

The LENINIST

Enniskillen p2
CPGB Congress p3
October Crash p4&5
Alton's Bill p8

For a real political revolution

ALL TRENDS within 'official communism' have been thrown into crisis by Gorbachev, perhaps nowhere more so than in Britain. His recent writings and speeches, not least the one commemorating the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, are a condemnation of all those like *Straight Left's* Harry Steel (Harry from Harry Pollitt - the CPGB's general secretary during the Stalin period - and Steel from Stalin - the *man of steel* himself) who religiously followed every cumbersome twist and dull turn of the Brezhnev years, while maintaining a secret admiration society for the late and not lamented Joseph Vissarionovich.

Gorbachev has conjured up the ghosts of the past: Khrushchev - deposed in a palace coup, Dubcek - overthrown by Soviet tanks, Bukharin - shot as a Nazi/Trotskyite spy - are walking again and haunting the sycophants. Shock there has been, but not enough to produce honesty.

•For the New Communist Party leadership it is business as usual. Without the slightest self criticism of its own slavishly pro-Brezhnev past it praises Gorbachev to the sky.

•Heather Sanderson (Harry Steel after a sex change operation?) drops a series of the smallest of hints in the *Straight Leftists' Communist* (June and July 1987) that s/he does not agree with everything Gorbachev is doing. But typically Sanderson dares not say so openly.

•As to the comotose diplomatic internationalists who write *Proletarian*, their No.3 - on the history of the CPGB - redrafted countless times already, will not see the light of day until it can be suitably Gorbachevised.

The leaders of these various factions are nothing but a load of miserable toadies. But none so miserable (and interesting) as the Communist Campaign Group.

Under the title of *The Second Revolution* they have launched a series of four classes on the Soviet Union. The first has so far been the most worthwhile. The CCG's speaker, Julian Cooper of Birmingham University's Centre for Russian and Eastern European Studies, spoke on what he called the *Dialectics of Perestroika*. He might be an academic, but he is at least an honest academic.

His diagnosis of what is wrong with the USSR was broadly accurate. Where we differed was his cure. He backs Gorbachev, we back the working class and the platform of international communism.

Cooper outlined Gorbachev's criticism of the dead weight of bureaucracy in the USSR, how it had become a fetter on production, his condemnation of the crimes of Stalin and the massive repression carried out during the collectivisation of agriculture. He went on to speak about social ills in the USSR like prostitution, alcoholism and apathy; how Gorbachev's reforms

have brought into being a growing class of petty capitalists, private hospitals and why workers face the prospect of higher prices and the danger of unemployment.

Cooper went on to blithely announce that some Soviet commentators were saying that the Eurocommunist criticisms of the USSR in the 1970s were correct and that there was a growing friendship between the Soviet and Italian CPs. But the bombshell really came when he pointed out that the CPSU was deliberately dropping reference to proletarian internationalism. It is apparently reassessing its attitude towards the world communist movement and certainly does not favour any further splitting in it. The CPSU is, Cooper reported, looking to loosen its links with the world communist movement and seeking cooperation with Greens, social democrats and labourites. Where now the NCP and the soon to be formed CCG party?

It is only to be expected that our comrades took not a little pleasure in watching the embarrassment, the dropping jaws and ideological contortions of those CCG factional leaders who deigned to be present at Cooper's lecture. They are hell bent on splitting and at the same time desperately trying to square their support for Stalin and Brezhnev with the circle of supporting Gorbachev.

Let centrism continue its disintegration, its splitting and rush to oblivion. Genuine communists will rally to the banner of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism raised by *The Leninist*.

Frankly we, unlike the *Straight Leftists*, CCGers, NCPers and *Proletarian* centrists, have no problems with comrade Gorbachev's reforms. We have no circle to square. We agree with many of the factual criticisms Gorbachev makes about the Soviet Union of yesterday and today. We have made many of these criticisms ourselves and been attacked for doing so. But, and its a big but, while we broadly agree with many of Gorbachev's criticisms of the past we do not concur with his cure.

Gorbachev calls for a political revolution yet under *glasnost* and *perestroika* he is offering less socialism for the USSR and all along the line attacks on the working class.

We say that the USSR needs a genuine political revolution. This can only be led by the working class and that will mean more socialism and real socialist democracy for the USSR.

Gorbachev and his supporters are not leading a political revolution. His 'revolution' against Stalin's *Short Course* history of the CPSU is a cosmetic job. His political antecedents can be traced back directly to Stalin. The crimes of Stalin were not merely those of one man and his immediate entourage - as Gorbachev claimed in his October Revolution speech - they were the crimes of the social stratum Stalin personified. That stratum

is the Soviet bureaucracy which has parasitically governed the USSR since the mid-1920s.

That does not mean there is nothing happening in the USSR as the myopic writers in the petty bourgeois revolutionary left press tell their readers. The USSR is at an historic crossroads. The old bureaucratic methods of running the Soviet economy can now only produce stagnation and crisis. This opens up all sorts of dangers but also great possibilities.

What we are seeing today is a struggle within the bureaucracy, not a struggle against the bureaucracy. Gorbachev rails against the inefficiency of various sections of the bureaucracy, their *unearned* privileges. But because he is the leader of the technocratic wing of the bureaucracy he can only offer technocratic solutions. Against his phoney political revolution the Soviet working class will turn to the programme of Marx, Engels, Lenin and international communism.

•**Wages and bureaucratic privileges.** Gorbachev says wage differentials between various sections of the working class are too narrow. They will have to grow and even then workers will have to work harder for relatively less.

We admit that wage differentials under socialism are necessary, but we are against campaigns to widen them. We are certainly against cuts in working class living standards. Gorbachev wants to cut the social wage and increase prices.

We say let Gorbachev talk about wage cuts when he and all state and party functionaries in the USSR only receive the average pay of a skilled worker. This was the practice originated in the Paris Commune of 1871 and carried on by Lenin after 1917. In those days there were no fat cat salaries for party functionaries, no caviar and western luxury goods at give away prices in special Kremlin shops.

It was Stalin who championed privilege. From the mid-1920s the bureaucracy became a parasitic stratum and gradually accustomed itself to obscene opulence. If Gorbachev was only getting 250 roubles a month maybe he would be less enthusiastic about widening differentials. Abolish all open and concealed bureaucratic privileges!

•**Economy.** Gorbachev says the economy in the USSR is over-centralised. It is true that the bureaucracy has become a fetter, it has always acted as a brake on what could have been.

The bureaucracy was never progressive. True, in 1928 it initiated a drive for industrialisation. This was done, though, in a ham fisted, enormously wasteful and totally bureaucratic fashion. Although this was a step forward the Soviet Union is still paying the cost.

The bureaucratic methods of the 1930s were not totally out of step with laying the basis of industry. Soviet growth rates in that period testify to that. Today on the other hand bureaucratic planning has be-

come a block on the development of the productive forces.

Growth rates have steadily slid downwards and the rate of return on investment has done likewise. Gorbachev says he will introduce a Soviet version of market socialism to change this. Inefficient enterprises will be allowed to go bust, prices will rise and wages will be tied to profit or loss. This could mean unemployment. Would Gorbachev be so ready to talk about making workers unemployed if all state functionaries in the USSR were subject to instant recall?

Gorbachev's New Economic Mechanism will certainly mean the strengthening of the forces of capitalism in the USSR. Gorbachev's technocratic answers will temporarily increase growth, market socialism certainly did in China and Hungary. But, as these countries have shown, the advance is short lived. While NEM will mean the peasants and the petty capitalist Nemmen enriching themselves, the working class will suffer a growing gap between higher prices and their social and monetary wages.

Socialism is not a specific mode of production, it is a transitional form of society in between capitalism and communism. NEM will increase the danger of capitalist restorationism - not from below but from above.

The triumph of communism will only be ensured by the forces of communism in socialism - not least the law of planning - overcoming the forces of capitalism - commodity production and the law of value. What the USSR needs today is not less centralism, as Gorbachev maintains. What is needed is democratic centralism in the economy, democratic not bureaucratic planning. No to the market, yes to the democratic socialist plan!

•**Democracy.** Gorbachev says he is leading a political revolution to allow the full flowering of socialist democracy. This is not true. His *glasnost* comes from the top, it is not the result of working class initiative, it is not without guns and bullets, the bureaucracy controls plenty of guns and bullets. Make 'the workers' militia real, arm them with the most advanced weaponry!

With or without Gorbachev the working class does not rule the USSR directly. Bureaucratic initiative, not working class initiative, rules. Political opponents of the CPSU can still find themselves landing up in jail or even mental asylums. The works of Bukharin, Stalin, Trotsky and Zinoviev remain banned. The CPSU enjoys a political monopoly. This is not socialist democracy it is bureaucratic authoritarianism.

Genuine socialist democracy cannot be handed down from a technocratic elite. It will have to be won by the class struggle of the working class, up to and including a real political revolution. Bureaucracy under socialism - especially in its early stages - is unavoidable.

But the socialist state's bureaucracy must be under the control of the working class, it must be its servant.

In the Soviet Union the bureaucracy has criminally and murderously advanced its sectional interests against the interests of the working class as a whole. The USSR's problems can only be overcome through the introduction of real socialist democracy. Only then can the forces of production be liberated, only then can the bureaucratic fetter be removed.

The key to opening up the struggle for socialist democracy is the ending of the one party system. There are various classes and strata in the USSR, all with differing - if not antagonistic - interests. These interests should be brought out into the open. For a plurality of parties!

The CPSU is fused with the state. This must be ended. The CPSU should compete, along with other parties, for governmental power through winning a majority of delegates to the soviets. Not the soviets we see today, but genuine soviets which are not rubber stamp bodies but the real institutions of working class state power.

•**Internationalism.** The leadership of the CPSU has abandoned proletarian internationalism, not only in word but deed. Vanessa Redgrave, *Marxism Today*, *The Economist* and *The Guardian* might like Gorbachev - we do not. His new version of the CPSU's programme does not even refer to the concept of world revolution, it is certainly not guided by it.

The leadership of the CPSU now 'thinks of the interests of the USSR above the interests of the world working class. The USSR was originally intended to be the voluntary union of all socialist states. Instead it has been limited more or less to the frontiers of the old Tsarist empire.

For Lenin the Soviet Union's fate was bound up with the progress of the world revolution. Lenin never put the interests of the Soviet Union above the interests of the world revolution; the part above the whole.

Yet at the 27th Congress of the CPSU Gorbachev offered to do a deal with the USA in countries which he called 'international hot spots'. This, like appeasing the warmongering US over missile cuts, might gain temporary advantage. But it can only damage the long term interests of the USSR and the world revolution.

We must not be blinded to the truth by Gorbachev's popularity in the liberal bourgeois media. We cannot solve the USSR's problems for it. Only the working class in the USSR can do that. But we have a duty to understand developments in the USSR and support the Soviet workers' struggle for communism by struggling for socialist revolution in our country. Long live proletarian internationalism!

Jack Conrad



THE ENNISKILLEN bomb has produced a tidal wave of hypocrisy. The British political establishment, which has in Ireland murdered, maimed and tortured on a scale second to none, united in a sickening bout of bi-partisan chauvinism; to Tory cheers Labour's spokesmen demanded the 'barbarians' be brought to 'justice'.

Confronted with such reactionary bile it is vital for communists to stand firm and point out that the source of all political violence in Ireland is none other than Britain and its determination to keep Ireland divided. Unfortunately many communists have not just kept their heads down but jumped on the anti-IRA bandwagon (including Moscow's Tass).

The *Morning Star* epitomises this trend. It claims to support the national liberation struggle in Ireland, yet after the Enniskillen bomb it ran a headline which screamed: "A blind act of blind hatred" (courtesy of the Communist Party of Ireland). This was indistinguishable from the high Tory *Telegraph* and the gutter Tory *Sun*.

Such a headline shows that its editors have a blind hatred and blind fear of revolutionary violence, that is, revolutionary violence in Ireland today. Would the *Morning Star* attack the armed actions of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* as providing the apartheid state in South Africa with an excuse for further acts of oppression? Hardly. So why accuse the IRA of entrenching sectarianism?

The *Morning Star* in fact embodies hypocrisy. It quite rightly celebrates the revolutionary victories of the Red Army, but it is worthwhile recalling that its forerunner hailed the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki - and that was reactionary violence.

Enniskillen was not a "blind act of blind hatred", the IRA is no "elitist armed group" (*Morning Star* November 10 1987). To suggest it is flies in the face of truth. The forces of national liberation have been conducting a protracted guerrilla struggle in the Six Counties for nearly 20 years. This has been, and could only be, carried out with the active support of the nationalist population. Enniskillen must be seen in this context. Indeed it can only be understood in this context.

The fact is that Ireland is too close to home for the *Morning Star* to have anything approaching communist principles and to defend the armed struggle. Some will make the excuse that all it is doing is taking its line from the CP of Ireland. This is feeble. The paper does not after all feel obliged to take its lead from the CPGB! It only echoes the cowardly calls for surrender coming from the marginalised and isolated CPI because it agrees with the CPI's hostility to the forces of national liberation.

There is a war being fought in the Six Counties. It is a war between the forces of national liberation and the forces of imperialism. The war cannot be wished away. It is a political reality and communists have a duty to take one of two sides.

In a war, any war, innocent people get killed. This is unfortunate, tragic, but a fact. The IRA says the killing of civilians in Enniskillen was a mistake, perhaps due to British Army electronic countermeasures. Whether or not this was the case is not the point. The armed actions of the IRA are the violence of the oppressed. If they go wrong we do not get on some moralistic high horse. We must take a comradely and understanding attitude towards the national liberation struggle in Ireland, just as we do to the struggles in South Africa, Namibia and El Salvador.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Sanctions

I have some doubts about calling upon bourgeois governments to implement sanctions against South Africa. Could they be effectively enforced (Rhodesian sanctions did not work)? Would they not also create unemployment among black workers, ensure the closure of enterprises and so weaken trade union struggles?

Do we not want black workers' organisations to be strengthened? And would it not be better for the revolutionary struggle to be stepped up and for the South African Communist Party to develop a real Leninist revolutionary strategy?

Having read other left wing and Marxist papers on this, I am unclear as to the policies we should be advocating. Therefore I would be interested in any comments.

Tom Lane
Swansea

David Sherriff replies:

We are primarily in favour of workers' sanctions. But we are also in favour of forcing the bourgeois government in Britain, whether it is Labour or Tory, to impose sanctions. These should be policed by workers. The prime impact of this will not be economic but political. Workers in South Africa will get a tremendous moral boost if they see workers in other countries taking militant action in support of their struggles. As to the SACP, we think that all communist parties should develop a Leninist strategy.

Political Revolution

I agree with your article on the front page of the last issue. If any real reform is to come about in the Soviet Union, then there has to be a political revolution and this needs a political party. Of course, this should be the Communist Party, but many of the Party leaders and others have vested interests in the bureaucracy and would oppose any change.

The revolution has to come from the people and no doubt many Party comrades would join in. The Party as such, however, would hold back. The members of the Party who backed the political revolution would need to break away and form a new party.

Perhaps you do not agree. I am not suggesting a Hungary-type of situation, but a revolution of ideas with workers gaining control and purging the bureaucrats.

You say the Soviet Union did not degenerate, but the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did. If, as I believe, we have a dictatorship of the Communist Party tied up with a massive bureaucracy, then this causes a degeneration of the state. Therefore the Soviet Union itself must have degenerated.

We have shortages, lack of democracy and political repression: can this be called socialism? I accept that socialism is a sort of transitional period to communism and will have elements of both capitalism and communism.

However, I thought socialism, apart from the expropriation of the bourgeois property forms, meant developing and improving manufacturing, creating for the peoples' needs and also workers' control based on factory committees with real power and elected councils of workers and peasants, etc.

Would you therefore not agree

with the Trotskyist view of degenerated workers' state rather than 'socialism'? I would be grateful for any comments as I am trying to clarify my own views.

Paul Harding
Surrey

Jack Conrad replies:

On our thesis that the Soviet state did not degenerate: In Lenin's day there were massive shortages - shortages which make today's look like abundance. Likewise there was a lack of democracy - the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were banned and they were repressed, there was even a burgeoning bureaucracy. Lenin did not distort Marxism in an effort to circumvent these problems, he did not accept such a situation as normal or permanent. He saw the Soviet Union as an isolated bastion of socialism in a hostile world and knew that the Soviet Union's long term survival rested with the progress of the world revolution. This position was agreed at party congress after party congress. When we use the word socialism all we mean by it is the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the USSR the proletariat does not exercise its dictatorship directly but it does rule. That is why it is correct to talk about socialism in the USSR - however underdeveloped it is.

POWs

I am writing on behalf of the Irish Republican Socialist Party to request that your readers approach the organisations they belong to consider sponsoring a republican socialist POW.

There is a general misconception that all Irish political prisoners benefit from the Green Cross (the Prisoners' Dependents Fund). This is not so! The truth of the matter is that the majority of republican socialist prisoners sentenced during and after late 1984 have been completely and utterly denied this benefit.

At present we have 45 prisoners, both married and single, in gaols in Ireland, Britain and France who are receiving absolutely no help at all from these people who purport to represent all Irish republican POWs. Therefore, the onus is on our movement to ensure the upkeep of these men and women and also to alleviate the financial strain presently burdening these prisoners and their families. But, since we do not have hundreds of thousands of American dollars flowing into our coffers, as others do, we must find another alternative. Sponsorship is this alternative.

Each POW is entitled to at least one food parcel per week, although this varies from gaol to gaol. The parcel usually consists of three newspapers, three shampoos (sachets) and 2lb of fruit. There are a few other 'luxuries' allowed, such as books and magazines, but a prisoner who is not receiving Green Cross realises that his/her family have had enough financial worries and will therefore go without such 'luxuries'. It may be hard for some people to believe that such a meagre amount of money can cause such hardship and worry to the prisoners and their families. But the hardships and worry do exist.

As well as the price of a parcel each week, the family must also pay the bus fare to and from the gaol at least once a week. Again this is a small amount, or may seem to be to someone who is not trying to run a home, feed and clothe themselves and their children, all on thirty odd pounds a week. If a prisoner can be sponsored a lot of

strain and worry will be lifted off his/her shoulders and a lot financial worries off the shoulders of the family.

If you undertake to sponsor a prisoner, you must not take the decision lightly. You must be willing to finance the prisoner for as long as he/she remains in gaol. It will only cause more problems if the sponsorship money is paid to the prisoners' family erratically. Therefore, we are appealing only to those who have the commitment and dedication to see this task through. Having said all this, the price of sponsorship can in no way be called exorbitant; £7 per single prisoner and £8 per married prisoner per week. Correspondence between the prisoner and his/her sponsor will be encouraged. As you can see, the money is not a lot to ask for, but the commitment and dedication must be genuine.

Sean P. O'Neill
Glasgow IRSP Support Group
Box 26,
340 West Princess Street
Glasgow G4

Unemployed struggles

I'm writing to thank you for your warm message of support to our centre. When it was read out at our members' meeting it was really well received and it now holds pride of place among the letters of support on our notice board.

We have now been in occupation of the centre for 147 days and morale is as high as ever. One of the best things about the occupation is that it has involved all the centre's activists in the day to day running of the Centre and the political struggle to save it. In short, our centre has truly become a centre run by and campaigning for the unemployed.

Obviously, everybody here has learnt through this battle who are the principled organisations of the left, like *The Leninist*, and others who would rather line up with a right-wing council like Camden.

Once again, thanks for your solidarity.
Mick Gavan
Camden Unemployed Action Centre

Party struggles

The issue 55 of the paper was great and whilst the report on the Foster letter was probably the most important, the one on devolution has made the most impact on the few sales I make.

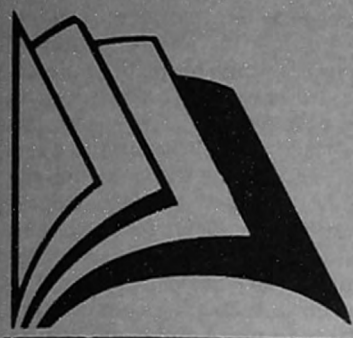
Also, many thanks for recent analysis of the struggle in the Party. It is years since I have either heard or read such a comprehensive report on the Party.

David Giles
North West

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.



War Drive

To Win a Nuclear War, Michic Kaku/Daniel Axelrod, Zed Books, 1987, pp356, £7.95 (p/b).

AT THE TIME of writing, Reagan and Gorbachev have agreed to a summit meeting to put the seal on nuclear arms reduction. This book, *To Win a Nuclear War*, is therefore timely as it shows that war is most certainly still the continuation of politics by other (violent) means. It also proves that there has not been a World War III for one reason and one reason alone, the strength of the USSR.

Kaku and Axelrod give a full and detailed background to post-World War II nuclear arms race between the USA and the Soviet Union. It can well claim, indeed, to be the authoritative account of US nuclear strategy, based as it is on hitherto secret documents released under the Freedom of Information Act.

They also show that ever since the production of the first atomic bombs by the 'Manhattan Project' group, and even while the USA

and the USSR were still allies in the fight against the Axis powers, US presidents have consistently contemplated, planned, and both implicitly and explicitly threatened 'first use' of nuclear weapons, and indeed a full scale 'first strike' nuclear offensive against the Soviet Union.

In general US war plans of the nuclear era can be divided into three historical groups, through which run the two threads of US nuclear strategy: the officially-declared policy of 'mutual deterrence' and the actual, secret, plans for launching a nuclear offensive against the Soviet Union.

The first of these is that known as 'Massive Pre-emption' (1945-1960), when US policy was to solve the 'Soviet problem' with initially the threat and if necessary the execution of a massive nuclear attack on the USSR, then its occupation and dismemberment. A pre-emptive nuclear strike was considered feasible because of the Soviet Union's inability to carry out a retaliatory attack on North America.

However, should such a first strike have been effected, the US could not hope to prevent the Soviet Army overrunning Western Europe. Thus, "in effect, one of the greatest deterrents against a US pre-emptive strike with plutonium bombs was the strength and size of the socialist bloc." (p.60)

The second period is that of 'Mutual Assured Destruction' (1961-1974), characterised by the leading power among the socialist countries, the USSR, acquiring, initially, sufficient long range bombers, and later intercontinen-

tal ballistic missiles, to threaten a nuclear attack on the USA. Although in this period the USSR closed the missile gap, US missiles have always remained better protected (not least the submarine missile fleet) and technically far superior in terms of accuracy and response time.

In the mid-1970s this period gave way to a search by the US for a World War III first strike strategy, known as 'Counterforce'. Breaking from MAD Carter gave the go-ahead to the building of instant reaction, super-accurate weapons systems. Trident II and the MX are all first strike weapons designed to destroy both the Soviet Union's leadership and its missiles, leaving the USSR helpless and forced to capitulate, or face total annihilation with a US second strike;

Kaku and Axelrod show that while the US now possessed both the willingness and the capability to carry out a first strike, the decisive deterrent was the knowledge that no effective defence existed against those Soviet missiles which, given the by-now expanded and diversified Soviet armoury, would inevitably escape any such action.

However, the Reagan administration regards the much-publicised Strategic Defence Initiative as the anti-ballistic-missile shield to the MX and Trident II first strike sword. The US establishment seems finally in sight of its perennial dream: US nuclear superiority coupled with invulnerability.

This then is the story told by official documents released from the Pentagon, State Department, and similar sources. It throws into

disrepute the traditional interpretations of US foreign policy: the official theory (solely for public consumption) of mutual deterrence, the old lie that the US has struggled for peace and freedom against that mythical spectre the rapacious Russian expansionist bear, the CND nonsense that somehow, bad as it may be, US policy only matches that of the Soviets.

What some have long suspected is now confirmed: the nuclear deterrent of the USSR, built up through the sacrifices of the Soviet working class, has alone kept the peace, has alone prevented the genocidal annihilation of the socialist countries, has alone kept imperialism at bay. More, the book gives overwhelming evidence to confirm the correctness of the Leninist outlook: that war can only be 'off the agenda' if imperialism is overthrown.

This definitive book must reinforce our grave misgivings about the US/Soviet talks on the zero-zero option for medium range missiles and 50:50 reductions of strategic missiles. The proposal to remove all short and intermediate range missiles from the armouries of both superpowers will result in the Soviet Union dismantling 683 missiles, and a maximum of 1,565 nuclear warheads, in return for the US decommissioning of 108 Pershing IIs, 256 ground based cruise missiles, and 72 Pershing Is (ageing systems which are controlled jointly by Federal Germany and the US, the Americans owning the warheads).

Even on a mere headcount, this

clearly favours the US: amazingly, however, this agreement would ignore the French 'Force de Frappe' with its several squadrons of supersonic nuclear-armed bombers, four nuclear submarines each with 12 SLBMs, and above a score of silo based IRBMs; as well as the existing British deterrent of four Polaris submarines with 64 SLBMs, and the awesome Trident II system, with a total of 640 warheads, which are due to replace them in the 1990s.

After all, these Western European imperialist weapons are what the Soviet SS-20s, and their replacements, the SS-24s and 25s, were built as a response to. Similarly, a fifty percent reduction in ICBMs, which was the US response to the Soviet proposal to reduce by half all strategic weapons systems, would be a straightforward weakening of the Soviet Union, since for it ICBMs represent over 60% of its nuclear strike force, while the equivalent figure for the United States is a mere 22%. Thus, either path, if taken, would result only in the weakening of the socialist countries vis-a-vis imperialism, not in some utopian dream of an eventually 'denuclearised' world. That will only come to pass with the complete victory of the proletariat on a world scale in their class struggle against the decaying warmongering bourgeoisie. We must not appease imperialism. The forthcoming Reagan/Gorbachev summit has a disturbing resemblance to Munich 1938. Certainly any deal will be as worthless as Chamberlain's piece of paper.

Peter Clancy

Against centrist hypocrisy, for communism

Proletarian, Selected Articles and Correspondence. 60p, pp90

PROLETARIAN, a sorry group of pretentious Soviet-sycophants have at long last again ventured into print. In 1982 came issue number one of their journal. We had to wait a full two years until number two saw the light of day ... and we have yet to see the publication of the third.

This autumn saw the publication of ... well, not exactly number three; not even a 2½, really. The Proles have brought out a selection of leaflets and letters that they have produced over the last two years to fill the gap. The pamphlet is divided into two sections, imaginatively named 'against right opportunism, for unity' and 'against left opportunism, for unity', being respectively directed against the Communist Campaign Group/*Morning Star* and the Scottish Communist Republican Party and Mosquito Press.

The declared aim of *Proletarian* is, by producing a paper aimed at advanced workers, to carry out a theoretical struggle against opportunism. A worthy goal. Their practice differs somewhat, and not only in their inability to produce said paper. For instance, they complain of "underhand administrative and organisational manoeuvres on the part of [the NCP and CCG] directed against us ranging from denying us entrance to public meetings to the recent ruling of our resolution on a united communist front out of order by

Mary Rosser at the 1987 AGM of the PPPS." (p29) *Proletarian* is a group that likes to parade its openness, principles and honesty against the troglodytic bureaucratic conspirators of the larger centrist groupings.

Yet we have had experience of *Proletarian's* 'openness' and 'honesty'. For instance its openness did not allow it to admit our comrades to its public meetings. And its honesty did not prevent it opposing (at this year's *Morning Star* AGM) a principled resolution on class war prisoners - jailed miners, Irish republicans and Broadwater Farm youth - on the basis that the resolution supported rioting!

This is nothing new. Last year it opposed a resolution on Ireland on no better grounds than claiming that it emanated from *The Leninist*. This, remember, from a group which claims to support the struggle in Ireland. It also opposed a resolution at the same AGM calling for the *Morning Star* to support the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the same reason.

To then turn around and attack the CCG, NCP and the Straight Leftists for lack of openness, lack of honesty, careerism and revisionism - true though this is - is hypocrisy of the highest order.

In reality, the leaders of *Proletarian* have neither the honesty nor the principles to argue their politics openly against Leninism. Instead they resort to bureaucratic exclusion and cynical 'red baiting'. This is not the 'advanced theoretical struggle' of which they arrogantly boast. It is opportunist cowardice.

Far from the "basic contradiction at work [in the British communist movement being] between petty bourgeois and proletarian interests which finds its clearest expression in the demarcation between *Proletarian* and Eurocommunism" (p1), *Proletarian* is the product of the same disease as Eurocommunism. Both are part of the problem and not the solution.

Far from being communist revolutionaries, these frauds have openly opposed principled resolutions, standing with the chauvinist *Morning Star* Management Committee because of a sectarian fear of the politics of Leninism.

Proletarian is nothing more and nothing less than a shallow apology for the politics of the world communist movement, not least its leading party the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: "the Soviet Communist Party has, overall, defended the principles of Marxism-Leninism and in fact remained their chief custodian ... Marxism-Leninism has always maintained predominance in the world communist movement, notwithstanding its various weaknesses and shortcomings in leadership." (pp38 and 71)

Can we assume that 'various weaknesses and shortcomings in leadership' refers to the Italian, Spanish, British, Irish, French, Chinese, Albanian and so on *ad nauseum*? Or maybe it means the

more 'mainstream pro-Soviet' parties, in which case perhaps the 'weaknesses' referred to are the liquidation of the Communist Party of Poland and the murder of its leading cadre by that 'main custodian of Marxism-Leninism', the CPSU, or the massacre by the leaders of the CPSU of Lenin's 'Old Bolsheviks'. Perhaps another 'shortcoming' of a certain leadership was the Tudeh Party of Iran lining up the Iranian working class for defeat and counterrevolutionary terror after both 1953 and 1979, again with CPSU approval.

We could go on providing examples of 'weaknesses and shortcomings'. On and on and on, in fact, as they tend to be the rule in many, many cases, rather than the exception. Is this an illustration of principled Marxist-Leninists merely throwing an occasional wobbly? Only absolute rogues or those with faith for brains could argue so. These are examples of the grip that opportunism has on our world movement, opportunism to which

Proletarian is blind precisely because it is as much a product of it as is Eurocommunism.

Because *Proletarian* cuts its cloth to suit the leadership of the CPSU, we can only wonder where present moves in the Soviet Union will take it; ie, offers by Gorbachev to stitch up deals with Reagan on 'international hot spots', or the CPSU's rapprochement with the virulently pro-imperialist Communist Party of Italy.

Possibly it will meekly swing along behind this rightward lurch. Alternatively, this unstable grouplet, which retains its unity only through failing to put its eclectic ideas into print, may shatter on the jagged rocks of the real world. This uncertainty must explain the failure to publish *Proletarian 3*.

One thing that we can be sure of, whether or not *Proletarian 3* ever appears on the bookstands, is that living fossils such as these are part of the old decrepit order, offering no answers.

Sean Quinn

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ALL AGREE October's stock market crash will go down in history. But what as? A necessary readjustment or a 1929 type big bang? For the Islington stripped pine brigade who write for *Marxism Today* the 1929 parallel is being poo-pooed. Is this because *Marxism Today* had just launched a 'city supplement' for its share buying readership? There might be an element of truth in this. But surely the main reason is ideological.

The *Marxism Today* right Eurocommunist faction does not think crisis and capitalism go hand in hand. In November's issue John Grahl writes that "October 1987 is not a return to October 1929 ... largely because of the stabilising role of big government". All that the city needs is "re-regulation". How reassuring.

There are always equally wrong but opposite views. On the other side of the opportunist coin was the *New Worker* of October 30. It attempted to reassure its readers with the certainty that 'last week's crash is not just going to match the 30s, its going to be worse.'

Naturally we must, in contrast to the rightists in the workers' movement, use the October crash to point out the inherent instability of capitalism. This is correct, and when one considers the yuppification of Eurocommunism and Labourism, timely. Nevertheless, reading the various opinions offered about October's crash, it must be said that most of the revolutionary left, like the centrist authors of the *New Worker*, seem to have forgotten nothing and learned nothing.

Many a Trotskyite journal has, for example, combined a dull sermon about the evils of capitalism with an unrestrained whoop of joy. Like one who sees another opportunity to claim the validity of their oft made and never fulfilled prophecy, the left Cassandras have again been full of themselves with roof top self-satisfaction and self-congratulation.

Every year since 1945, Gerry Healy and Ted Grant have been saying, like the leader of some religious sect predicting the end of the world, that the crash is just around the corner. We say demagoguery it was and demagoguery it is. The vain self-satisfaction and self-congratulation of these epigones of Leon Trotsky is no substitute for scientific analysis. Such prophecies are no more scientifically based than those of Priam's daughter. The official world communist movement is little better. In fact in some ways it is worse than the Trotskyite latter day saints and left reformist moralistic utopian socialists like Benn and Livingstone.

Although pointing out that capitalism is inherently prone to crisis, no revolutionary perspectives for overthrowing it are provided. Bourgeois observers commented favourably on the 'mature' response to October's crash by Gorbachev. The world communist movement has in recent years clearly moved further to the right. Its theory, which insists that capitalism has been in uninterrupted general crisis since 1914, has been a result of this long drawn out process.

According to mainstream centrism, general crisis is the period of capitalism's collapse. The period since 1914 is better described in our view as the epoch of capitalism's decadence, an epoch of wars and revolutions. The idea that capitalist general crisis could be uninterrupted was not Marx's invention. He located the general crises of capitalism within its economic cycle. For Marx the general crisis was the violent, self-adjusting mechanism which capitalism uses to end its over-accumulation of capital, each crisis always forming "the starting point of large new investments".

By abandoning the Marxist theory of general crisis, the functionaries of the world communist movement were to all intents and purposes forced to turn a blind eye to the great boom of the 1950s and 60s. Every superficial and slight business depression was bracketed with Marx's general crisis of 19th century competitive industrial capitalism.

Hence if we look at economic writings emanating from the Soviet Union today (e.g. *Dictionary of Political Economy* English edition, Moscow 1985) we find a cataclysmic crash like 1929 and the subsequent slump listed as general crises along with 1825, 1836, 1847, 1856, 1867 and the minor and mundane downturns of 1953-4, 1957-8, 1960-1 and 1969-70. Such banality does not even have the virtue of being impressionistic. As we will see the general crises of monopolistic/imperialistic capitalism are of a different order than the preceding competitive phase.

Not surprisingly articles on October 1987 by those guided by centrist theory are transparently worthless. Those who lack the ability to develop living theory on the basis of dialectical and historical materialism will only pro-

duce a parody of Marxism. And it certainly is a parody of Marxism to suggest that what has just happened is merely the end of a pre-1870s ten year type business cycle.

Capitalism might have experienced economic downturns in the 1950s and 60s but this was against an overall backdrop of unprecedented growth and prosperity which lasted for an unprecedented length of time. The general crises of industrial capitalism were short, sharp shocks. The relative value wiped out during their brief course does not compare with 1875-93 let alone the bloody agonies and horrors of 1914-48.

The long drawn out period of chronic depression of 1875-93 gave way to a sustained period of economic growth. The world economy was plunged into general crisis, in a sense prematurely, through the outbreak of World War I. Although this reflected economic contradictions the actual economic effects of the crisis reflected the prematurity by developing very unevenly, that is until the 1929 crash.

In its wake 40% of US and 30% of the world's GNP was wiped out. Contrast this to the post-World War II period. Between 1948 and 1973 the US only experienced a drop in GNP three times, and then the greatest fall was only 1.6%. Western Europe fared even better. Throughout the 1950s and 60s the region as a whole only experienced growth. The downturns were downturns in economic growth. Clearly this was not a continuation of general crisis but a boom. Nevertheless the 1914-48 general crisis and the long boom of the 1950s and 60s carries within it the germ of a crisis which will dwarf all others.

Final Crisis?

Genuine communists know that Marxism does not promise a safe, comfortable life style as does cocksure petty bourgeois punditry. Neither do we deal in the certitude of self serving centrist soothsaying (this can at best only defend the status quo). The working class must face up to the future understanding full well the inevitability of crises under capitalism. This does not mean, though, that we make up fairy stories about the final crisis of capitalism.

Frankly it is too early to say with any surety whether or not October's stock market crash will directly lead to a full scale general crisis of capitalism. Naturally that does not mean we have nothing to say. Far from it. But we are first and foremost interested in what is, not certainty for its own sake.

The symptoms of general crisis - stagnant and falling production, rock bottom rates of profit and interest, and the bursting of the credit system - will only appear after the general crisis has begun. Only when we see such features of crisis can we start talking about general crisis. This is something those at present churning out both apologetic and apocalyptic articles would do well to remember.

It is quite possible that this time round a stock market crash need not lead to a general crisis and slump. Remember that the stock exchange is not as central to capitalism as it was in the 1920s. Even with privatisation the state and state monopoly capital is the centre of gravity in the imperialist economy.

So without down playing the October crash caution and serious thinking is the order of the day. Capitalism can temporarily avoid a slump through massive governmental and quasi-governmental intervention. Reagan has dumped promised tax cuts and promised to throw in unlimited money to shore up the system. This represents a dual promise of knocking down the world economy's growth rate and a further stretching of the credit system, something which, of course, carries the risk of provoking either stagnation or even hyper-inflation and the plunging of the whole system into crisis.

There are some who want to have their cake and eat when dealing with the coming general crisis. They want it to come - after all why be a communist of any sort if you think capitalism's crisis can be overcome without crisis. Yet at the same time they insist that because imperialism no longer has colonies on which to shift the burden of the crisis, a redivisionist war is no longer possible.

This is not just plain silly, it disarms the working class. The US has never had any significant number of colonies. This did not stop it fighting and winning two world wars, let alone its threat to launch a third. No, the last general crisis of capitalism has important lessons for us today. Not least that this was not only a period of economic but political crisis which began with world war and was more or less ended with world war. Although it had its roots in purely economic developments, the last general crisis developed th-

rough the medium of political struggle (war being a political struggle through violent means).

The same interconnection of the economic and the political will undoubtedly be seen in the coming general crisis. Indeed the October 1987 crash, whatever it does or does not lead to, must be looked at both in economic and political terms.

Even before the first major economic shock wave (more unemployment and bankruptcies) some political effects from October are already clear to see. Big Bang 1987 was very, very different from the Big Bang 1986. It only took 24 hours to shatter the myth that British capitalism was on the threshold of a new 'privatised' golden age. The new stock market Big Bang has seen the government's BP sell-off reduced to the level of farce. The Thatcherite new middle class could only watch in impotent and dumb amazement as their shares plummeted. They are mortgaged to the hilt and growing unemployment among them will create an embittered stratum of middle class poor. Where now Thatcher's tarnished spirit of enterprise and the property and share owning democracy?

The Tories are not alone in suffering the fall out from the immediate political effects of Big Bang 1987. They are not alone in having BP shares held against their political record. Where now Gould's 'shares for all' Labourism. His and Kinnock's attempt to steal the banner of popular, share owning capitalism stands totally discredited.

The results of the stock exchange crash, the failure of Thatcherism and Gouldism will in the coming months and years feed all sorts of realignments in the ruling class, splits in reformism and new developments both to the right (the Owenites into Le Pen Mosleyites?) and not least the search for revolutionary answers by the advanced section of the working class.

Government ministers, the apologists of capitalism and the establishment's bland spokesmen put a brave face on the October crash. Unconsciously echoing US president Hoover in 1929, Lawson and Reagan both claimed that the overall world economy was basically sound. The crash was an aberration due either to computer selling or the sheep like nature of market leaders.

This is nonsense. And so was the soothing reassurances that the crash was an affair purely for the stock exchange leaders.

If the world capitalist economy was in sound fettle no amount of computer foul ups or sheep like panics could have caused a stock market crash and then allowed the decline to continue. As to the idea that the crash need not worry ordinary folks, this is not only rubbish, it is a cynical lie.

Even if October's crash does not lead directly to a general crisis its effects on the working class will be dire. Some whizz-kids may have had the financial carpet pulled from under them, true. They are victims of their own system. But whether the former £50,000 plus operators decide to get back into the rat race, go back to nature or throw their lot in with communism, the working class will have to foot the bill for capitalism's crisis.

This is not the result merely of cowardly buck-passing. It simply reflects the fact that at the end of the day all wealth is the product of the living labour of the working class and not the parasitic and unproductive usury worshipped in Mammon's towering citadels in the square mile.

It is we who will pay for their crisis. We will suffer higher rates of exploitation, more unemployment, further attacks on our living standards and democratic rights. Certainly if October's crash leads to a general crisis the temperature in the class war will rise to boiling point. The need for a Leninist Communist Party under these conditions cannot be stressed enough.

World economy

It was months before the full effects of the 1929 October crash on Wall Street spread to the rest of the capitalist world. Now interlinked by satellite and computer the centres of world capitalist economy reacted instantly to news on Wall Street. As daylight moved across the earth's surface stock exchanges opened and were in turn engulfed in the deepest blackness; Paris, London, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Singapore and Sydney followed New York down.

The resultant selling binge made the 1929 crash look positively tame. In 1987's Black Monday the Dow Jones industrial average went down a staggering 22.6% - nearly twice as big as the 11.7% fall of 1929's Black Tuesday. Around the world as each bull market turned into a bear, stocks and shares plum-

Big Bang



October's stock market crash... understood in its history... must learn from the... prepare for the future... must learn that... economic crisis

meted. Within a few days two trillion dollars were wiped of their value, fortunes made last week were turned into massive losses.

Whatever Lawson says, the precipitous crash in the stock markets primarily reflected the weakness of the world economy. It is riddled with problems. The unserviceable debt of countless countries like Brazil, Tanzania, Mexico and Zaire has led to mass pauperisation. And absolute impoverishment is not confined to the so-called Third World. In the advanced capitalist countries we see tens of millions condemned to long term unemployment or marginal temporary work.

Federal German interest rates and another set of rather gloomy US trade figures.

Of course, these were only triggers. The fundamental reason for the stock market crash are the contradictions within the capitalist system itself. It is truly like the sorcerer's apprentice. It has conjured up the scientific and technological revolution but it cannot control what it has produced with its spells. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto* the "conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them." (pp.15) The history of the last decade has above all been the history of the revolt of the modern productive forces against the existing property relations over which the bourgeoisie rules.

It is vital therefore to go beyond using the October crash simply as a stick with which to beat Margaret Thatcher, Brian Gould and the share buying editors of *Marxism Today*. We must concentrate our energies primarily on developing a rigorous analysis which puts October's stockmarket meltdown into historic and scientific context. Without the fight for theoretical clarity nothing serious can be mounted in the way of resistance, certainly without a firm grasp of the mechanisms at work in society nothing serious in the way of revolutionary practice can result.

Few if any on the revolutionary left have adopted this approach. What has been on offer is a combination of childish self-justification and totally superficial doom-mongering.

We must quickly dismiss attempts to transpose October 1987 onto October 1929. Those who do so simply because we have seen a stock market crash are very wrong. The 1929 crash led world capitalism to the depth of its 1914-48 general crisis. The period we are now in might be the beginning of a new general crisis; it is, though, hardly its nadir. Those who have insisted that what we have seen is another 1929 can only do so on the basis of idealism.

It is equally idealist to say that October 1987 was an 1825, an 1867, a 1953, or a 1960. To suggest it was is sheer stupidity revealing an utter inability to grasp real historical laws and development. Things should not be seen to be endlessly repeating themselves, society must be understood in its motion, dialectically and historically, not mechanically. There is obviously repetition within social development. After all, capitalism develops on the basis of a cycle. Yet society in general develops like an expanding spiral creating ever wider and more complex phenomena.

So although there is the appearance of simple repetition, in fact each repetition contains an upward and wider motion. This can be seen all too clearly when we look at capitalism's general crises. They are occurring far less frequently but last far longer and are far more devastating. It does not take a genius to work this out.

Capitalism obviously develops through a cycle of boom, pre-crisis and crisis. Broadly what these various phases of the cycle represent is a constantly rising rate of profit (boom), a growing mass of profit but a declining rate of profit (pre-crisis) and finally a decline in the mass of profit and interest rates (crisis). If we look back to the cradle of capitalism in Britain, when it alone constituted the capitalist 'world' economy we can see cyclical crises occurring every five years. This has now been drawn out by a factor of eight and globalised.

This should have provoked far reaching theoretical research from those who called themselves 'Marxist' theoreticians. Unfortunately most refused to see the boom of the 1950s and 60s - even though they lived through it - because capitalism was, according to their theory, in general crisis. Those who dared admit capitalism had somehow survived the trauma of 1929 and World War II concocted truly awful and eclectic explanations, the SWP's discredited and quietly buried theory of the permanent arms economy being a prime example.

Capitalism boomed after World War II because the US at last managed to exert its world hegemony and reconstruct the world economy in its own image. This allowed an unprecedented boom which was greatly extended, not through the expansionary effects of trade union militancy, national liberation victories and the spread of socialism, or some such nonsense, but through an enormous expansion of the credit system.

Credit where credit is due

Capitalism must expand in order to survive. More and more capital must be accumulated. The nature of the profit system dictates this. Capitalist accumulation is like a labour of Sisyphus. Every capitalist must never en-

dly strive to put onto the market the greatest possible amount of commodities, and this demands more and more capital - it is this or certain bankruptcy.

The striving for profits never endingly demands increased productivity and new techniques of production. As sure as night follows day this leads to the sort of overproduction of capital we see today when an ever expanding mass of capital is finding it ever more difficult to realise its surplus value in a market saturated with commodities.

The overproduction of capital also means the rate of profit tends to fall. Why? Because living labour is the source of all surplus value. The decline of living labour, i.e workers' labour power employed, relative to dead labour, i.e machinery, buildings and raw materials, causes the rate of profit (a converted form of surplus value) to fall. In *Grundrisse* Marx called this "in every respect the most important law of modern political economy." (p. 748)

Marx noted the fact that until the market had become completely saturated with commodities this tendency for the rate of profit to fall could be partially offset through increasing the exploitation of the working class, but mainly through the extension of the credit system, which Marx called the main lever which capitalism uses to extend its cycle. The fetter put on capitalist self-expansion by the tendency for the rate of profit to fall is "constantly broken through by the credit system" (K Marx, *Capital* Vol III, p441).

Since the termination of the gold/dollar exchange system in 1971, credit has become truly global, truly interdependent and truly a house of cards. The money markets in London, New York and Tokyo now stand as a series of props which keep the capitalist system from collapsing into general crisis slump.

The ability of these centres to do this is based solely on 'fictitious capital' - stocks, bonds and shares, whose call on existing wealth relies on nothing more than an accumulation of claims on future profits. Under conditions where the rate of profit is declining, where capitalism is heading towards crisis, fictitious capital grows extraordinarily fast in a series of speculative booms. Yet because of its lack of intrinsic value, the entire credit system is, as we saw in October, extraordinarily fragile, nervous and prone to panic selling.

Since the late 1960s capitalism again entered the intermediate phase of its cycle between boom and slump, the phase of declining profit rates, overproduction and speculation, featuring the stretching of the credit system to its limits.

One study has estimated the rate of profit in US manufacturing fell from a peak, in 1965, of 36% to 10% in 1980. During the same period in Federal Germany it went down from 20% to 10% and in Japan from 40% to 14%. Undynamic Britain only had a profit rate of 10% in 1965 and this had been reduced to a miserable 3% in 1980 - and though the Thatcher years undoubtedly saw a rise (perhaps to 1973 levels) - it must again be falling.

Within this phase economic upturns become ever more fleeting and economic downturns ever longer, deeper and more intractable. This means that in order to survive and keep the mass of profits up, capitalism seeks to raise the rate of exploitation. It also turns to the export of capital to find new markets. Part and parcel of this, and in an effort to curb open competition, the process of centralisation and concentration of production is dramatically increased. Throughout the capitalist world mergers and takeovers are taking place at a staggering rate. Capitalism has reduced itself to the omnipotent rule of a score or two of giant transnational corporations and a dozen or so giant banks. The fundamental contradiction of the capitalist order, between social production and private expropriation, has reached its highest expression.

Next time

Capitalism has always had its ups and downs, but what we are moving out of and what we are heading towards have developed the basic crisis mechanisms of competitive industrial capitalism in the 19th century onto a truly monstrous scale. Even if October's crash leads to only a partial crisis, like the 1974 and 1979 recessions, it heralds a general crisis of deeper and more extensive proportions than the general crisis of 1914-48.

Although the credit system has allowed booms to reach unprecedented highs for unprecedented periods there has been a price to pay. The subsequent general crisis reaches unprecedented depths and lasts for unprece-

dent lengths of time. Thus the last general crisis spanned three decades and included the crash of 1929. It was only resolved by World War II which redivided the world and created the conditions which allowed capitalism to enjoy the long boom of the 1950s and 60s.

Why are we so certain that the next general crisis will be even more destructive? Simply because slumps develop in reverse proportion to the previous boom, and the long boom of the 1950s and 60s was unprecedented in its height and duration. Moreover under monopolistic, imperialistic capitalism the business cycle has not just been developed quantitatively but also qualitatively. The cycle which was first spread from five to ten years and then from ten to thirty years now goes hand in hand with redivisionist war.

The reason for this lies in capitalism's uneven development. In the capitalist system individual companies, branches of industry and countries develop unevenly and through a business cycle of booms and slumps. Under imperialism, when the world has effectively been divided, commodities simply cannot find markets. This poses the necessity for the violent entry into closed markets through war, and the destruction of antagonistic capital.

Thus where industrial (pre-imperialist) capitalism developed through a cycle of booms and crises of overproduction, imperialism adds to this wars of redivision as a necessary and inevitable feature of capitalism's mechanism. Capitalism has therefore not only become a fetter on the full development of productive forces but threatens to plunge all of humanity into the most devastating war imaginable. The 1987 crash can only exacerbate the drift towards war.

Underneath the Gatt, Nato, and OECD cooperation, growing antagonistic inter-imperialist contradictions are brewing. The unity of the world market now has a question mark over it. Three competitive imperialist trade blocks/military alliances are beginning to crystallise around the US, the European Community and Japan. US over-importing and Japan and Federal Germany's over-exporting is destroying the equilibrium of the post-1945 world economy. As Japan waxes the US wanes.

The dollar is no longer the world currency it was. The breaking of its link with gold in 1971 saw to that and led to the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system in which the rates of exchange between the currencies of the capitalist states were fixed in relationship to the dollar. This was the beginning of the end of the US position as a 'super' imperialist power.

Its truly gigantic endemic budget deficits were meant to be overcome through the 50% cut in the value of the dollar and a drive for exports. This further heightened inter-imperialist antagonisms. It was in an attempt to manage these antagonisms that the Louvre agreement was worked out. Under it the world's major capitalist governments were meant to intervene to let the dollar decline in a controlled way. It did not work. Other imperialist countries, in particular Federal Germany, could not afford it to work. It has actively intervened to prevent cheap US goods undercutting German goods in the world market by keeping up interest rates and buying dollars to keep its price up. The US deficit has not been substantially reduced. And because of this the dollar's slide has continued and led to the effective breakdown of the Louvre agreement.

Sooner or later Japan and the other more dynamic capitalist powers will be unable to patch up another compromise with the US. The need to survive will overcome the need to cooperate. And when peaceful compromise becomes impossible jaw-jaw will become war. Inter-capitalist contradictions will in turn produce protectionism, trade war and finally a shooting war to open up markets, either against other imperialist powers, or the socialist countries, or both. So the world capitalist economy is not hale and hearty, it is sick, moribund and beginning to stink of war.

In our view the main danger of war; unlike during the 1914-48 general crisis, comes from the 'have' powers, like the US and Britain, not the 'have not' powers like Japan and Federal Germany. The epicentre of the October crash was quite clearly Wall Street. Reaganomics is now officially dead and buried. But the US anti-Soviet war drive lives. The bitch is on heat (Brecht). Star Wars will not be grounded by the stock market crash, it will be fuelled by it. The US, for so long the power house of the world economy, is attempting to offset its crisis by orchestrating a redivisionist anti-Soviet war drive.

Appeasement will not stop it, only revolution can.

Jack Conrad

arket crash must be historic context. We the past in order to ure, above all we t capitalism in is breeds war

Because capitalism is unable to sustain its profit rates there has been a flight of capital into speculation. In Britain the results of this parasitism are easy to see. Once the workshop of the world, it now imports more industrial products than it exports and its index of industrial production has only just reached the 1979 level.

The US has also been negatively transformed. Once the world's largest creditor it is now the largest debtor. All it took for Wall Street, the supreme institution of capitalist speculative wealth and power, to go into a precipitous meltdown, was marginally higher

Setting the Middle East Aflame

Iran's war is reactionary. No support for Khomeini

THE GULF is the main focal point of wars and revolutions in the world. The seven year Iran/Iraq war is, whirlpool style, dragging the other states in the region into the conflict, along with the major imperialist powers, not least the US which has massed its biggest fleet since the Vietnam war.

The reaction of many British left groups has been not only to correctly call for the defeat of imperialism in the Gulf, but to infer that this necessitates support for Iran. The Revolutionary Communist Party justifies its support for Iran on the basis that it is a "third world nation" (sic), while *Socialist Action's* Brian (God is great) Grogan and the surreal *News Line*, (God holds the purse strings) both believe that the Iranian regime is somehow progressive, and not only support Khomeini against Reagan but also against Saddam.

In general, but not exclusively, communists take a definite side in such conflicts – with the oppressed nation. But this is, as Lenin argued at the second congress of the Communist International, conditional on the nature of its leadership: "the Communist Party, as the avowed champion of the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeois yoke, must base its policy, in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles but, first, on a precise appraisal of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of economic conditions; secondly, on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class". (*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, p77)

Comintern supported liberation movements which were led by bourgeois democrats only so far as they genuinely struggled for democracy against imperialism, and therefore had a progressive role to play.

Lenin stressed this in the report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions at the same congress: "... we, as communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work in educating and organising the peasantry and the broad mass of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit." Do you hear this WRP (*News Line*), RCP et al? Do you feel that this is what Khomeini is doing?

Again, we refer back to Lenin who, speaking on the unequivocally reactionary nature of the stratum that the RCP, WRP etc would have us cheer on, emphasised "the need for a struggle against the clergy and other influential, reactionary and medieval elements in the backward countries ... the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners and mullahs, etc." (*Theses*, etc., p80)

That was the Comintern's position as regards support for this reactionary stratum within an anti-colonial movement. No support whatsoever!



The petty bourgeois left says victory to Iran

Today, the mullahs do not serve a popular anti-colonial movement but the Iranian state itself. The reactionary role of the clergy is amplified in proportion to the power it now wields.

This was highlighted by a representative of the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rah-e Kargar) in an interview in *The Leninist* (issue 54). "Marxism" the comrade said "analyses the anti-imperialist struggle from a class point of view. This includes the anti-imperialist struggle. That force is anti-imperialist which is not against the working class ... If a regime, no matter how 'anti-imperialist' in what it says and does, is at the same time destroying the organisations of the working class in that country, then that regime does not deserve the support of communists."

The Khomeini regime represents the most reactionary sections of Iranian society: the feudal clergy, the 'Black Hundreds' of the *hezbollah/pasdaran* and the grasping, corrupt bazaar bourgeois. Their hankering after the 'golden age of Islam' entails the smashing of the working class, the virtual enslavement of women, the total liquidation of democracy and the suffocation of the limited gains of the 1979 revolution.

The RCP, for instance, can play word games all it likes, claim that the slogan 'victory to Iran' does not really mean victory to Khomeini, but victory to the Iranian people. This semantic idealism is hardly a 'precise appraisal of the historical situation'. We must say their slogan, concretely, *does* mean victory to Khomeini – a victory which runs absolutely contrary to the needs of the Iranian working class and oppressed peoples.

The lessons of the Malvinas war

The RCP argue that a defeat for imperialism would unleash the

anti-imperialist aspirations of the Iranian masses, aspirations that the theocracy would be unable to fulfill. In short, that victory for Khomeini would fuel revolution in Iran.

'RCP watchers' among you will find this position familiar. It is identical to that advanced by it during the Malvinas war: "Should Britain succeed in clubbing its old slave back into submission it will probably lead to the fall of Galtieri. We may be sure he will be replaced by a ruler even more servile to the demands of his imperialist masters and, in response to these demands, even more coercive towards the masses. A British victory would mean even tighter imperialist control over Argentina, and more poverty, torture and murder for its people."

"On the other hand a defeat for Britain in the South Atlantic would be the best result for the masses of Argentina ... A victory would be a tremendous boost for the anti-imperialist struggle. It would create conditions in which the working class could, for the first time, take the lead in challenging imperialism. The workers would not be slow in exposing and casting aside those bourgeois rulers who try to exploit the anti-imperialist sentiments of the masses to strengthen their bargaining position with the imperialists." (*The Malvinas are Argentina's*, Mike Freeman, 1982, p17)

As we know, the defeat of Argentina made nonsense of the RCP's wishful thinking. The jingoism that the junta had been able to whip up around its war drive disintegrated with defeat. It lost all moral authority to carry on the fight at home and fell apart. This created a crisis in Argentinian society, offering the potential for independent working class action. But, because of the absence of a revolutionary party politically independent from the bourgeoisie, the working class was channelled in

behind the Peronists.

The political crisis which arose could hardly have done so if the junta had won the war. Instead, its hold over the masses would have been immeasurably strengthened. By defeating Britain it would have been in a much more assertive position in the region, able to then contemplate aggression and expansion at the expense of, say, Chile.

In reality, it was the defeat of the junta which unleashed the raw material of revolution in Argentina. What prohibited this was the absence of a party which could have given a lead to the anger and aspirations of the masses, the Communist Party of Argentina unfortunately having a similar line to the RCP. The crisis caused by defeat, utilised by a genuinely revolutionary communist party, could have taken Argentina to revolution.

Joining up

Possibly the single most suspect facet of support for Khomeini is its implications for revolutionaries in Iran. Should Kurdish peshmergas fighting the regime instead stand shoulder to shoulder with the pasdaran? Should communist militants in factories in Tehran join up or, popular front style, campaign to boost productivity for the war effort?

If, indeed, western imperialism is the prime enemy and, if the victory of the regime today is the surest way to see it topple tomorrow as the RCP says, then communists in Iran would be duty bound to join in alongside their own jailers, torturers and murderers, and do battle with 'the Great Satan'.

Understandably, RCPers have baulked at the distasteful implications of this Little England 'anti-imperialist' line. When challenged on their one dimensional politics RCP members have given nebulous answers; from the philistine 'well, we don't meet many Iranian revolutionaries(!)' to the evasive 'that's not exactly what we mean'.

In Iran today, where a war of national liberation is being waged by Kurds in part of the state, where a proletariat with experience of living revolution is beginning to rise to its feet against the reactionary counterrevolutionary Khomeini regime, there can be only one communist call: 'The main enemy is at home! Use the disaffection caused by the war and the Gulf conflict to make revolution!'

Just as Lenin argued for the defeat of backward Russia in 1914, communists in Iran should – and are – fighting for the defeat of their own regime. Where is the internationalist support for this from the petty bourgeois left like the RCP?

When we, as communists in Britain, raise the slogan for the defeat of 'our' bourgeoisie – as we do – this in no way entails support for the Khomeini regime.

- Imperialism out of the Gulf!
- Withdraw the fleet now!
- The main enemy is at home!
- No to bourgeois victories – For victory through revolution!

We would lose no sleep over seeing the imperialist fleet sink below the waves. But neither would we shed tears if the Khomeini regime topples. Our perspective, unlike the petty bourgeois left, rests on the struggle for world revolution. Our strategy, tactics and slogans are crystallisations of this.

Alan Merrick



Since cruise missiles arrived at Greenham despite the baby clothes and domestic knick-knacks festooning the fence, the feminist clowning of the peace camp 'sisters' has begun to turn in on itself. Apparently, there is a split between members of the Kings Cross Women's Centre group and the rest. Kings Crossites have occupied the Yellow Gate, isolated themselves and have now got their little mittened hands on the camp's funds. Remember when our Euros used to offer the Greenham women as a model for the miners' wives? Working class women, thankfully, had more sense.

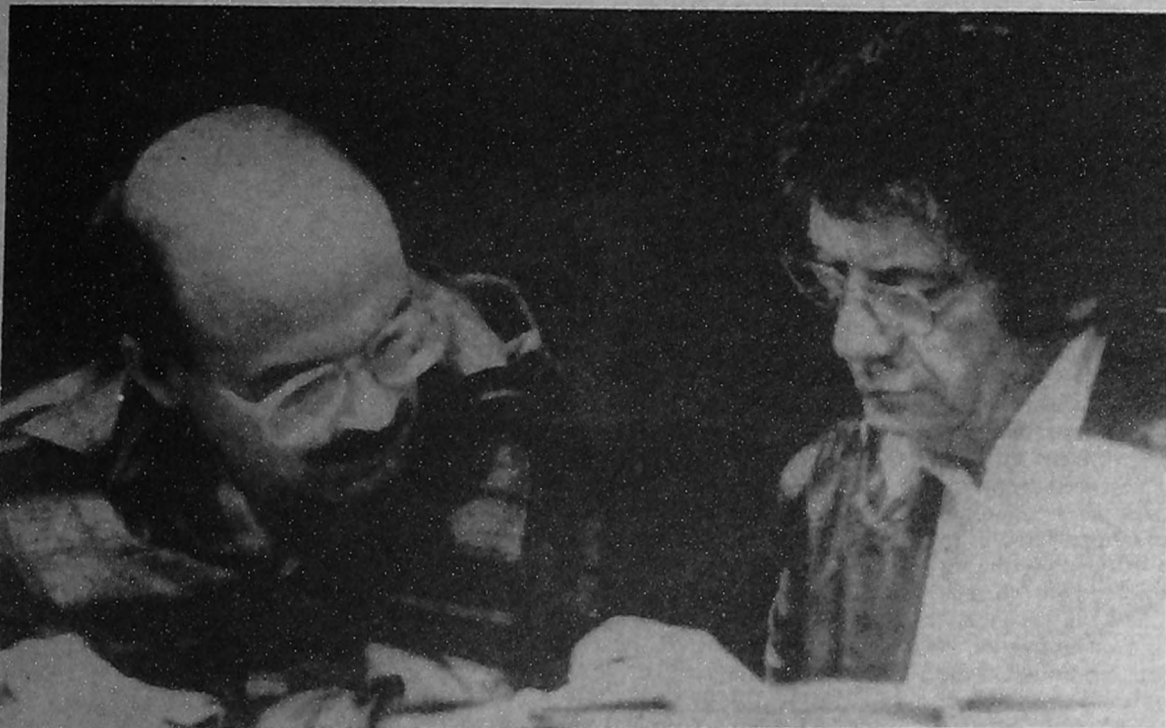
Someone should take David Sullivan, owner of the trash rag Sunday Sport, aside and have a quiet word. After all, Mary Rosser for the Management Committee of the Morning Star recently put her hand on her heart (which was somewhere near her wallet at the time) and told supporters of the paper that Farringdon Road had not been sold to the disreputable bourgeois wide-boy, Sullivan. Now we learn from the Financial Times that Sullivan has sold this building, which he does not own, for a cool £1 million profit. Obviously, this is a very confused man: the alternative, that Rosser actually told supporters of the paper a lie, is, of course, just too fantastic to believe.

Confidence in the Morning Star/CCG faction must have been given a real boost by Karl Dallas' announcement in the paper's letters page that he and a group of other 'Communist Christians' plan to pray for god's intervention against the Euros. Good thinking. After all, on the verge of its split without international support, no ideological unity and with a distinct lack of enthusiasm from Ken Gill, Bert Ramelson and Jack Gaster, how can the CCG possibly succeed without a miracle?

Who are the better Gorbachevites? The Morning Star reprints just part of the comrade Gorbachev's recent 70th anniversary speech, 7 Days reprinted all of it. Centrists, beware!

The CPGB Executive, to mark the retirement from the NUM of comrade Mick McGahey, has produced Mick's Story, or 'the Thoughts of Chairman Mick' as it is known. Unfortunately, Mick's thoughts have trouble stretching over the four pages of this A4 broadsheet. And there's not many of his own thoughts there either.

For a Leninist Party!



Jacques and Carter: the 'new' old ideas of Eurocommunism have failed. Make way for the new!

This is the text of the statement issued by 'The Leninist' to the 40th Congress

The crisis in the Communist Party of Great Britain is not over. Those who naively think that the 40th Congress of our Party will create the conditions where peace will reign in our ranks are mistaken. True, the *Morning Star*/Communist Campaign Group faction is almost certain to set itself up as an NCP Mark II – but the Party crisis was never about the future of the *Morning Star*. The Party crisis was and is a crisis of opportunism.

This crisis is world wide. In the capitalist countries the world communist movement is becoming increasingly social democratised. In the socialist countries – where the working class does not rule in a direct way – the bureaucracy has become a fetter on the full development of the forces of production.

But as the old goes into crisis, the new comes forth to provide the working class with the answers it needs. What is needed is revolution. In the capitalist countries social revolution, in the socialist countries real political revolutions.

In Britain *The Leninist* – the fortnightly paper of the Leninists of the CPGB – has intransigently stood for this perspective against opportunism in all its forms. We say only Marxism-Leninism can lead the working class to the conquest of state power. Opportunism is useless.

The working class in Britain has been blooded by Thatcher, it has not been bowed. It does not need a Communist Party to follow the lead of the Gouls and Hammonds of Labourism. It does not need a neo-Fabian think tank. It does not need opportunist defeatism.

What it needs is a Communist Party to lead a concerted counter attack against the bosses, a Communist Party to shift the balance of class forces in our country towards the workers, a Communist Party which can act as a general staff in the struggle for state power.

Our CPGB can and must be reformed so it can lead the working class in Britain to revolution. To move forward to this future requires the ideological defeat of all forms of opportunism. We must win advanced workers to reject all notions that socialism can come peacefully through parliament.

The ruling class will never give up its power and wealth without a bitter fight. We must, as Marx

said, crush the dictatorship of capital, with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The opportunist factions have had their day. The ideas of Eurocommunism, the Straight Leftists and the *Morning Star* are irrelevant to the needs of the future. Opportunism disarms the workers and retreats into the arms of bourgeois society. Ireland, the miners' Great Strike and even the last general election prove this.

All the opportunists hate the national liberation movement in Ireland, all the opportunists hated the violence of the miners' hit squads and all the opportunists love the "bourgeois party of the working class" (Lenin).

Capitalism is heading for another general crisis – the October 1987 crash is a dramatic pointer to this – and if we don't stop it, capitalism will launch a World War III to save itself. Gorbachev might try to appease imperialism but only revolution can stop its drive to war.

The opportunists refuse to recognise this truth. Instead they invent all sorts of utopian schemes to reform capitalism, make it peaceful and even turn it into socialism. These dreams are becoming more and more divorced from reality. No wonder all the opportunist factions and groupings in and around our communist movement are wracked by crisis.

The Executive Committee of our Party is certainly bankrupt. It cannot offer draft resolutions to our 40th Congress which present a serious perspective for fighting capitalism, let alone overcoming our Party's precipitous organisational decline. In point of fact it has, objectively speaking, done all in its power to split our Party. The Party leadership is not pro-Party, it is an anti-Party clique which considers the Party its own private property.

Criminally, the EC has allowed a whole swathe of good communists to be cynically manoeuvred into supporting Chater's careerist rebellion. It has done nothing in the way of propaganda and agitation to break the supporters of the *Morning Star* away from the dead end CCG attempt to split our Party.

The EC must not be allowed to evade its responsibilities. The quiet liquidation of our Young Communist League, the steady haemorrhaging of membership and

the tiny circulation and poor quality of *7 Days* and *News and Views* cannot be blamed on the *Morning Star* opposition. The buck stops with the EC. And if it has no answers it must go.

Eurocommunism has failed organisationally and politically. Under the domination of the Euros our Party has suffered more expulsions (official and unofficial) and administrative bullying than ever before. The only success the Euros can point to is *Marxism Today*. Yet comrade Jacques' journal, which has never had anything to do with Marxism, now has less and less to do with the Communist Party itself.

The liquidationism of *Marxism Today* is transparent. The right Euros who back the *Marxism Today* 'project' no longer really see the need for a Communist Party. The main link between *Marxism Today* and the Communist Party is financial: we foot the bill for *Marxism Today*'s liquidationist games.

The Party leadership fears honest and open communist debate. When the NCP split in 1977 there was no attempt to persuade comrades not to leave our ranks. The same is true today with the CCG. The pre-Congress debate has been a farce. Many contributions have been suppressed and all the opportunists have tried to conceal or play down their differences – not least the Straight Leftists. During the vital pre-Congress period the official Party press has been notable for its absence of articles, letters and debates on the Congress, certainly the leadership has acted like an ostrich when it comes to the emergence of two Eurocommunist factions.

Our Party EC favours openness in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It should practice what it preaches.

The Leninists of the Communist Party say that the only way to forge unity in our Party is by uniting around the principles of Marxism-Leninism. This is best facilitated through the widest, most open, most frank and comradely debate. Party members should be free to read what they like. There should be no thought police in the Party.

- End the ban on *The Leninist*!
- Open up all Party publications!
- No to the CCG split, yes to a reformed Leninist CPGB!

PARTY PIECES

A recent exchange between representatives of the Cuban and Soviet Communist parties, which appeared in the Soviet magazine *New Times*, makes interesting reading. The Soviet writer Vladislav Chirkov criticised the state of the Cuban economy and even went so far as to claim that the government is spending amounts on armaments way out of proportion to the country's real needs! Comrade Rafael Rodriguez replied for the Cuban CP in a measured but biting piece which claims that Chirkov has "succumbed to the temptation to repeat the generalities of US Cubanologists". The Cuban comrade also explained (as if explanation were necessary) why tiny Cuba, with US imperialism just 90 miles across the water, feels the need of strong defences. In opposition to most of the socialist countries, Cuba is currently emphasising centralised planning and "revolutionary morality" to vitalise its economy. This explains the growing tensions between Cuba and the Gorbachev leadership in the USSR, which emphasises the profit motive and is set on appeasing the US warmonger.

Arthur Scargill's decision to resign from his post as NUM President and seek reelection and a fresh mandate is to be welcomed. We are in favour of elections. Indeed we stand on the principle that all functionaries in the working class movement should be subject to recall at any time. While Arthur is unwilling to stand on this platform, his declared willingness to regularly submit himself to election is a step forward. The rightwing of the union has been thrown off balance by Scargill's move, but there are rumours that the Eurocommunists, who have some influence in sections of the union in Scotland and South Wales, might throw their weight behind an anti-Scargill candidate like Scottish Secretary Eric Clarke, or South Wales leaders like Des Duffield and George Rees, both of whom have been instrumental in negotiating the sellout deal over Margam. We have never been uncritical of Arthur Scargill: far from it. But we say that communists in the union should fight for Scargill's reelection. This would be a powerful blow against British Coal, the NUM's right moving soft left and their attempts to destroy the militant traditions of the miners.



• Scargill – standing on militancy. Communists must back him

Roger Trask reports in the *Morning Star* of October 8 the recent unprincipled merger between what was the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey and the Turkish Workers Party to form the United Communist Party of Turkey. Trask presents a blinkered account, typical of 'official optimism'. The new party is thoroughly reformist: it plans "to reflect Turkey's potential of peace-loving, democratic and humanist ideas", but refuses to admit that only making a revolution can achieve these worthy aims. Indeed the UCPT leadership is doing everything to become legal; after all, the Ozal government says it is unafraid of a 'Italian' type CP. So unafraid that when Behice Boran, leader of the TWP, died she was given a state funeral by the authorities. Now to force Ozal's hand Haydar Kutlu and Nijat Sargin, the leaders of the UTCP, have returned to Turkey. This stunt in fact represents an opportunist attempt to jump into the mainstream of Turkish politics before the November 29 general election. The two UCPT leaders were as expected arrested as soon as they landed on Turkish soil. But they are expected to be released quickly on bail and their party legalised after the election. There is no talk of legalising the *real* Communist Party of Turkey – it is not seeking bourgeois respectability.

Redouble Efforts



The period opening up in front of us offers great possibilities. Developments in the Soviet Union have thrown the politics of old pro-Soviet centrism into crisis; the October crash testifies to capitalism's inherent weakness and the certainty of a new general crisis; and in the communist movement in Britain the question of redrafting the transparently dated *British Road to Socialism* is now on the agenda. It is against this background we must ask our hard-pressed readers and supporters to redouble their efforts. Our paper, like no other, has the answers to the great issues of the day. Now is the time to extend its circulation and transform its financial situation. All readers should seriously consider ordering, on a sale or return basis if you wish, five or ten extra papers every fortnight, all readers should send us regular donations through a bankers order. Last month we nearly hit our £600 target, we were only £57 short – but in such times we need to regularly break our target

The LENINIST

WOMANS RIGHT TO CHOOSE!

Free Abortion on Demand



How to fight the Alton Bill? We say: no reliance on Labourite hot air – the working class must champion the rights of women

THERE IS a universal consensus on the British left that Liberal MP David Alton's attempt to reduce the legal time limit on abortion from 28 weeks to 18 is a 'bad thing'. Although last year only 5,660 abortions were carried out after 18 weeks and a mere 29 after 24 weeks, Alton's nasty little Bill is rightly seen as the thin end of a wedge of an attack on women which has the ultimate goal to ban all abortions. So, we all agree: Mr Alton's Bill is a 'bad thing'.

The majority of left groups, however, have backed themselves into the corner of simply defending the 1967 Abortion Act against Alton: yet that particular piece of legislation was itself inadequate and in practice allowed doctors and the state to decide a woman's fate. In no way did it represent "a woman's right to choose" as suggested by the bumbling, reformist buffoon of an editor with which the *Morning Star* is currently lumbered.

If we really want to fight for wo-

men's rights we must unequivocally fight for *free abortion on demand* as our central slogan. (After the October Revolution the Soviet government passed a decree which allowed abortions to be "performed free and unimpededly"). Anything else not only sells women short on their rights; in the social atmosphere of today's crisis torn Britain, it disarms us in the face of reaction.

Strictly Controlled

The 1967 Act which 20 years later the left so vehemently champions, legalised abortion but only under strictly controlled conditions. The mass petty bourgeois feminist movement that emerged after the Act was on the statute books, was highly critical of it. Before degenerating into Greenham mysticism the feminist movement insisted that women must have the right to free abortion, not curtailed by arbitrary time limits imposed by church or state.

The 1967 legislation stipulates

that women can only abort fetuses after they have satisfied stringent conditions, such as when the pregnancy threatens the welfare of the mother's existing children or there is a tangible risk of handicap of the child.

Most women, however, opt to seek termination on the basis of an additional clause: that "the continuation of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman greater than if the pregnancy was terminated." To describe the 1967 Act as "a woman's right to choose" is an insult to the thousands of women who every year have to go through the pain and humiliation of having to justify themselves to often unsympathetic and insensitive doctors.

In fact, the closest working women have ever really come to 'abortion on demand' was courtesy of the cash nexus, not through the enlightened actions of Britain's legislators. Prior to 1967, estimates put the number of abortions annually at many hundreds of

thousands. These of course, were totally illegal 'back street' butcher jobs where the only condition you needed to satisfy was having the money.

There were drawbacks with that avenue of supply, of course. Some 3,000 septic abortion cases a year ended up in hospital due to the unhygienic conditions under which they were operated, with 50 of those unfortunate women dying annually.

While public concern at these horrendous figures was one of the spurs to the introduction of the 1967 Act, the real impetus was the need to bring abortion under the control of the state: to regulate more directly the fertility of working class women in a period when expansion in the economy was necessitating their increased participation in the production process.

Today the pathetically despondent left is defending this bit of capitalist legislation for all it is worth, even dubbing it, as in the case of that shabbling rag, the *Morning Star*, as enshrining "a woman's right to choose"

Wrapped Up

The last thing that socialists must do is to get wrapped up in gobbledegook arguments with anti-abortionists about when 'life' starts: when a fetus becomes a 'baby' with certain inalienable 'rights' and thus when the time limits for abortion should be imposed. Human life is social life; our concept of 'life' can have no meaning outside of this context unless we are going to entangle ourselves in obscurantist philosophical meanderings about the spiritual 'essence' of human beings. Life starts with birth, when a child enters society.

Unfortunately many organisations have embroiled themselves in these tangled moral and scientific webs in order to justify their defence of the 1967 Act. For instance, *Socialist Worker* of October 31 presents some useful facts and figures to show that the arguments of Alton and the anti-abortion organisations that back him are nonsense, yet fails to clearly delineate a fighting alternative for working women.

It gets totally emmeshed within Alton's reactionary logic. Countering the Liberal MP's claim that "by 18 weeks a child is no different in size and weight from a child at 28 weeks", it replies that below 22-24 weeks, fetal lungs are not sufficiently developed to survive even on a ventilator. As far as we are concerned, this is more or less irrelevant.

The SWP thus claims that it "cannot agree to any concessions on women's abortion rights. We believe that only the women concerned has the right to decide whether she has an abortion or not." Yet *Socialist Worker* implicitly suggests that the 1967 Act, which limits women's rights, actually enshrines a women's right to choose.

This is not a minor matter, even on purely technical grounds. Most late abortions are presently performed because of fetal deformities. The best test for this cannot be done until after 20 weeks. But what, for example, should be our attitude if medical science is able to achieve a break-through in this field, as is perfectly possible, and such authoritative tests can be done much earlier?

We would still stand full square for a woman's right to an abortion with no ifs and no buts. Women, not Alton, must decide. He is neither pro-women nor pro-life. He is, though, a damnable hypocrite. Mr Alton's interpretation of what he calls humanity's "overrid-

ing right to life" does not stop him supporting the reintroduction of capital punishment or the murderous presence of British troops in Northern Ireland! Obviously, Alton's 'pro-life' sentiments are a sick joke. But behind this 'joke' lies the needs of capital to force women back into the home, reinforce their position as a reserve army of labour and second class citizens. The women of the ruling class will not suffer from Alton's bill; with money they can always buy safe abortions abroad. Alton's bill is clearly an attack on working class women. This is why exposing Alton's hypocrisy is not enough. What is needed is a fight for women's rights led by the working class.

FAB

The "Fight Alton's Bill" campaign does not stand on the basic principle of a woman's right to choose. It wants women to put their trust in the parliamentary Labour Party. It is a classic reformist campaign. Why then does almost the entire spectrum of the left line up behind it? For the SWP there is the excuse of the so-called downturn, a poisonous little theory which reasons along the lines 'What's the point of trying to get workers to fight for abortion rights when they won't even fight for their pay and conditions?'

The SWP though are hardly alone in their passivity and practical irrelevance to the struggle for the rights of working class women. The dispirited Labour Party entryists around the increasingly infrequent paper *Socialist Action* in their October 23 issue bleat that, "The policy of the Labour Party and the TUC are very clearly in support of the 1967 Act and a woman's right to choose." Now as we have shown, in fact 'a woman's right to choose' and the stipulations of the 1967 Act are not the same thing.

Our own Communist Party central organ, *7 Days*, a drab, lack lustre sheet only enlivened by the occasional bizarre editorial cock-up, has been no better than *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Action* et al. The paper's October 31 edition encapsulated the hopeless perspective of the 'left' Eurocommunist forces that edit it. "If every *7 Days* reader writes to their MP, asking them to vote against Alton's bill, this will be a tremendous contribution to the campaign to save the 1967 Act." This is a miserable retreat into bourgeois realism.

FAB, which is a loose alliance of women from previous abortion campaigns, left groups and even some female members of the Liberal Party, limits its campaigning horizons to defence of the 1967 legislation. Inevitably, this severely weakens any potential fight it can put up.

We communists say the bourgeois state can never liberate women. We do not have a leftist argument that the particular attacks on this or that reactionary like Alton on the limited gains of women are 'irrelevant', but frankly, if we are mobilising against Alton, we should be mobilising for a women's unrestricted right to free abortion on demand.

We are not in favour of abortion as 'just another method' of contraception. It is frequently painful, dangerous (on average two women a year still die from the operation), and emotionally distressing. However, while abortion remains a necessity if women are to have control of their own bodies, we will support it unconditionally.

•Smash Alton's Bill!

•Free Abortion on Demand!

Ian Mahoney