

The LENINIST

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We say the March 26 meeting of the NHSSC was a lost opportunity

Health workers: A winning strategy

SINCE MARCH the health workers' struggle for decent pay and a dramatic improvement in funding for the country's decaying health service has, to a certain extent, marked time. Some of our contacts even talk of an air of despondency. The blame for this lies squarely with the trade union bureaucrats.

Nupe and Cohse misleaderships have put all their eggs into a truly pathetic 'crusade' for public sympathy. In this way the bureaucracy hoped it could persuade Lawson to put more money the way of the NHS and increase Kinnock's opinion poll ratings.

This Eurocommunist style strategy was never going to work. If the health workers' struggle is left at the level of a charity PR operation, the whole momentum of the campaign will be lost and Thatcher will be left free to step in and impose no-strike deals, YTS cheap labour and a divisive pay structure. She will then strip the NHS of all profitable areas and leave it as an emergency safety net. This will boost Bupa's fortunes, it will also leave working class health to continue its relative decline.

To avoid this Thatcherite scenario it is essential that militant rank and file health workers seize the initiative from the Kinnockite bureaucrats. They cannot be trusted; they cannot lead; all they can do is sabotage.

After the lack of leadership we have seen from Nupe and Cohse so far, no militant health worker will doubt this. If there were any doubts, the treacherous role of the leaders of these two unions around budget day will have served to convince. Cohse called a day of action on March 14 (the day before budget day) while Nupe called upon its members to stage their own protests on March 15!

Clearly health workers need rank and file organisations to bypass the bureaucracy – and there's the rub. While there is a relatively large and growing layer of militant activists in the NHS, it lacks a clear political strategy. So far it has made up for this with an energy and determination to win that has not been seen in Britain since the heady days of the 1984-5 miners' strike. As we know from the miners' Great Strike, while energy and determination to win are vital, they are not enough if defeat is to be avoided and victory is to be gained.

Equipping the rank and file with a winning strategy is in fact the question on which the whole outcome of the NHS struggle hangs. If we do not want to see yet another defeat, however heroic, it is essential to begin the fight for a correct perspective now. The National Health Shop Stewards Combine (NHSSC) held in Sheffield on March 26 posed the problem of leadership perfectly.

It was, thankfully, no safe sanitised affair like the TUC's March 5. Instead of a platform which ex-

cluded health workers, the platform consisted of militant rank and file leaders and debate involving the floor was encouraged. This was all positive.

There can be no question that those who spoke at this rally did not echo the views of the average health worker. It is, after all, clear that political consciousness among health workers is very uneven. Many hospitals have not been affected by strike or protest actions. This in no way invalidates the advanced ideas that were expressed at the NHSSC. Quite the reverse.

We take as our starting point not the backward health worker but the advanced, not the passive but the active, not the average, not even the average militant but the advanced militant. Communists fight to equip the most advanced militants with the strategy they need in order to bring under their influence/leadership the average and the backward sections.

In broad terms two arguments dominated the meeting, *Militant* and the SWP. Neither the WRP, nor the RCP, nor the opportunists in the CPGB got a look in.

Supporters of the *Militant* tendency wanted health workers to put all their hopes in their demand upon the TUC to call a 24 hour general strike. *Militant* misleads its own militants. Making demands on the TUC is not incorrect in principle, but with *Militant* it is a simple case of buck passing.

The fact that the TUC refuses to countenance a general strike lets *Militant* and its supporters off the hook. It enables people like Macreadie to sound left without bringing out a single CPSA member. The fact is that unless significant sections of the working class are taking action, there is no way the TUC would even discuss the possibility of a 24 hour general strike, let alone call one.

As we have indicated, opposition to *Militant* was in the main headed by partisans of the SWP. They were absolutely right to lambast *Militant*. If health workers wait for the TUC to act, they will wait for ever. In the unlikely event that the TUC was forced into calling a 24 hour general strike, the Tories would hardly capitulate, and anyway, we all know that the TUC has no record of delivering solidarity, more a record of unbridled treachery. As to the Labour government which *Militant* supporters so earnestly recommended ... as more than one angry militant pointed out, it was the last, Wilson/Callaghan, Labour government which began the cuts in the health service. What could we expect from them now, with capitalism still deeper in crisis?

But the SWP also misleads its militants. It was only the lesser of two evils, and that is no answer. The SWP leadership is today a conservative force. This role stems in no small part from its ridiculous economic theory that there has

been a downturn in the class struggle throughout the 1980s.

This resulted in the SWP opposing the demand for a general strike during the miners' Great Strike – a strategic test for workers and bosses alike and the longest mass strike in British history. The SWP's 'number two', Chris Harman, came out with a truly demoralised and demoralising conclusion during the Great Strike. Nineteen eighty four was, according to him, more like 1927 (ie a year of defeat) rather than 1925 (ie the year before the general strike). This put the SWP to the right of Tony Benn and just about every militant miner in Britain!

'Armed' with the downturn theory in 1988, the SWP has attempted to stymie one militant action after another, including the strike action by Ilea workers in London on March 8. It did the same on March 14. For example in Brent Nalgo the SWP argued against the militant minority which wanted to enforce an all out strike through picketing, lining up instead with the 'moderates' who wanted mere token gestures.

Therefore in opposing *Militant* the SWP had nothing in the way of a winning strategy as an alternative. True, its partisans had little time for their leaders' semi-Keynesian 'No Tax Cuts for the Rich' slogan. But, apart from pedestrian calls to take the arguments about the NHS back to the workplaces, they were directionless.

Precisely because many of the most advanced rank and file leaders follow these two organisations and precisely because neither of these two organisations has any real answers, if health workers are to fight their way forward to victory it is essential to overcome the block that *Militant* and the SWP between them represent. *Militant*'s Labourism and the SWP's economism must be defeated. Health workers must in point of fact be won to *The Leninist* alternative.

Our strategy does not begin with demands that seem to be acceptable to the most backward. No it starts with what is needed and then outlines the way this can be attained. If the advanced sections are won to this strategy they will surely assert their leadership over less advanced sections.

All out action! That is what is needed. In this we agree wholeheartedly with the London Strike Committee resolution (No.4) put to the NHSSC. Of course, as the London comrades implied, this will not come courtesy of Nupe or Cohse, let alone the TUC. It will have to come as a result of militant rank and file leadership.

It is essential that the militant rank and file bodies go from being pressure groups on the Cohse and Nupe fat cat bureaucrats; to becoming an alternative centre of leadership and authority. We say that the March 26 meeting in Sheffield was a lost opportunity. What the recall meeting on May 14 must

do is confront the task of building a permanent Health Workers' Militant Movement which organises across all sectional divisions and for action. This is urgent.

Health workers have limited muscle. The NHS might be the largest employer to the west of the Soviet Army but we are not dealing with a workforce with a long collective memory of militant struggle. Turnover of the workforce in the NHS is very high, hence few have direct experience of the actions in the early 1980s. Even those who do will only remember endless and ineffective days of action and ultimately bureaucratic sellout. Moreover, health workers are split along numerous sectional divisions and 50% of the nurses are members of the no-strike, non-TUC RCN.

This necessitates a strategy which generalises and broadens the NHS struggle to the greatest extent possible. By this we do not mean the involvement of bishops, Tory wets and media do-gooders. What we are talking about is generalising and broadening all out action.

There are some, not least those who can only see a downturn in the class struggle, who reject this perspective as unobtainable. We say they are wrong to do so on two counts. One: only with such a strategy can health workers achieve victory; anything less is to admit defeat before the battle has been fully joined. Two: with audacious tactics generalised, all out action can be obtained. Let us show how.

•Joint Strike Committees must be organised in as many hospitals as possible. These committees should not only link the large militant minorities in unions like Cohse, Nupe and MSF but the small militant minority in the RCN, represented by the 27,000 who voted in favour of strike action. We must go all out to win this section of the RCN rank and file – failure to do so could prove fatal. Joint Strike Committees must be linked nationally in a Health Workers Militant Movement and it is in such a national forum that a fighting platform must be hammered out – this must include all out action, the abolition of the waiting lists, a minimum £180 pw wage for student nurses and £240 pw for all other health workers and the banning of all private patients in NHS hospitals.

•Health Worker Support Committees should be organised across the length and breadth of the country. They should consist of elected and recallable delegates from trade unions, shop stewards committees, trades councils, political organisations of the working class and unemployed workers' organisations. Each Joint Strike Committee would thus organise around itself a broad layer of potentially powerful support.

•An imaginative propaganda campaign must be launched. This must be targeted at the biggest and strategically most important workplaces in the towns and cities in

Britain. Meetings during worktime or during lunch must be called where nurses and other health workers can put their case for active support.

•The government must be given an ultimatum. A date should be set after which militant health workers will call for all out action if their demands are not met.

•In the event of the government refusing to concede, all out strike action enforced through nurses and other health workers picketing out as many workplaces as possible according to a detailed plan of action. Emergency cover should only be organised under workers' control. Managements that refuse this should be arrested. Union bureaucrats that attempt sabotage should be dealt with in the same way.

All of this is obtainable. We have already seen spontaneous illegal strike action by car workers, miners, local government workers, firemen, EMI workers and bus workers in support of the health workers. With organisation, with a communist influenced militant rank and file leadership, such examples can be multiplied a thousand, ten thousand fold – which would amount in effect to a general strike.

There must be massive, illegal, generalised strike action because that is what is needed if we are to shift the arrogant Thatcher government, bring it to its knees and force it to concede our demands. Those who say it cannot be done are wrong, worse they are defeatists.

The balance of class forces in Britain today is by no means tilted towards the working class. But neither is it stable. Over recent months we have seen a rash of strikes, all of which show that the working class is in a fighting mood. In more than one case defeat has been snatched from the jaws of victory only because of bureaucratic misleadership. What the working class lacks is leadership, not fighting determination.

Its confidence is not high, it is not certain of itself or its strength. Struggles are in the main defensive. But the mood is there. 'Enough is enough' is an expression heard on the lips of workers up and down the country. With the threat of the Poll Tax, social security cuts, the hounding of the unemployed, yet further anti-trade union laws in the pipe line and a budget which was breath-taking in its arrogance, it is clear that discontent there is aplenty.

What is needed is the issue which will act as the focal point around which workers can galvanise a united workers' offensive. If militant health workers grasp the nettle they can act as a catalyst for working class anger which will not only deliver the solidarity health workers need to win their demands but shake the Tories and their rotten system to its very foundations. Comrades, grasp the nettle!

Jack Conrad



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

THE EXTENDED Editorial Board of *The Leninist* unanimously agreed the following statement:

"The Extended Editorial Board has met. It was noted that capitalism is heading towards a new general crisis and that even today millions of workers and peasants are suffering absolute pauperisation as a result of the usury of capitalism. With a new general crisis this absolute pauperisation will be generalised.

"This poses the necessity of making revolution. Without revolution imperialism will seek to resolve its crisis through counterrevolution and redivisionist war. We are confident that imperialism will be defeated and revolution will triumph. Nonetheless the world revolutionary process is at a particularly complicated and contradictory stage. We are at a crossroads in historical terms equivalent to 1914. The world is objectively becoming ripe for communism but because of opportunism the dangers of world war and retreats are great.

"Although the US is no longer a 'super' imperialist power, now it is merely the 'first among equals', it represents the main threat of war. We thus have a different picture from the last general crisis which spanned the years 1914-45. Then the most aggressive, most warlike, most redivisionist powers were the 'have not' imperialist powers.

"The prime aim of a redivisionist war is the socialist states. The US has orchestrated an unprecedented arms build up by imperialism against the Soviet Union.

"The Gorbachev leadership is not merely opportunistic it is treacherous. It is offering the US a deal on 'defusing' the world's trouble spots. This and the fact that under the dead weight of a parasitic bureaucracy the Soviet Union has suffered relative decline since the 1970s and is now turning towards 'market socialism' means that there is a danger of the world socialist system being eroded at its edges and at the same time decaying from within.

"It is essential to understand that at the end of the day it is capitalism in general which breeds war. Not just the USA. Until capitalism is ended there is a danger of war. To kill war is to kill capital. Treaties, deals and cooperation with capitalism can only provide a breathing space. Capitalism must be replaced by socialism if peace is to be guaranteed.

"Supporters of *The Leninist* consider that CPGB is now a revisionist rump. It has no possibility of making revolution. What is needed is a new CP free of all forms of opportunism and class collaborationism. To this task supporters of *The Leninist* dedicate themselves.

"We must therefore greatly extend the circulation and influence of *The Leninist*. To facilitate this it was agreed to set a minimum £500 target for this year's June to July Summer Offensive, a £100 increase on last year.

"The formation of a genuine CP will require the winning of forces way beyond the present day communist movement. Developments in the Labour Party, not least the crisis of left reformism were considered of great importance in this. A genuine CP must be both theoretically correct and mass in influence.

"Nonetheless the core for a genuine CP will initially come from the existing communist movement. With this in mind it was agreed to urge all communists in the CPGB and CCG to fight where they are but prepare for the unification of all genuine communists under the banner of *The Leninist*."

Extended Editorial Board March 20 1988

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LETTERS

Unflinching support

As a member of the CPGB, I regret to say that there is not a great deal going on in my local branch. Our branch does still exist, but it is very inactive. At best there are only individual initiatives and activity; most of which is petty-bourgeois and inefficient.

Within the past few days, I have received a letter extending special thanks for all the donations I have sent to *Umsebenzi*. Of course I am pleased to be able to send in all I can, but I also consider it my duty. From time to time I have tried to get others in the branch to contribute likewise. However, all my requests and urgings seem, thus far, to have fallen on deaf ears and sealed wallets.

However, we have acquired a new member. Pass the smelling salts! This new member is a local shop steward. I look forward to meeting her before she decides to resign from the CP through disillusionment.

I once wrote that I concur with most of what is written in *The Leninist*. I can inform you that this is still very much the case! In what other publication in this country would you read such a clear, concise and unambiguous statement as the one penned by comrade Jack Conrad on behalf of *The Leninist* Editorial Board relating to the murder of the three Irish freedom fighters by the butchering SAS state terrorists in Gibraltar.

The fact that you seem to be almost totally alone in your unflinching support for the Irish liberation struggle speaks volumes about the rest of the 'champions of the oppressed' in this country today. When two soldiers of the British oppressor state got their just rewards at the recent Republican funeral, it further exposed the writhing social chauvinists we have to contend with within our movement. Karl Kautsky seems almost admirable in comparison with these 'leaders of the proletariat', in reality collaborators with the class enemy.

Your line is unpopular because it is true, your political stance is frowned upon because it is revolutionary. If only the CPSU had issued such a statement as the one on the front page of issue 61. But of course they are too busy lining up with the ranks of the world's bourgeoisie -- witness the Enniskillen statement! No doubt the bourgeoisie cannot believe their luck in being blessed with Gorbachev.

When I view the state of the CPSU and the USSR today it fills me with anguish and frustration. It seems that hardly a day goes by without yet another betrayal of Marxism-Leninism taking place. Long gone are the days when I took a very uncritical -- and therefore unhealthy -- attitude towards the leadership of the CPSU. To follow every twist and turn of this present leadership would lead down a crooked and disastrous path to nowhere.

Peter Jones
Portsmouth

Class Approach

The letter from comrade Cronin (*The Leninist*, No.60), states that we need to start "...pressurising the unions (union bureaucrats, surely -- PC) into taking a militant

stand". Far from advocating a Leninist position re the health workers and the trade unions, he is in actual fact putting forward a typical centrist Trot policy.

Far from being a class approach it diverts the workers who are breaking down sectional trade union divisions back into their respective and separate trade unions.

The unions, the rank and file, are taking a militant stand. But he says we should put "pressure ... on the TUC to give supportive action". Even though rank and file workers chased Willis of the TUC off the platform at the March 5 rally?

Although they may not be consciously breaking with the reformists and bureaucrats, workers have in their action spontaneously revolted against the limitations and class collaboration of the Labour/trade union bureaucracy. This has propelled the workers into a natural movement of class solidarity, of independent organisation and action, thus creating the fertile groundwork for the work of Leninists in both building the revolutionary class party and advancing the struggle towards socialist revolution.

The workers have both shaken the trade union bureaucrats to the core and gone beyond the so-called left leaders. The Trotskyite 'leaders' are tail-ending the mass movement -- at a greater distance than hitherto. They seek to replace the workers' independent class initiative with 'demands' for action by the bureaucrats the workers have spurred.

The Leninist policy is surely to infuse the emerging class forms of organisation and struggle with an "independent political platform" (Ian Mahoney, *The Leninist* number 60); to provide revolutionary Marxist content to the struggles.

The revolutionary Leninist Party must strive to strengthen this independent class struggle and raise the workers' political consciousness to an understanding that only socialist revolution can solve their problems. Only by such will we build the revolutionary party and mass movement.

P Conlan
South London

Vital Importance

Your call for ITV workers to occupy all ITV studios and barricade the buildings is absolutely correct. However, I am not sure if you are aware of the vital importance of the point you are making!

The fact is that in nearly all industries, new technology has considerably displaced workers from the production process. Therefore, during industrial disputes, management only needs to get in a relatively small number of scabs to keep production going. As we all know, there will always be scabs.

Occupations and barricades are highly effective in solving the above problem, and it is also important to recognise that they stop the bosses from organising production and strikebreaking from inside the workplaces. In short, workers can police their workplaces during industrial struggles.

Your call for these two tactics truly represents the revolutionary perspectives of *The Leninist*, in stark contrast to those groups who have no understanding of dialectical materialism or the fact that workers now need to use more ad-

vanced forms of struggle against the bourgeoisie.

Frank Archer
Leicester

Unsavoury amalgam

I don't like the way you lump Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson with the Workers Revolutionary Party (*Workers Press*) as if these two individuals are guilty of crimes on the level of those in which the WRP leaders have been complicit. I have differences with comrades Bornstein and Richardson but I consider your amalgam to be unsavoury.

Incidentally, if you want to talk about past records, Sam Bornstein has been active on the left for five decades, including through the difficult days of the Second World War when the party you are trying so hard to reforge, or resurrect to put it more accurately, was happily strikebreaking for Churchill and slandering as 'fascist' anyone who stood up for the independence of the working class.

Arthur Truscott
London

Ian Mahoney replies:

We 'lumped' Bornstein and Richardson with the likes of the WRP leaders simply by virtue of the fact that they have lined up with the WRP's Moscow Trials Campaign along with anti-Soviet windbag Eric Heffer. *The Leninist* hardly put them there.

We have criticised the record of the CPGB during World War II. But what about the war record of the party to which Bornstein and Richardson owe their loyalty: the Labour Party? People in glass houses should not throw stones. The Labour Party has always sided with British imperialism and it always will.

SWP

You correctly point out the counterrevolutionary position of the SWP on the Iran-Iraq war.

It is also important to recognise that the SWP's politics, which fight against Bolshevism, see revolutionary consciousness developing spontaneously as a result of economic trade union struggles, and advance the poisonous theory of 'state capitalism', are the same politics that fought against a general strike in support of the miners, that dampen workers' militancy and that ultimately sees all working class struggles as doomed to defeat!

The SWP is an organisation that lives from day to day, never able to develop a consistent scientific world outlook.

Pat Collins
Essex

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.

Whose Big Union?

Laird and Willis came back from Detroit with the promise that the TUC now regards one-union, low pay deals as perfectly defensible. The bureaucrats' spinelessness will cost the whole working class in Britain dear



Willis: middle man for Fords

WE SHOULD admire someone who says: "I am a communist. I have been a communist all of my life. My entire career has been devoted to advancing the cause of the working class." Unfortunately we don't... and no wonder.

These lines were written by the man who negotiated a one union deal between the AEU and Ford for the Dundee plant, CPGB member Jimmy Airlie, writing not in the CPGB's *7 Days*, nor even the AEU journal. No, the owners of the rightwing *Mail on Sunday* were so swayed by comrade Airlie's convictions that they gave him a double page in their sordid rag on March 20 to explain how he, heroically and in the true spirit of bureaucratic self sacrifice, sacrificed workers' rights and living standards to Ford Motor Company.

Of course, Airlie did all this in the interests of job creation and against 'sectionalism'. The TUC and the TGWU were 'sectionalist' in Airlie's eyes because they initially opposed the AEU stitching up other unions and their own members at Dundee. When, initially, the TUC opposed this and Ford pulled out, the rightwing leadership of the AEU - and we include in this the 'communist' Airlie - pointed the finger at their opposition and blamed them for having "destroyed, barring miracles, the chance of 1,500 jobs".

Despicably, Airlie and the AEU have also played on Scottish nationalism against 'the south', stating that they had negotiated a cut in Dundee's 15% unemployment rate, but that the doctrinaire English based unions had buggered it all up with their squabbling.

AEU chief Gavin Laird also chipped in against the TUC, playing the radical and 'in touch' egalitarian against the "blundering boneheaded prehistoric monsters" (Ian Lang, Scottish Industry Minister) of the TUC. In Murdoch's *Sunday Times* of March 20, no less, he trumpeted that the AEU is able "to demand an end to archaic distinctions between blue and white collar workers. The petty apartheid of better holidays, sick pay, pensions, canteen facilities and training for white collar workers are dispatched to the wastebin, where they belong."

All this may leave you wondering whether Messrs Laird and Airlie have stumbled on syndicalism, mounting their soap boxes and preaching the marvels of 'one big union'. They are right, of course. It makes no sense having several unions in one car plant, as Airlie argues, and even less to use this to foster sectionalist divisions within the plant, as argues Laird. But what exactly does their solution offer in the concrete?

Firstly, in the case of Ford Dundee only 450 jobs are guaranteed. More jobs could be lost from existing plants if the opening went ahead as agreed. The Ford plant at Woolwich is due to close, and plants whose functions include electronic parts production like Treforest, Enfield and Basildon will have their workforces cut, which the potential centralisation of electronics production at Dundee would facilitate.

The pay rates offered by the AEU at Dundee are well below the national rate for the car industry. The AEU's Dundee agreement would contribute to undermining existing pay and conditions of workers in other Ford plants - and, as is well known, where Ford leads the rest of the industry follows.

The AEU's approach destroys national pay agreements, fragmenting the national organisation of car workers. Needless to say, this renders extremely difficult any ability to undertake or coordinate national industrial action through union structures.

Laird's approach here is not merely restricted to one Ford agreement in Dundee. He and the AEU have a national strategy of bosses' unionism. He makes it clear in the *Sunday Times* article that his prime concern is with bosses' profitability: "What unions must do is reach deals with firms that contribute to their profitability and efficiency, which in turn underpin employment prospects by making the company more competitive."

He is also deeply shocked that the unions, even in the limited if not yet totally ineffectual way they do, should oppose workers being sold down the creek with Gavin Laird firmly gripping the paddle: "The TUC would prefer that it should determine the appropriate union for a particular employer."

"This ignores a fundamental principle, namely, the role of the employer in the question. It is inconceivable to me that any employer with sense would abrogate his right to influence which union would represent the employees."

So Laird, like the class stooge, steps forward to offer his - or rather his members' - services at a cut price, low waged, premium. With workers' leaders like Laird, who needs the CBI?

The threat posed by the AEU, with the EETPU and the UDM in tow, of a scab trade union centre, is one which the TUC has proven unwilling and unable to combat. As soon as the Ford America reps stomped off back to Detroit, the General Council was thrown into confusion; confusion from which the AEU emerged as the victors, when they were sent off to Detroit with a one union deal in their back

pockets and the blessing of Norman (Judas) Willis and the TUC.

It seemed that Laird and Willis came back with nothing. This is not true. They came back with the promise that the TUC now regards one-union, low pay deals as perfectly defensible. The bureaucrats' spinelessness will cost the whole working class in Britain dear.

Moreover, the AEU has clearly strengthened the hold of its own particular brand of scab unionism in the TUC, with the General Council majority accepting its criterion of bosses' profitability. This leaves British Coal an open door through which to impose six day working on NUM members and demand the TUC's backing in the name of 'defending jobs'. With Airlie's political clones in the South Wales and Scottish NUM straining at the leash to sell their members and their union lock stock and barrel to British Coal, after Ford Dundee this is clearly a great danger.

Workers must not look towards the 'dinosaurs' of the TUC General Council to defend their jobs and conditions. We say workers should fight to build rank and file alternatives to the misleaders at the top of the TUC. This does not mean we are against one union in one industry. No, we stand by this principle. But far from this being imposed from above, through a deal between bosses and bureaucrats, the workers themselves must be free to choose which union they wish to belong to.

Mick Gosling, chair of the TGWU Ford Dagenham branch, in a letter to the *Guardian* of March 22, proposed an alternative way forward for workers in the motor industry, on an organisational level: "we believe in building effective shop floor links with our co-workers in Ford plants across the world, so we can stop this company playing off plant against plant, region against region, country against country to the detriment of us all." He is quite right.

This must be done on the basis of what workers need, not what the bosses' can afford or what Laird thinks he can fob them off with. Ford's - or any other company's - profits are not of the slightest interest to us, and we will not pay for their losses and their system's crisis.

- No bosses' and bureaucrats' one union deals!
- Organise the rank and file - for a cross union, cross industry militant minority movement!
- For one union in the car industry - built and controlled by the rank and file!
- For what we need, not what the bosses can afford!

The 2,000 National Union of Seamen Dover strikers have been let down by their union, not least by Sam McCluskie, their general secretary. Their strike is not only against P&O, it is also against the general threat from all ferry companies to the jobs, pay and conditions of all seamen. Rank and file resistance has been the motive force behind keeping the strike going and resisting the constant backtracking by the NUS leadership in the face of legal action. It was the strikers who forced the NUS into calling a national ballot, which took place on March 21 but which was then not counted because of a High Court ruling. For the strike to win it is clear that the law must be broken. P&O boss James Sherwood makes no secret about the fact that he is out to cut jobs and pay. If he gets away with it the rest will follow. Unless the McCluskie leadership is circumvented by the rank and file, the bosses will win. The rank and file must seize the initiative. Links must be forged between the Dover Port Committee and all ports (including on the continent) and plans laid for all out action. In this the men will not only have to fight the bosses and their courts, but the NUS leadership and McCluskie.

Six stewards from the Kings Cross (London) branch of Aslef were disciplined, one of whom, Steve Forey, was sacked, for distributing copies of *On the Line* which was agitating for strike action on March 14 in support of the health workers. Important mistakes were made in the agitation for solidarity action. Once the management threatened sackings and the courts, militants should have upped the stakes and got health workers, above all nurses, to picket out the station's workforce. That they did not and bowed before the courts has produced predictable results. The Aslef bureaucracy is running for cover. Forey - the activist with the most militant record - is being left in the lurch. Kings Cross Aslef balloted on whether or not to take strike action in support of the victimised Aslef stewards. After intimidation by the management the vote was 126 for, and 150 against. This is an important defeat for all rail workers. Kings Cross Aslef is one of the most militant union branches in British Rail. With its failure to defend its own leaders the stage is set for the bosses to threaten all activists. Militants at Kings Cross are now attempting to make their case a national one so that BR cannot begin a general purge. They are asking for support from all workers as well as rail workers. This initiative must be supported. We have said that illegal strikes fought under the control of the rank and file is the only way to win. Now we must support those who share this perspective. Contact the Kings Cross Six Defence Campaign, c/o Camden TU Support Unit, 213 Eversholt St, London NW1.

The Greater London Association of Trades Councils has now finalised the route of this year's May Day march. It will assemble at Finsbury Park at the Enymion Road entrance at 10am and arrive at Alexander Palace in time for the SE Region TUC's rally and festival at 12.30pm. Undoubtedly the biggest contingent will be made up of supporters of the Communist Party of Turkey but we aim to be the biggest British contingent. *The Leninist* is therefore calling upon all genuine communists to join our contingent. We will be marching under militant revolutionary and proletarian internationalist slogans: in defence of the Afghan revolution, for peace through revolution, in solidarity with the liberation movement in Ireland, for all out action in the NHS and for a genuine Communist Party. It is essential that all supporters and sympathisers of *The Leninist* make it to London on May 1 and march with our contingent - arrangements can be made for accomodation on Saturday April 30. The larger the genuine communist contingent is the more profound will be the impact of our militant slogans.

Now is the time



Last month our £600 monthly fighting fund reached £568. This is a good effort. But obviously not good enough. Most of it still comes from close supporters of *The Leninist* rather than readers. Our Fifth Summer Offensive will put an increasing strain on the already strained finances of these comrades. We have set a £500 minimum target for every comrade this year, many will set themselves targets way above that minimum. This is the self sacrificing spirit from which a genuine Communist Party in Britain will be born and our readers must take up this challenge. If you've never given a donation to *The Leninist* before, now the time to act. If you only donate occasionally start making regular payments. If you make a regular donation, double it.



• *The Leninist* sponsored a militant 60 strong picket of Kings Cross on March 14 in solidarity with Steve Forey and the other victimised stewards. Among those supporting it were health workers, including 18 nurses, and members of the LPYS. It was addressed by nurses from the Whittington, Middlesex and St Georges hospitals as well as supporters of the Unemployed Workers Charter and *The Leninist*

In Australia, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Finland, Japan, Sweden, the centrist splits have not been able to re-establish a Leninist Communist Party. At best all they have been able to achieve is life as a ginger group with no prospect of providing revolutionary leadership

Death and disintegration: CCG-type splits

THE COMMUNIST Campaign Group's split from the Communist Party is irrevocably doomed. In the pages of this paper, we have taken the CCG's pretensions to 'Marxist-Leninist' orthodoxy apart *piece by piece* and conclusively shown that under the leadership of opportunists like Lysandrou, Hicks and of course Chater, far from being on a trajectory to reform/reforge/re-establish a Leninist Communist Party, it is in fact on a waterchute to oblivion.

This stark conclusion is not simply verified by an analysis of the CCG's political stance and reformist programme. No, over the last 10-15 years or so, CCG-type centrist splits have taken place in one country after another. The decline and political fossilisation of these splinters verifies our predictions for the CCG's future.

That these splits are concentrated in imperialist countries is no accident. Opportunist parties in such countries have a choice: they can either fossilise in right centrist orthodoxy or fully adapt to the needs of a crisis-ridden capitalism.

In Federal Germany, Ireland, the USA and Canada the communist parties operate as sects, little more than arms of Soviet diplomacy. Only with large parties, like the PCI in Italy, is the latter course really a serious perspective.

For the smaller parties social democratisation results in organisational disintegration. Thus in Britain, Australia, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Finland, Japan, Sweden, we have seen splits. And yet for all their ritualistic claims to ideological orthodoxy none of them have been able to re-establish a *Leninist Communist Party*. At best all they have been able to achieve is life as a ginger group, with no prospect nor aim of providing revolutionary leadership to the working class.

Clearly, from the broad uniformity of the

failure of these CCG type splits and the political problems they face after breaking from their Euro parents, there is an *organic crisis* ripping through centrism internationally. But where many of the splits of the late 1960s and 1970s could expect aid – direct and indirect – from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, this is no longer the case. It is not only the Euro parties which have been sucked towards a social democratic outlook.

Under Gorbachev, the CPSU has played down the importance of the world communist movement and sought co-operation with the much more influential (for it) forces of social democracy. And this is not just a matter of diplomatic manoeuvre. Gorbachev has revealed in one speech after another that he has a social democratic approach to social change in the world.

Where Brezhnev paid lip service to the world revolution and at least defended its gains, Gorbachev says socialism can "only and exclusively" come peacefully. He has taken the unprecedented step of offering imperialism deals "in all the planet's turbulent points" (M Gorbachev, *Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress*, pp.84,89), ie countries like Afghanistan and Angola, in return for paper promises from imperialism that they will guarantee peace in our time.

Even without such a treacherous perspective the CCG is doomed: by following Gorbachev the CCG's fate is sealed. In this article, we will concentrate on just four CCG type splits. Each of them in its own way shows what the future offers for those thinking of joining the CCG's re-established 'CPGB' after its congress on April 24-25.

Spain

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Communist Party of Spain has suffered a series of

centrist splits, each one successively larger and more damaging than the last. Yet none of these has been able to really make its mark on Spanish political life and, having been left high and dry by Gorbachev, they have recently made desperate moves towards 'communist unity'. Such attempts by former 'irreconcilable' opponents is evidence indeed of the crises of identity facing both the established official party and its various splinters.

Enrico Lister, the communist general of Civil War fame, headed the first significant centrist breakaway after the 1968 Czech events, when he established the Spanish Workers Communist Party. Lister's NCP type organisation, however, did not retain an independent existence for long. In the aftermath of a recent electoral pact between the Communist Party of Spain and its various centrist offshoots, Lister's group has given up the ghost and dissolved itself. Its members are now back under the discipline of the PCE.

A more significant breakaway was the 1981 walkout by the majority of the PCE's Catalan section after its congress had voted to reject the term 'Eurocommunism', precipitating a bitter struggle in the party. This culminated in the formation of the Party of Communists of Catalonia, a group which managed to pull into its orbit other ex-PCE groupings as well as members who jointly sponsored the Congress of Communist Unity which founded the Communist Party (initially called that and nothing more), led by Ignacio Gallego in 1984.

This was a far larger and more important alternative party, more like the CCG plus the NCP combined with the CPGB's Scottish organisation, in British terms. The party certainly included whole sections of the PCE apparatus and local organisations.

Its fortunes received a tremendous boost in early 1985. While the Eurocommunist leadership of the PCE was engaged in an undignified and squalid wrangle of its own, the party's Deputy General Secretary, Jaime Ballesteros, announced that he along with four other members of the Central Committee and "thousands of members" had gone over to the Gallego CP, stating that "in view of the process of liquidationism and grave crisis that is afflicting Spanish communism, we want to undertake a process of ideological clarification and unification of all communists".

Gallego's party, now called the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (CPPS), was supported and promoted by the CPSU under Brezhnev, and was even granted dual recognition alongside the PCE itself. Considering this it displayed its diplomatic amateurishness and isolation when, in November 1987, it established fraternal relations with the British NCP. This was clearly a ham fisted response to being distanced by the Gorbachev CPSU, which has bigger fish to fry. For although far larger than the minuscule and ideologically dull NCP, the Gallego CP has proved unable to take any real steps forward.

Despite the disquiet the Soviet decision caused in PCE circles (and also in Eurocommunist parties the world over who saw the possibility of the CPSU backing similar breakaways in their own countries), the Gallego CPPS remained thin on the ground outside Catalonia and in some areas, like the Basque country, more or less non-existent. In 1985 it was claiming around 30,000 members, almost certainly an exaggeration when one considers that its fortnightly newspaper *Nuevo Rumbo* has a circulation of only 35,000.

This lack of success and the distancing by Gorbachev from Brezhnev's willingness to "interfere in the internal affairs of fraternal parties" pushed it towards attempting to find

shortcuts to popularity and electoral success. Thus, in the June 1986 elections, the party came full circle and joined Izquierda Unida (United Left), a left reformist platform with the Euro PCE (plus hosts of greens, ecologists and petty bourgeois radical groups).

Ironically, excluded from this pact was the former PCE general secretary Santiago Carrillo and his very own 'CP', still embroiled in a factional struggle with the leadership of the PCE. He sarcastically dismissed the alliance of Euros and centrist 'hardliners' as a "gazpacho" – the Spanish soup made from mixed vegetables.

So, we have a situation in Spain where the 'pro-Soviet' centrists, after splitting from the PCE, now find themselves in an electoral alliance with the Euros. Yet the Euros themselves are today split down the middle, with the centrists' old *bete noir*, Santiago Carrillo, outside the party hurling accusations at the Iglesias PCE leadership of "anti-Sovietism"! Will we ever see Martin Jacques brand Monty Johnstone 'anti-Soviet'? Judging by Spain, however unlikely, it is not impossible.

The recent impetus to unity has come not only from Gorbachev but from the disastrous decline of all Spanish communist organisa-



... will ever produce is an NCP Mark II. NCP general secretary (right) Rene Damen

tions – centrist and Euro alike. Indeed, a hint of desperation has crept in.

A recent document presented by Communist Party of Spain general secretary Gerardo Iglesias and approved by a plenary meeting of the Central Committee, called for "all communists without exception to unite within the Communist Party of Spain." (*Mundo Obrero*, no:450, October 15-21, 1987, reprinted in *Information Bulletin*, 3/1988.)

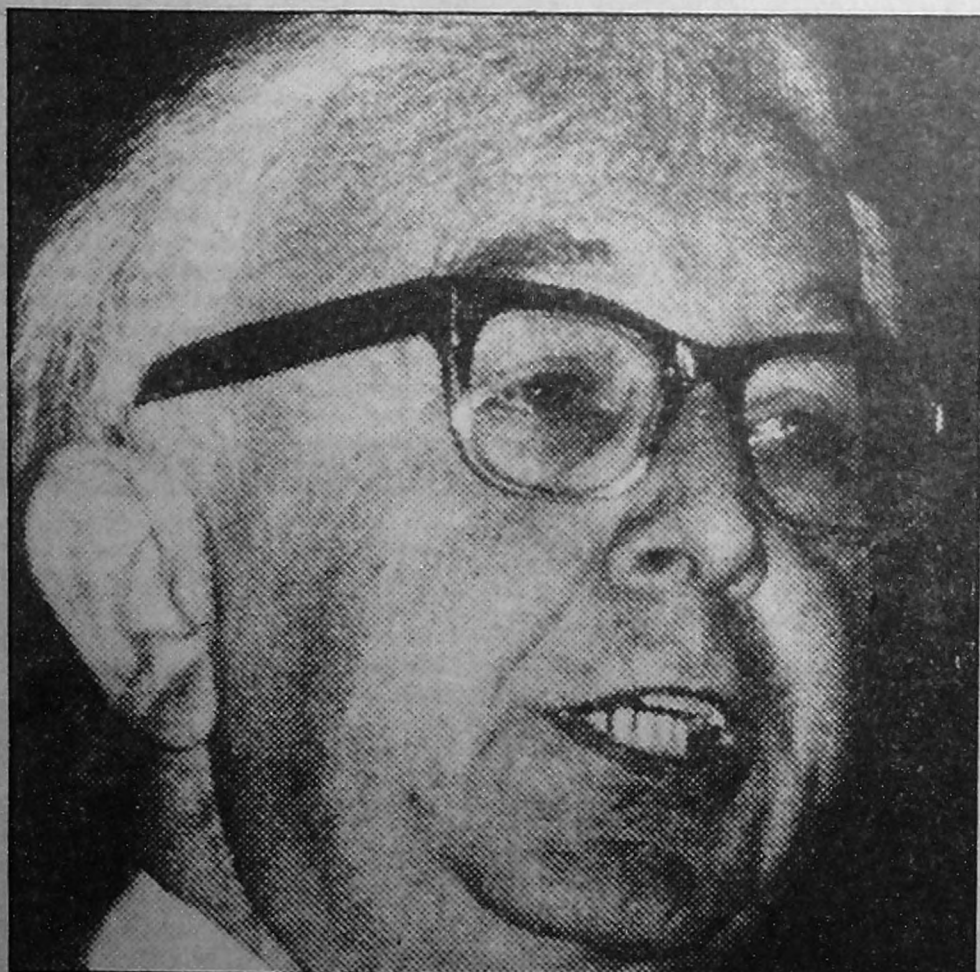
The document continues: "There are many considerations, including the broad coincidence of political viewpoints [sic] and joint activity in the coalition of the United Left-Initiative for Catalonia, behind our proposal for unity, which is of special importance in the history of the Communist Party of Spain, a proposal addressed first and foremost to the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain." (*Ibid*)

The Executive Committee of the CPPS replied on October 24 1987 in its *Nuevo Rumbo*. Its document was more 'political' than the PCE proposal and contained a gratuitous section in praise of the (current) Soviet leadership, perhaps included to emphasise its political origins. Certainly both parties support Gorbachev's market socialism and his turn to the right. So 'pro-Sovietism' is not one of the differences between the two organisations.

Similarly, the CPPS emphasised that there were still views in the PCE's document that "can only partly qualify as positive" and warned that the "goal of the ... CPPS EC is to build a Leninist Party" and that this cannot come through "an agglomeration of the existing organisations, their integration, or incorporation of some within others."

Obviously, this is a cry for independence. Like Eric Trevett, the pathetic general secretary of Britain's NCP, Gallego fears that his CPPS will be gobbled up, and along with it the prestige of being a general secretary, with its perks and financial rewards. What a political pigmy!

Apart from vacuous generalities – for example, to "defend the demands of the working people and youth and uphold national [sic] interests, peace and revolutionary transformations of society" (from the CPPS document) – there is no real discussion of the *political basis* for co-operation with what their co-thinkers in Britain would rightly call out and out revisionists. Clearly what has



All that Chater ...

brought the opportunists together – Euro and centrist alike – is decline and crisis.

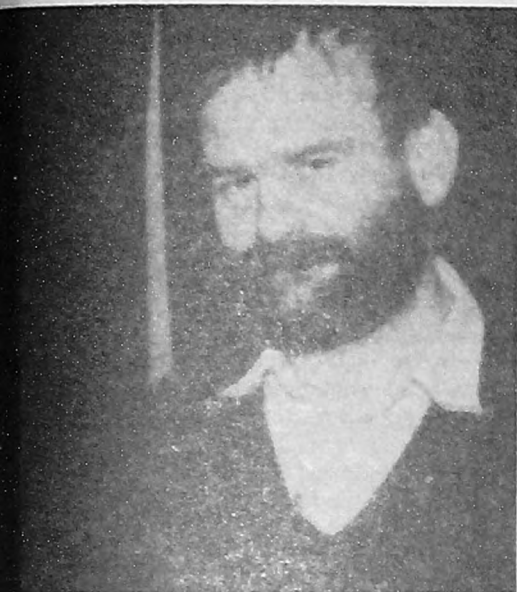
Australia

The history of the Communist Party of Australia and its various splits is a particularly interesting and instructive one for British communists. Obviously, there is a cultural affinity; also both are small parties, but historically important in the labour movement.

The right wing Labour Party administration of Bob Hawke, first elected in March 1983, has now been in office for three terms (Australian terms are a maximum of three years) and has imposed savage austerity measures on the working class. Nothing new here.

Like Britain, when social democracy attacks the working class all those currents and shades tied to social democracy are plunged into crisis. The vicious attacks by the Hawke government have precipitated a desperate search on the left for allies and 'unity' – unity of the grave. For this 'unity'-mongering is not the result of strength, nor a determination to fight, but political bankruptcy.

Rather than coming together in order to



general secretary (left) with VCN (Dutch NCP)

forge a *fighting* unity in a larger organisation, the Australian left is huddling together for comfort and warmth.

Centrist forces originally split from the CPA in the aftermath of the 1968 Czech events to form the Socialist Party of Australia in 1970, taking large swathes of the CPA's industrial base. What sort of 'communists' call themselves 'socialists' can only be wondered at. Anyway, the SPA initially managed some unspectacular growth, but quickly ran into trouble.

In 1983, an important section of the SPA, comprised largely of the party's trade union bureaucrats and their followers, split away. As one militant from Australia put it to us, this "really ripped the industrial guts out of the organisation".

This split illustrated the inability of the SPA to train Bolsheviks, to produce trade union leaders who would act as *communists* in the trade unions rather than as trade union bureaucrats in the party.

The pivotal figure in this split was one Pat Clancy, a leading official in the building workers' union. Clancy and his co-thinkers split with a political orientation towards the Labour Party, particularly in relation to its policy of wage restraint. Prior to the Labour Party's election, Hawke stitched up a social contract with the trade union bureaucrats in the Australian equivalent of our TUC, the ACTU.

The SPA instructed its officials on this body to vote against the Labour Party's proposals. In fact, however, the SPA's members voted for austerity. The basic issue was whether the party could control its officials in the trade unions or not. It couldn't!

Since then, the SPA has declined rapidly. It has managed to maintain some sort of base among miners, where there is still a resonance for pro-Soviet politics, but that is more a vestigial sentiment than active revolutionary identification. As for growing beyond these parameters, the SPA has found this impossible.

The increasingly aged membership now no longer believes that it has the answers. And again, under the influence of the Gorbachev shift to the right the party has embroiled itself in 'unity' negotiations with equally dispirited, desperate and disorientated political forces – the Maoists, the erstwhile Trots of the Australian SWP and, yes – ironically enough – the CPA.

Finland

After World War II, the Communist Party of Finland was the biggest party in parliament. Unquestionably, it was one of the most important communist parties in Western Europe – the third largest non-ruling European CP, after the Italian and the French, and with the prestige and power conferred by its close historical ties with the Soviet Union.

Today its vote has been halved and it is only the fourth largest party in the country. The Euro leadership of the CPF under chairman Arvo Aalto is determined on a 'historical compromise' with the bourgeois parties, something which it is felt can only be achieved by eliminating the centrist opposition around the *Tiedonantaja* paper.

In 1985 *Tiedonantaja* supporters controlled 8 of the party's 17 district organisations and the gerrymandered special congress in 1987 effectively finalised the split in the party.

In the lead up to this congress, general secretary Arvo Aalto ordered the establishment of parallel Euro organisations in the districts with centrist majorities. Initially, the characteristically conservative centrists thought about taking the whole matter to the bourgeois courts, but then the *Tiedonantaja*-ists rebelled.

They did not set up an alternative party, however, but instead a 'half-way house' organisation – the Committee of the Finnish Communist Party Organisations – with its own elected central committee, its own chairman, Taisto Kajanoja, and general secretary Jouko Kajanoja. A sort of CCG without 're-establishment' fantasies.

So the 20th Congress of the CPF in 1987 was a turning point. The party has been effectively split since the 1960s, but this congress was the first time that the Euro majority attempted to impose its will on the 'hardline' minority.

The newly aggravated split is personified in the figure of the new party chair, Aalto. His election represented not simply the defeat of the centrist minority, but also of the CPSU, which had supported the alternative candidate, Kajanoja, and strenuously attempted to pressurise party districts to vote for him against Aalto. Knowing the Gorbachev method, compromise with the rightists will be sought and found.

In many ways, the deep structural changes in Finnish social life during the post World War II boom were brought about through Finland's ability to become an imperialist power, albeit a junior one. This underlies the present crisis in the CPF. Finland has been transformed into a highly industrialised country with imperialist interests stretching all over the world and this has enabled the ruling class to foster the growth of a large labour aristocracy.

The CPF responded to this development by moving further towards social democracy. This only speeded up its crisis. The fact that the Social Democratic Party in Finland dropped its previous cold war stance in the 1960s and, fairly unsurprisingly, given the specific geo-political circumstances of Finland, established warm relations with the Soviet Union, did not help either.

From 1966 on, with the support of the SDP, the CP held ministerial posts in bourgeois coalition governments. This raised expectations among both communist and social democratic workers, but when these coalition administrations introduced incomes policies and the like, such expectations turned sour. In spite of the fact that deep controversies arose around these and other anti-working class measures, the ruling class had effectively crippled the fighting capacity of the CPF by making it complicit in their implementation.

These problems split the party into a 'Euro' majority which supported further participation in bourgeois coalition governments and a centrist minority in opposition, the Taistoists (from the minority leader's name, Taisto Sinisalo – 'taisto' meaning 'struggle').

Throughout the 1960s, the tensions between the two trends in the party grew and hardened, especially after the 1966 Congress which saw an openly rightist, social democratic trend emerge.

However, it was the clash of the Euro majority's parliamentary ambitions and the 1968 Czech intervention by the USSR which provided the 'critical mass' necessary to explode the tension-fraught Finnish party.

In order to further establish themselves as 'reasonable' politicians in the eyes of the Finnish bourgeoisie, the Euros in Finland, like Euros the world over, condemned the Soviet action. In the lead up to the following year's congress, the centrists revolted, accusing the

majority of "betrayal of the working class and proletarian internationalism" and launched their own factional paper.

The leadership counterattacked at the 1969 congress, precipitating a walkout by the centrist minority and the party has been split into two antagonistic wings ever since, a split seemingly finalised by the 1987 congress and the new 'hard' attitude of the Euros.

The minority have always followed a straight centrist line on international matters. In the past, they have had some impact on Finnish social life, particularly among youth, but have declined dramatically over the recent years.

In the search for relevance, the remnants of the 'Taistoists' have turned more and more to 'peace' issues, but have been overshadowed even there by the Finnish CND-type movement. Facing an ascendant Euro majority which is after their blood as part of its campaign to integrate itself further into bourgeois political life, the future looks bleak for the centrists.

Italy

Organised opposition to the PCI's rightist drift started in the early 1960s, initially around Roberto Gabriel. Today, Gabriel is general secretary of the Movement for Peace and Socialism (MPS), closely identified with the trade union centre Rappresentanze Sindacale di Base (RSB), an organisation which appears to be acting as a pole of attraction for disaffected members of the PCI, 91,000 of whom left the party last year according to its central organ, *L'Unita*.

The MPS, set up in 1986, is not a political party yet and thus is not in a position to challenge the PCI on its own terrain. Undoubtedly, however, the Euro party is worried, as

evidenced by the hostility the PCI has shown to the new organisation and its sympathetic trade union organisation, the RSB. When the RSB was invited to the last meeting of the World Federation of Trades Unions in Bulgaria the PCI angrily threatened to boycott the gathering if it was allowed to attend.

Yet despite its opposition to the advanced stage of social democratisation of the PCI, the MPS in no way represents a principled communist alternative. At the end of February of this year, it held its second national assembly in Rome in the form of a conference under the banner 'Communists and Europe'.

It emerged from reports of this conference that the decision to form the MPS was actually precipitated by the low vote for the PCI in working class districts in the 1986 general election. To back up their decision to split from the party, they also point to the changing social composition of the PCI.

Some 43% of delegates to the last congress were full-time party workers and most of the rest were public officials of one sort or another. "What impulse to change in society can be given by a force with such a composition?" asked Sergio Cararo of the MPS, and answering his own question, "None!"

He may well be right. But the MPS has failed to undertake a systematic critique of the *origins* of the political degeneration of the PCI and, indeed, looks as equally wedded to the same genre of class collaborationist perspectives that have laid the PCI low.

The President of MPS, Nino Pasti, is a case in point. Pasti is not simply a self proclaimed implacable opponent of Eurocommunism, he is also an *ex-Nato general*! He is a living embodiment of precisely the type of class collaborationist policies which have characterised and discredited the Euro party!

Ian Mahoney

Re-establishing Revisionism

THE CCG's Congress Preparatory Committee's discussion document – *The Re-establishment Congress of the Communist Party – A Perspective* – confirms that its new party will continue with the same undemocratic method in which the CCG itself started in 1986. A self-appointed clique of expellees proclaimed themselves leaders of the anti-Euro opposition in the Communist Party, standing on the very same revisionist programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, which gave birth to the hated Euros.

Many left centrists in the Party, looking for genuine communist leadership, were led by the nose towards the present futile split which, with the same revisionist politics, can only reproduce the same disintegration as in the CPGB.

The CPC admits (p23) that "Some comrades may, quite understandably, still express some dissatisfaction" because "formal resolutions and amendments will not be possible at this congress", but only in 1989.

So the "fundamental principles, key campaigning policies and major organisational tasks of the Party", all based firmly on the discredited *BRS*, will be "broadly reaffirmed" (p2) by the congress, like it or not. Debate will be permitted, but no changes. One might well ask, 'When is a congress not a congress?'

"The major task of the congress will be to elect an executive committee ...", but how are delegates to choose without testing the political positions of the various leaders in open political conflict over opposing motions and platforms? The result can only be the rubber stamping of the original self-appointed *BRS* clique.

Those who would like to ditch the revisionist *BRS* are promised the "widest discussion and amendment ..." But far from acknowledging their own revisionist errors of the past and trying to correct them, these smug bureaucrats only admit the need to *update* the *BRS*!

"From 1951 to 1977 our programme went through five editions, that is to say, it was revised on average once every five years. Since the last edition eleven years have passed ... Accordingly, our programme is in need of

a thorough review and update." In other words there is only a technical reason for discussion on the *BRS*.

For those in the CCG who reject the *BRS* – and there are many – this should set the alarm bells ringing. What point is there in splitting from one revisionist led organisation, only to find oneself in another revisionist led organisation – but with only 5% of the membership.

In addition to this technical device, which has the advantage of legitimising the revisionist *BRS* complacency, the "number one priority of the re-established Party" will be that 'daily living embodiment of the *BRS*', Tony Chater's yawning *Morning Star*. Chater will in fact give the main political opening at the congress, emphasising his standing in the CCG and proving he has the new party bound hand and foot to his beloved *BRS* revisionism.

Given that this revisionist is giving the political opening it is hardly surprising to find the CPC's *Perspective* promising "solidarity with those peoples fighting for freedom from neo-colonial exploitation and oppression, for national liberation ..." and then simultaneously demanding that the IRA must lay down its arms. Revisionism always gives with one hand and takes with the other.

The CPC in fact offers debate in the future over the *BRS* while at the same time forcing those who disagree with it to vote for politics which directly flow from it and its reformist logic. This is easily illustrated. The new party's "overriding objective is socialism" but this will be achieved not through proletarian revolution and the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, but by "a Labour government of a new type" implementing the Alternative Economic Strategy and greater democracy as "the appropriate conditions ... for opening the way for socialism". In other words the usual *BRS* utopian and reformist recipe.

To those comrades who come to recognise the dead-end revisionist character of the CCG party, we say: stay inside it, insist on your democratic rights, fight for Leninist ideas until you are expelled, or until you can bring sections of the organisation into the camp of *The Leninist*.

Ian Farrell



INTERVIEW

Idatu is known the world over as the union of the Dunnes strikers

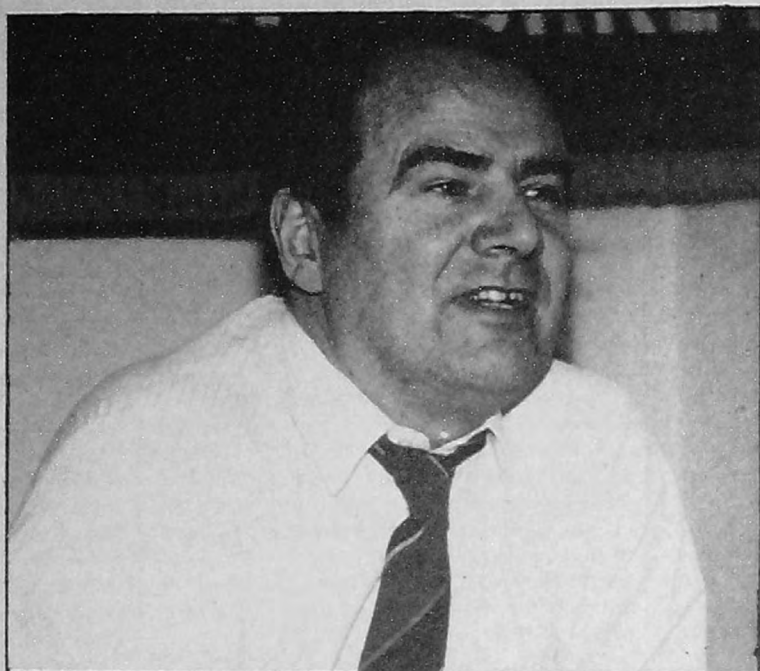
In Connolly's footsteps

"Bye-bye WRP", part 68: We hear that, following on from the walkout of Bill Hunter's faction from the WRP (Workers Press) and the collapse of their paper (so what do we call this WRP now? - Ed) another grouping has left their fast diminishing ranks. It seems that a grouping around a certain non-entity Dave Bruce were able to excuse their exit from the plug hole bound WRP through discovering a "progressive side of Stalinism". Will the last one out of the WRP please turn out the lights?

On splits from the WRP: did you know that the born again pro-Soviets of wacky Gerry Healy's odd-ball and thespian dominated 'Marxist Party' have started turning up to CCG meetings? Given the fact that both sects have a position that a political revolution is well under way in the Soviet Union, can we look forward to a merger? Then Vanessa Redgrave could impart her acting skills to Photis Lysandrou to make his next big lie to keep the leaky CCG craft afloat nearly believable.

Chris Myant, editor of 7 Days, had an odd little piece on the murder of three IRA Volunteers in Gibraltar. The column concludes with comrade Myant musing "Perhaps, if I had been brought up in Belfast, I might have been with her" [Mairead Farrell] "the other week in Gibraltar". Does this statement from the editor of the CPGB's official paper hint that the Euros will take a lesson from the CPGB's past and organise an International Brigade to fight with the IRA in the Six Counties? You know, somehow I just can't imagine Martin Jacques in a balaclava...

Here's a piece for those of you with strong stomachs: In Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, monthly paper of the Revolutionary (sic!) Communist (sic!) Group (just about), Patrick Newman oozes syrup about the internationalism of Gorbachev, claiming that where a revolutionary movement has seized power "the USSR never refuses to give its military support ... to the revolution." On the opposite page there is a small report, without comment, of the Soviet Armed Forces' proposed withdrawal from Afghanistan, leaving the PDPA government at the hands of the counterrevolutionary Mujahedin. What was that you were saying, Pat?



John Mitchell: a revolutionary trade union leader in the tradition of Connolly and Larkin

JOHAN MITCHELL is no run-of-the-mill trade union bureaucrat. Although he has worked his way through the trade union bureaucracy and is now general secretary of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union, he is no Irish version of John Edmonds, Ron Todd or Ken Gill. Some say that a British equivalent is Arthur Scargill, yet even this comparison is inadequate. There is in point of fact no British equivalent to John Mitchell because no British trade union is led by a revolutionary. Even in Ireland there has been no one in this mould since Connolly and Larkin.

It is not every day you meet a leading trade unionist who voices support for the revolutionary struggle in his own country, rather than a revolutionary struggle 6,000 miles away. Yes, John Mitchell does not fear being associated with the revolutionary struggle in the Six Counties. No ritualistic condemnation of terrorism, no matter where it comes from.

With such an outlook it is not surprising that he has no time for the politics of 'the last atrocity' type. Ireland must be free and Britain must go. That is the John Mitchell bottom line. No matter how much the state, the media and the pulpit may fulminate against the heroic actions of an unarmed funeral cortege in taking on gun toting soldiers, John Mitchell says he will side with the oppressed and not the oppressors.

Why Britain stays in Ireland has puzzled many. "It can't be profit and I don't think it's a question of military strategy", he told me. "What it fears is a civil war leading to the creation of a Cuba throughout Ireland." For Mitchell - and, it must be said, for this paper - this would be "no bad thing."

That is not to say John Mitchell has a fully worked out political programme for revolution. He would be the first to admit that his world view suffers from a certain eclecticism. This is not a small question. As Lenin said: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."

Connolly's failure was, at the end of the day, a theoretical failure. He did not see the centrality of building a revolutionary party.

Whether Mitchell can take on board the tasks of theory, or unite with others who can, is a matter for the future. Nonetheless its importance cannot be over-emphasised. And, no matter what anyone may think, there is no substitute in this task for a theoretical paper. To put mass work before theoretical clarity is to put the cart before the horse.

Yet, in spite of this fault, John Mitchell is no conceited anti-theory philistine. He knows he has got to learn and he considers that the best way to do this is to look for lessons abroad. No narrow green nationalist he. Hence John Mitchell has taken a close interest in the ex-Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines. And although he has recently developed important differences with them, this has not led to any diminution of his determination to take lessons from abroad.

His contacts with Turkey through the Irish CDDRT - of which he is chairman - brought him into contact with militants of the Communist Party of Turkey. Its theory and practice clearly have had a profound impact. For John Mitchell this is the Party Ireland needs to emulate.

Clearly what is important about John Mitchell is not where he has come from but where he is going. Those who seek to build a genuine Communist Party in Ireland will certainly take note of this.

We have always made the point that for Ireland to be free it is essential to mobilise the working class in the south. Indeed we have argued that only if the working class takes the lead can the national struggle succeed. John Mitchell agrees with this. More, he sees Idatu playing an important role here.

Mitchell emphasised to me that the Twenty-six Counties is extremely unstable. The economy is heading for trouble and "no deal between trade union officialdom and the government will prevent the working class fighting back." While many revolutionaries we have spoken to in the Six Counties have expressed a certain scepticism about the prospects in the south, that John Mitchell is where he is today - leading a major trade union and being drawn towards Leninism - shows that the wheels

of progress, for so long frozen by the division of Ireland, are moving again.

Since he became general secretary of Idatu it has been transformed from a sleepy, declining monument to moderation into Ireland's most dynamic and militant union. But what makes Idatu important is not its growth - it is now the fourth largest Irish based union operating in the country - but its politics, as personified in John Mitchell.

Where other union leaders in Ireland treat James Connolly as a harmless icon, for John Mitchell the struggle Connolly fought and died for in 1916 remains to be completed. Like Connolly, he understands that Ireland will never be free until the working class is free. This is the root of his disagreements with Sinn Fein. He does not think that Gerry Adams' 'labour must wait' politics, nor his stagist scheme of revolution, will lead to success, but to disappointment and failure.

Again, like Connolly, Mitchell considers that the working class will never free itself through piecemeal reform: "What is needed is a revolution, a revolution which combines the national and social, a revolution which leads to socialism." The form of socialism Mitchell wants is not that which he sees in Eastern Europe. He is still barred from Poland because of Idatu's support of *Solidarnosc*.

Mitchell in our view was incorrect to have supported *Solidarnosc* - it became a counterrevolutionary organisation - but correct to question the Polish form of socialism: millions of workers do not desert official trade unions over nothing. What Mitchell wants to see in Ireland, he told me, was "not an authoritarian socialism but a socialism with mass participation and democracy, as the CPT is fighting for" and we certainly do not disagree with this.

To achieve this he knows full well that a leadership, a general staff, a party is necessary. Exactly how this will come about he is not sure. This is clearly an important political weak spot that must be overcome. But for him, looking at what exists at present, he says it is clear that something new is needed, perhaps the founding of a completely new organisation.

While he looks sympathetically at the struggle being waged by Sinn Fein in the Six Counties, he thinks it has reached a plateau of support in the north and an impasse in the south. Indeed he describes Sinn Fein today as being at "a crossroads".

He fears that Sinn Fein will take a turn to the right, towards some sort of "pan-nationalist alliance" with the SDLP in the north and Haughey's Fianna Fail in the south. This, Mitchell says, would be a setback.

For, while he is critical of Sinn Fein's tendency towards narrow nationalism, he recognises the differences between it and those who only pay lip service to the cause of Irish freedom. Because of this he has proposed to Gerry Adams that, as well as needing a political and military wing, the republican movement needs a trade union wing.

With this in mind Mitchell has set himself the task of organising nationalist workers in the north,

who have traditionally been hostile towards, even hated, trade unions. In this Idatu has had some success. In particular it has - unlike other unions - gone out to organise the unemployed. This is undoubtedly an important step forward.

When I asked him about the Irish Republican Socialist Party, he told me of his high esteem for it when it was formed but he thinks that with the vicious attacks it has been subjected to, and its inability to firmly subordinate the military wing to a political leadership, it is doubtful whether it will lay the basis for a genuine Communist Party in Ireland. This puts the ball firmly in the court of the present leadership of the IRSP.

The militant orientation of Idatu has won it many friends. It has also won it many enemies. But its friends are typically to be found in the soulless, decaying housing estates that ring Dublin, or the nationalist ghettos of Belfast and Derry. Its enemies are found, north and south, in the plush offices of government and big business and, it must be said, those who talk about socialism but practice the most abject class collaborationism.

Proof of this came at last year's Irish Congress of Trade Unions when the so-called 'left' lined up with the open right in suspending first John Mitchell and then Idatu. The reason was straight forward. Mitchell told the truth about the trade unions in the north when he branded them 'Uncle Tom' unions: that, and the fact that Idatu refused to dissociate itself from its general secretary's cutting remarks, was enough for the fat cat ICTU bureaucracy.

Interestingly, Mitchell notes that "ICTU has never shown the slightest willingness to take similar action against unions which stand on the right, not least those in the north which in practice have connived in the most outrageous sectarian practices." In principle he stands for the organisation of trade unionists through a single centre, yet he says suspension has had no effect on Idatu's membership, if anything the reverse. Mitchell's message to the bureaucrats is, do your worst.

He reserved special contempt for the leaders of the Communist Party of Ireland. Its members voted solidly for Idatu's suspension. Mitchell puts this down to the CPI's congenial prostration to the diplomatic demands of the Soviet state and its opportunist project of integrating itself into the trade union bureaucracy.

This means that the CPI has no presence on the streets, no grass roots support but relatively large numbers of time-servers in the upper echelons of trade union officialdom. It deserves contempt. It has dragged the proud name of communism into the mud, brought it into disrepute among socialist workers in the south and the revolutionary masses in the north.

If Mitchell and other comrades in Ireland can get their act together, the day will soon come when the banner of communism will be ripped away from the dishonourable hands of the opportunists and placed where it should be - at the front of the revolutionary masses. We look forward to that day.

Jack Conrad



Ireland's Iskra?

TO CHANGE the world, the working class, through its vanguard, must first understand it. This is an arduous process of theoretical study and ideological struggle for that vanguard, and its active relation to the working class. Such a struggle in Tsarist Russia took many decades to win the vanguard to Marxism; from Plekhanov's opening shots against the populists in the 1880s to the October insurrection and Lenin's struggle against Menshevism the battle was fought.

The lessons of Russia provide the most advanced example of revolutionary practice for communists today. One such lesson is of the importance of the revolutionary paper, providing the central medium between the communist organisation and its tasks - whether they be rousing the masses to insurrection in 1917, or creating and consolidating a highly disciplined body of professional revolutionaries and asserting its hegemony within the revolutionary movement in 1902.

The nature of the communist papers that addressed themselves to these two tasks were as different as the tasks themselves. *Pravda* was the mass paper of the insurrection, popular and highly accessible. *Iskra*, on the other hand, was orientated to a thin layer of advanced workers and revolutionary intellectuals. Its task was the forging of a party able to carry out the theoretically and physically demanding task of revolution.

In Ireland today, as in Britain, such a party is absent. For communists in both countries the task of forging such a party is the central one. We were therefore very pleased to read in *An Camchéachta/Starry Plough* issue No.2 that:

"It is hoped that *An Camchéachta* can become the *Iskra* of Ireland... In Ireland today there is a barrenness of political theory, a complete lack of direction and leadership, which is reflected in the low ebb of the struggle at this time. We hope that *An Camchéachta* will fill this void by stimulating debate and fierce polemic."

The paper, as the IRSP realises, appears none too soon: "The national liberation struggle, as we have stated many times before, is at an impasse. Unable to mobilise the social forces to go forward, it is floundering. Signs such as the emergence of the Communist League in the H Blocks show that there is a basic desire to rethink the strategy of the last twenty years."

Such a situation begs the question that only communists can answer. The comrades are quite correct to point out that "the subjective conditions lag behind" and to address themselves to providing the solution to this. Certainly, as they indicate, there is no lack of raw material for this task.

A clear perspective and a strong lead is demanded. It is therefore very encouraging that *Starry*

Plough No.2 is a great improvement on No.1 (see our review of this in *The Leninist* of January 21). It has indeed differentiated its ideological position against left nationalism. But this is not to say that the IRSP has fully embraced Leninism. There are many pitfalls into which the IRSP can stumble, not least anti-Sovietism.

For example, in his article on "Marxism and Religion", Robert Lake writes of the 'Soviet Union' in quote marks and says: "Exploitation still occurs in Russia". This is dangerous. The Soviet Union is the world revolutionary centre and the greatest gain ever made by the world's working class.

The capitalist class was expropriated through the greatest revolution in world history. We must steadfastly defend the Soviet Union, even when it is led by a dangerous rightist like Gorbachev. Those that glibly and contemptuously write about exploitation and call the Soviet Union 'Russia' bow before petty bourgeois philistinism.

Nevertheless the fact that religion, usually skirted by the republican movement, who at best back Fr Dessie Wilson against Bishop Daly, is attacked is positive. But this can never excuse anti-Sovietism. Religion is not after all our main enemy - imperialism is.

For all this the paper has less of the eclecticism which characterised No.1. Confusion as to whether Ireland is an "underdeveloped" or a "medium developed capitalist country" seems to have been correctly resolved in favour of the latter, and with the appropriate conclusions being drawn in the four page supplement by comrade Seamus Morgan.

Articles now appear signed, an important feature, as we argued, because leaders can be developed and followed through the paper - views are not a disembodied 'line'; a Lenin can be distinguished from a Trotsky, a Trotsky from a Plekhanov.

This can best be done through polemic. And given that the editors are not running a tight ship, this is essential. The editorial in No.1 which called Ireland a "backward capitalist country" should have been subject to open attack in No.2. We certainly hope that Lake's anti-Sovietism is pulverised in No.3.

The prisoners of war are also entering into this debate, with an article on democracy by Long Kesh POW, comrade Patrick McPhillips. This is all to the good. The production of such articles, alongside *Congress '86* and *Questions of History* by POWs shows that there is a high level of debate in the prisons which needs to be tapped into by communists outside.

Both the supplement and the article on Afghanistan by comrade Francis Glenn have drawn from the study of these questions made by *The Leninist*, a step forward from *Starry Plough* No.1, which still smacked somewhat of being a more left wing version of Sinn Fein's *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

Comrade Morgan's supplement on nationalism does a neat little job on the romantic illusions that many Irish revolutionaries have in the Cuban revolution. Cuba, the comrade correctly states, can be no model for revolution in Ireland. The lessons of the Communist Party of Vietnam are held up as broad examples for a liberation struggle against those of radical African nationalists like Nkrumah and Mugabe. In so far as it goes on this, we too are in agreement.

The *Starry Plough* combines theoretical debate and concrete analysis of Ireland with considerable international coverage, from

comrade Glenn's article on Afghanistan to comrade Kate Doyle's timely double page on Palestine. This indicates an eagerness to absorb the lessons that the world revolutionary struggle throws forward.

Communists must view such a 'learning process', historically and globally, as an indispensable task. The socialist revolution, unlike the capitalist, may be national in form, but its essence is international. This was expressed in the 1920s through the Communist International, which synthesised and generalised the lessons of the world proletarian revolutionary movement - primarily the lessons of the Bolsheviks - into one world party. The Comintern was as one fist, not many independent digits.



The world communist movement has now degenerated beyond all recognition, in the main leaving opportunist insults to the word 'communist' such as the Communist Party of Ireland.

But that only reinforces the need for principled proletarian internationalism. This must involve the closest cooperation and most intense open ideological debate between communists internationally. With the close political, geographical and economic relations between Ireland and Britain, this is especially the case between communists of our two countries.

We therefore look forward to fruitful debate between supporters of *Starry Plough* and *The Leninist*.

Alan Merrick
Subscriptions to *Starry Plough* (monthly paper of the IRSP) are £3 for six months or £6 for one year from *Starry Plough Publications*, 392 Falls Road, Belfast 12, Ireland.

CCG Jungle

Communist Campaign Group,
Communist Campaign Review,
Spring 1988, pp32, £1.00

CHATER'S TITANIC is now on the slipway, rushing headlong towards its moment of truth - April 23-24 in the North London Poly - when, at the so-called "re-establishment congress" (of the communist party), Communist Campaign Group followers will discover for themselves just how false is Tom Durkin's lie that "the majority of communists" support the CCG.

That Durkin finds it necessary to use such an argument, and that CCGers are attracted by such an argument, says everything about their opportunist politics. Like the monkeys in Kipling's *Jungle Book* he cries to them: "We must be right, there's so many of us!"

Genuine communists know that what matters when forging a communist party is not numbers, but principle, ideological clarity and readiness to face the truth and do what is necessary. Communist parties formed from just a handful of people have gone on to lead successful revolutions, for example in China and Vietnam.

The reformist politics of the CCG ensures that it will not be able to face the truth squarely, and such dishonesty as Durkin's will inevitably be a hallmark of the new CCG 'party'.

Those who still believe the "re-establishment congress" can produce a genuine communist party should take a look at the role prescribed for the new party in this latest (and presumably the last) *CCG Review*.

A communist party is needed, argues the editorial, to generate mass struggle to facilitate a Labour Party election victory. CCG National Organiser and Secretary of the Congress Preparatory Committee Nidge Tovey spells it out: "We need to mobilise the labour and democratic movement" (not the working class, you note) "to go over to the offensive in order to secure a Labour government..." Comrades, if you are so keen on Labour you should join the Labour Party!

There follows the usual Kautskyite revisionist nonsense about "the winning of fundamental social changes" - in other words, solving capitalism's crisis within capitalism - "opening the road to socialism" etc.

It is precisely under the parliamentary CPGB programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, which subordinates the Communist Party to the Labour Party, that the CPGB has declined, divided into various opportunist factions and is now in an advanced state of disintegration. The CCG's brilliant remedy, like the NCP before it, is to constitute itself as a smaller version of the opportunist CPGB! It is in fact an NCP Mark II!

The recent spontaneous upsurge in the class struggle will be stifled if left to Labourism, restricting its sights within the 'realities' of the needs of British capitalism. It needs independent working class politics, revolutionary Leninist politics, to pursue singlemindedly the needs of workers, regardless of what the system can afford. Workers must be won to reject Labour and its suffocating pro-capitalist reformism.

Instead of arguing the necessity for communist leadership of the working class, these "parliamentary cretins" (Lenin) beg the Labour Party leadership to abuse the mass struggle for its own treacherous electoral purposes.

This spontaneity confuses the CCG leaders, as it contradicts their view of the role of a communist party - to generate struggle. "Generating mass struggle demands a strong and effective communist party - but frankly, no such party exists in Britain today." (editorial) Then how come there is an upsurge?

Workers struggle spontaneously for a better deal within capitalism and must be diverted by communist leadership into conscious struggle against capitalism. The CCG, however, arrogantly believes that workers only struggle when told to, and wants to keep the struggle safely within the dead-end reformist framework.

The CCG's Labourism in a thin communist wrapping is nicely illustrated by their introduction of a new contributor, John Kelly, whose article *Communists and the Unions* is actually "based on a discussion pamphlet sponsored by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs - *Labour and the Unions*, John Kelly (Verso 1987)."

The Labourism of the new CCG party will be doubly reinforced by its dependence on Tony Chater's *Morning Star*. The contribution made by this brown-nose of the trade union bureaucracy as part of the revisionist leadership which supervised the decline of our Communist Party is well known to most CCGers. Now he is to give the main political speech in their 're-establishment congress'!

Ron Bellamy, *CCR* editor, blindly declares that "a re-established Party would have as one of its most crucial tasks to guarantee the survival and growth of the paper." Despite Bellamy's bold efforts in the next few columns to persuade those *Morning Star* addicts who oppose the split - like Jack Gaster, Bill Alexander, Nora Jeffery and Bert Ramelson - that a daily paper is not enough and "it is a communist party which is primary", he forgets to mention that the *Morning Star* will be independent of the new party, just as it has made itself independent of the CPGB.

Instead of the party having a paper, the paper will have a party! Chater will decide the political line, and comrades Photis Lysandrou, Ron Bellamy, Mary Davis, Tom Durkin, Monty Goldman, Red Robbo, Roger Trask, Ivan Beavis and the rest will have to decide whether to like it or lump it.

If they disagree, they will have to split - and that is precisely what we expect to see as those comrades who look to the new party for Marxism-Leninism come to recognise that they are looking in the wrong place, and turn instead towards *The Leninist*.

Ian Farrell

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No middle ground



Gotchal

When it comes to Ireland – the acid test of internationalism for British revolutionaries – we should see the most intransigent, most firm, most uncompromising stand with the IRA when it kills two members of the British occupying army. Unfortunately the revolutionary left apologised for the IRA rather than defended it

THERE HAS BEEN an unprecedented outpouring of anti-Irish bile by the British ruling class and its media over the beating and execution of corporals Howes and Wood: "Barbarism that knows no defence" the liberal *Guardian* wailed, "scum of the earth" raged the Tory back benches, "String 'em up" demanded the *Sun*. In the face of this the British left has come out with its usual mixture of

downright pro-imperialism, miserable neutralism and feeble apologia. The Labour Party lined up in bi-partisan solidarity with Thatcher. Kinnoek who makes sympathetic noises about those struggling for national liberation in South Africa and Palestine stands four square with Thatcher when it comes to Ireland. Par for the course for Labour leaders. From Ramsay MacDonald to Micheal Foot the

leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition have dropped all their 'petty party differences' with the Tories when it comes to defending Britain and its national interests. What about Kinnoek's left critics? In the name of workers' unity the *Morning Star* and *Militant* try to stand on the middle ground. They condemned the executions in the most sickening terms but attempted to blame the "horror" on Thatcher and her "policies".

What renagades. The problem in Ireland is not Thatcher alone but British imperialism. Imperialism is no 'policy' but a stage in the development of a capitalism served equally by Tory and Labour governments. Defence of British imperialism meant that the Wilson Labour Party government sent British troops into the Six Counties and introduced the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act when the oppressed fought back.

In Ireland there is no middle ground. The complete absence of support on the streets for the *Morning Star's* colleagues in the Communist Party of Ireland and *Militant's* Irish clone testifies to that. Far from taking sides with the forces of national liberation the *Morning Star* and *Militant* arrogantly look down on the troublesome Irish and their 'sectarian squabbles'. The solution in Ireland according to these so-called British 'revolutionary' 'socialists' is for the Irish to stop fighting each other.

'Forget your nationality' they piously tell the Irish, 'discover the delights of trade union and reformist politics.' The Irish reply has come through the bullet and the ballot box and has sent shock waves through the whole spectrum of the British establishment.

Workers in Britain must side either with the oppressors – as Kinnoek and the Labour Party does – or with the oppressed. Those who will not defend the living revolution in Ireland will never lead the future revolution in Britain. Those who will not stand with the Irish, who refuse to side with the oppressed objectively line up with the oppressors, and those that do that have no right to call themselves 'socialists', let alone 'communists'.

Of course, we expect Kinnoek to hypocritically huff and pompously puff against the IRA. To his very marrow he is a social imperialist. He is after all a self confessed "reactionary", a red, white and blue patriot, in other words a typical Labour leader.

Neither are we surprised when *Morning Star* and *Militant* rushed for the non-existent middle ground. We expect nothing else from reformists, even when they call themselves 'revolutionaries'. Quite rightly the revolutionary nationalists in the Six Counties have contempt for such 'internationalists' as these.

But what of the revolutionary left? Surely when it comes to Ireland; the acid test of internationalism for British revolutionaries we should see the most intransigent, most firm, most uncompromising stand with the IRA when it kills two members of the British occupying army.

Unfortunately the revolutionary left apologised for the IRA rather than defended it. *Socialist Organiser* and *ms* for example understood the anger of the crowd but refused to welcome the death of two members of the British Army.

The RCP's *ms* put itself in the shoes of the "many in Britain" who "were shocked at how bitterly the mourners reacted against the army intruders". But it explained this was "fury which grows from grief" ... "the level of nationalist anger reflects the scale of suffering inflicted on their community" (March

25 1988).

The struggle in the Six Counties is not a "community" struggle it is a struggle for national liberation. The IRA did not execute Howes and Wood out of grief or in a fit of rage. They shot them because the IRA – unlike the British state – can take no prisoners. The RCP has long ago abandoned its 'left' communism – "bring the war to Britain" and all that – now they look set to embrace 'liberal' communism instead.

We Leninists unconditionally support the demand for self determination in Ireland. Hence we refuse to apologise for an unarmed funeral crowd which takes on, disarms, beats and then hands over members of the enemy forces to the IRA. War is war.

We salute the heroic revolutionary masses in the Six Counties. The "scum of the earth" have nothing to apologise for. Howes and Woods got their just deserts. War is war.

Even if Howes and Wood were unarmed there is no need to regret their deaths. Even if they were not part of a British Army dirty tricks operation there is no need for excuses. They were experienced members of an occupying army, they were paid agents of the forces of oppression, reaction and imperialism. That is why they were killed. War is war.

When in 1920 Marshal Tukhachevsky's cavalry drove Pilsudski's forces out of the Ukraine and swept towards the gates of Warsaw – in spite of many a Polish peasant's son dying – every participant at the Second Congress of the Communist International wished the army of the International speed.

When the Red Army ripped the guts out of the Nazi war machine and overrun Germany – even though tens of thousands of young working class Germans horribly perished – this was cause for celebration in the proletarian quarters of London, Paris and Rome.

When the Vietnamese army entered Saigon and the US embassy personnel fled on the skins of helicopters – for all the undoubted horrors of war – all anti-imperialist rejoiced.

Why the squeamishness when it comes to Ireland? Why the wringing of leftist hands, why the fears for Ireland degenerating into a Lebanon? The only answer is opportunism. What British imperialism fears in Ireland is not loss of life. British capitalism has leached off Ireland from its very first days. What Britain fears is not a Lebanon but a Cuba.

The only solution in Ireland is British withdrawal. Those British 'socialist' who offers the Irish a federation in a 'socialist' British Isles (the Spartacist's *Workers Hammer* and *Militant*), indeed anything short of self determination objectively line up with reaction.

The only principled stand for British internationalists to take is for the IRA against the British Army, for self determination against imperialist colonialism, against British hypocrisy and for an unarmed crowd which dares to take on and overpower armed soldiers.

Jack Conrad