feel that the NEC's ballot, although unfortunately timed, must now be carried through and our action suspended. The code will punish all of us equally and our commitment to fight it to the death is not weakened by this change of tactics. For these reasons we reject any accusations of betrayal of either you, or ourselves. We urge our comrades at the Frickley Branch to suspend the picketing and let the ballot proceed. In continued comradeship, on behalf of this mass branch meeting, Jimmy Moore secretary, Dave J Douglass delegate."

Monday July 20, an area council (of a delegate from each pit speaking on a mass mandate from his branch) meeting was called. Be-

fore that, though, the Frickley pickets had been out for the day shift, calling out every pit in Doncaster and South Yorkshire and some in North Yorkshire where they held the line.

At one or two, they agreed after discussion with the rank and file of those pits to voluntarily withdraw. (At Hatfield for example, which was on holiday anyway, and was not involved in any coal production or productive work).

The Council meeting was heavily lobbied by the Frickley men, and an unfortunate number of paper sellers, who screamed "traitor" at men who had neither crossed the picket line, nor spoke in anger against the Frickley initiative. It was a gesture seized upon, and used by the right wing delegates in an attempt to curry an "enemy within" climate. That climate didn't get airborne, but nonetheless it is a simple fact; miners resent non-miners telling them what's best for them, and prepared to fight to the last drop of our blood.

The debate inside was predictable. Nearly all delegates praised the conduct and initiative of the Frickley men. Nearly all expressed the view that the last few days had been worthwhile and helpful in the cause of defeating the code. Astonishingly enough, while Taylor was saying he would accept "no criticism of the Frickley men in the meeting" one of the few Communist Party delegates got to his feet to talk of the ultra-left and the "wreckers" and the need to seize the nettle over these so-called picket lines.

It was a cue taken up by some others. One asked: "Is it an official picket line?" he didn't think so. "I took my men through this morning" another admitted. A call was made for redefining what was an official picket line, obviously so that Frickley's would be deemed unofficial and therefore it would be OK to cross it. At which point, I among others from Doncaster, rose to oppose any redefinition of a picket line. Frickley was a branch on strike, and by mass vote to strike. It's pickets were indeed official.

It occurred to me that the definition they were looking for, was that an official picket line was one you agreed with, and an unofficial picket line was one you didn't agree with, or inconvenienced you. Of course, miners picket lines were always to be deemed official when we were picketing someone else. Our picket lines never inconvenienced anyone else, even when those picketed were not closely involved with our dispute. It was a nonsense, and dangerous nonsense.

To his credit, Taylor ruled that there would be no redefinition of picket lines, or official picket line, or unofficial picket line, while he was in the chair, and he wasn't going to call on people to cross them. He would instead try to put our reasoning over to Frickley. The council voted with four exceptions to carry through the recommendations of the NEC and the EC and now what was in reality the wishes of the rank and file at branch level.

For all the subsequent charges of "Area Baron", "bureaucrat" and "traitor", Taylor's defence of the picket line, even one which was in direct contradiction to area and national policy, and seriously 'cocked a snook' at his authority, must be seen as a principled stand regardless of his position. On the other hand, the hare set running by the CP delegate and intended to create a backlash of reaction which would have taken men through those lines was a disgrace, despite the fact that Taylor was "area

ON SEPTEMBER 8 nearly 50 supporters of the Unemployed Workers Charter lobbied the TUC in Blackpool. They lobbied around two main demands: Break from the MSC and Organise the unemployed.

For too long the TUC has paid lip service to the plight of the four million unemployed. It has backed charity-mongering stunts like Hands Across Britain and pumped union members' money into tea and sympathy non-political Unemployed Centres (many of which are now being quietly closed down it seems). But it has done nothing to organise the unemployed.

The TUC may have decided to boycott the notorious work or starve Jobs Training Scheme. However, this token gesture should fool no one. It still refuses to withdraw from the MSC. While it sits on this body the TUC collaborates in the ruthless exploitation of young workers and in a general attack on the pay and conditions of all workers.

The unemployed are fed up with TUC platitudes.

Without a serious fight to organise the four million unemployed no effective fightback against unemployment can be staged. That is what is needed. That is what the UWC lobby demanded.

Among those who offered their backing for the lobby were *The Lovely Lads* and the *Hi-Bees* who performed gratis at our successful send off concert, Labour MPs Ron Brown, Martyn Jones, Alice Mahon and Harry Cohen, a range of trade union organisations, from Brent Nalgo and Derbyshire NUM to Hackney Teachers' Association, an encouraging number of local Labour Party branches as well as rank and file dockers at Tilbury and prominent individuals like South African freedom fighter David Kitson and *East Enders* actor Tom Watt.

Despite often being hamstrung by their funding from local councils and the MSC, a few of the more active Unemployed Workers Centres around the country have offered their support. The Unemployment Centres in Hammersmith and threatened and occupied Camden joined the lobby.

So, what was the TUC's attitude to the spirited, ear-splitting and very militant UWC lobby? While many delegates expressed their support the TUC tops treated the lobbyists - who were there to voice the anger of the four million unemployed - as non-people. Seeing the lobby with eyes to the ground there was a definite rush to get past from the big wigs. The UWC could not even, as arranged, hand in the 6,000 signatures gathered on its petition to the TUC at the main door. It had to go round the back of the building, to be sneaked in quietly through the 'tradesman's entrance'.

This just illustrates the total contempt of the trade union bureaucracy for unemployed workers. They would much rather preen their egos in the collaborationist atmosphere of MSC committee rooms, sitting cheek by jowl with government and CBI representatives, than suffer the presence of militant workers - employed or unemployed.

The unemployed have no choice but to fight. And to win we must forge a fighting unity between employed and unemployed. This is a burning necessity not only for the UWC and *The Leninist* but for the working class.

The September 8 lobby was one step towards that. We can regard the lobby as an unreserved success. It stands in total contrast to TUC backed scabby back peddling stunts like 'Hands Across Britain' which was notable for its insipid non-politics and its lack of unemployed workers.

The Editor

Six months subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5; Europe £8; Rest of World £10 (airmail £17.50). Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £10, Institutions £20; Europe £16, Institutions £26; Rest of World £20 (airmail £35), Institutions £30 (airmail £45). Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. Issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p. All cheques payable to November Publications Ltd. Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16 2BS. Published by: November Publications, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX © World copyright September 1987. ISSN 0262-1649

LETTERS

chief" and the delegate was a "rank and filer".

Frickley, now feeling isolated and betrayed, had another mass meeting and resolved to call off the pickets and return to work pending the ballot. Meantime, the suspended men went before the gaffer individually, and were given a warning over their conduct, a verbal bollocking, and the suspension lifted.

At least one of them was found not to have done even the non-crime the others were accused of, and was found "not guilty". Much of the focus now swung to North Yorkshire, where theoretically, if the Board went ahead and turned down Scott's appeal, North Yorkshire collieries might still strike. Many of us felt that this was a stronger issue than Frickley's had been and if the board refused to reinstate him, certainly the coal fields should strike.

Ballot difficulties or not, an unofficial action would be a justified response for however long we could sustain it. Still, the prospect of the board being so stupid did not seem on the cards. They had been given a breathing space, the union had appeared to back off, which would allow them a climb-down without loss of face. Subsequent events were to show them not only not stupid, but cunning as well. They indeed upheld his dismissal from his colliery, but offered him a job in another pit.

In other words, they would remove him from secretaryship of his branch, for carrying out the policy of the NUM in Yorkshire. They announced it as his pit broke up for the annual holiday, thus preventing that colliery taking action or sending out pickets on the Frickley model. Yet another emergency executive meeting was held, but one I personally couldn't attend as I was away at the time, and didn't get to know of the result until my return.

The EC (wrongly this time in my view, although that's easy for me to say now; but I feel the cue could have been given to let an unofficial response have its head) decided we were now hooked onto the national ballot for a national response to the entire issue, as it affects all the coal fields, and thus the die is cast for now. Any overtime ban is sure to be short lived, it breaches the disciplinary code and as such, anyone taking part can be disciplined or even sacked.

What then will be our response? Do we wait until key militants in every pit in every coal field are systematically sacked before open reaction?

Clearly an overtime ban is not enough now, and as it takes effect it will prove to be woefully inadequate, if the Board keep up the pressure, which they seem to have every intention of doing. Frickley's initiative may soon be shown to be the only initiative the national union as a whole can take, despite our weakened state.

The right to strike, whether official or unofficial, is a fundamental human right, and one we must fight to maintain. Working in a pleasant environment without such a right would be bad enough, but in the conditions of underground work it is unthinkable. Clearly our union cannot survive as a union, without we retain such a right.

David Douglass
Hatfield Main NUM, Doncaster

Trotsky

Comrade Sheriff in reply to my letter in issue 51 states that Trotsky

before 1917 "was among Lenin's fiercest critics". The implication I draw from this worries me deeply. Is Lenin above criticism? Of course not, no one is!

Let's take one major disagreement that occurred before 1917: that concerning permanent and uninterrupted revolution in countries like Russia. This 'Trotskyite' idea envisaged the telescoping of the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions in industrially backward nations where the working class and not the bourgeoisie must seize state power from the autocracy.

In 1917 the Tsar was not toppled by the bourgeoisie simply because they were not a revolutionary class. The Tsar was toppled by the revolutionary proletariat in alliance with the landless peasants led by the Bolsheviks. But in 1909 Lenin responded to Trotsky's theory (worked out four years earlier) by saying: "Trotsky's major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois character of the revolution".

For Lenin the impending revolution would have to facilitate bourgeois democracy and capitalist development in order to bring Russia out of the dark ages. But for Trotsky this seemed like utopianism since events would very soon lead to a clash of interests between the workers and peasants - the Bolsheviks - and the capitalist employers. The state would be compelled to take a principled stand and adopt socialist policies - an anathema to the bourgeoisie.

The only real solution to this contradiction lay in 'jumping' the capitalist epoch according to the then popular interpretation of Marxism, which insisted that the bourgeois-capitalist epoch must precede the proletarian-socialist one. In order to jump the capitalist epoch permanently the victorious socialist revolution in industrially advanced Europe had to extricate the Russian economy from its primitive backwardness. Alas! The European revolution failed.

Today, 70 years since 1917 the problem remains unchanged for the Soviet Union: how can it precede towards full communism from its qualitatively unchanged situation (especially since 1930) of a collectivised economy of a 'socialist type' without the theoretically correct understanding for realising this aim, namely the promotion of the world revolution?

* I do not believe Gorbachev's reforms can lead the Soviet Union towards communism any more than I believe the CPGB's policies will lead the British workers to socialism. This is not to say that I do not welcome some aspects of the changes occurring in the Soviet Union presently. The much appreciated 'openness' towards critical debate within the CPSU has been long overdue in being re-established and must be pursued passionately not just within the CPSU but within all CPs including, I might add, the CPGB.

John Pike
Watford

Jack Conrad replies:

Comrade, do not be so worried. Sheriff in his answer to your letter in no way implied that Lenin was or is beyond criticism. His statement that "Trotsky was among Lenin's fiercest critics" is simply a statement of fact. Trotsky was a left Menshevik, but nonetheless a Menshevik. Where did Lenin and Trotsky disagree? Not on the perspective of permanent revolution. This was not the invention of Trotsky but Marx. Lenin fully accepted this concept. He called for uninterrupted (or permanent) revolution, and brilliantly applied it to the conditions of Tsarist Russia in his classic work *Two Tactics of*

Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution. A theoretical position which became fully concretised in the Great Revolution of October 1917. Partially because of Lenin's lack of information, partially because of Trotsky's abstract insistence that Russia could only have a dictatorship of the proletariat or a dictatorship of big capital Lenin attacked Trotsky for ignoring the vital role of the peasants in Russia and called for a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry - proletarian hegemony to be decided in the course of struggle. To this charge of playing down the peasants Trotsky pleaded not guilty. What he did admit, though, was his complete failure to understand the centrality of the Party. This is something Trotsky later freely admitted. Lenin dedicated his life to the Party and was correct to do so. The simple fact was that, in essence, Lenin was right, Trotsky was wrong. The October Revolution was indeed bourgeois, but because it was under the hegemony of the proletariat (ie under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party - the vanguard party of the proletariat) it was able to go on uninterruptedly towards the tasks of socialism. As today, let us agree that the future of the USSR is bound up with, reliant on, dialectically connected to the victory of the world revolution.

Euro Democracy

I thought you would like to know that my district secretariat has decided to issue me with a Party card for 1987. In addition, the YCL central office has issued me with a 1987 card. Will wonders never cease! But there is a catch.

I am expected to fight in public for all Eurocommunist views. I can only express disagreement inside the Party in the form of letters to the district committee. Of course, what this really means is that Leninist politics must not be placed in front of workers. This sort of proclamation is stunningly similar to that made by the Mensheviks when they took over the leadership of the RSDLP at its Fourth Congress in 1906.

They declared that no criticism of congress decisions at public meetings should be made, neither could alternative proposals be suggested. Lenin criticised this on the grounds that it was designed to stifle debate and discussion. Thus, what this illustrates is the dialectical contradiction between opportunism and democratic centralism. Yours in comradeship
David Jenkins

7 Days in Crisis

Apparently the last Party Executive Committee discussed *7 Days*. It is in a bad way. There is a £14,000 deficit and orders (not sales) are well below 5,000 a week. Branches are therefore being asked to take an extra five copies (of course, some branches don't take any). Is this what the EC's major campaign to lift circulation amounts to? It seems so.

Such is the depth of the crisis affecting *7 Days*, staff on the paper is to be cut. The price has already gone up to 40p and there is even talk about cutting the use of pho-

tographs. Is this how comrade Myant plans to improve the contents of his paper?

The truth is that *7 Days* is deadly boring. It is so eclectic, so liberal, so directionless no wonder only the Party faithful bother to buy it.

Unlike the right Euros around *Marxism Today* the 'left' Euros around *7 Days* have no common programme. This shows all too clearly in the pages of the paper. But added to this fundamental *7 Days* has in Myant an editor trained in the style of the *Morning Star* of which he was deputy editor and then the Party's candidate to replace Chater. This is a fatal combination.

Typically the Eurocommunists will try and shift the blame for their failure onto the opposition. But this just does not wash. It is the Euros who have failed and they should accept full responsibility for the present dire situation. The buck stops with the Euros.

The only way to save *7 Days* and the Party for that matter is opening it up to the ideas of Leninism. Without this the fate of the Party is sealed. It will slowly decline until it reaches the level of the YCL which now, thanks to the Euros, boasts a giddy membership of fifty!

Andrew Browning
Surrey

Afghanistan

A report in the *Sofia News* weekly on the plenum of the CC of the PDPA on June 10 should alarm communists as to the April 1978 revolution in Afghanistan.

Sofia News quotes General Secretary Najibullah as saying: "We must therefore use every opportunity to get in contact with the monarchic forces, with political forces from former regimes, with eminent and influential religious figures." The paper further reports the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan position that the present process of national reconciliation within the country will lead to a multi-party system and coalition government at the current phase of the national democratic revolution.

Therefore, in essence, Najibullah and the Parcham wing of the PDPA are continuing the policy of Babrak Karmal (with the support of the CPSU) in seeking to draw the most backward feudal elements into the country's leadership.

Leninists should demand that the PDPA leadership have no truck with these anti-socialist elements. Instead, it must strive to conduct a vigorous propaganda and educational programme among the admittedly small Afghani working class, so that it becomes the hegemon of the national democratic revolution. Only then will the Afghan revolution possibly move towards the establishment of socialism.

The *Leninist* correctly saw the dangers for the revolution. It said: "...we consider the killing of Amin and 97 other PDPA leaders as representing the extinguishing of the flame of the revolution; this was not only a crime, but also deforms the development of the country. While the presence of large numbers of Soviet Army units can secure it from the clutches of imperialism, the threat of counter-revolution welling up from the depths of society is, in the long term, a constant danger, much in the manner experienced in Poland in the last three decades". (James Marshall, *The Paradox of Afghanistan*, *The Leninist* Spring 1982).

Afghanistan faces all the problems of a backward country trying to establish socialism. Ultimately, however, its success will depend on

a fundamental change in the world balance of forces and the dominance of Leninist politics within the PDPA.

Harry Ford
Yorks

Fool's Mate?

On the chess-board there are the pawns - the masses; knights and bishops - the Party; rooks and the queen - the Central Committee; and the king - leader and thinker. Chess is described as both a science and an art. So is communist revolution. The grandmaster needs to know the theory but each game is an unpredictable and unique creation forged in the white heat of inspiration.

Theory is important, yes, but not so much in the head as in the blood.

We have habitually used the October Opening in the belief that this was the best possible one, but the opponent has developed a pretty effective defence, which has also lulled him into a false sense of security. When it comes to the big match we shall spring upon the adversary a totally new, hypermodern opening, throw him into confusion, establish an impregnable position, and go for mate.

Alexander Clements
London SW1

Fighting chance.

Although I am not unemployed myself, I will be happy to join the UWC's lobby of the TUC on September 8. I think the way that unemployed people have been left to simply rot on the dole and given no perspective of change is absolutely scandalous. Of course, we expect little from the Tories, but what about the TUC and the unions. It seems to me that in terms of offering a fighting alternative to the unemployed, to get them really campaigning for better conditions for themselves, the labour movement has been just about useless.

Although I don't agree 100% with the programme of the UWC, I will be there in Blackpool to show my support for anything that offers the unemployed a fighting chance.

M.B. Fraser
North Wales

Labour's wages and capital

I cannot understand the Labour Party's political representatives in parliament voting themselves a weekly increase of £80 when a retired pensioner only got 80p a week.

Tom Hopkins (retired miner)
Caerphilly

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

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

Our Fourth Summer Offensive has ended in triumph. It has pointed the way to the level of commitment needed to reforge our Communist Party of Great Britain

Summer Triumph



Lenin always emphasised the need for communist self-sacrifice

ON AUGUST 1 *The Leninist's* Fourth Summer Offensive drew to a victorious close. Comrades who participated in this 'financial assault' can feel justly proud of their achievements.

In nearly all cases the target which participants had been set – £400 whether employed or unemployed – was not only reached, but surpassed. Last year the average raised by our comrades was £252. Money is still coming in and as we write fingers are still busily hammering away at pocket calculators, but of one thing there is no doubt; this year's average is much, much higher than last year's. Furthermore, there have been a greater number of participants, using a greater degree of ingenuity.

When and wherever possible friends, sympathisers and workmates were won to sponsor us. Fundraising socials, sponsored bike rides, sales of possessions (including one highly prized *bona fide* Red Army uniform) and many other ideas were thought up in order that comrades could meet and break through their targets.

And broken they were. This is a great indication of the commitment and conviction of *Leninist* supporters at a time when virtually every other section of the workers movement has the post election blues and seemingly terminal apathy and indolence.

The starkest contrast to ourselves must indeed come from within the ranks of our own Party. Witness the shambling mass of today's Party members who, irrespective of whether they are Euro or CCG, all give off the same stench of depression and despondency. Opportunism is mother and father to defeat and degeneracy. These opportunists are being dragged down, not kicking and screaming but only pathetically whimpering, through the apathy that their politics, their opportunist failures and defeats, has produced. Nothing, in their eyes, can be done, so why try and do anything serious.

In contrast, the politics of Leninism give birth to strength, commitment, dynamism and inventiveness. This was mirrored in our approach to finance. We have no exorbitant subs to the socialist countries to finance ourselves with, we have no fat accumulated from the past to live off. We have no choice but to grapple with reality as we find it. And we are, against the stream, winning.

Circumstances today force us to strain every muscle swimming against the stream of Labourism, reformism and defeatism while bigger fish are swept away behind us. We are even able to advance through the current, clawing our way forward. For our comrades to contribute what they did was no easy thing. We are not an organisation which is over-endowed with peers of the realm, wealthy actors or fat cat labour movement bureaucrats. It was not merely a case of anyone dipping into their back pockets to make up their total. It took all of us a lot of hard slog, but it was a slog that all enjoyed. Why? Because we know our cause will win!

We can only look on in wonder at those who call themselves communists or revolutionaries and merely turn out once a week to do a sale of this or that paper, or turn up to branch meetings and public meetings of this or that group or 'party' and think that they have done 'their bit' for the British revolution.

Just how little do they think that the revolution will take to achieve? An hour or two every Saturday morning outside Sainsbury's? We Leninists are only too well aware that the project of forging a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party in Britain, let alone the revolution, demands much more than £400 from one comrade, £600 from another or £1,000 from yet another. It demands our lives. Revolution is not a hobby, a time filler. That is why we take the serious approach that we do. Any-

thing else from anyone claiming the name 'communist' merely mocks that name.

Through our work we have been able to impart some of this commitment to a section of our readership. Readers have sent in donations of £75, £50, £25 and the like.

Unfortunately the number of readers that have involved themselves in this way has been small. Indeed most, for whatever reasons, have chosen to limit their financial commitment to *The Leninist* to paying out 40p per fortnight.

This is a greater criticism of ourselves than of anything else. We have been unable to involve the bulk of our readers in the task of reforging our CPGB and to win them to the idea that *The Leninist* is their paper, and to then commit them to our task of reforging the CPGB. This is obviously something we must aim to do, and indeed achieve, for the next, Fifth Summer Offensive.

The money we raised will be well employed. The situation demands that we intervene far more effectively in the class struggle and the crisis in the communist movement. This necessitates an extension of the range and depth of our activities and publications of *The Leninists*.

Of course, all this takes money. What we have gained, financially and by 'hardening the sinews of war' through the Summer Offensive, undoubtedly takes us much nearer to this goal.

But we still have far to go. Leninist commitment does not just last for two months every year. It must be unflinching, permanent.

The fight, the work and the commitment continues. This year we have been more ambitious than ever, and we have triumphed! Now is no time to rest on our laurels, now is the time fight.

Back a winner and fight back with *The Leninist*.

What is happening in Afghanistan? The wide ranging land reforms first instituted after the April 1978 revolution were recently reversed and land holdings of unlimited size are now allowed. The country's name has been changed from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to simply the Republic of Afghanistan no doubt to downplay Soviet connections. The leader of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan, comrade Dr Najibullah, has declared a unilateral ceasefire in the war against the counterrevolutionary Mujahadeen and has made overtures to all and sundry, offering the establishment of a 'government of national reconciliation'. This has even been extended to the country's ex-King. Could the motive force behind the Afghan revolution's shift into reverse gear have been the current Soviet leadership? Certainly comrade Gorbachov has openly stated that he wants to withdraw from Afghanistan as soon as possible. As a result of this the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan has, it is reported, suffered further fragmentation. The dominant, rightist Parcham group has divided into supporters of Najibullah against the supporters of ex-president, Babrak Karmal (not so long ago lauded to the sky by our centrists). But more than that the Khalq wing of the Party which actually led the 1978 revolution under comrade Hafizullah Amin has also split into two, one grouping still supporting the ideas of comrade Amin, the other seeking conciliation with the rightist Parchamites. One thing is certain; the gains of the revolution are in danger.

Some weeks ago the *Morning Star* ran an 'open letter' from the Communist Party of Ireland to the Irish Republican Army. The letter was based around the cowardly, unfounded and totally un-Marxist notion that there was no basis whatsoever for the IRA's armed struggle in the Six Counties and further indicated that the IRA had no significant support. The CPI then went on to slander the IRA's campaign as "increasingly degenerating into a sectarian armed campaign". This naturally provoked a letter in response from members of Sinn Fein. They rightly took offence at the CPI's hectoring tone and reactionary stance. Informed sources tell us that *Star* editor Tony Chater was originally dead against applying that basic democratic right that the left has always fought for, the right of reply, and resisted publishing the letter.

Apparently, we have deputy editor David Whitfield to thank for the publication of the Sinn Feiners' letter (although this does not absolve him for interviewing Orange fascist Gusty Spence) as he demanded the *Star* print it. Nonetheless credit where credit is due. We support Whitfield's fight. The *Morning Star* did print the Sinn Feiners' statement on August 12. Nonetheless comparing the two, it is the Sinn Feiners who obviously have not only the better knowledge of history, but believe it or not also of Marx and Lenin. In other words what one would have thought would have been the domain of Irish communists. The Sinn Feiners rightly defend the IRA's heroic record, comparing it to the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe.

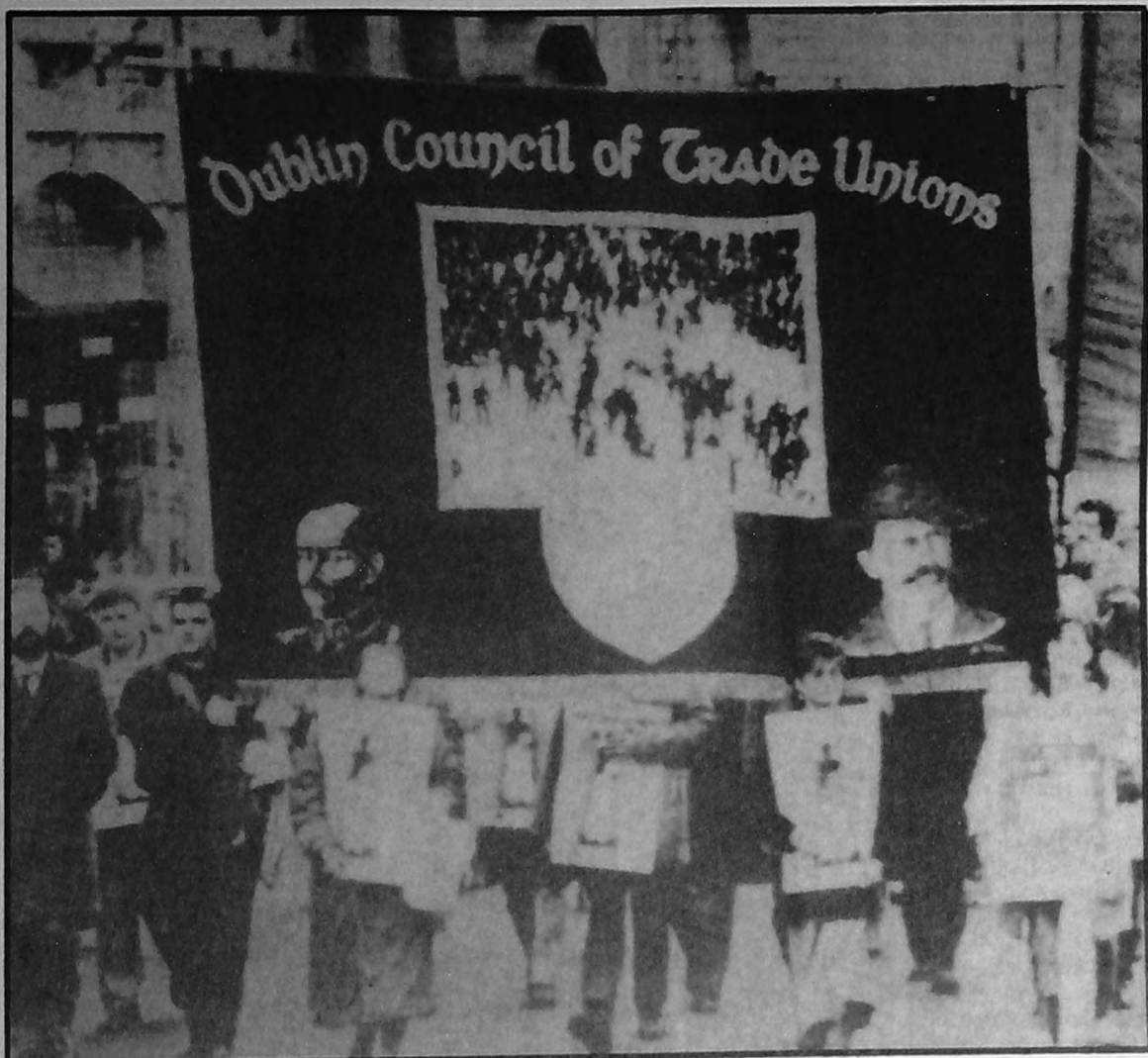


Part of the Leninist contingent organised on the Irish Freedom Movement demonstration on August 8. We militantly and actively support the demand for Irish self-determination.

NOW IS THE TIME

The reformist left press is clearly heading into crisis. The Labour Party executive has approved the axing of *Labour Weekly*, *New Socialist* and *Labour Youth* – just as Labour MPs voted themselves a £80 a week pay rise. And just as Labourism is proving itself bankrupt the *Morning Star* and *7 Days* both look like going the same way. Of course, the death of our reformist communist press promises to be slower, more drawn out than the Labourite reformist press. Nonetheless the writing is on the wall. What about *The Leninist*? Well we have our problems. We have still not managed to get back to our fortnightly schedule, we are still hampered by a lack of input by our readers, not least in money. But, and it is a big but, our paper is not going backwards. We will, with the help of our readers, surmount all obstacles and go on to take new strides forward simply because this is what the class struggle necessitates. Before we can do that though we need to begin to meet our monthly target. In August we received £410 towards our £600 monthly fighting fund. This is good but nowhere near what we need. So come on readers, now is the time to act, order extra copies of the paper, send in that extra fiver. You know you need us as much as we need you.





The images of Connolly and Larkin are paraded. But do Irish trade unions carry on their revolutionary tradition?

'Workers' unity' or 'Uncle Tom's mafia'?

IN ITS RESOLUTIONS to the 40th Congress the Party's EC puts forward no perspective for communists in Britain building a solidarity movement with Ireland. This silence is typical of the Euro-communists, they have become charity mongering liberals.

But what of the *Morning Star*? In a welcome break from its past it has started to carry articles on Ireland. Unfortunately they are all either written by members of the Communist Party of Ireland or merely echo these comrades total subordination to pacifism, opportunism and economism.

The truth of this can be clearly seen in the *Morning Star's* reporting of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions which met at Cork at the end of June for its annual conference. The *Morning Star*, a paper which revels in being in the smell of tightly packed trade union big wigs duly sent one of its innocents abroad to get a slice of the action. Isolda McNeill was the lucky candidate.

So what kind of animal is the ICTU? I'll sit back here and let Isolda explain:

"Workers from North and South, organised in Irish unions and in British based unions - with an Irish membership both in the North and the South - (were represented) at the conference.

"This makes it a unique forum in which a united trade union movement can debate the many issues confronting Irish workers.

"This unity under the umbrella of the ICTU has been strenuously fought for and is maintained despite continuous sectarian pressures and repeated onslaughts.

"One of the prices that the ICTU has had to pay for this unity, and which is strictly adhered to, is a

constitutional prohibition on discussing the national question." (*Morning Star*, June 30)

Brilliant! What a stirring example of workers' unity in practice! Protestants can be united with Catholics, north united with south ... just so long as the little detail that Ireland happens to be an oppressed nation, divided and partially occupied by British troops, does not rear its ugly head. How the hell can the ICTU "debate the many issues confronting Irish workers" if it can't even confront the central one - their oppression and division by British imperialism?

Sectarian unions

Isolda and the *Star* quietly skate over this. It is the only mention that it gets before she launches into a tirade against 'sectarianism'. Who the sectarians are we are not told. Guess. She does not even think of addressing herself to the question; why exactly is it that the ICTU should not discuss the national question?

Isolda, we will just have to tell you what you probably know already. This 'taboo' is imposed by the unions in the Six Counties. They stamp their feet and threaten to split every time anyone raises the issue.

The northern unions are overwhelmingly made up of Protestants led by semi-fascist bigots who say they will fight tooth and claw to keep 'Ulster' British and thus defend Protestant privilege which is bestowed through partition. The union leaders either go along with this or close their eyes to it. You therefore have 'unity', but at a price - a price set by loyalist sectarianism.

Worshipping such spineless forces as the northern trade union movement, the likes of McNeill and the *Star* must shamelessly play down the influence of loyalism on the unions to justify their preference for them to the troublesome and oh-so sectarian republican movement.

When loyalist workers in Shorts aircraft factory in Belfast walked out over management's resistance to them airing their bigoted politics overmuch on the shop floor, the *Morning Star* reported that: "A walkout by loyalist workers at Shorts... over the flying of sectarian flags and emblems fell flat yesterday, with only 400 out of a 7,000 workforce supporting the move. (It just so happens that, at the same time, Shorts, wary of the effect this would have on their orders, reassured their customers that only 2,000 had come out - AM) ... The limited scale of the action represents a big success for the unified trade union movement in Northern Ireland (sic), which has been waging a campaign against sectarianism and intimidation." (July 2)

And remember, it had been waging this campaign without mentioning the cause of such sectarianism and intimidation - the national question. Pretty neat, huh?

A mere two days later, the *Star* was forced to eat crow when these '400' managed to shut Shorts down. The only thing red about the *Star* that day was its blushes as it approvingly quoted Irish vice-president of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Workers, Joe Bowers: "We believe that the workplace should be a politically neutral environment." What the *Star* didn't tell us was

that this apolitical-seeming bureaucratic statement came from a leading member of the Communist Party of Ireland. So much for factories being the power houses of communism - "politically neutral" indeed!

The sectarian attitude of the Six Counties trade unions is at times mind blowing. For instance, when USDAW members in the Six Counties occupied the Agra meat packing factory in a pay dispute, Agra transferred the work to its plant in the Twenty-six Counties.

USDAW, which does not organise in the south, told its striking members that the plant in the south was unorganised. So they moved into it and occupied it, only to find that the plant was unionised, by a Twenty-six Counties union whose membership had not been informed of the action of their sisters and brothers in the Six Counties. This amounts to a deliberate act of sabotage by the northern USDAW leadership. Needless to say, it was not reported in the *Star*.

MacBride principles

McNeill and the *Star* do little more than act as an apology for unions which refuse to confront loyalist bigotry. Let us see what McNeill writes:

"Controversy could be caused by four motions, all put forward by trades councils, calling for the endorsement of the 'MacBride principles'.

"These principles are aimed at ending job discrimination against Northern Ireland[sic] Catholics by using economic pressure to force companies to introduce quotas for the employment of Catholics.

"Progressives in Northern Ireland fear that such endorsement would inevitably lead to a significant increase in the tension between the two communities. They favour moves toward fair and balanced employment rather than what will be presented as 'reverse discrimination'." (*Morning Star*, June 30 1987)

Now, look closely, McNeill does not oppose MacBride because they only offer a redistribution of the crumbs, not the bakery, ie jobs for all. She opposes these principles because they would increase tension between the two communities. Why? Because any time the Protestant working class feels its privilege threatened tension increases.

The only way to prevent this is to keep Catholic workers repressed. McNeill endorses the status quo - three times the rate of Catholic unemployment to Protestant, and lower grade employment at that. What else can we take the above passage to mean?

The only thing she puts in its place is the cosmetic Fair Employment Agency, which merely asks employers to make no distinction between Catholics and Protestants when taking on workers. It is toothless, totally ineffectual.

The War

This is an issue that neither the ICTU nor Isolda McNeill touch upon, any more than they do the national question. 'Sectarian murders' got the ritual denunciations, cheered on by McNeill. Wiping away a mournful tear, McNeill reports: "Only five days ago, electrician John Tracy was killed at work in Belfast, APEX delegate Pat MacCartan reminded delegates." (*Morning Star*, July 1)

She omits to say who he was killed by, and why. Well, he was killed by IRA Volunteers of the Belfast Brigade. Why? Is it because they have an irrational

grudge against electricians? Maybe they are just anti-union, anti-workers' unity. No. Tracy was shot because he was a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and had been for over ten years.

The IRA carried out a legitimate act of war against the forces of an occupying power. McNeill and the bureaucrats she crawls before are more than blind to this. They know it full well. It's just that they stand on the other side of the barricade.

The union bureaucracy because it is a union bureaucracy stands for the maintenance of its members economic position. It just so happens their position is privileged, it is a labour aristocracy which exists on the basis of maintaining the link with Britain and the repression of Catholics. This is why the union bureaucracy refuses to question British domination. This objectively links it to Molyneux, Paisley, the UDA and UVF. With them stands the *Morning Star*.

Fighting Back

The ICTU conference did witness one area of disagreement among all the mutual back slapping, hot air and platitudes. This was the suspension of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union because of its refusal to reject comments of its general secretary, John Mitchell, who said that the unions in the Six Counties were dominated by a 'mafia' and that USDAW was an 'Uncle Tom reactionary union'. This predictably sent the northern bureaucrats off into fits of apoplectic fury. McNeill reports this (briefly) but does not comment.

It is not just a matter of the loyalist dominated unions proving a problem in Ireland. The majority of ICTU affiliates are Twenty-six County based. Yet only 15 out of 470 delegates voted against the IDATU suspension. They too are only too willing to drop burdensome principles to maintain their much vaunted organisational unity.

How then do you combat this? What do Irish workers, north and south, do to defeat loyalist sectarianism in the north and their apologists? Obviously, the defence of Mitchell and the IDATU must be fought for. Their victimisation gives the chance to raise such issues in all unions. The bureaucrats must not be allowed to perpetuate their emasculation of the movement through their reactionary compromising.

In the Six Counties, with most nationalists non-unionised and unemployed, the demand must be raised for unemployed membership of the unions, so as to open them up. It is unrealistic to call for workers' unity through the unions when Catholic workers cannot enter factories like Shorts, Harland and Wolf and many others. Indeed, they dare not, through fear of sectarian loyalist attack. How many times have Catholics been hounded out of work in loyalist dominated workplaces?

Six and Twenty-six County workers must be linked ever closer through a rank and file fightback against the attacks that are bound to be mounted on their living standards and rights. This can only be done by shattering the bureaucrats' ban on the national question.

The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. By openly betraying the former the ICTU leadership cannot but betray the latter. What the Irish working class needs, proven by the ICTU farce, is genuine communist leadership. They need to be rid of the politics of the ICTU. Just, in fact, as we need to be rid of the politics of their sycophants like Isolda McNeill and the crisis ridden *Morning Star*.

Alan Merrick

THE CRISIS IN the communist movement in Britain will reach a qualitatively new stage this November. The aftermath of the Communist Party's 40th Congress could well see the formation of a split around Tony Chater's paper the *Morning Star*. More than that everything points to the CPGB taking a further turn to the right and another step towards total liquidation.

In this article we will show that the crisis in the communist movement has its origins in the grip of opportunism. It is a crisis which effects not only the official leadership but the alternative leadership around the *Morning Star*.

Let us begin with the *Morning Star*. How can Chater deny it? His so-called survival plan for the *Morning Star* is dead. The self sacrifice of generations of communists has been buried in betrayal. Working at the *Morning Star* now is like working at a funeral parlour. Even Costello has decided to leave the sinking ship. The followers of the Communist Campaign Group are in mourning.

David Sullivan, founder of the trashy 'tits and bums' *Sunday Sport* purchased William Rust House. Although his plans for the *Daily Sport* (which was to be "aimed aggressively at a market slot below anything that currently exists") have now been abandoned after the deal with the *Daily Star*, from November 7 the *Morning Star's* old building, acquired on the basis scrimping and scraping by countless thousands of ordinary workers in 1948, will be his property. Presumably its sale will net him a tidy profit. This is what the so-called survival plan has come to.

We always said the *Morning Star* could not survive without the Communist Party. We said from the beginning Chater's UDI would prove fatal. Rank amateurs like Chater and Rosser would not be able to successfully compete in the capitalist market. The *Morning Star* could not be "printed out of crisis" when its crisis was at root political not commercial.

Who can doubt that we have been proved correct. The *Morning Star's* management committee has been obliged to face the fact that easily predictable changes in printing technology pulled the rug from under its feet.

Despite George Guy's connections in trade union officialdom profitable commercial work proved impossible to get on a press which was only the best of the old technology, not the newest of the new. It is like a horse and cart in the age of the Model T motor car. As any go-ahead cost conscious capitalist will tell you this is no small matter.

So after wasting a cool £100,000 of shareholder's money to install a press which Chater was banking on to "print the *Morning Star* out of crisis" it has become, as we said it would, a white elephant, or to use another animal analogy, an albatross around the necks of the *Morning Star's* hard pressed supporters. Not surprisingly Chater was prepared to do almost anything to get someone to take it away. Until the *Morning Star* was shot of it there was a £9,000 monthly drain on funds in interest payments for a press which it could not use.

Chater has less and less room left for manoeuvre. The *Morning Star's* tiny print run was always far too low to justify paying printers to run it off on the Urbanite. Circulation looks set to continue its remorseless decline and thus exacerbate further the paper's chronic financial crisis. Even now lack of cash has led to a situation where most of the professional journalists have long gone, where the staff are still waiting for their annual January pay increase and where because the bill from the Press Association was not paid the telex machine remains cut off.

The £2.5 million from Sullivan will not last long. Redundancy payments will have to be made, a new office (sites in South London, Shoreditch and Caledonian Road are at the moment being considered) purchased and mounting debts honoured. Printing will still have to be farmed out, presumably to the SWP's East End Offset, and this will represent a constant drain.

Under Chater's mismanagement the *Morning Star* is dying. All Chater has achieved with the Sullivan deal is to draw out its death agony.

Chater's opportunism

Failure is not a crime. Objective conditions are not always favourable. Nonetheless whatever the conditions communists must struggle, they must do their best to lay the basis for the success of future struggles, for the success of future generations. This is their duty.

Has Chater done this? No, he has not even attempted to do so. He is a bungler with a speaking clock personality. A dyed in the wool right opportunist wedded to a trans-

parently irrelevant reformist programme. A cynical manipulator of his readers militant instincts, readers whom he actually treats with contempt and middle class disdain. It is he that deserves contempt and disdain.

Chater does not recognise the need for revolution nor revolutionary openness. Some reformist leaders like Scargill deserve our respect, not Chater. Because of political and personal inadequacy he plots, hides behind procedures and committees, prefers the dark to the light and refuses to admit the truth until forced to.

Honesty in politics as Lenin rightly said is a sign of strength. Chater has none. The blank pages in the paper on July 31, and subsequently, say everything about Chater's personality and political strength. The print workers who in 1982 went along with Chater's rebellion against the Communist Party to save their jobs themselves rebelled against Chater because of his lack of honesty.

In Murdoch style the management committee had not even bothered to tell let alone consult with the print workers union the NGA. Such an approach by a capitalist boss is reprehensible, from a communist it is unforgivable. The first the *Morning Star's* workers heard of the possible loss of their jobs and the sale of the Farringdon Road building to Bradmore, the publishers of the sordid *Sunday Sport*, was in the early edition of the *Evening Standard* at 2pm on Thursday July 30.

Outraged they stopped work, leaving pages three and eleven blank except for the photos which had already been set and demanded an explanation from Chater.

For Chater this is par for the course. Lack of honesty and of what the Russians call *glasnost* has a long history at the *Morning Star* under Chater. The management committee likewise fears the truth. After the management committee triumphantly announced the full installation of the ill fated Urbanite Mark II it took literally months before the tabloid it was meant to print finally appeared.

Chater feared telling the *Morning Star's* readership that this was due to a dispute with the trade unions. Problems with the unions were again the cause of several non-appearances afterwards but again Chater did not let on.

Another example of Chater's political approach was the absence of any announcement of Costello's resignation (it was reported in the *UK Press Gazette* on August 10!) Yet another was when he had to sack over 40 of the paper's print workers and move to East End Offset. This was proclaimed as a dramatic move forward because of the re-appearance of the red masthead. Such a claim could only be made by a contemptible narrow and unprincipled opportunist.

Yet perhaps the most outrageous act of political dishonesty perpetrated by Chater was at this year's AGM of the cooperative which owns the *Morning Star* the PPPS. Over 1,000 shareholders were there, the overwhelming majority of whom had in the past backed the survival plan. Surely this was the ideal opportunity for Chater to put his cards on the table and at least give a warning that all was not well.

No, instead he tried to turn the AGM into a rally for Neil Kinnock. In face of assertions that "the survival plan was in tatters" the platform claimed it was "flexible"! This was plainly not true. The survival plan rested on the paper "printing its way out of crisis". But the press was useless, it was in mothballs. Moreover Chater was preparing to sell 75, Farringdon Road to Bradmore. Not even a veiled warning about this was given. Surely this shows Chater's lack of trust, even contempt for his own supporters and thus a lack of principle.

Certainly his rebellion against the Communist Party Executive Committee, on which he sat, was narrow and totally unprincipled. He had come to consider the *Morning Star* his paper. When the EC insisted on carrying out changes agreed by a congress he petulantly refused to abide by majority decisions, an act of indiscipline which finally led him to break the historic link between the paper and the Communist Party which had founded and sustained it since 1929.

This was not the act of a genuine communist.

In a way our Party leadership laid the ground for what has happened since 1982. His schooling in the methods of the 1950's Party bureaucracy did nothing for Chater's personality or principles. Because of this his fellow right opportunists felt safe in appointing him as editor of the *Morning Star*.

As the Party has drifted to the right talent and initiative have come to be seen as dangers



There was a Eurocommunist majority elected at the CPGB's last congress. Now the

Opportunism

to the existing bureaucratic centralist regime. That this trend continues apace can be seen in the appointment of Doug - call the police - Chalmers to a full time position in Scotland.

Centrism's opportunism

The real tragedy of the whole Chater rebellion is that he has managed to hoodwink whole layers of honest Party members into supporting his unprincipled stand. Because of the domination of centrist ideology over the ranks of the majority of the Party opposition this was a relatively easy task.

By undergoing a sudden conversion to 'pro-Sovietism' Chater had most centrist leaders eating out of his hand. Frustrated by isolation from the mainstream of the official labour movement, itching with an unhealthy desire for influence, they rallied their troops to Chater's rebellion using the excuse that he was a latter day Plekhanov and as Lenin had once fought in alliance with the pro-Party Menshevik Plekhanov it was okay for them to align themselves with the pro-Party Menshevik Chater.

This is twisting the truth out of all recognition. The facts are these: Plekhanov was the founder of Marxism in Russia; when Lenin temporarily blocked with Plekhanov he was the leader of the pro-Party Mensheviks who had only a short while ago fought on the street barricades of Petrograd and Moscow with the Bolsheviks in the unsuccessful 1905 Revolution.

Plekhanov was still a Marxist and a revolutionary. Chater has never been a revolution-

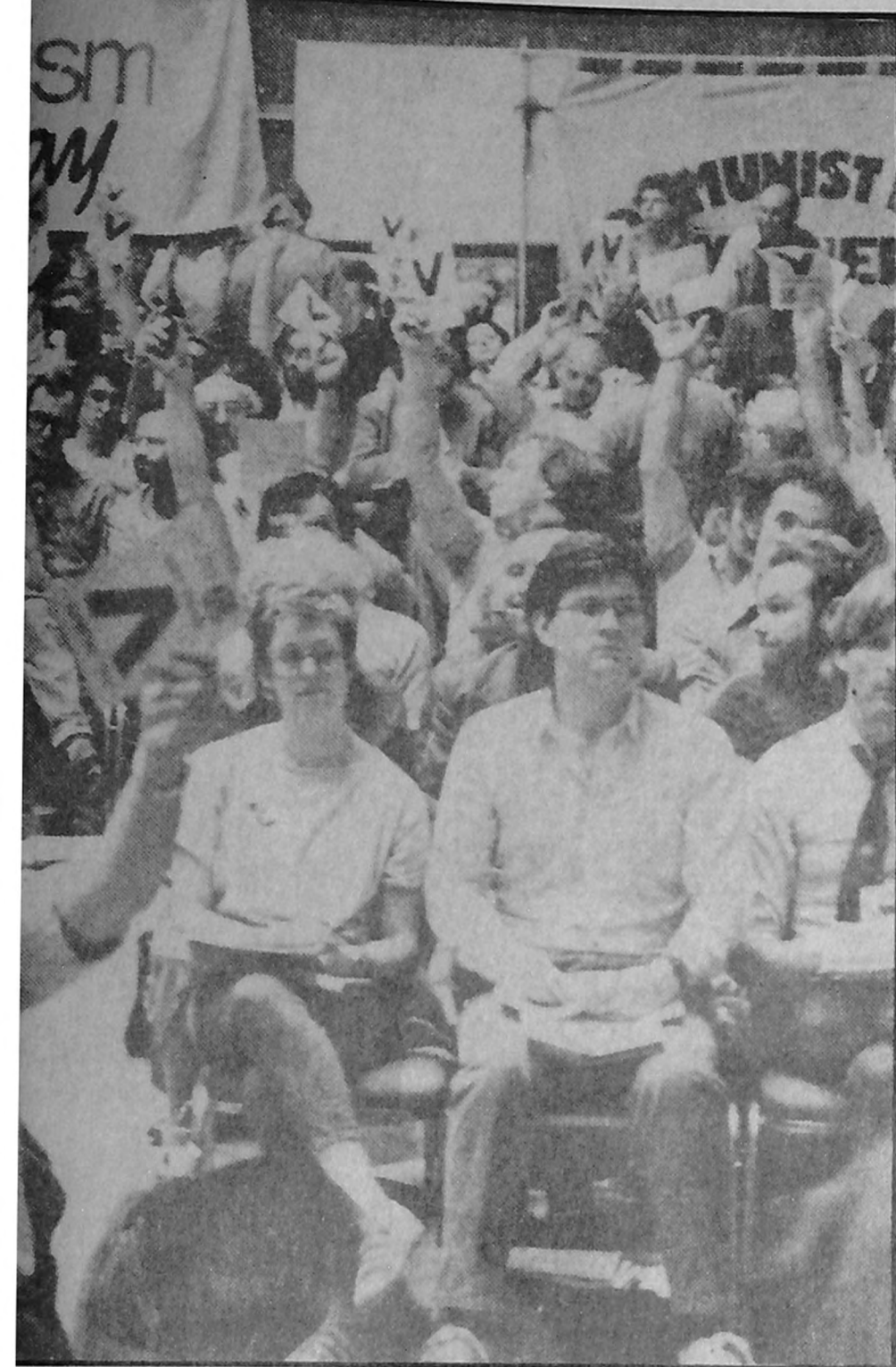
nary in his life. Our CCG centrists opposed the reformist *British Road to Socialism* programme in 1977; now they say they support it. Lenin did not for one moment sacrifice any principles in coming to an agreement with Plekhanov against the liquidationist trends in the Party. He wanted an alliance with Plekhanov because he and the forces he led stood out against liquidationism and for the party. Chater is thoroughly liquidationist and is hostile to the Party.

By drawing a parallel between themselves and the Bolsheviks the centrists hope to hide the fact that what they are defending is an editor who is a right opportunist and who rightly considers his paper the "daily living embodiment of the *British Road to Socialism*" - a reformist and utopian recipe for social reform not revolution.

This exposes the true nature of so-called "Bolsheviks" like Photis Lysandrou, Tom Durkin and Mary Davis. They are in truth miserable right moving centrists.

Following the Party's 40th Congress in November their Communist Campaign Group will we are reliably informed have its own 'congress' and proclaim itself the Party. (Though some say this will depend on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union promising 'dual recognition' we think the die has been cast - the CCG cannot stay in no man's land for long - it is at present neither in nor out of the CPGB) As we have pointed out time and time again in reality this split will be nothing other than a right centrist version of the New Communist Party.

Yes, it could just about pull more members



are at each others throats

ism in crisis

away from our CPGB than the NCP. Yes, it will be able to pepper its leading committee with a few big name trade union functionaries. But no, this does not add up to the vanguard party the working class needs to overthrow this rotten system.

In fact there is every reason to believe that the CCG's NCP Mark II will suffer the same fate of irrelevance as the original model. Far from the CCG's 'party' being ideologically cohesive the only thing that made it possible in the first place is hostility to Eurocommunism.

Once out of the CPGB the various strands, factions, cliques and drinking circles that make up the CCG will come into conflict. They will no longer have the Euros to unite them.

Those who wish to carry on as if they were the CPGB would want to stand candidates in elections and will therefore find themselves opposed by the pro-Labour wing of the CCG 'party'. In the event of another Polish, Afghan or Czech crisis will Chater, Hicks and Rosser again bow before bourgeois opinion and clash with the 'pro-Soviet' wing of the CCG 'party'?

Certainly the trade union big wigs would want a free hand in their wheeler dealing with the TUC, Kinnock and even the Tories. They would insist on their right to decide their union's policies. Woe betide any CCG 'party' leadership which thought democratic centralism applied to trade union leaders: "my union's democracy cannot be subordinated to the party" will come the swift answer.

So if Ken Gill deigns to join the CCG

'party' leadership the union he leads will, in spite of the CCG 'party's' supposed pro-Sovietism, carry on churning out lavish propaganda promoting the virtues of Britain collaborating with other European imperialist powers in the production of a new generation of warplanes to combat Soviet Migs instead of buying an off the shelf product from the USA.

As to Tony Chater can anyone imagine he would bow before the democratic decisions of the CCG 'party' leadership? After his dismissal in June 1 1983 of the CPGB EC, of which he was a member, as a "body outside the PPPS" and his subsequent bureaucratic break of the historic link between the paper and the Party, it is hardly likely. The *Morning Star* is his paper as the CCG 'party' leadership will find out to its cost.

Will those who imagine they have joined a real communist party go along with this? Divisions will surely come to the surface and a bitter internal struggle, reproducing those of the 1970s CPGB on a lower level, will break out. Indeed already we are told four distinct factions are to be found in the CCG. Arguments about the *British Road to Socialism* can only further the divisions. It is not only reformist, it is laughably dated and transparently needs rewriting. The leadership's first draft will send the CCG 'party' factionalising along its countless fault lines.

How will the CCG 'party' leadership respond to the differences in their ranks? We can say with certainty it will use every underhand device, ploy and trick to bureaucratically crush opposition. Why are we so certain?

● The whole history of Chater and Co is one

of fear of open debate and unprincipled attacks on those who disagree with them. For example it was not so long ago Mike Hicks was hated by the opposition because of his autocratic and heavy handed attitude as chair of the London District Committee.

● The CCG and its publications have refused to countenance different views being openly expressed. Only that which urges unity behind the *Morning Star* and the *British Road* is allowed.

So the future of the CCG 'party' can already be clearly seen. How quickly, by what exact route it will arrive at oblivion remains to be seen. Certainly though the latest twist in the *Morning Star's* long drawn out death rattle will lead to a further drop in the CCG's already low morale and a new wave of desertions from its betrayed rank and file.

That this is happening before the split, before differences are forced to the surface, only goes to show that the CCG 'party's' fate is well and truly sealed.

The fact is that real communist unity is only possible around the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Without this there can only be unity imposed through bureaucratic centralism or liquidation into the swamp of social democracy.

The period we are now in, a period which has seen a string of defeats for the working class, is one of disintegration, disorganisation and disorientation for many left groups. Those which have no ideological homogeneity, no real disciplined organisation can not even manage to achieve stagnation, they can only but decline in ever small circles, becoming little more than a set of factions divided amongst themselves. This applies equally to the future CCG 'party' and the Eurocommunists.

Euro divisions

Ever since the Euro trend coalesced as a faction in the Party it has wormed its way into the Party hierarchy, its mission to create a CPGB thoroughly purged of all trends other than itself. This is no bold revolutionary project. It is neither new nor imaginative.

It is revisionist to the core and it has been done by countless other updaters of Marx in the past. Like the Bernstein right wing of the pre-1914 Second International, reflecting their class base, the Euros want to make the CPGB a party of petty bourgeois reform. They want to make it respectable and acceptable to bourgeois public opinion.

Infiltration of the upper echelons of the Party has not been the only Euro method. These so-called 'revolutionary democrats' are neither revolutionary nor democratic. Since they came to dominate the Party's EC there have been expulsions, bureaucratic disbanding of branches and a systematic violation of the most elementary rights of members on a scale never seen before in the Party's history.

The 'revolutionary democrats' have proved far more 'Stalinist' (if by that is meant authoritarian) than those who actually proclaimed themselves Stalinists like Harry Pollitt - even when compared with the height of the centrist sectarian bing of the late 1920s and early 30s.

With the exodus of CCG centrists away from the Party the aim of a pure Eurocommunist CPGB seems just a 40th Congress away. Yet at this very moment the Eurocommunists find the sweetness of their triumph turning sour.

Why should this be? We have always insisted Eurocommunism was never a homogeneous grouping. Because of its petty bourgeois and radical reformist roots it consists of a whole mass of different and ultimately contradictory strands.

Even at a cursory glance the informed observer can see tensions between radical feminists and all others, Labour voters and tactical voters, gays and straights, unreconstructed anti-Soviet elements and the fans of Gorbachev. In fact the list is endless. What kept these various strands together was the goal of taking over the Party and the battle against the centrists.

The post 39th Congress saw a clear Eurocommunist majority on the EC assert its authority, 1987 has seen the bulk of the centrists set on a course out of the Party and into an NCP type split. These conditions meant it was only a matter of time before Eurocommunism would split and then split and split again.

In *The Leninist* No 51 we reported the emergence of two distinct trends in what had been the united Euro camp. This was no mere division over the question of tactical voting. It was a factional division about the future of the Communist Party itself.

The right Eurocommunists around *Marxism Today*, and its editor Martin Jacques, see a

future for the CPGB but as an amorphous collection of well meaning individuals all doing their own thing in 'broad movements' and as a 'think tank for the left'. In other words liquidationism.

As to the 'left' Eurocommunists, they are only 'left' in terms of Eurocommunism. As evidenced by their dull, crisis ridden flagship *7 Days* and their leaders such as comrades Monty Johnstone, Dave Cook and Nina Temple they have no clear vision about where the CPGB should go. They consider the *Marxism Today* project elitist and out of control. What has united them in essence is opposition to the 'right' Eurocommunists.

The June election took the wind out of the right Euro sail. The LSD Alliance emerged without holding the balance of power in parliament. The Labour Party staged a modest recovery. In other words the whole tactical voting anti-Thatcherite panacea proved a non-starter.

The 'left' Eurocommunists heaved a sigh of relief. The right Euro challenge which they had expected to come at the 40th Congress in November fell at the first fence. Of course the right Euros are not finished, they do at least have the advantage of having some sort of unifying perspective around the success of *Marxism Today*. Nonetheless with the pressure from the right Euros eased what has happened to the 'left' Euros?

As revealed in the July edition of the 'left' Euro house journal *News and Views* they have been forced to admit the split in Eurocommunism, what Monty Johnstone calls the "EC majority" ie the 'left' Euros and the "EC minority" ie the right Euros. But more than that growing splits in the EC majority itself.

This can be seen in comrade Dave Prescott's article. Not even reading between the lines it is clear he does not trust the candidates who have put themselves forward to replace comrade McLennan when he retires as general secretary following this year's 40th Congress. Comrade Jacques is obviously too far out for the conservative former Yorkshire district secretary. But what of the other three aspiring general secretaries? Nina Temple and Ian McKay are not front runners and as such the main purpose of Prescott's warnings are clearly directed at heading off comrade Dave Cook.

Looking at Cook's initiative in 1979 in issuing a *Minority Report on Inner-Party Democracy* Prescott is plainly worried. Cook inspired the *Minority Report* which proposed giving the Euros (and only the Euros) the right to form factions before Party congresses.

Fearing what Cook as general secretary might be able to put into the new edition of the *British Road*, which it is proposed to redraft in 1989, Prescott makes a plea that comrade McLennan should delay his retirement until 1989. Then he says the Party can test the various candidates on the basis of what they are saying about the new draft of the Party programme in 1989.

In a real sense the Eurocommunists are not merely the historical offspring of centrism, they still resemble the CCG. They are the Tweedle Dee of opportunism to the CCG Tweedle Dum. It is not accidental that both groupings are riven by countless factions and are visibly disintegrating.

Opportunism by definition, whether it be the opportunism of the various Euros, the various centrists around the *Morning Star* or *Straight Left*, is the pursuit of short term or sectional interests to the detriment of the revolutionary tasks of the working class.

As the capitalist offensive continues opportunism can only offer sectional responses. It is unable to present let alone fight for a united revolutionary front against capitalism. Indeed opportunism weakens and divides the forces of the working class. As can be seen from the EC's congress resolutions and the *Morning Star's* prostration before Labourism it is part of the crisis of capitalism not the answer to it.

Indeed because of opportunism we find the paradoxical situation where as capitalism drifts nearer and nearer towards a new general crisis many Party members question the need for the Party itself. This is the fruit of opportunism. Clearly our Party is in crisis because it is dominated by opportunism, not because there is no longer a need for a Party.

What is needed in the Party today is branches submitting resolutions demanding the freedom for all tendencies in the Party to openly express their views. The persecutions, the purges and prescribed lists of banned publications must come to an end. This small step could halt the slide of the CPGB into oblivion. It would provide the best conditions for correct ideas to emerge and that means the ideas of Leninism.

Jack Conrad

Neither Baghdad nor Tehran but the working class

AS REAGAN'S fleet steams its way around the Gulf, the British bourgeois press once more engages in its favourite past time: Arab baiting. Scores of Fleet Street's finest hunch over battered word processors, hovering somewhere between frenzied fits of chauvinism and alcohol induced stupor. Look on with distaste if you will, but these gallant lads are busily raising the flag for the civilised west in a crusade against the godless heathen.

The line which the whores of Fleet Street come up with when they triumphantly input their finished work will be of no surprise to any casual follower of the British media. With a cavalier regard to history television, radio and newspaper alike tell us that the US task force is protecting freedom in the Gulf, giving a stern warning to the 'mad mullahs' of Iran who are intent on terrorising and subverting the 'free west' and generally keeping the situation of peace and democracy that we all know and love so well.

Of course this is not the case. Western imperialism backs right to the hilt governments for which 'terrorist' is too mild a term. To justify this the Reagan administration has had to make a distinction between 'autocratic' regimes such as El Salvador and Chile which must be backed, and 'totalitarian' regimes such as the Soviet Union and Iran which must be fought (albeit with the odd 'Contragate' style slip-up).

Hypocrisy here is taken to the point of irrationality. And indeed, so it must; Reagan and Thatcher are fighting tooth and claw to hold together an irrational system - imperialism - and furthermore hold it together on their terms.

The position of world dominance the US held is slipping from its grasp. Whereas its need to export capital, to retain and extend its markets, is now greater than ever it finds itself in a position where its markets are not only stagnant but actually contracting. Other capitals of greater dynamism are pushing the US out. British imperialism is in a similar situation. The alternative is posed: export or die and, although the imperialist beast is a rabid obscenity, it has no intention of voluntarily rolling over and dying.

The resistance of regimes like Khomeini's Iran are at once a threat and an opportunity for imperialism. A threat because Iranian capitalism has its own national interests to look after and these contradict those of the west; a threat also because the Iran-Iraq war threatens to drag in the whole of the Middle East creating a highly unstable and extremely dangerous situation. But it is an opportunity for US imperialism to show that whereas it might not be as young and sprightly as it once was it can still pack a punch against upstarts like Khomeini.

Imperialism does not, and cannot have any progressive role to play in the Gulf or anywhere else. US gunboats are not in the Gulf in

the interests of peace or safety. There is nothing peaceful or safe about a heavily armed task force of US imperialism. The safest thing that it could do would be to sink slowly below the waves.

We therefore have no interest in the success of Reagan's 'gunboat diplomacy'. We earnestly hope for its defeat. It is the duty of communists in the west to agitate for this. But does this mean that we support Iran's victory? Many leftwing groups in Britain would answer this in the affirmative.

The example that springs immediately to mind is the WRP *News Line* crowd. If you have ever wondered how such an oddball sect can afford a daily paper, look at headlines like, "Iran - Day of Martyrdom", "Iran Vows Revenge", ponder on *News Line's* defence of the Khomeini regime's murder of revolutionaries, reactionary war and anti-working class, anti-women stand. And then stop and listen carefully. Somewhere in the distance you may hear the 'ching' of a cash register. It is not just in Iran and Iraq that you will find people with the blood of Iraqi and Iranian workers on their hands...

Let us now deal with leftists who can at least tell you the meaning of the term 'principle' without first having to rush to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. August's *Workers Power* defines Iran as a "semi-colonial regime" and states "we must pledge unconditional defence of Iran". *Workers Press* of August 8 goes as far as to ludicrously label Iran as "a colonial country" and sickeningly cries "defend the Iranian revolution". One might be forgiven for asking what revolution there still is to defend in Iran. The Revolutionary Communist Party's *the next step* of August 7 calls Iran a "third world nation" and again says that "we must back Iran against imperialism".

'Semi-colonial regime' and 'third world nation' (Iran is a state but is it a nation?), let alone the joke 'colonial' label, do not define the nature of Iran. They are empty phrases, mere apologies for a definition.

These groups want to defend Iran, yet they do not understand what they are defending! The *Workers Press* and *Workers Power* paint a picture of Iran as a country whose whole growth is stunted by imperialism, kept in semi-feudal slavery by the jackboot of the west. This is an exaggeration to say the least.

Iran is no peasant nation; it is no Zaire or El Salvador. Through the medium of the state and large loans from imperialism Iran has been able to reach a degree of economic development and strength which surpasses countries which are simply backward.

The Iranian state even under the Shah was independent enough "to restrict imports and to promote domestic output more directly, either through state monopolies or through encouragement to private capitalists... a further stage

has been reached, because of the fact that the major source of funds, oil revenues, is paid to the state which must therefore distribute money through its developmental policies." (Fred Halliday, *Iran, Dictatorship and Development*, p151, 1979)

This was taken a stage further with the 1979 revolution: "One of the Iranian revolution's early acts, in 1979, was the complete nationalisation of the country's banking system. A few months later, in March 1980, it completed the merging of the 22 small commercial banks into two major new institutions" (*Financial Times*, April 1 1985) Since the end of World War II government intervention in the economy has developed national banking capital and industrial capital. The two have merged, producing native finance capital. Lenin included this occurrence as one of his five criterion of imperialism: "The merging of bank capital with industrial capital and the creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital' of a financial oligarchy." (Lenin, *Imperialism*)

This has quite clearly occurred in Iran. But with the formation of finance capital comes the need to export capital. This Iran cannot do, it is far too weak. It cannot out compete the imperialists for their markets. Iranian capitalism just cannot win. All it can do is prolong its wretched life by literally bleeding the Iranian people to death.

The Iranian monopoly bourgeoisie has no progressive character whatsoever. It is entirely reactionary. Of course the overthrow of the Shah was a setback for it, but far from the 1979 revolution putting into power the working class in alliance with the urban and rural poor the ideological weakness of the revolutionary movement, its tailism allowed the black reaction of Khomeini to triumph. A black reaction which although it relies on the support of the urban poor represents the national bourgeoisie based on the bazaar which is counterrevolutionary, backward looking and reactionary to the core.

Those on the British left who call for support for the Khomeini regime in effect advise Iranian workers and revolutionaries to patriotically line up to enrol in the *Pasdaran* or the army to defend the theocracy and thus Iranian capital, to defend the butcher of 100,000s of Iranian workers and 10,000s of Iranian revolutionaries.

If the RCP and the rest really want to "take a stand with the people of Iran" as they state, then they can only do so by standing with the masses against those who oppress them. Not only imperialism but the Khomeini regime.

Because we are internationalists, not mere little Englander 'anti-imperialists' on some kind of a guilt trip, we stand for the defeat of both sides by their 'own' working class. Neither Washington, London, Baghdad nor Khomeini's bloody theocracy in Tehran. For revolutionary defeatism!

Alan Merrik



The US is not bringing peace to the Gulf: only revolution can

The left in Iran and internationally has been thrown off balance by the US intervention in the Gulf. We say fight for the defeat of all sides.

THE Khomeini regime is in reality not strong. Imperialism wants rid of this tiresome and troublesome regime. Internally it relies on a mixture of religious fanaticism, bribery, spies and naked terror. Certainly sections of the bourgeoisie are known to be looking for a future not in the theocracy but in some 'liberal' alternative. As to the working class, after its defeats in the early '80s, it is once more slowly, cautiously, rising to its feet, preparing to do what it should have done in 1979 - overthrow not just the existing regime but the system behind it.

The fact is that the Khomeini regime is cracking. It is cracking in such a way that a communist party, a 'red wedge', could prise the divisions within the regime wider still and, by striking where Khomeini is weak, smash the whole system asunder. In Iran today the objective conditions for qualitative change are rapidly maturing. The Gulf crisis clearly illustrates the truth in Lenin's statement that we are in an epoch of wars and revolutions. Lenin also taught that if a revolution is to succeed in the winning of proletarian power it must be led by a proletarian, communist, party. Conditions are quickly rendering Iran tinder dry for change. Where, then, is the party that can touch this tinder with the spark of communism and ignite the blaze of revolution?

Tudeh

This is the answer that many centrists will give - the Tudeh Party of Iran, official Iranian contingent of the world communist movement and the oldest of the different groups in the Iranian communist movement. The core of the Party

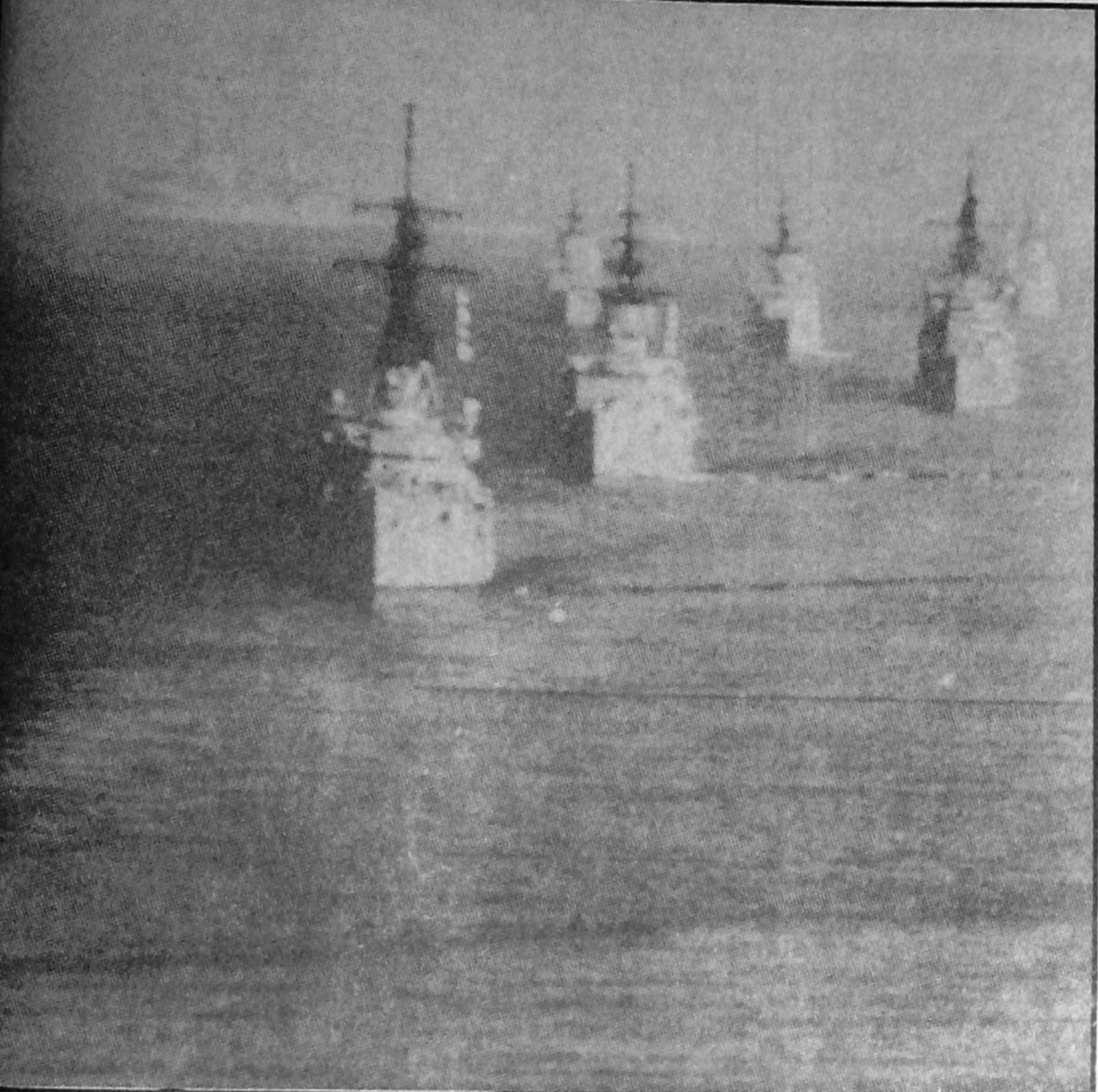
was consolidated in the jails of Reza Shah by the old cadre of the liquidated Communist Party of Iran. On their release the project of a new party was embarked upon and was proclaimed in 1941.

Tudeh, to a greater extent than most communist parties, was little more than the Iranian wing of Soviet diplomacy. This led to many twists and turns, left and right, as was required by the Soviet state in the region. Consequently, it led to demoralisation and splits within the Party and, after it had led the Iranian proletariat up the garden path in the early 50s, prevented it from gaining a mass membership or influence within the masses.

The Party's strategy of 'passive survival' from then until the late '70s - heads down, say nothing, do less - can hardly have facilitated a 'high profile' position for it. Instead it opened the door for more dynamic groups to gain mass influence in the '60s and '70s, ie the radical Shi'a Mojahadeen, the Maoist Peykar and the guerillaist Fedaii.

Every dog has its day, and Tudeh's day came with the decline of the revolutionary wave in the early 80s. Firstly, because it was able to ingratiate itself with the new Islamic Republic by becoming the Imam's tame leftists, denouncing other organisations who fought on as 'counterrevolutionary'; secondly, because its international connections and attendant respect, and the experience of its cadres relative to other younger left organisations allowed it to draw a majority of the mass Fedaii organisation to its banners after 1979.

By toadying for the theocracy, Tudeh retained its legal status until 1983. Then the Islamic Republic turned on it and decimated its ranks. All that was gained by



Tudeh through years of sycophancy was lost overnight, along with many of its cadre lost to Khomeini's jails, torture chambers and firing squads.

Not even the most blind, 'hack' party could sustain the sort of the defeat that Tudeh had brought upon itself without some form of internal crisis. No matter how the Party leadership might, in true world communist movement fashion, seek to suppress such dissent it still bursts forth. The *Tudeh News* of July 23 1986 reports the expulsion of what it terms the 'fractionalist group'.

Singled out in this is one Amir Khosravi. Khosravi, a Central Committee member, is essentially of the same opportunist trend as the leading group around Safari, who just want 'business as usual' and to ignore their past political *faux pas*. The Khosravi grouping feels that this is a little too much for the Iranian masses to swallow and therefore wants an extensive 'cosmetic job' to regain the credibility lost through backing Khomeini for so long. This got his supporters expelled.

Another split has been that of the *Bayneh* (Statement) grouping who have asked more probing questions but have yet to rationalise this into a coherent programme of action. This group is based around three regional committees of the Party. The fourth, and last split that we know of is led by associate CC member Mohamed Azadgar, also named by the Tudeh leadership as one of the 'fractionalist group', which has, it seems, done a more thorough going critique of Tudeh's positions and adopted views close to those of the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rah-e Kargar*).

Tudeh is indeed in a sorry state, being paid back with interest the fruits of its opportunist practice. It would, however be foolish to consider its influence to be ended because of this.

Although lacking in any mass basis, Tudeh still has the international connection and the alliance with the Fedaii (Majority) to

sustain it. It is unlikely to disappear, even under the weight of its own monumental opportunism, and should circumstances change, it could even rise to prominence again. Opportunism does not melt away like spring snow, it must be fought.

The Fedaii

The Fedaii originated from circles of revolutionary youth during the 1960s who were seeking to fill the vacuum left by the absence of a viable revolutionary organisation in Iran. Again, the core of the Fedaii came out of the prisons, around a young ex-Tudeh militant, Bijan Jazani. Heavily influenced by the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions as well as the Palestinian struggle, the group moved towards a guerillaist, 'armed propaganda' strategy which was, in part at least, a reaction to the passivity of Tudeh.

Jazani's critique of Tudeh did not really dig below the surface to the roots of the problem. His new organisation retained much of Tudeh's populist 'anti-imperialism' (eg, Jazani's attribution to the national bourgeoisie of a potentially revolutionary role. See his *Capitalism and Revolution in Iran*, especially p140). These political deficiencies were to open up the Fedaii to Tudeh a decade later. The Organisation of Iranian People's Fedaiian Guerillas was launched formally in 1971 and christened in action with the heroic defeat of the Siahkal insurgency.

The OIPFG continued with the guerilla strategy up to the revolution. Because of its militancy it then found itself in an enviable position; the revolutionary upsurge drew masses of workers into its ranks. The Organisation exploded in size, from hundreds to literally hundreds of thousands. It became massively bottom heavy and, to its cost, ideologically insecure as to what its approach to the new Islamic regime should be. This is where Tudeh came in - it had a far more coherent line (ie tailism) and

also had the stamp of authenticity of a world movement.

The Splits

So Tudeh was fortuitously able to net the Fedaii. But not, however, the whole organisation. A split took place in 1980, with the majority moving towards Tudeh, dropping its guerilla strategy and hence the 'G' from its name and adopting a position of total support for the Islamic Republic to become the OIPF (Majority). The minority remained hostile to Tudeh and Khomeini whilst retaining the guerilla strategy and the original name, OIPFG. It has subsequently been unable to develop a coherent line and has consequently suffered split after split.

The Majority organisation was to suffer one more major split, taking place in December 1981. A minority around CC member Ali Keshtgar came into conflict with the majority around Farokh Negahdar who they accused of adopting a liquidationist attitude towards Tudeh. They split, later dropping the title 'Majority' to become simply the OIPF. The OIPF was slow to extend its criticisms of the Tudeh/Majority. As late as 1983 it was still extending critical support to the regime and clinging to the same petty bourgeois, superficially 'anti-imperialist', radical nationalism of this trend.

However, through a self critical approach to the mistakes of its past theory and practice it has taken steps to the left, developing its original criticisms of this line, *vis a vis* the attitude to the Islamic Republic and the war, stagism and the uncritical approach to both the policies of the Soviet state and the predominant line in the world communist movement.

The OIPF (Majority) remains the largest secular left organisation in Iran. It retains its links with, and formal independence from, Tudeh and of course now, like Tudeh, has been forced to take a hostile stand to the Islamic Republic. As the

leadership has adopted Tudeh's politics it is to be expected then that it will have contracted Tudeh's political leprosy. The opportunistic stench of an organisation of such a size is bound to cause splits and fragmentation within it.

Much of the rank and file of the Majority retains its militancy and consequently is hostile to the Negahdar leadership's continued liquidationist overtures to Tudeh. Understandable discontent is also felt towards the positions of the Majority up to 1983. Why did it support the Khomeini regime and the war? These are questions that the Negahdar leadership cannot and will not answer. They have perfected a form of opportunist tightrope walking, maintaining their balance in between the counteracting pulls of their rank and file and Tudeh. Objective conditions and the interventions of revolutionaries who can provide answers to these dilemmas will undoubtedly exacerbate these divisions.

Rah-e Kargar

This, the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran, is one of the newest - and possibly the healthiest - organisations of the Iranian left. It should come as no surprise to learn that it was formed from imprisoned revolutionaries. To be specific, from three different groups of political prisoners in the Shah's jails during the late '70s. The three groups - Fedaii, Mojahadeen and a group made up from members of smaller guerilla bodies - carried out a reappraisal of their past positions while imprisoned: "By re-examining those revolutions that had achieved victory, and in the light of the upsurge of mass struggles in Iran, they re-evaluated and criticised the guerilla tactics and forms of struggle... [they] ventured further than merely criticising the tactics of the guerilla struggle and took a critical look at the political programme of the populists... In their fight to establish a communist ideology they not only formulated an ideological struggle against the guerilla strategy, but also activated a... campaign against the reformists of the Tudeh Party of Iran." (*Rah-e Kargar*, a short introduction, p5) Released by the uprisings of early 1979, these forces fused and launched ORWI in 1980. They were among the first revolutionaries to oppose the Khomeini regime, proclaiming "the revolution is dead, long live the revolution!" with the rise of the Islamic Republic - a most unpopular slogan at the time! They were also quick to advance the correct position of revolutionary defeatism in the Iran/Iraq war.

Initially they had a propaganda orientation to the Fedaii but, while maintaining a polemical approach to other organisations on the Iranian left, have struggled to embed themselves within the working class, to test their theories in practice at factory level.

Internationalism

Revolutionaries in Iran have correctly criticised Tudeh's subordination to Soviet state directives. Unfortunately this has led many to abandon a fundamental Leninist principle; in attacking the effects of having the current CPSU as a guide to action for communists they have taken a sceptical attitude to any world communist centre, whatever the political line predominant within it: "... the maintenance of class independence from the representatives of the non-proletarian classes and strata and the maintenance of national independence from the communist parties

and organisations of other countries, while at the same time pursuing active solidarity with these parties, is a basic prerequisite for the success of the communist movement in fulfilling its objectives." (*International Fedaii*, Autumn 1986, English language publication of the OIPF).

Now, to argue that the introduction of centralised discipline on the international level of the world communist movement today would be counterproductive is of course correct. It would mean the complete organisational dominance of the strong opportunist trend over the, as yet, much smaller revolutionary trend. But the OIPF comrades are not just arguing this. The only way we can interpret the above quote is that it opposes any form of world communist party - a Communist International - no matter what the leadership.

The comrades' argument is based on the idea that those on the ground, fighting on the national terrain of a given country will understand the conditions best, and hence the best way to approach the tasks that this poses. It is they, after all, who will suffer the repercussions of this most sharply. This is the method of the Second, Kautskyite, International rather than the Third, Leninist: "The old International used the method of referring such questions for decision to the individual parties in the countries concerned. This was a grave error. We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another, but in this case we are dealing with the principles underlying a communist parties tactics. This is very important and, in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist point of view." (VI Lenin, *CW Vol 31*, p257) This view was enforced by the democratic centralist discipline of the International. The Iranian social revolution will be national in form but international in content. It will rock every other country on the planet. It is in the interest of the British, Soviet or American working class no less than it is in the interest of the Iranian working class. As Marx said, the proletariat has no country. He therefore strove to unite it across national boundaries in one world party.

This objective necessity has strengthened, not diminished today as the world market draws ever tighter and capitalism becomes ever more moribund and dangerous. Our model of an International is not one based on the opportunist politics and bureaucratic dictat of another Stalin, or with communist parties acting as adjuncts of Soviet diplomacy. It is one where all parties, all tendencies are allowed to freely and democratically argue their positions at all levels. But it is also one that at the end of the day is united in revolutionary action.

Above we have summarised the standpoint of the most significant sections of the communist movement in Iran. Although, in a situation where even trade unions do not exist and the politics of revolutionary communism are as yet still uninfluential, the objective situation has created a rising tide of workers' activity. As we have indicated above, this is going hand in hand with a greater fluidity within the left. The old structures of the communist movement, particularly Tudeh, are opening up to debate. The central struggle for communists in Iran must be the forging of a genuinely revolutionary and internationalist communist party in Iran. This is no small task, but without the party of the revolution there can be no revolution, only further defeats. There are faint gleams on the horizon. And it is all there to play for.

Alan Merrick



One of our comrades recently ran into an unknown centrist in London's Collet's bookshop. By the centrist's lack of wit, charm and dress sense, not to mention a quirky line in 'dialectical' gobbledegook, he seemed an adherent of the Proletarian sect. But no — the centrist proclaimed himself a supporter of Partisan, a split from Proletarian! What provoked this world shattering split we do not know as he would not tell.

While we are on the subject of bizarre sub sects, have you by chance come across the WRP (News Slime)'s latest 'campaign'? You will find them on street corners with 'Arm the South African Workers' leaflets, placards and collection tins or organising 'Arm the South African Workers' benefit concerts with performers like Smiley Culture, Maxi Priest and Misty 'n' Roots. This undoubtedly has the potential to bring in a bob or two, if the WRP gets its act together. But for whom? Where are the guns going to come from? How are they going to get them into the hands of South African workers?

You may not have noticed but, according to old issues of the next step, 1986 was the year that the RCP 'took on the Labour Party'. Unbeknown to either the working class, the Labour Party or the election vote tellers it seems that the RCP actually won! Frank Richards, head honcho of the SWP with hair gell, proclaimed in his 'key-note speech' at their summer school, 'Preparing For Power, the collapse of the official labour movement'. Sorry Frank, we missed that one. Perhaps next year the RCP will really hit the big time and 1988 "will be the year that the RCP takes on the bourgeois state". Perhaps, but given the decline in size of both the RCP's summer school Preparing for Power and this year's Irish Freedom Movement demonstration on August 8 relative to last year, this is not something we advise readers to stake their life savings on.

The August Congress Special edition of News and Views has at least one surprise. Apparently the Young Communist League is not dead. It has three branches and 50 members. We say we are surprised because we know of members of the YCL who although they had written in several times asking about YCL activities and asking for a new card for 1987 received no reply. The YCL is as we have long said the barometer of the Party.



Willis might smile, we must fight

TUC RETREATS in crisis

WHILE THIS year's TUC congress was rather a non-event, it did underline the tendency towards compromise and retreat displayed by the leadership bureaucracy in the unions. Its debates were boringly predictable, with the right retaining the initiative on most questions.

Delegates who tried to stand against the drift to the right in most instances found themselves attempting to appeal to what they chose to call "traditional trade union values", or put another way, those methods and approaches to trade union struggles that have proved themselves manifestly irrelevant and useless in this period and have in fact paved the way for the ascendancy of the Lairds and Hammonds of the world.

So what is the TUC going to do about what it itself dubs as the "serious crisis" facing the labour movement? If you want to know, you could do worse than to look to their blood brothers in the Labour Party during the election campaign. In short, glossy covered brochures hiding between their covers ever more rightwing politics.

In the main the TUC is trying to maintain its organisation, and hence for these tops, the relevance and position of the bureaucrats. They are more worried about losing their 'negotiating power'. They are not looking to fight or to win. Few militants can have any doubts as to the truth in this after the miners' and printers' strikes.

But at the same time, the centre-right majority of the General Council has to look over its shoulder at the 'bad boys' of the TUC like Eric Hammond and Gavin Laird who play the game faster and harder than they are at the moment prepared to do. Thus, the TGWU put forward a resolution opposing single union, no strike deals. In typical TUC fashion, this was fudged and glossed over. But Hammond of the EETPU was able to detail in the debate a whole list of similar deals struck by other unions. In other words, they are all at it, but the EETPU is simply more up front about it.

The likes of Hammond and

Laird know that they have a valuable commodity to sell to the bosses — safe unionism — and, despite the stand-off at this year's congress, are still darkly threatening to leave the TUC to lash together a scab union centre with the likes of Lynk's UDM to sell it all the better. After all say these bureaucrats, the TUC has less to offer than the CBI.

Even if the TGWU's resolution had been passed, it would never have been made to bite by the General Council. All Hammond needs to do is threaten to split and the rest of the bureaucrats rush to fudge in an effort to protect their much vaunted 'trade union unity'. 'Unity', that is, around the lowest, most reactionary denominator. Hammond and Laird can keep playing and winning their split game on the TUC so long as it is just political pygmies of the likes of Willis and Todd who are ranged against them. If the congress proved one thing, it is that if we wait for the TUC tops to defend our rights we will be waiting a long, long time. The answer is a rank and file fightback. Not around what the bosses can afford or what the TUC tops think that they can negotiate, but what we need.

Organised workers need to stretch across sectional boundaries and forge links right across the class, to organise the militant, fighting minority to take the lead away from the cringing, cowardly TUC bureaucrats.

The successful Unemployed Workers Charter lobby of the congress on September 8 around the slogans: Break from the MSC, Organise the Unemployed shows the way forward for militants who really want to get at the Tories. Our campaign cuts across sectional divide and unites unemployed and employed activists in struggle precisely because it does not take as its starting point the short term interests of a this or that bit of our class, but from the interests of our class as a whole. This is the type of campaign we need and we do not advocate waiting another year for the action to start as various bureaucrats were in the aftermath of the TUC congress. The best time to start the fightback is right now.

Camden's council has shown the resistance and courage that we have all come to associate with the Labour councils when they begin to feel the purse strings tighten. The council says it needs £12 million and will do anything to balance the books. It is going in with the cleavers to cut, cut and cut again. Already the council is maintaining massive vacancies for council posts. It has also sacked 300 temps and sold off blocks of council flats to private landlords. And in case of resistance it willingly slanders and turn the screws. The Camden Unemployed Action Centre has been branded an IRA front and its coordinator, Mick Gavin has been suspended and funds frozen, all because the centre has fought for the rights of the unemployed. Where others in Camden have resigned themselves to the council's cuts the CUAC users have fought back. The centre is now occupied 24 hours a day and the users are sure the council will unleash the police to evict them if they are allowed to by the inaction of the local labour movement. We say act now. Support the CUAC occupation. Fight for the right to campaign meeting called by CUAC: 7.30pm September 23, 102 St Pancras Way NW3, phone (01) 485 6352. Support the CUAC picket of the Camden Council Employment Committee: 6.30pm September 30, Old Town Hall, Judd Street, NW1.

Another example of Labour council 'creative accounting' at workers' expense is Brent council. They have £13 million to make up. Services are already suffering, with work being farmed out to private contractors, and the council has entered into the game of trying to maintain as large a pool of vacancies as possible. Their assault has only just begun. The council is turning its 'caring' face to the workers that it is attacking and pleading for co-operation from the trade unions to make the cuts as painless as possible. This has taken some local unions in. Although Brent Nalgo has voted to resist the redundancies and oppose the council's cynical manoeuvres with vacancies, some union officials in the TGWU and Nupe are backing 'their' council and justifying it by arguing that the council is spending too much on white collar jobs, and this is where the cuts should be made. These moves to off load the employer's crisis onto the backs of a section of the workers must be resisted all along the line, if necessary by circumventing the local leaders and going straight to the rank and file to organise joint resistance. Again, this is a field where the unemployed can be mobilised at a grass roots level alongside the employed. At a mass open air meeting of council workers an Unemployed Workers Charter speaker pledged solidarity with the council workers in what was obviously a mutual desire to fill council vacancies.

The decisive 77.5% vote for industrial action against British Coal's new disciplinary code shows that the miners' fighting spirit is still alive. However, the fact that the most likely form of action to come out of the NUM Executive Committee's next meeting will be an overtime ban highlights the fact that while miners don't lack guts, they still desperately need a winning strategy. One lesson of the '84-5 Great Strike is that an overtime ban is certainly *not* the answer. It is more likely to demoralise than invigorate miners for the struggles that are bound to come. The NUM leaders seem unable to provide any answers to the attacks on their membership. Even another national strike on the scale of the last is bound to go down to defeat. It is a hard fact to face, but the NUM is not going to win fighting under its own power alone. The *Financial Times* of September 1 reports however, that the NUM leadership does not even intend to seek any form of backing from the TUC for industrial action against the code. In the Great Strike of '84-5, we called on the TUC to organise a General Strike alongside the miners, but we didn't just leave it there. We said 'With or Without the TUC — General Strike!' If Willis and his cohorts refused to act, then we insisted that workers must be organised independently of their leaderships to take strike action. The mass Miners Support Committees, which often united many of the very best militants in a particular area, were organisations with the potential to establish sufficient authority with the class to act as an alternative organisational centre to the TUC for solidarity strikes. The key was though, to generalise the action. If the miners' leaders were ignoring the TUC because of their plans to link up with the rank and file of other unions and organise them independently of their leaderships to take solidarity action, we would regard it as one-sided, but a step in the right direction. But that is not the case. Rather, the executive's decision to let the TUC off the hook seems to be more the result of a narrow, sectional 'go it alone' approach. NUM militants should be looking to make links with open cast miners in the TGWU and with power workers. It seems obvious that a strike will be far more effective if it mobilises energy workers from all spheres. And not only these, but other workers can and must be drawn in to fight alongside the miners. Rail and dock workers showed that they had a vital role to play in the Great Strike. It is a role that they must be won to play in the coming battles.



Brent's Labour MP Paul Boateng: why the silence over the Labour council's cuts?

REVIEWS



Our Day Will Come!

David Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, Grafton, 1987, pp432, £3.95.

BUY, borrow or steal this book. It is a well written and well informed account of the 1981 hunger strike in Long Kesh prison camp, penned by *The Guardian's* northern Ireland correspondent at the time.

Ten Dead Men is based around the H-block POW's communications; letters written on cigarette papers, wrapped up in cling film and conveyed to republican movement officials via couriers at visiting hours, secreted in mouths, nostrils, anuses, vaginas and foreskins. It is these 'comms' from the prisoners, rather than Beresford's competent journalism marred by occasional liberalism, which gives the book its sense of immediacy.

The basis was laid for the heroic '81 hunger strike in 1976 when the Labour government of the time withdrew 'special category' (effectively political) status from Irish

POWs. They refused to wear the criminalising prison uniforms or do prison work and went 'on the blanket'. In 1978, through prison harassment, this escalated into first the 'no wash' and then the 'dirty' protests. The male POWs of the Kesh were joined in their resistance to Britain's 'criminalisation' strategy by the female POWs of Armagh jail, in equally, if not more, horrendous conditions.

The next step in the prisoner's resistance took place in late 1980. The protest had become an epic campaign but there was no sign of any weakening in the British government's stand against the prisoners. It was felt that extreme action was demanded if the protest was to be brought to a victorious conclusion. Seven POWs embarked on a hunger strike, led by the IRA prisoners' Officer Commanding (O/C), Brendan Hughes. But 53 days later, on December 18, the hunger strike was aborted. Sean McKenna, a 26 year old hunger striker, was close to death and there was a supposed government 'initiative' to end the strike on its way to the prisoners. Afraid for McKenna's life, Hughes took a gamble on an offer he had not seen and aborted the strike. The 'initiative', however, amounted to nothing. The British government had defeated the 1980 hunger strike by cynically playing on fears for a man's life. The atmosphere in the prisons was one of confusion, defeat and anger.

There was an experimental attempt to apply what little the government offered in January 1981, but even this was back-

tracked on, and by the end of the month the dirty protest was back in full swing. Pressure mounted in the H-blocks for a new hunger strike. This was viewed with trepidation by the IRA Army Council, but the prisoners won through. On February 5 the announcement of the hunger strike was made to the outside world. Bobby Sands, the new O/C of the IRA POWs was to be first to refuse food, in a hunger strike which was to be staged in a staggered fashion. He knew full well that he was in all probability going to his death.

On the morning of Sunday 29 February Bobby Sands refused breakfast. The hunger strike was underway. On March 15 he was joined by Francis Hughes, who had also gone into the strike knowing what it might entail: "Comrade, in answer to AC comm of 25/1/81 regarding my position on the h.s. my decision remains the same - Yes - I am prepared to see it through."

The first resounding success of the strike came with the election of Bobby Sands to the British parliament as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone with a vote of 30,492. Beresford describes an example of the jubilation felt within the republican movement at Sands' success: "On the Slane Road to Dublin the red Ford Escort started weaving between the hedgerows as Adams pounded on the steering wheel, shouting: 'Fuck it, we've done it, we've done it...' we've done it... In H5 the prisoners could not contain themselves and the roar of triumph, 'Bhi An Bua Again' - Victory is

Ours - brought the warders running." (p113)

But this was not enough to save Sands' life or win the strike. British imperialism had piled the cemeteries high with the corpses of Irish men and women and was prepared to pile them higher still. This fact began to take hold of Sands' successor as O/C, Brendan McFarlane: "I saw Bobby on Saturday - it was quite an experience and in all honesty I haven't felt the same since. I just had a short yarn with him and when I was preparing to leave he said quietly: 'I'm dying Bik.' Don't think I can describe how I felt just then. I couldn't say anything except God Bless. I told him I'd see him again very soon and he just gave me a quiet laugh. Man, what a feeling!... I think it's becoming increasingly more obvious that the Brits are going to hold fast. It's a nightmarish thought comrade which is taking on the form of cold hard reality with each passing day..." (from McFarlane's comms, dated April 29)

The worst occurred when Bobby Sands MP died on Tuesday May 5 1981 at 1.17am. By 2am rioting had broken out in West Belfast. Progressive opinion worldwide was outraged by what was in essence Britain's slow, tortuous murder of a young man. The nationalist people gave him a funeral befitting a martyred freedom fighter of such courage. Over 100,000 people marched with the coffin when it was taken to the republican plot in Milltown cemetery, West Belfast.

Nine others were to follow Bobby Sands: IRA Volunteers

Francis Hughes and Raymond McCreesh; Inla Volunteer and H-block O/C Patsy O'Hara; IRA Volunteers Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson; Inla Volunteer Kevin Lynch; IRA Volunteers Kieren Doherty, Thomas McIlwee and finally Inla Volunteer Michael Devine. All genuine revolutionaries remember and honour them all.

On October 3, after day 217 of the hunger strike, it was ended, due to in part pressure from some hunger strikers' families but in the main hopes of a settlement from the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Prior.

The substance of some of the hunger strikers' five demands were met but by no means all. Of course for us it is not just a question of the grim conditions, it is the very fact that hundreds of Irish freedom fighters are incarcerated by British imperialism for the 'crime' of fighting for the freedom of their country. It is our duty to get them out.

In Ireland today the hunger strike is not history - its memory is alive, vibrant, inspiring.

In spite of their troops, their torture camps, their banks of computers, their spies and their terrorism the British imperialists can never eradicate the forces of liberation in Ireland. So long as they oppress Ireland there will be men and women of the courage of Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Patsy O'Hara and their comrades who will resist. Bobby Sands told them: *Tiochfadh ar la!* Be warned... our day will come!

Alan Merrick

Syrupy Fabians

News and Views (August Congress Special), CPGB 50p

THE AUGUST edition of the CPGB Executive Committee's badly produced, laid out and thought out soporific journal *News and Views* contains the three resolutions submitted by the EC to the Party's 40th Congress in November. Party branches are invited to submit three amendments to each resolution. Any Party member with even a spark of revolutionism would be tempted to submit the kind of amendment which begins 'delete all and insert'. They are truly dreadful!

The one entitled 'The Communist Party and the PPPS and Morning Star' (their punctuation, not mine -SQ) is fairly predictable. It formalises the disenfranchisement by the Party of the *Star*, in the process sticking two fingers up to the Communist Campaign Group. In its place are put official Party publications like *7 Days*, *News and Views* and comrade Jacques' *Marxism Today*.

The real cringers, however, are the other two resolutions. In the first, 'The New Challenge facing Britain's Labour and Democratic Movements', the Euro dominated leadership sets out the general 'line of march' for the Party in the post election period. Here they clearly plant their flag as the conscience of British liberalism, hankering after "a progressive change in Britain's foreign policy" which includes a call "for Labour to strengthen its non-nuclear defence policy". Defence? What are we 'defending' for Christ's sake? One of the most sanguinary, rapacious powers on the face of the planet, that's what. 'Defence', whether nuclear or conventional still amounts to defence of imperialism, nothing else.

It is clear from the resolution that the Party EC sees itself as advisor to Kinnock's Labour Party, a crutch for the Labour lieutenants of capital, albeit a crutch that has signs of advanced rot. The resolution is packed full of 'good' advice for Kinnock on how he can worm his way into Number 10 in five years time. Unfortunately what it fails to do is give leadership to the working class to resist the bosses' offensive. But then, maybe I'm just being 'classist' and 'vanguardist'.

The EC goes as far as to advocate extending the Broad Democratic Alliance to the LSD Alliance itself; "Although much Alliance politics is opposed to socialism, there are also strongly democratic and anti-Thatcher elements within it." Now, while this is indicative of the rightward slide of the Euros, there is every justification for this statement if you stand by the 1977 version of the *British Road to Socialism* which the CCG also claims to stand for. After all, the Broad Democratic Alliance it propounds advocates alliances with the churches, who surely are no more a part of the workers movement than is the LSD Alliance.

There are many roads to liquidation, and the resolution tests the footing on a few of them: "On some points of policy there was common ground with the Green Party, and this should be the basis for greater future co-operation." It doesn't take much imagination to envisage many a Euro fitting snugly into the ranks of the Greens. We have seen test cases in Europe, why not here?

The resolution tries to justify the Party's abysmal electoral performance by putting it down to voters' "deep desire to defeat Thatcher and return a Labour government." Rubbish! The fact is that few could see the point in voting for the CPGB's Labourite election manifesto when they could vote for the more realistic prospect of the genuine article in the Labour Party. Inch by inch the Party has

been dragged towards the liquidationist precipice. Now the inches are becoming tenths of inches, and hundredths of inches.

A harbinger of things to come is the position of the YCL, which is "no longer a national organisation and only has about 50 members and three functioning branches." It is as well to remember that the people who squeezed the YCL effectively to death now lead the Party. No doubt they will apply the lessons that they learnt from one to the other. Unsurprisingly Party membership has fallen from 12,711 in 1985 to 10,350 today. This is the official figure, the number of active members is undoubtedly much lower.

This resolution reeks of a death wish. 'Liquidation' is written through the EC's resolutions like a stick of Blackpool rock. It is obvious that the comrades who wrote the resolution increasingly have less and less of a conception what a communist party - any kind of communist party - is for. Suf-

fice to say the third resolution - 'Campaign Against Poverty and Unemployment' - plumbs the depths of syrupy Fabianism. It has no fight in it whatsoever. It looks to liberal, ineffectual pressure campaigns like the disgusting 'Hands Across Britain' to defend our rights, of course with the help of the churches.

The resolution is throughout imbued with a sickeningly patronising attitude to the unwaged and low paid, even with regard to its own membership: "The Communist Party will change its own practices where they discriminate against our own members living in poverty." 'Poor' Party members with any sense of respect ought to tell the patronising yuppies who wrote this crap where they can stick their 'practices'!

It is hard to write any more on this resolution without becoming openly abusive. Such sentiment as it expresses is no more conducive to communist polemic than were Edwina Currie's dietary hints for

the northern working class. It reads more like one of the sicklier pages from *Oliver Twist* than of anything remotely communist.

It is obvious from the resolutions where the Euro dominated EC is taking the Party - far away from communism politically and even organisationally. They are just the Fabians of today, and whereas the original Fabians could at least claim the likes of the Webbs and Bernard Shaw, who were moving from liberalism to Labourism, comrades Jacques or Cook are moving from communism to liberalism.

In the first issue of *The Leninist* when it became a newspaper we called on communists to 'fight liquidationism on all fronts'. From the camps of the Euros and the CCG this liquidationism now stares us right in the face. We repeat it now, with more urgency than ever. It is our Party - fight for it!

Sean Quinn

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Poll Tax rebellion in sight

UNITED WE WILL WIN

THATCHER has entered her third round in office with determination to shift the burden of local government spending from business and the wealthy onto the backs of the working class. The poll tax is her chosen weapon.

That this does not even get a mention in the EC's resolutions to the CPGB's 40th Congress can of course be rectified by branches submitting resolutions and amendments. Of course dealing with the poll tax is one thing; developing a successful fightback is another. Clearly what is needed is a full understanding of the background to the imposition of the poll tax and the courage to build a militant, all-Britain working class front to smash it.

Ever since 1979 she has successfully taken on and beaten one section of our class after another. Now she is out to do the lot of us.

By imposing the poll tax the vast majority of the working class will suffer a sharp fall in living standards. YTS 'trainees' could end up paying as much as a millionaire. Every household will receive massive poll tax demands of as much as £788 for every adult individual.

We think she has bitten off more than she can chew. We are not resigned to another Thatcher victory. Armed with correct politics the working class can fight back, smash the poll tax, regain lost ground, and shift the balance of class forces in our favour.

The poll tax must be fought with energy and a sense of urgency. But it must be fought with a strategy. Thatcher has excellent advisers. They have told her that a frontal assault on the entire working class could lead to defeat. Like any good general Thatcher will therefore concentrate her forces and attempt to break any all-Britain united working class front before it happens.

She will attempt to divide and rule. Already the unemployed have been offered concessions on the 20% residual poll tax they were originally planned to pay. England will only start paying the tax in 1990 and even then it will be introduced on a staggered basis over three years. This will, the Tories hope, leave Scotland, where the tax will be introduced in 1989, isolated.

Evasion will be difficult, if not impossible. It is not a simple matter of not being on the electoral register to escape the tax. Those who use any local service, from education to taking out a library book will be cross checked automatically against the Town Hall's list of poll tax payers. Eighteen year-olds signing on for evening classes and pensioners attending council run day centres will all be caught in the poll tax net. Even the homeless sleeping rough are liable to pay it, though only here actually collecting it could prove impossible. Being in prison or hospital are the only legal ways of avoiding it, though this is not a form of evasion we would advocate.

Yet the ruling class is divided on how, or whether, to implement the tax. Not only do we hear murmurs (or whimpers) from the opposition benches in parliamentary debate, but prominent Tories have voiced severe doubts and concessions have already been given to head off a united working class opposition.

Fronting the back bench rebellion are Edward Heath and Michael Heseltine, although he lost some of his self righteous blus-

ter when Nicholas Ridley reminded him that he had voted for its implementation in Scotland twice in the last parliament. Nevertheless, the fact that the cabinet is having to offer concessions to get the poll tax approved by a significant section of its own supporters is of no small importance.

Such conditions provide the perfect opportunity to exploit ruling class divisions and give them all a bloody good hiding. We need to use the divisions in their ranks to allow mass activity to have its full effect. To paraphrase Connolly, the bosses' difficulty is the workers' opportunity.

Left Options

The ruling class knows it has a fight on its hands. Does the left in Britain, then, see this as an opportunity to role up its sleeves and get stuck in? Does it hell.

The 'left' Euros' 7 Days was struck by a bolt of awe inspiring genius. Its inventive and ingenious strategy was ... to get the churches involved! How novel.

This tired old hack formula of the Broad Democratic Alliance has time and time again sabotaged any fightback, not least in Scotland. In their haste to break out of 'the ghetto of the left' the Euros just alienate the brickies so as to buddy-buddy with the bishops and of course 'anti-Thatcherite' Tories like Heath and Heseltine.

The *Morning Star* too has voiced its opinion on the poll tax. Its editorial on June 29 argues for "a broad campaign in the communities". Fair enough, but the *Star* is no more specific than this and, given its allegiance to the same Broad Democratic Alliance we are fearful of just how broad 'broad' is.

On past experience it will surrender any fightback to the interests of the Labour Party. The *Star's* loyalty to Kinnock's party is amazing. For the *Star* the main purpose of the poll tax is to "hit the Labour vote" by making 'high' spending councils too expensive to elect. We are much more concerned about the poll tax's effect on workers pockets than crosses next to the name of Kinnock's party.

Anyway the choice between one interpretation of the *British Road to Socialism* and another here is precious little. Cuddle up to the Bishop of Durham with the Euros or cuddle up to the Bishop of Durham with the Communist Campaign Group. One can only wonder why they are splitting.

What alternatives do we have to these respectable leftists? The so-called 'ultra-left'? Maybe here we will find a little spirit, the will to get up and get at 'em.

The largest alternative is the Socialist Workers Party. In the 1970s they took on fascists, police and labour bureaucrats with the Anti-Nazi League, the Right to Work Campaign and the Rank and File movement. What are they going to do now? Are we on the verge of witnessing an SWP instigated mass anti-poll tax movement burst on the scenes. The answer is short and simple: no.

Socialist Worker of July 4 says there is really no need, basically because poll tax just is not going to happen. It tells us that "the system is unworkable" and that "wiser back bench Tories see what sort of havoc this system will cause". So we can again sleep easy in our beds. Nothing will happen and if it does the system will be so "unwor-

kable" that nobody is going to manage to get any money off you. Convinced? No, we thought not.

The real reason behind the SWP's complacency is that it has run to hide behind its 'down turn' schema, to save its ideologically vulnerable organisation from being shattered by the harsh conditions of 1980s reality. It is a self fulfilling prophecy. Nothing can be done, therefore you do nothing, therefore nothing gets done, therefore you were right to start with.

The SWP's inactivity would not be a problem were it not for the fact that they insist that everyone else does nothing apart from day to day economic struggles. Those who encountered them in the miners' Great Strike, Wapping and even in union branches must be only too aware of the all too often retrogressive blocking actions of this depressing and despondent modern sect.

The 'orthodox' Trotskyist groups have been no more inspiring. *Workers Press* boldly proclaims; "the time for waiting is over - Labour leaders must fight Thatcher!" (June 20) Must they now? We will give any WRPer any odds he or she wants on the fallacy of that little prophecy. This 'party' has no ideas for leading any kind of resistance itself. *Workers Press* of July 18 has a double page on the poll tax - three quarters of it is on the poll tax of the 14th century which provoked the 1381 peasant revolt!

We know the WRP has an old cadre force but ... The situation today only gets a small corner. This article concludes with the question; "what has Labour been doing to counter the poll tax threat?" Okay, nothing; but what then is the WRP going to do against the poll tax threat? Recruit Watt Tyler?

For the right lurching Labourites of *Socialist Organiser* those it appoints to the leadership of its fightback against the poll tax is predictable: "councils need to plan now for a campaign that organises and involves local people who are going to be affected." (July 2) So

the working class should rely on the spineless Labourites, who administer a local wing of the bourgeois state, to lead the fightback against anti-working class legislation. All this is hopelessly reformist. One wonders sometimes if the Soggy Oggies still think of themselves as revolutionaries - surely not.

The Fightback

So that is the 'Vote Labour, But ...' brigade for you. Buck passers of the world unite! It is not necessarily wrong to place demands, but they must not be used as an excuse for inaction. Neil Kinnock is unlikely to be propelled into battle even after a hundred *Workers Press*, *Workers Power*, *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser* and *Labour Briefing* articles calling upon him to lead the fightback.

No group seems to have learnt the lessons of the most important working class struggle since 1926 - the miners' Great Strike. As well as ruthlessly exposing the deficiencies of the politics of the official labour movement it also gave us a glimpse of the new.

The support committees that the strike produced provided the essence of bodies of working class struggle, able to coordinate the strike across the class at a rank and file level. Because of the strike's domination by reformist politics the full potential of this was never realised. But it was there. This is clearly going to give the Revolutionary Communist Party's *Red Front* some difficulty.

Through the *Red Front* the RCP declares its intention to lead resistance to the poll tax. Yet throughout the Great Strike - the acid test for all revolutionary groups - the RCP monstrously dismissed the support committees as nothing more than 'left talking shops'. Because the RCP is still wedded to the same contemptible sectarianism it displayed three years ago it cannot lead a serious fightback against the poll tax. Its puffed up anti-poll tax *Red Front* is a mere sectarian 'party' building

device, it is mere bluster. Nice presentation, shame about the politics.

We take as our starting point the interests of the working class as a whole. We have no sectarian project. We say build on the example of the most advanced, most militant and most dynamic bodies our class has created for many decades - the Miners' Support Committees.

The lessons of the Great Strike, applied to today, would be invaluable. Boycott Committees made up of elected and recallable delegates from all working class organisations, standing on the shoulders of the Miners' Support Committees, could mobilise and coordinate a poll tax revolt by millions. That is what we need. That is what we are fighting for.

Industrial action by CPSA and Nalgo members who will administer the tax must be initiated quickly and supported - boycott all poll tax work. A massive boycott of the poll tax must be prepared - create a united all-Britain workers front.

Boycott Committees must draw the mass of the working class - English, Welsh and Scottish, rural and urban, employed and unemployed - into unified action against the poll tax.

Using the electoral register every household must be visited, pledges to boycott the poll tax should be collected from every person who will be liable to pay it in 1990. Boycott Committees should organise this and encourage the formation of committees in every estate and locality.

Waiting until 1989 in Scotland and 1990 in the rest of Britain would be fatal. The bosses will by then have the initiative and gained the high ground. We must rally our forces now.

Scotland must not be allowed to fight alone. There is no time for complacency in England and Wales, no room for separatism in Scotland. United we will win; divided we will fall.

Sean Quinn