

# THE LENINIST



**Smash the poll tax! Fight for world socialism!**

**May Day demonstration**

**Tuesday May 1, 2pm Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1**

**(Farringdon tube)**





Central Organ of the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*)

THE IRISH war is central to politics in Britain. What the British state has instituted in Ireland yesterday, it 'repatriates' today. The black community, striking trade unionists, anti-poll tax protesters — whoever comes up against the state in Britain gets 'the Irish treatment'.

Because the criminalisation of the Irish is, as a whole, accepted in Britain, workers here are left open to attack. If we accept the criminalisation of the Irish struggle, then we cannot rebuff the ideological offensive to criminalise struggles here. This is exactly how the state and its media operate: black youth fighting police racism are transformed into 'muggers' and 'drug-dealers'; poll tax demonstrators become 'looters' and 'leftist thugs'.

Support for Irish freedom is in the direct interest of all workers in Britain. Hands Off Ireland! will be taking this message onto the streets in London on April 21. The demonstration is part and parcel of the fight to put the solidarity movement on the only secure basis possible: within the working class, explicitly against the British state. Because this presents a direct threat to the state, it is to the fore of creating and training a communist cadre. This is not because we see it as some kind of leftist endurance course, but because the Irish war explicitly challenges the very existence of the United Kingdom state.

This is illustrated by the current state of 'public opinion': Thatcher and the Tories are unpopular as never before; many contemplate breaking the law for political reasons for the first time. Yet, alongside this, opinion polls show 80-90% against even the piecemeal immigration proposed by the Tories. Similar figures would no doubt be produced by a similar poll on the Irish war. This is the ideological chain which keeps the working class in Britain tied to British imperialism. It is one which must be broken if resolute anti-capitalist struggle on other fronts is to be won.

No Communist Party can be forged that does not fight for British defeat in Ireland. The early Communist International demanded of the CPGB that it prioritise this. Through the degeneration of 'official communism' and the distortion of radical sects this revolutionary stance for Irish self determination has been all but lost. It can only be regained through the battle to re-establish the theoretical and practical gains of Lenin's International, and advance from it. The cutting edge of this is the Irish war.

This demands action. Some on the left have argued against the march, counterposing 'discussion' on Ireland, even arguing that the calendar of Irish marches is overcrowded. This is abstention from translating 'principled' articles in one's press and fierce bar room speeches into action. In organising this march HOI! has taken the challenge of Irish freedom to as wide a range of workers as possible, pushing for concrete action. The demonstration is worth a thousand leftist articles.

But it is not just a question of action. Practice without theory is blind. Groups that have energetically dived into work on various subjects have, when ill equipped with any adequate theory, dissipated the energies of their supporters, producing disillusionment rather than any advance in the struggle. The approach of 'Time To Go' is a case in point. What made TTG important was not what it mobilised, but that it indicated the inability of reformist politics to mobilise wider sections of the working class. Yet it is precisely these reformist politics which dominate not only Irish solidarity but the workers' movement in general.

Taking up Irish self determination in an anti-imperialist way is a direct challenge to the state and to reformism, the politics that have crippled the combativity of our class. Taking this onto the streets is an expression of the most direct challenge to these forces.

That is why the demonstration is needed: because it is a crystallisation of the politics that our class needs.

Deputy Editor

## LETTERS

### Soviet Bureaucracy

I'm writing to express an opinion on the article on Gorbachev in your March 9 issue. I don't want to downplay the critical juncture which the political crisis is reaching in the Soviet Union, a crisis brought about, in the main, by the politically bankrupt policies pursued by the Soviet Communist Party over a number of years.

I do, however, want to take issue with your assertion that the Communist Party's response to this crisis reflects "the fact that the bureaucracy ... [has] ... definitively become reactionary". This you date from 1985. The class collaborationist policies now being formulated by the Soviet leadership are no different in essence from the Popular Front strategy followed during the 1930s, when the international working class were instructed to ally with the 'progressive' wing of their 'own' bourgeoisie, a strategy duplicated tragically and criminally on numerous occasions since.

Nor are the stakes any higher either. No one would argue that World War II was any lesser danger to the Soviet Union than the present crisis.

All I am saying is that if you (as I do) believe that the Soviet Communist Party (the Party, not necessarily individual members) is a politically bankrupt force for political change, and that this is reflected in its current policies, then you have to date this political degeneration from a much earlier period.

Incidentally, the 'bureaucracy' is made up of hundreds of thousands of individual Party members; some good, some bad... and some ugly — by branding them all 'reactionary' you run the risk of alienating a section that might well side with the working class in a major upheaval. This is the mistake that groups such as Workers Power make, and leads them to their characterisation (which you have highlighted amusingly in a previous issue) of the end of capitalism in Eastern Europe as "counterrevolutionary social overturns".

Millenin  
London

Alan Merrick replies:

Of course the bureaucracy did not suddenly become reactionary in 1985. This has been a long drawn out process. However, the formal adoption of 'new thinking' on the Central Committee at this time is an important nodal point, indicating the formal adoption by the CPSU of an overtly social democratic position.

The start of the CPSU's political degeneration can be traced back to the 1920s, with significant lurches to the right in the intervening years, such as the adoption of the Popular Front strategy in the mid-30s. Millenin is right to state this. Having said this, though, Millenin's view is essentially static. S/he states that the line now being followed is "no different in essence" from over half a century ago. Here we disagree. In the 30s the Comintern had a stagist approach. It had not, as a body, renounced formal commitment to revolution. Now the CPSU even renounces class struggle.

Over recent years zero growth rates, giving rise to what we have termed the general crisis of bureaucratic socialism, have shown the inability of production to even keep pace with stagnant capitalism,

let alone advance ahead of it, under the *bureaucratic form* of the plan. This form, and the social strata which expresses it, have become an *absolute fetter* on productive forces under socialism.

Leading sections of the bureaucracy are therefore looking for a way out through a return to capitalism — again, a new development. Leonid Abalkin, the most influential Soviet economist, recently stated the necessity of transforming the Soviet economy over to one dominated by the market — ie, a capitalist economy — *this year*. These are qualitatively new developments. The standpoint of the bureaucracy is qualitatively changing. We have always argued that the bureaucracy was *never* progressive, but now it is overtly crossing class lines.

We do not identify every CPSU member as a bureaucrat. This would be silly. However, the Party is dominated by the bureaucracy, which has a distinct caste interest, which has now developed a restorationist dynamic. So, yes, individuals from this may break and join the side of the working class during "a major upheaval". But, having said this, the most important thing is to understand the dominant tendencies of this stratum and where it will lead; and it is becoming clearer day by day that this is back to capitalism.

### Political Prisoner

After a lot of messing about by the Home Office Prison Department I was eventually 'ghosted' temporarily to Horfield Prison, Bristol, for my accumulated visits. Away from the actual visits room it was a pretty miserable existence, as Horfield is one of the old Spartan type local nicks, over 100 years old, and primitive conditions generally.

But even worse is the fact that a group of screws, mainly the security section, decided to make my stay there as miserable as possible and gave me as much hassle as possible. So once my allowance of visits was completed I was glad to be 'ghosted' back to Full Sutton (I say 'ghosted' because as a Category A prisoner you're never told when you're being moved — they just come at any moment and say 'you're on the move').

I can see from a recent *Leninist* that Hands Off Ireland! has succeeded in drawing together an impressive range of groups and individuals in support of the April 21 rally to commemorate the 1916 Easter uprising. When I look back at the severe criticisms and doubts in the earlier stages of HOI!, expressed by various groups and individuals, I can only say that it has given me renewed hope for the solid growth of Irish solidarity and support work, seeing that those earlier doubts and divisions have been overcome.

A couple of weeks ago I received three printed leaflets about the Hands Off Ireland! April 21 march. I've already said I support the march, but I'm enclosing the 'sponsorship' section duly completed from one of the leaflets and also a completed 'joining' form. I hope you'll understand why I can't send any money, but hope that won't prevent my membership!

Comrades, I'm not greatly impressed by Alan Merrick's piece 'The Road To Hell', but equally I guess you weren't greatly

impressed by my earlier defence of the IRSP — so we'd best agree to disagree, but hopefully pursue all principled avenues of joint activity.

I'd only like to make a brief comment on the paragraph, "The character of IRSP propaganda is generally directed to the nationalist community in the Six Counties, not to the working class in Ireland as a whole. There is no comprehension of how to relate to protestant workers. This is a classic example of nationalist ideology." There is much IRSP material to contradict the accusations in that para. I have in front of me now a batch of IRSP propaganda, titled 'IRSP information sheets' — six small sheets setting out IRSP politics on six issues, and in three of them the question of protestantism and loyalism is dealt with — the sheet headed 'Loyalism', the one headed 'Level of Economic Development' and the one headed 'National Liberation Struggle'.

Anyway, I was pleased to see Eamon Mullen's letter of support, though I don't age completely with it — for instance his reference to "other little explored avenues to which the effort and energy being given to this Easter event could have been directed". It seems to me that it is a very correct step to try to make an annual Easter commemoration a big event where all revolutionary forces can come together in principled solidarity, and hope that a working committee can come together with a correct style of work to forge that solidarity and not end up again in mutual verbal slaughter.

Wishing all success to the march, and may it establish itself and build into a significant annual political event.

Pete Jordan  
HM Prison Full Sutton

### Irish Prisoner

A lot seems to be happening in your own imperial bastion of a country just now. No doubt prisons in England are becoming even less popular for English people. And we can say for definite that you'll be replacing your PM for a new one (with approximately the same horizons). It will probably make things easier for a while once Labour's in for a while (as they are a cert to do *nothing* and just let things deteriorate).

In relation to the poll tax, it is reassuring to see how much support there is for a social issue of this kind. We can't lose sight of an issue that creates conditions favourable for more working class solidarity. In fact, this has been a great rallying call in the light of disillusioning events in the rest of Europe (where most of the 'newly emerging democracies' are at the economic behest of the world bankers).

Tony McNeill  
Portlaoise Prison, Ireland

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.

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# Unemployed against the poll tax!



With the UWC to smash ET!

**T**WO YEARS have passed since the 1988 Trades Union Congress voted for a policy of non-cooperation with the Thatcher government's brand new slave labour scheme, "Employment Training," which failed to meet any of the criteria previously laid down by the general council, and criticised the general council for nevertheless having given "critical support" to the scheme. On that occasion the Unemployed Workers Charter had made its presence felt by organising by far the largest lobby of the congress, with over a hundred supporters from all parts of the country converging on Blackpool to give the delegates our message on their first morning: *Smash ET! Organise the Unemployed!*

Our success on that occasion was temporary, however. Contrary to congress policy, and despite the general council's 'hot air' of concern for the unemployed, the fact that the scheme is used to provide cheap labour, that the funding is too small for genuine training to be possible, that trade union control is missing, that employers use the scheme as a cheap substitute for real jobs and that the scheme is becoming ever more compulsory when coupled with the 'actively seeking work clause', the general council is still giving ET its 'critical support'.

Our request to provide a speaker to put our case to the general coun-

cil's monthly meeting on March 28 had been turned down, with the curious instruction that we — unemployed workers — should pursue the matter through our respective trade unions. Of course, most unemployed workers are not in trade unions and find it almost impossible to join; nonetheless our trade unionist supporters are doing this. Meanwhile the UWC mounted a militant lobby of the meeting at Congress House, serving notice that we will be back outside the 1990 Trade Union Congress at Blackpool on the morning of Monday September 3. Our lobby will follow a four day march from Manchester, mobilising working class support in all the towns and villages on the way.

The UWC still has a £3,000 debt arising from spending beyond our means on the 1989 march and lobby, and although current fundraising efforts — mainly from London street and workplace collections — are keeping pace with current spending, we need to raise some serious money to cut this debt down and to finance what is our major annual action. The situation where we were unable to publish *Unemployed Organiser* for several months because of a cash shortage must not be allowed to recur.

One of the essential preparations for this year's march and lobby must be a serious fundraising campaign within the trade union

movement and among individual UWC supporters. The key to establishing a sound financial basis for the UWC's work, however, must be the unemployed themselves. We need to dramatically increase the number of activists making regular street and workplace collections.

Having placed our marker for the 1990 TUC, the UWC is turning its attention to campaigning against the poll tax, which gives unemployed workers special problems, not only because they cannot afford to pay the 20% demanded of them, but because they cannot effectively refuse to pay: it will be deducted at source from their benefits. The anger at this direct attack on the already minimal living standards of the millions of unemployed workers was shown when the massive London anti-poll tax demonstration on March 31 turned into what one daily paper called "the worst riots this century". Undoubtedly many unemployed workers, their backs to the wall financially, were more than ready to take on Thatcher's boot boys when challenged, giving as good as they got.

Earlier in the day the UWC had set up its stall in Kennington Park selling 'Axe the Tax' T-shirts and a range of badges, petitioning and making new contacts in all parts of the country from among the 200,000 anti-poll tax demonstrators who had converged on London for the day. New supporters helped with the fundraising work in the park, and many took away petition sheets and copies of *Unemployed Organiser* No7 to start UWC work in their home towns.

London supporters will be concentrating in the immediate future on South London, using *Unemployed Organiser* No7 to mobilise support for the UWC's Brixton march and rally against the Poll Tax on Saturday June 9. First step in the mobilisation will be a public meeting at St Matthews Meeting Place on Wednesday April 25. Speakers include Ernie Roberts, Honorary President of the UWC. Also invited are Jeremy Corbyn MP, Lorna Reid of the Tooting Anti-Poll Tax Campaign, and a speaker from the Lambeth Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

The UWC is offering speakers to local workplaces, trade union branches and Labour Party ward organisations; but the main work must be done by unemployed activists spending time at all the local dole offices every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning using the UWC petition and *Unemployed Organiser* to win new supporters. As well as adding to the anti-Poll Tax campaign, the UWC's aim is to form a Brixton UWC group. To this end, and to coordinate the mobilising work, South London organiser Paul Conlon will be holding activist meetings every Monday in Brixton up to June 9. For details ring (01) 431 3135.

Stan Kelsey  
UWC Secretary

**The Workers Theatre Movement** moved back to the streets on March 31 on the anti-poll tax demo. 'Axe The Tax' was performed twice before the march moved off. Its hard hitting politics got a splendid reception, as it did that same night at the WTM's club, the *Internationale*. The next *Internationale* will be on the evening of the HOI! march on April 21. Apart from the WTM itself, other acts confirmed are the North Staffs Miners Wives Action Group with their show, 'No Turning Back'; Irish band Jacket Potatoes; and The Fine Lines, an Irish women's poetry group. Also on offer will be food from Irish, Turkish and Iranian groups. Those on the march and rally will be admitted free to the social before 7pm. Thereafter, it is £3, (£1.50 concessions). Rally and social take place at Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London N19 (nearest tube Archway). The next night of *The Internationale* at our regular venue, The Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, NW1 (nearest tube Camden Town) will be on Tuesday, May 1 at 7.30pm. We will be celebrating May Day with a full international programme. WTM comrades will also be out in force on the London May Day march itself with our May the First sketch which celebrates this central event in the revolutionary calendar. *GK*

**On Saturday April 7**, 150 supporters of the Bacton textile's strikers marched against the victimisation of these sweatshop workers, sacked for attempting to unionise their factory. As we reported in the last edition of *The Leninist*, the campaign has been organised on the basis of "a right to work, a right to join unions, a right to fight racism, a right to stay". Most of the marchers were from the Turkish and Kurdish migrant community. However, Halkevi, backed by the 'official communist' party of Turkey, played no part in the demo, despite — or maybe because of — its large quango resources. The turnout from the British left was low, with only two organisations turning up with banners on the day; Hackney SWP and ourselves. Though to be welcomed, the SWP contingent confused the character of the march, especially in the eyes of non-Turkish/Kurdish bystanders. They carried anti-poll tax placards and shouted the 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie' refrain, giving the impression that this was an anti-poll tax demonstration, not one for trade union rights and against state racism. The experience of the Bacton strikers shows that migrant workers cannot make a stand against their employers without also coming up against Britain's racist police and immigration laws. It is the duty of all workers to stand with them. Victory to the Bacton strikers! *SQ*



■ The struggle for elementary trade union rights is integral to the struggle for proletarian internationalism

**The London Joint May Day Committee** — made up of representatives of trade unions, cooperative societies and the Labour Party — has again rejected the soft option of holding the London May Day march on the nearest Sunday following May Day, and quite rightly has chosen to organise the march on Tuesday May 1 itself, a working day. This throws down the challenge to all workers to use the day to mobilise in protest against the poll tax, against the Tories and for socialism by organising strikes. May Day is the symbol of proletarian internationalism, of the common interests of the workers of all countries in overthrowing the capitalist system of exploitation worldwide and building a World Union of Socialist States. The size and militancy of the May Day demonstration will, as always, be a measure of the level class consciousness. The CPGB (TL) is calling upon all workers to support the London march. Assemble 2pm outside Marx House at Clerkenwell Green. *IF*

## Over the top



Comrades will be delighted to learn that our £2,000 desk top publishing appeal has ended with a £200 surplus — rest assured we will put this to good use. Likewise our £600 monthly fighting fund ended £155 over the top last month and looks well set at £390 to do the same this month. Our next issue will almost certainly be delayed because comrades will be participating in our international school in Corfu. Can you turn the delay into extra sales of this issue? We would like to take the opportunity to again thank comrade AS for his veritable regular stream of donations as well as comrades TR, PC, IS and HT for their contributions.



# Revolt against the poll tax!



Sticks and stones: but we need workers' defence corps

## Edited and supplemented version of the speech made by comrade John Bridge at a meeting in Central London soon after the 240,000 strong March 31 ABAPTF demonstrations

**E**VERY working class partisan knows how bad the poll tax is, we all want to fight it and turn the tables on those who introduced it. Ever since it was first mooted, certainly since it began its 'test run' in Scotland, the left press has quite rightly been full of devastating articles exposing its unfairness and how it was designed to shift the burden of local government expenditure away from true blue Tory voting ratepayers.

Thatcher's idea was a 'charge', as she incorrectly calls it (as it is involuntary it is right described by everyone else as a tax), which would ensure that those who most need the paltry sops that capitalism calls 'local services' will be unable to afford to vote for them. 'High spending' Labour councils will be unelectable because their poll tax charges would be unaffordable. This represents far more than a continuation of Thatcher's vendetta against 'local democracy'. It is a frontal assault on the entire working class.

Surely therefore all those who claim to understand this must also admit that we have been right all the way along; that not only has the official labour movement, the Parliamentary Labour Party, the TUC, etc, proved inadequate in fighting the poll tax, it has always been a pro-capitalist fifth column in our ranks.

Kinnock has actually rounded on those fighting the poll tax using phrases *directly borrowed* from the *Sun*. What a low life scum! According to this pompous prig those who have tirelessly demonstrated and fought against the poll tax are nothing but a "raggle taggle army of toytown Trots", "toytown revolutionaries", who are ruining his chances of power. After Trafalgar Square his deputy, Roy Hattersley, went even further in his bowing and scraping before bourgeois respectability. He demanded an investigation into 'extremist' groups and "tough and exemplary sentences" for those individuals who dared break capitalist law and capitalist order.

Kinnock and the Labour Party have also stabbed in the back the million or so ordinary people in Scotland alone who have refused to

pay; Kinnock has called the tactic of non-payment "luxurious self indulgence". As if those who are presented with £400, £500, £600 poll tax bills have money to burn. Many simply can't pay. Others rightly won't pay. Kinnock shows that not only is he no socialist, with his refusal to support those in struggle, but also that he is not even a democrat. He takes the side of bourgeois law, not the people.

Unfortunately Kinnock, Hattersley and Co have plenty of so-called 'communist' friends. As well as the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, which calls for the bourgeois state to set up a public inquiry to "sort out precisely" what happened on Saturday, there is the Euro 'official' CPGB.

Showing the direction of its political evolution and its emerging 'third way' programme in the form of a Mark Perryman 7 Days article, it lined up with Kinnock ... and, more importantly (not least for them), the boss class. Perryman attacked the SWP for "wilfully encouraging violence, intimidation and vandalism" and called them "polluters" (March 17 1990). For Perryman they are *the problem* not the police, not the state (Perryman - who, incidentally, studied war at Sandhurst - is opposed to all working class violence on "principle").

As an aside here it is worth noting that the SWP too was peddling Kinnock's objections to the 'can't pay/won't pay' slogan in Scotland - voiced also by the RCP - only a couple of years ago. Ignoring the lessons of working class history, not least the famous rent strikes of the Red Clydesiders between 1914 and 1919, the SWP declared that a campaign based on non-payment was "virtually impossible". And apparently in spite of a line change since (or at least, a change of slogan on their posters), many of its members are determined to be good citizens like Kinnock and pay up their poll tax. *Militant* quotes a leading 'Kinnockite' SWP member, Simon Speed, from Bedford, as saying that the non-payment campaign was "duping people" (March 16 1990).

Anyway, let us return momentarily to

'official communism'. Its self proclaimed 'sound' wing, the New Communist Party - which wants 'communist unity' with Benito Perryman - also echoes Kinnock. This sponging diplomatic internationalist organisation hypocritically attacks Militant, which in the form of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, succeeded in mobilising 200,000 people in Central London and 40,000 in Glasgow. Militant, so the NCP would have us believe, shouts "slogans from the fringes ... their one tactic sloganising - don't collect, don't pay - sounds radical, but does nothing to help mobilise the hundreds of thousands who are confused and intimidated by the poll tax as well as being angered." (*New Worker*, March 16 1990). What world do these 'official communists' inhabit? Clearly, if there is an organisation on the "fringes" of the anti-poll tax fight, it is the NCP.

To leave no room for doubt concerning its respectability, this Derby and Joan retirement home urges on Kinnock's purge of Militant tendency, and supports - with minor criticisms - his roof tax! "To win," it says, we need "an alternative to the Tories' policies." The roof tax might "not be ideal" but "it is the simplest, practical short term response" ... as if it was our job to tell the bourgeois state how to tax us. It's not! It's their state, their laws, their society, their services! We might need schools, the NHS and unemployment benefit. But so do they. They need to keep the working class at a certain subsistence level so that our labour power has use value. They don't give a damn for us as human beings, only as objects of exploitation. So let them pay for the lot! Not a working class pound, not a working class penny in taxation for the bourgeois state!

If the anti-poll tax movement was channelled into a movement for the roof tax, as the NCP wants, the consequences could be disastrous: the bourgeoisie would have the option of simply turning round and saying 'well, if you want to be fleeced this way as opposed to that way, it's okay by us!' That would leave us defenceless. The bourgeois state is our enemy. Only traitors give it advice.

For these 'official communists' the leadership of the official labour movement consists of well meaning people simply making all too human mistakes. This is not true! It consists of people committed to a political programme, ie Labourism, which is fully in line with capitalism - an economic system that lives by the ruthless exploitation and pauperisation of the working class, a system that by its very nature causes wars of mass destruction and now

stands as a threat to the very existence of our species.

Their response to Saturday's violence exposed in the sharpest way the despicable nature of Labourism. But it did more than that. It also exposed in the sharpest way that, in spite of the absurd pretensions of some, at the moment there exists no organisation which can unite revolutionary theory with revolutionary practice and put itself forward as a serious alternative, in the way the CPGB once was able to do. Indeed, given that the revolutionary left has to be judged more at the moment on its theory than its practice, London's brief reenactment of the 14th century anti-poll tax Peasant's Revolt exposed the flaws, lack of honesty and downright fraudulent nature of many a 'revolutionary alternative to Labourism'. Let's see.

### Street fighters?

Long before Saturday's explosion of popular violence, the bourgeois press was running a typically hysterical, typically hypocritical and typically dishonest campaign designed to blame the Socialist Workers Party and in particular Militant for organising "bully boy" violence outside town halls from Taunton to Hackney.

We all know that this is a lie. It is certainly a lie that the SWP, let alone Militant, was somehow responsible for engineering the running battles with the police on Saturday.

Militant tendency supporters and leaders are committee room socialists, not revolutionary street fighters. They are respectable Labourites who crawlingly insist that they "support laws against crime". The last thing on their minds is physically countering marauding '25s' (the boiler suited riot police). Certainly they would do nothing to provoke a violent confrontation with the police, or workers in uniform, as they insist on calling them.

Militant has no perspective for equipping the working class with the means necessary for taking on the police 1917 style. It emphasises trade union rights for the police and campaigns to make them accountable. In other words, typical utopian left reformist fare.

The SWP is only different in detail. This or that individual SWPer might respond to police terror with a well aimed brick or bottle but there is no evidence that this is somehow



organised by Tony Cliff, Duncan Hallas and other SWP leaders. These people approve of working class violence in the abstract, never in the concrete. We don't even need to wait for their forthcoming 'nothing to do with us' denials concerning Saturday March 31 1990, let alone their passivity on the day. All we need do is recall their disgraceful attitude towards the miners' heroic hit squads of 1984-5. The SWP saw these dedicated bands of class fighters as nothing more than 'individual terrorism', therefore to be both dismissed in terms of their historic significance and criticised in terms of their consequences, ie the injury and death of police and scabs.

What we witnessed on Saturday was not the result of a tightly knit conspiracy to organise violence - except, that is, by the police, who have been doing riot training for years. Spontaneously 3,000 actively, bravely and imaginatively resisted (with the encouragement and sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the 200,000 strong demonstration) when the police attacked.

Given this, it is essential that communists take sides. We do not even handedly dissociate ourselves "unreservedly" from those confronting the police (*Morning Star* April 2 1990), suggest that violence has "nothing at all to do with legitimate politics" (*7 Days* April 7) or condemn "deliberate attacks on the police" (ABAPTF secretary, Steve Nally, in *Militant* April 6). We are not dealing with a playground brawl. We have before us a clash between classes. On the one side the forces of the bourgeois state and on the other the forces of the working class.

One of the key distinguishing features of today's capitalist society in Britain is the fact that the people are unarmed and that the state is tooled up with all sorts of terrifying weapons, designed to terrorise not only the Russians, but us, the ordinary people of Britain. In other words, they're prepared for the class war and we're not.

Communists, that is real communists, not social democrats and liberals who call themselves communists, have always had the perspective of leading our class to the point where it can take on the armed might of the bourgeois state; only then can we realistically expect to provoke splits between privates and captains, constables and inspectors. Therefore, when we see an outbreak of popular violence, we want to encourage it and give it revolutionary direction.

In light of this we say that organisations like the SWP and Militant, because in relative terms they are large, should be utterly ashamed of themselves. Both did nothing to organise popular resistance to police attack ... and let's have no doubt about it, that is exactly what happened in Trafalgar Square.

The Sundays had difficulty in hiding the truth. The *Mail on Sunday*, *News of the World* and *The People* all had reporters beaten by the police, many of whom, judging by their grinning faces, clearly loved every minute of it. Even the *Sunday Telegraph* insists that things blew up when "mounted officers charged the crowd, including elderly protesters and mothers with young children" (April 1 1990).

Sure, as widely reported, there were a couple of hundred anarcho punks - who were obviously not 'organised' by the rather silly *Class War* group so loved by the gullible media. What manifested itself on Saturday March 31 in a trail of destruction of ruling class symbols, Stringfellows and Aquascutin, Porches and Jags, between St Martin's Lane and Regent Street, was the revenge of those dispossessed by Thatcherism (there are 70,000 homeless - mainly youth - in London alone).

These atomised victims were determined to display their disaffection with bourgeois society and the organised labour movement alike; true this also took the form of attempts to break the discipline of the march. But the courageous devil-may-care attitude towards the police and the acts of petty hooliganism cannot and should not be blamed for causing the police to attack. With firm and sensitive stewarding they could have easily been neutralised.

The real question is, of course, that the police attacked ... on foot with body armour, steel helmets and perspex shields, on horseback with three foot long batons, in meshed cop wagons, which sped into the crowd at 30 mph. How did Militant respond? By throwing up barricades and coordinating the defence of the demonstration? No! Instead its leaders unsuccessfully appealed to "a very senior police officer"; and once the fighting developed they pulled their 650 stewards out in despair!

As well as revealing the true parliamentary and legalistic cretinism of Militant, this was an

act of unmitigated cowardice, a shirking of the responsibility the organisers of any demonstration have of defending what they organised. Having failed to do that it is frankly disgusting for Militant supporters to blame the violence on "anarchists and lunatics". Worse, Steve Nally went on TV and promised to "name names" ... in other words, line people up for arrest and imprisonment by the bourgeois state.

A genuine revolutionary organisation would expel any leader who said such a thing. A genuine revolutionary organisation would never promise not to "resort to violence". A genuine revolutionary organisation would do all in its power to organise Workers' Defence Corps, to defend those who refuse to pay the poll tax from bailiffs, to defend our demonstrations from police attack and to prepare our class for revolution. Of course, as a reformist organisation Militant has no such perspectives.

## Fake left

Whatever criticisms we have of Militant/RSL it at least has the virtue of taking the poll tax seriously and recognising its potential to mobilise the working class. Not so the 'Revolutionary' 'Communist' 'Party'. After the Trafalgar Square revolt its paper *The Next Step* carried a poster front cover on the events with the headline "where do we go from here". Judging from what the RCP was saying the week before, nowhere - at least with the RCP.

A week ago the RCP was saying that "the political potential of the poll tax issue is limited". Protests against the tax were dismissed as merely coming from "rebel Tory councillors", Heseltine and the Home Counties. The whole campaign is apparently "much more a middle class revolt against the burden of local taxation than a protest against the anti-democratic character of the poll tax". Because of this the RCP, which perfected its boycottism over Ireland, preferred "to devote" its "campaigning energies" to issues "which have more potential for clarifying and strengthening working class politics", ie, have more potential for gaining recruits for the RCP (*The Next Step*, March 16 1990). If this wasn't written down in black and white such arrogant stupidity would be hard to believe. But it's all too true.

Of course, the bourgeois press has highlighted "rebel Tory councillors", Heseltine and discontent in the Home Counties. And as Leninists we, unlike the RCP, also place great emphasis on the importance of splits and divisions in the enemy camp. But we understand full well that such splits and divisions are a bye product, a bye product of the anger welling up from the working class masses of this country, the anger that saw nearly a quarter of a million people take to the streets of London and Glasgow on Saturday.

The RCP, which used to piously lecture people about the preference of the left for solidarity with far off countries - rather than Ireland - has fallen into a far deeper trap. As evidenced by its paper, its deployment of activists etc, it places much more emphasis on distant South Africa than the poll tax; which isn't just on our doorstep, it is in our front room.

To dismiss the tens and hundreds of thousands who have taken to the streets and the millions who will refuse to pay, the RCP needs a 'theoretical' justification (as it did when it dismissed as "press hype" the revival in working class struggle last year and when it couldn't see what all the "fuss was about" concerning the counterrevolutionary events in Eastern Europe).

"The poll tax," it says, "like other taxes is ultimately a deduction from the surplus value appropriated by capitalists". Workers will simply make up for it by pushing for higher wages, but the hard pressed small capitalists will have to pay out of their meagre profits. For the RCP the poll tax is an attack on small capitalists, not the working class. Let us examine the facts.

According to the *Financial Times* 25 million people are set to lose because of the poll tax, only 10 million, including small capitalists, who are on average far better off, will gain (April 2 1990). *The Independent* likewise reports "how the flat rate charge will shift the burden of taxation from the richer suburbs to inner city areas like Handsworth and Toxteth, which were wrecked by riots in the 1980s." (April 2 1990)

Yet although the residents of inner city slum estates, the unemployed, pensioners and workers in weak bargaining positions will be

presented with, for them, crippling tax demands, the RCP says it doesn't really matter! Its leaders obviously have a comfortable middle class life style. These academics certainly have no understanding of real people and how the poll tax will financially cripple millions.

We all know that if the unemployed or pensioners go along to the government and the DSS and ask for more money because they live in a high poll tax area, they will be told to vote in a low spending council. If workers from Camden or Lambeth go to the boss and say that as their astronomical poll tax bill is ultimately a deduction from surplus value could the wages of those living in Camden or Lambeth be put up accordingly, they will be told in no uncertain terms where to get off.

Theoretically, workers get paid at subsistence level. But it's ABC that workers wages can fall far below this level as a result of inflation, tax demands or simple wage cuts. That is how the real world operates and it is no defence of workers to tell them that in *Capital Marx* assumed for the sake of simplicity that all workers receive the full value of their commodity, labour power, ie subsistence level.

Even if workers eventually make up the cost of the poll tax in higher wages it is criminal for any sort of working class organisation to ignore or economically belittle the political significance of the fight against it. The fight should not be confined to the workplace. It should involve all sections of the working class - housewives, the unemployed, students, everyone in every sphere. Those that can't see the importance of this fight do not offer, as they claim, "direction, organisation and leadership to those who want to fight back against the existing system" (*The Next Step* editorial, April 6 1990). They offer nothing.

The RCP, because it has no organic link with the working class, has been able to make progress while the working class was suffering one defeat after another. Then, its politics of empirical cynicism and political abstraction could find a resonance, at least among students and those on the fringes of the workers' movement. Not now. Now the RCP 'party' stands exposed for what it is: a glossy sect and a narrow, sectarian, sect at that.

Its head in the clouds attitude to the poll tax is nothing but a self serving lie. The RCP made no impact within the anti-poll tax movement; it used to condemn the tax as an attack on the working class, but did not have the patience of Militant. Therefore, as with the Miners Support Groups of 1984-5, it boycotts the Anti-Poll Tax Unions. Clearly there is a need for a rank and file revolt in the ranks of the RCP. Friends, your leaders have transparently failed. Their desperate theoretical jiggery pokery is utterly dishonest and lacking in the spirit of honest self criticism. The somersaults we see from one edition of *The Next Step* to the next are abject admissions of failure.

## Waterloo, Waterloo

Apart from the RCP, the rest of the left press is getting rather excited over the potential the struggle against the poll tax has in undermining Thatcher's government. After a decade of victories over our class - from the steelworkers to the P&O seafarers - it is hoped that the poll tax could prove to be Thatcher's Waterloo.

In our view this is not simply wishful thinking. Conditions are ripe for attack, the masses are angry and the Thatcher government is vulnerable.

There is no doubt that the Thatcher government, with its economic policy muddle, chaotic student loans scheme and Dickensian NHS reforms, besides its hated poll tax, is deeply unpopular - and in deep trouble. Ministerial rats are one by one deserting her ship, the Tory faithful are no longer faithful, and in opinion poll after opinion poll Labour is given a 20% plus lead.

At the root of all this lies the failure of the British economy. The idea that Thatcherism represents some sort of break with the years of relative decline is increasingly seen as a con. The economy is behaving exactly as it did in the 1970s, stagflation and all. The sacrifices and social strains of the Thatcher years were all for naught.

So yes, we could be at a new crossroads in British politics. But what leads us to this tentative conclusion is not only that Thatcher's economic renaissance has proved to be a mirage. There are political factors too, not least the collapse of the old Alliance parties, parties which did not succeed in breaking the mould

of British politics, but did divide the non-Tory vote. In part their collapse was due to the petty rivalries of their petty politicians. But it is also a result of Kinnock's assiduous cultivation of bourgeois respectability and the abandonment of left Labourism and the return to traditional let's run capitalism Labourism in the form of Thatchnookism. Because of all these factors - the Tories' unpopularity, the failure of the centre parties and Labour's Thatchnookism - there now exists a real possibility that Labour could win the next general election.

Briefly we must touch upon the RCP again. After Mid-Staffs, after opinion poll after opinion poll has given Labour a commanding lead over the Tories, the RCP has been forced to drop its stupid claim that the official labour movement, along with the Labour Party, is "dead". Typically though, instead of admitting it was wrong, it tries to wriggle out of the mess it has gotten itself into with the just as stupid claim that it is Labourism, not the Labour Party, which is dead. Getting further into the opportunist mire it tells us that Kinnock's Labour Party no longer has anything to do with Labourism, it has become a European style social democratic party. It's the second time they've used that one, but the first was when the RCP was the RCT, so perhaps they don't think it counts? Whether they do or not, the twisting and turning justification is frankly pathetic.

The other glossy 'Marxists' are just as pathetic. Only a matter of months ago the Euro CPGB's *Marxism Today* was insisting that because of the decline in the numbers of manual workers, "Labour can't win". Comrades, tell me, has the number of manual workers doubled over the last month or so? I certainly haven't noticed it. But then its original claims were crass in the first place and I'm sure that, just like the RCP, the Euros will come out with their own just as crass new line before too long.

Electurally we would like to see Thatcher defeated; it would add to the fluidity and volatility of British politics. But before, during and after any general election, what is crucial for us is the organised strength of the working class, its leadership and potential to make revolution. We do not put our faith in the Labour Party; it is a bourgeois party of the working class (Lenin) which can never carry out "socialist policies in the interests of the working class," as *Militant* would have us believe.

Whoever wins the next general election, Labour, Tory or Liberal Democrat, will attack our class; the logic of running capitalism demands it, just as it did when Labour was last in government (Callaghan succeeded in driving down real wages to an extent not seen before during this century). And as is well known, Kinnock has promised to run capitalism. He will, if he is given the opportunity. That means we will have to fight whoever wins! We must do our utmost to ensure that if Thatcher and Thatcherism go they are not simply replaced by Kinnock and Thatchnookism.

With the widespread discontent over the poll tax finding expression on the streets, outside the hallowed institutions of public house and the houses of parliament, a brief window of opportunity has opened. It must not be wasted. If the working class is to make real gains it is essential that the fight against the poll tax is organised along revolutionary lines. That means the domination of *Militant* reformism over the anti-poll tax movement - earned, we are only too willing to admit, through admirable doggedness and determination - must be broken; that we fight using the best tactics and strategy available, ie the tactics and strategy of Marxism-Leninism defended and advanced by the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

Thatcher and Co must go via the class war, via mass action of the working class organised along class lines, not via an atomised electorate and a "general election now", which *Militant*, the NCP and the *Morning Star* calls for.

• Mass non-payment must be linked to mass industrial action to prevent its collection, whether through the local authorities, DSS or employers.

• Yes to mass democracy. Transform Anti-Poll Tax Unions into Councils of Action through basing them on elected, recallable delegates from all working class organisations. Form a National Council of Action.

• Never again should our demonstrations be broken up. Counter police terror and bailiff robbery with disciplined, mass APTU Workers' Defence Corps.

• Break the Tories' anti-trade union laws and the Tory government, for an indefinite general strike against the poll tax.





# Our history

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: articles, documents and manifestos



■ Gary O'Halloran, 'theoretical guru' of those great contributors to the rich tapestry of Marxist thought, *Red Action*, has recently taken up the polemical cudgels against Lenin and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin, of course, was anti-democratic, unlike Marx, who gave the concept (which he created) 'no weight'. Anyone remember the Euros coming out with this a decade or so ago? But, hold fast with the yawns, as O'Halloran backs up his 'new' thesis with startling historical research: "In 1918 a young Russian democratic emigre visited Engels". The conversation resulting mitigates in favour of the 'O'Halloran thesis'. Surely, though, the comrades must concede some interpretive difficulties, considering Engels had been pushing up daisies for quite some time by then. Or maybe the young Russian social democratic emigre took a spiritual medium with him? We look forward to *Red Action's* polemic against monist materialism.

■ A little bird tells us that the Communist Party of Britain Youth Section has problems (so tell us something new). It seems that youth group numero uno, Trevor Bolton, refused to take out a CPB card for 1990, precipitating the collapse of this organisation. Not that we blame him, but that means we might find the already none too resplendent ranks of the CPB's ageing 'youth' might be stuck with Kenny Coyle as a leader. And we wouldn't wish that on anyone.

■ According to April's Searchlight, attacks on Jews are becoming more and more common in the USSR of perestroika. It cites many cases in which the authorities have accused the victims of inflicting wounds on themselves. In February the violently anti-Jewish 'Fatherland' organisation was given official permission to hold a 15,000 strong week long rally next to a Lenin-grad synagogue. These scum have friends in the highest places. Gorbachev has just appointed one Valentin Rasputin to his presidential council. He is not only a member of the Orthodox Church, he openly bates Jews, whom he blames for carrying out the "sin" of the October Revolution. Their "guilt is great", he says, they not only killed "God" but "should feel responsible for the terror that existed during the Revolution and especially after".

**M**ARCH 1919 saw the foundation of the Third (Communist) International. Reports of it took quite some time to reach revolutionaries in Britain. But as they heard about it all principled organisations in our country, the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the Workers Socialist Federation and the South Wales Socialist Society voted by overwhelming majorities to seek affiliation (as we will see in future editions it greatly assisted them in coming together to form the CPGB).

First details of its resolutions – which thoroughly expose the pretensions of today's Trotskyites and 'official communists' – were given by the WSF's *Workers Dreadnaught*, on Sunday March 29 1919 (Vol 6, No1). By its own admissions its report, based on a "wireless" message received via Berne (dated March 9), was "fragmentary and full of inaccuracies". The first full account in Britain seems to have been given on May 15 1919 by *The Socialist*, the official organ of the SLP:

## The SLP and Moscow International

Though somewhat tardy and belated, the document which has been the source of so much speculation in particularly Socialist circles, is now to hand anent [regarding – Ed] a call for a Communist Congress.

Due to unknown causes, but which may be pretty accurately guessed, it is somewhat obscure, which obscurity, with its rarity, is a tribute to the vigilance and censorship of our governing authorities, and marks their enthusiasm(?) to ensure that the truth should be known about Russia.

The difficulty is got over, however, by the simultaneous arrival of

the *Industrial Union News* from America, containing a reprint of the Manifesto, which is here appended.

## Manifesto

Dear Comrades ... During the war and the revolution not only the complete bankruptcy of the old Socialist and Social Democratic parties, and also the Second International; not only the incompetency of the middle elements of the old Social Democracy (the so-called "centre"), for live revolutionary action has finally become evident, but at present the outlines of the genuine revolutionary International are distinctly coming into view.

The gigantic speed of the progress of the world revolution ... compell[s] us to take the initiative to make the discussion of the question of calling an international congress of the revolutionary proletarian parties part of our business.

As a basis for the new International, we deem necessary the recognition of the following clauses, which we shall consider our platform, and which have been worked out on the basis of the programme of the Spartacus group in Germany and the Communist Party (Bolshevik) in Russia:

1. The present is the period of the dissolution and the collapse of the entire capitalist world system, which will mean the entire collapse of European culture if capitalism, with its unsolvable contradictions, is not destroyed.
2. The problem of the proletariat consists in immediately seizing the power of the state. This seizure of power of state means the destruction of the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie and the organisation of a new proletarian apparatus of power.
3. This new machine of state must

embody the dictatorship of the working class, and in certain places also the small peasants and farm hands – ie, it must be the tool of the systematic overthrow of the exploiting classes and the means of their expropriation ... Not the false bourgeois democracy – this hypocritical form of the rule of the finance oligarchy – with its purely formal equality, but the proletarian democracy and the possibility of the realisation of freedom for the working masses; not parliamentarism, but self-government of these masses through their elected organisations; not capitalist bureaucracy, but organs of administration which have been created by the masses themselves, with the true participation of these masses in the government of the countries and in the activity of the Socialist structure – this should be the type of the proletarian state. The power of the Workers' Councils and similar organisations is its concrete form.

4. The dictatorship of the proletariat must be the lever of the immediate expropriation of capital and the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, with its transformation into ownership by the people ...
5. For the purpose of safeguarding the Socialist revolution for defence against enemies within and without, of assistance of other national groups of the fighting proletariat, etc, the complete disarmament of the bourgeoisie and their agents and the general arming of the proletariat is necessary.
6. The present world situation demands the closest relation between the different parts of the revolutionary proletariat and a complete union between the countries in which the Socialist revolution has been victorious.
7. The fundamental means of the struggle are mass action by the proletariat, even to the point of armed and open warfare with the state powers of capital.
8. The old international parted

into three main groups: First, those frankly social patriots who during the entire imperialist war from 1914 to 1918 supported their bourgeoisie and transformed the working class into hangmen of the international revolution. Then there is the "Centre", at present theoretically led by Kautsky and representing an organisation of such elements, constantly wavering, not capable of following a definite plan of action and at times positively traitorous. Finally, the Left revolutionary wing.

9. As regards the social patriots, who everywhere in the critical moment oppose the proletarian revolution, 'only unsparing combat is possible. As regards the "Centre", our tactic must be to separate the revolutionary elements and the pitiless criticism and unmasking of the leaders. The absolute separation from the organisation of the Centre is absolutely necessary at a certain phase of the development.

10. On the other hand, a block with those elements of the revolutionary working class is necessary, which, although they formerly did not belong to the Socialist parties, now on the whole hold the views of and endorse the proletarian dictatorship in the form of the Soviet power. These are, in the first place, the syndicalist elements of the Labour movement.

11. Finally, it is necessary to attract all those proletarian groups and organisations which, although not openly attached to the Left revolutionary current, nevertheless show in their development a tendency in this direction.

12. Concretely, we suggest that representatives of the following parties, groups and movements should participate in the congress. Such entire parties will completely recognise the programme, and will be considered full fledged members of the Third International [Ed – there follows a list of 40 organisations including the Spartacus Group (German), the Communist Party (Bolshevik – Russia), as well as the British Socialist Party, "particularly that tendency represented by MacLean", and the Socialist Labour Party].

13. ...

14. The congress must publish a common fighting organ for the purpose of permanent connection and systematic direction of the movement. This should be the centre of the Communist International, subordinating the interests of the movement in each country to the common interest of the revolution on an international scale. The concrete form of the organisation, representation, and so forth, will be worked out by the congress.

15. ... The different parties will become the sections of this International ...

With fraternal greetings:

[Signed] for the Spartacus Group, RCP (Lenin and Trotsky), CP of Poland, CP of Hungary, CP of German Austria, CP of Lettland, Central Committee of Finland, Balkan Revolutionary Social Democratic Federation (Rakowski), SLP (American).

It will be noted that the invitations include the SLP ... the membership of the SLP is about to undergo the real test of its calibre, not as to the technical accuracy of the theories it propounded in the past, and discrimination by verbal and written declaration, but also as to the courage, character, and fortitude which were behind these declarations. Consider the matter well and I am sure we shall rise to the occasion. Revolutionary Russia has done us a glorious honour, but has also imposed upon us colossal responsibility. Let us, therefore, prove worthy of both.

Arthur McManus



## REVIEWS

### Victorian values

Lisa Goldman (author and director), *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick*, Essex University, March 1990.

PERHAPS the first thing the play has going for it is that it is such an interesting story. Hannah Cullwick was almost born into domestic service in Shropshire in 1833, significantly (as we shall see) the year that slavery was abolished in Britain. The play is based upon her diaries, which span some twenty years. Here we have the first of the many role reversals and contradictions contained within the story, which are skilfully brought out and added to by Goldman's production.

These diaries stand in stark contrast to the many we have seen on sale over the last few years. You know the sort of thing, 'An Edwardian Lady's Diary', with little water colours of flowers dribbling down the side of the page. Hannah Cullwick did not spend many days lying in the long grass with a paint brush. Her diaries tell of the drudgery of domestic labour which was the fate of nearly 50% of working class women in Britain during this period and of her developing relationship with Arthur Munby, an upper class 'expert' on working class life.

It was Munby who instructed Hannah to keep a diary of her working life which was to be posted on to him. Munby encourages Hannah to treat her lowly position as a blessing and this she does with a vengeance. She starts wearing a padlock and chain round her neck, blackens her face in Munby's company and calls him 'Massa'. All this the Christian Socialist Munby revels in; being a slave bring one nearer god.

Goldman's insistence that the audience takes a critical perspective of Hannah's situation, and of the larger issues of female oppression and British Imperialism, is given form in a wealth of ingenious techniques. Before the lights go down at the opening of the show, Munby goes round the audience with a tape recorder asking them to name their favourite charity. A few minutes into the show the tape is played back over the speakers and this forces the audience to question whether they identify themselves to be closer to Munby than Hannah and how their Britain relates to Munby's Empire.

This confrontation with the audience is taken further at the end of the show when the cast stare out as a tape plays containing what becomes increasingly clear are interviews with the cleaners of the residences where the majority of the student audience live.

The uselessness of charity is also shown in a slide projection which states charity only really affects the giver. In fact, the use of slides plays a major role in giving the production a didactic edge. The appalling life of those in Hannah's position, a maid of all work, is shown through complementing the action with shocking statistics on the screen.

The true extent of the burdens of oppression suffered by working class women is made clear, and illuminating facts come to light, such as the process whereby the percentage of working women involved in domestic service at the beginning of this century had turned into an almost equal percentage in office work today. Mind numbing office work is now firmly

established as 'women's work'.

The other feature used to bring out the living and working conditions of Hannah is having the diary played by one of the actresses as a sort of narrator figure. But what takes that particular device into new areas is having the character of Hannah played by three others who relate to the diary and to each other. One of the Hannahs, the one we see smearing her face with black, is played by a man. As this Hannah is the one most under the heel of Munby, washing his feet, acting as a foot stool, the effect of having a male actor in this role once more forces the audience into a critical role and removes the danger of gratuitousness.

The dramatic conflict in the first half of the play is primarily between the production as a whole and the audience, and this is brought to a head just before the interval when one of the Hannahs leaves the stage to 'beg' from the audience while the rest of the cast act out in grotesque manner some of the archetypal replies to pleas for charity in Victorian times while a slide quotes Thatcher on the virtues of the Victorian age.

From here on the play deals with the conflicts arising from Hannah's increasing assertiveness. Given the obvious limited experience of the student actors, this is a harder task and suffers from their inability to take hold of each new scene and to avoid the traps of all adopting the same rhythm pattern, which can bring a ploddy feel to the production. But, having said that, the performances which Goldman has pulled out of the cast and the high level of production and writing, given extremely limited resources in terms of time and money, bodes very well for the future.

Gavin Kyle

### Straight down the pan

Communist Publications, *Communist*, February 1990, pp18, £1 (PO Box 3, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE29)

PRODUCED BY the 'official communist' Straight Leftist faction within the anti-communist Euro organisation (for the moment still known as the Communist Party of Great Britain), the claim of this timid little A4 monthly to be "Britain's best informed Marxist-Leninist journal of news and theory" rings hollow indeed. Unable to face up to the reality of counter-revolutions in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the official world communist movement, its wilful blindness, straw clutching and wishful thinking carry no conviction. Those who are persuaded not to lose faith today will certainly lose it tomorrow, as reality punctures their self deception. Just listen to some of these gems:

"The events of 1989 ... have brought the socialist countries [sic] of Eastern Europe more into the sphere of imperialist exploitation, and this has the potential [sic] to change the situation in Europe drastically." (p2)

"A possible [sic] scenario opens up of a united, capitalist Germany where the gains of forty years of socialism count for nothing." However, "campaigns for peace and disarmament in countries like Britain could tip the balance" in favour of "a neutral demilitarised Germany" at the centre of a peaceful (imperialist) Europe. "Is it just a pipe dream?" (pp3-4) Well, yes.

Stuart Kavanagh (p10) glances

at the question of counterrevolution, but falls into the same dogmatic trap as the Trotskyite left: 'But restoring capitalism will not be easy either. It is not enough to have government power, a counter-revolution also requires the dismantling of the socialist state ...' In the GDR, "The whole question of the unification of two states with entirely different social systems begs many questions." (my emphasis - IF). But this coward not only is unable to answer the question as to which social system will predominate in the reunified Germany, he is afraid to formulate the question itself!

Why bother with such a spent force? Because today's tiny Straight Leftist faction is living proof of the inability of 'official communism' to defeat revisionism and defend Leninism. It is all that remains inside the CPGB of what was the main opposition trend resisting the right opportunist leadership ever since it broke with the Soviet bureaucracy by condemning the 1968 Warsaw Pact military intervention in Czechoslovakia. Then the pro-Soviet centrists were able to win large minority votes in Party congresses, and the prospect of actually winning a CPGB congress seemed real.

But the 'defence of Marxism-Leninism' always meant defending the latest Soviet orthodoxy, which gave legitimacy to opposition to the emergence of Euro revisionism.

Today, however, with Gorbachev and the Euros in fast embrace, that 'official' legitimacy is gone. The backbone of centrism has been removed, and it therefore faces imminent extinction. It is no surprise therefore to hear on the grapevine that this faction is now divided over whether or not to throw in the towel and dissolve itself.

But it seems that the majority around Fergus Nicholson seems determined to carry on with the self deceiving politics he has made all his own. For example, in his *Communist* it is claimed that the recent 41st Euro CPGB congress "re-affirmed the need for a Communist Party." It did not. What it called for was a "strong, independent Socialist Party", and omitted to uphold either Leninism or democratic centralism as principles for such a party. In other words, classic revisionism.

"We need a party," says the editor, which combines debate with unity in action, practises international solidarity (is proletarian internationalism too radical? - the question is not even considered) and "tries to understand better the nature of big capitalist exploitation and oppression" - a very tentative and humble aim indeed, reflecting the complete lack of self confidence of the writer, evidently aware that s/he does not understand it!

With no distinct role for "our party", *Communist* pathetically begs its supporters to maintain the anti-communist Euro organisation through card issue, National Fund donations, sales of *7 Days and News and Views* and the winning of new members. The Straight Leftists' voluntary submission to a Euro trend which is rapidly moving towards some sort of 'third way' modernism (a trend pioneered by Mussolini in Italy and Mosley in this country) because of a hopeless strategy of winning control of the party from within, has truly made them into nothing more nor less than left Euros.

The sooner the Euro organisation and its Straight Left faction give up the ghost and relinquish the name "communist", the better. They give us a bad name.

Ian Farrell

## ACTION

### The Leninist

**Revolution and Counterrevolution:** Dayschool on the crisis in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Sunday April 22, 10am to 7pm, central London. £5 including lunch. Book now by sending cheque to November Publications Ltd.

**London Seminars:** 5pm Sundays. Details 01-431 3135

Series on the CPGB, From left to right centrism (continued):

**April 29:** For a Soviet Britain, the seventh congress of Comintern and the turn to class collaborationism.

**May 6 and 13:** No seminar. Seminars resume from May 20.

**London May Day march:** Join *The Leninist* contingent.

Assemble 2pm at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, EC1 (Farringdon tube). March to Friends House, Euston Road.

### Hands Off Ireland!

**Take the Streets for Irish Liberation!** March to commemorate the 1916 Dublin Easter Rising - for troops out now. Saturday April 21. Assemble 1pm, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 (Highbury and Islington tube). Rally with speakers from Ireland and the workers' movement in Britain.

**London May Day march:** Join the HOI! contingent. Assemble 2pm at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, EC1 (Farringdon tube). March to Friends House, Euston Road.

**London activists' meetings:** Central London, 7.30pm, every Thursday: Phone 01-431 3135 for details.

### Workers Theatre Movement

**WTM Irish benefit:** Cabaret with dance, theatre, music, etc. Saturday April 21, 7.30pm Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19 (nearest tube, Archway). Admission £3, unwaged £1.

**Tuesday May 1:** Celebrate International Workers Day at *The Internationale* club, Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1. 7.30pm. Late bar. Admission £3, unwaged £2.

**Rehearsals:** Every Sunday in London. Phone Paul Harrington on 01-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

### Unemployed Workers Charter

**London activist meetings:** Every Monday 8pm South London. For details ring 01-431 3135.

**Anti-poll tax actions:**

**Wed April 25:** UWC Public meeting against the Poll Tax, 7.30pm Room 2, St Matthews, Brixton Hill, SW2 (opposite Lambeth Town Hall. Nearest tube: Brixton)

**Sat June 9:** UWC March against the Poll Tax. Assemble 12.30pm St Matthews, Brixton Hill, SW2.

**UWC Petition** against ET, YTS and the "actively seeking work" clause. Collect signatures and cash for the UWC. Send SAE for 6 petition sheets. UWC needs £500 per week!

**Unemployed Organiser No7:** Bulk prices including postage: 8 for £1; 100 plus at 10 for £1

	6 months	1 year
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# The party was never on

**T**RAVELLING light theoretically; but with an undoubted dynamism, the 'Revolutionary' Communist Party was able to sustain a certain growth among radical students throughout the 1980s. The defeats suffered by the working class during this period meant little to them. In fact, they were a positive advantage. Building a student based sect on such impetuous political platforms as "the Labour Party and the official working class movement is dead" is far easier during a period of retreat.

Things change, however. The rising tide of working class struggle in Britain today, plus the reactionary developments internationally, are now precipitating stirrings within the ranks of this organisation. The deeply reactionary core of RCP politics are becoming explicit.

## Ireland

Readers of *The Leninist* will already be aware of the RCP/IFM Freedom Movement's boycott of this year's Bloody Sunday commemoration in London. Hands Off Ireland! openly attacked this crassly sectarian manoeuvre and clearly, our criticisms struck a chord with many in the ranks of IFM.

In an unusually open step for the RCP, leading IFMer Phil Murphy took up HOI's criticisms in *The Next Step* of February 2 (although without mentioning us by name, so it was not that untypically RCP). We will not reiterate Murphy's apologia point by point (for a more detailed examination, see *The Leninist* No87, February 20), but his essential point was that last year's Bloody Sunday march was the "last straw" for his organisation for two reasons: •The IFM were tired of their continued exclusion from the mobilising committee and the consistent denial of speaking rights to them. But, as Murphy made clear, in previous years, they had "put up with" these sectarian attacks. So what was different this year...?

•He provides a long list of examples of poor organisation and negative features of the 1989 march (including the fact that it was raining!) This, we are left to conclude, shifted the RCP/IFM in favour of boycott.

This, of course, is simply rubbish. And do not take our word for it, get hold of a copy of *The Next Step* of January 9, 1987. There, an article on 'Sectarianism and Bloody Sunday' mentions the fact that "some IFM supporters have argued that we should take no part in this year's [Bloody Sunday 1987 in Sheffield] demonstration ..." But 'no, no, no!' chide the IFM's national leadership, "while this response is understandable ... the organisation will build and march on the Sheffield march ... it is vital to put the interests of the Irish people before the squabbling of the British left ... we are not prepared to play that game."

An appetite for the big time is not wrong. But when combined with more packaging than content, you have a recipe for one of the most dishonest groups on the British left

Or rather, not while the sun shines. All it seems to take for the RCP/IFM to put its own sectarian interests before the "interests of the Irish people" and start playing the boycott game is one good soaking on a badly organised march. Three years ago, they claimed to be made of sterner stuff. The article continued: "The Irish liberation struggle needs the largest demonstrations of solidarity in Britain that can be mustered. We have a responsibility to use every opportunity to mobilise support ... If the official mobilising committee lived up to its name, and spent more time worrying how to get people on the march instead of conspiring to keep people off it, they would be doing the Irish people a service." (Our emphasis)

So this year, the RCP/IFM decided to do the Labour sectarians' job for them and they conspire to keep people off the march! Far from taking up "every opportunity" to raise a principled line on Ireland, it has abandoned the fight. Is it that the nature of the Bloody Sunday march organisers has fundamentally altered? Is it that the RCP's boycottism is growing in line with its appetites for the big time? You guess.

One last quote: "given the pathetic state of the demo's organisation, if we abandoned the march it would be a tiny, insignificant event. Such a flop could only be to the advantage of the British authorities, who could use the small turnout to 'prove' the lack of any support for Irish freedom among British people".

First, it should be energetically pointed out to RCPers at every opportunity that their despicable boycott this year did little or nothing to detract from either the size or militancy of the demo. Sorry to disappoint you, comrades, but you simply were not missed. The prediction from 1987 is far more to do with RCP bombast than any sober appraisal of the real balance of forces between themselves and the official movement.

But this quote says more than that, does it not? A boycott, they state, would serve only the interests of the British establishment. It would actually do harm to the cause of building a solidarity organisation in this country.

Was this position wrong in 1987, RCP? If so, where is your self criticism for this mistake? If it was correct in 1987, why not today? What qualitative developments have rendered this tactic inappropriate? Or are you now indeed doing the British state's job for it? We await your self justifications with interest.

## Press hype

This Irish boycott is no 'slip up': it

is a product of rotten theory beginning to bear rotten sectarian fruit. We will not deal with its attitude towards the poll tax here (see the speech by comrade John Bridge in this issue of *The Leninist*). Instead we will look at some of its other blundering positions.

Obviously, somebody, somewhere in the centre of the RCP got their hands on a book called 'Selling yourselves in a crowded market'. This is not a wrong thing in itself, of course. We can always learn a thing or two from the capitalists. The real problem comes when you start letting your desire to differentiate yourselves lead you to prematurely write off the opposition.

•South Africa and sanctions. The 'party's' latest pronouncement on the fight against apartheid comes in the form of Jenny Graham's pamphlet, *The end of apartheid?* The blurb on the back cover states the publication's intention as being to "encourage effective solidarity" with the struggle. Interesting, especially so as Graham does not even discuss what constitutes that 'effective solidarity'.

Her vacuous stance is hardly surprising. While the 'party' has made great play out of its opposition to government sanctions, it has only spoken in the vaguest terms about what its alternative is. In an editorial comment headlined 'Why we don't support sanctions' (*The Next Step*, February 23, 1990), it correctly lambasts those like the Anti-Apartheid Movement leadership who simply plead for the British state to impose sanctions, but its alternative is a little vague - "working class action", "genuine working class solidarity", "an independent stand". They couldn't be talking about workers' sanctions, could they? Of course not! After all, other organisations have already put that forward and the RCP is so different, isn't it?

•"Press hype". Having announced "The official labour movement RIP" in December 1982, the RCP must now hammer the square pegs of reality into the round holes of this theory as the tempo and context of the class struggle and the political life of Britain change.

Way back in May of last year, Mike Freeman was talking down the upsurge in industrial action. According to him, the "more radical newspapers are eagerly looking out for any industrial discontent to spoil the atmosphere at the close of the Thatcher decade." (*The Next Step*, May 12, 1989). Press hype, you see.

Today, it is quite clear that we have in fact entered a new phase of the class struggle. The previous period of defeat and retreat has

passed. Yet where is the self criticism from the 'party'? How does it now explain the fact that the 'dead' official movement is fighting these battles? Indeed, how are we to explain the spectacular rise in political fortunes of that other corpse, the Labour Party? Let us summarise some of the RCP's statements on this matter over the last few years.

First, the Labour Party is "dead". The Labour Party is incapable of winning an election, but the Tories are capable of losing one to them. The Labour Party is not dead, it has been transformed into "an openly pro-capitalist party." The Labour Party is alive, but *Labourism*, the traditional form of reformism in Britain, is dead.

All of this is muddle-headed nonsense. The pages of *The Next Step* are increasingly full of not very convincing jobs on old RCP lines as reality (and the opinion polls) catch up with them.

•The USSR and Eastern Europe. The "merit" of the RCP's analysis of the unfolding process of counterrevolution in the socialist countries is that it at least does not refer to it as 'political revolution'. It recognises, as we do, that the mood among the East European masses is that of an "anti-communist lynch mob" (*Living Marxism*, January 1990) and that workers in these countries face "hardship, violent unrest and instability". Its 'demerit' lies in the fact that it sees all of this, and still backs it.

"The negative example of the Stalinist states had to go ... and it was always most likely that the reaction would initially take an anti-communist form ..." (*Living Marxism*, January 1990, our emphasis) But even within its own terms, the RCP's "wholehearted" support for the counterrevolution in these countries is contradictory. In *The Next Step* of February 16, 1990, Frank Richards suggests that the 'party' is "obliged to argue against secession from the Soviet Union" as this would "benefit imperialism" and quite possibly lead to a "carnival of reaction".

But how does all of this square up, RCP? Richards tells us that there is "nothing progressive about the Soviet Union" (*Ibid*), but then defends its geographical integrity, as dismemberment would benefit imperialism. Using the same 'lesser of two evils' arguments, the RCP has found itself backing the rulers of Iran before now. In the broader context, however, it finds itself unable to consistently apply this criterion. The counterrevolution in Eastern Europe will lead to a carnival of reaction and will aid imperialism; yet the RCP's rabid anti-Sovietism

flows so deep that it finds itself cheering on the defeats of the working class in these countries, cheering on the carnival of black reaction.

The RCP has been at pains to belittle the monumental events in Eastern Europe and the USSR. 'What's all the fuss about', it asked? "Nowhere [in Eastern Europe] has the old order been decisively defeated. Indeed, in most places the ruling bureaucracy has had a hand in overseeing the process of transition" (*The Next Step*, January 12). The "internal moral collapse" of 'Stalinism' is inexplicable for the RCP, except in terms of the individuals involved. Frank Furedi's *The Soviet Union Demystified* - the definitive RCP statement on the USSR - re-read today illustrates the incredible shallowness of this group's 'neither fish nor fowl' definition of the Soviet Union. On page 157, for example, it is stated that "the restoration of capitalism - is a step that the Soviet leadership is not prepared to countenance." Really, Frank? Perhaps you would now care to explain the recent announcement by Leonid Abalkin of the speeding up of the introduction of a "regulated market" in the Soviet Union, the opening up of a stock exchange, etc?

Similarly, how does the RCP now feel about the statement in this book to the effect that "Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin at the twentieth party congress in 1956 was a more significant break with the past than anything that Gorbachev has said or done" (p9)? Is there anything in the last four years since these words were written that might cause you to revise your dismissive analysis? Or can't you see what all the fuss is about, still.

Like everything else, the RCP's position on the Soviet Union was written to justify its practice - in this instance, its foul anti-Sovietism - rather than to explain the world as it was. It was an elaborate attempt to shuffle the issue sideways, to pretend that it was an irrelevance and that as "the destiny of the Soviet Union will be largely decided by events on the international arena" (p250), we could all forget about it. 'No one talks to us about defence of the Soviet Union in the by-election in Bermondsey', the RCP philistines and theoretical charlatans once told us. Well, it seems that, Frank's book notwithstanding, the issue is now firmly back on the agenda of world history. And the RCP has nothing worthwhile to say.

Despite its enormous pretensions, the RCP shares common features with all the petty bourgeois left in today's Britain. The real world is mercilessly exposing their cowardices and waverings. The theoretical chickens coming home to roost are having to form queues longer than anything Poland every saw. Your party, comrades, was never on.

Ian Mahoney



## Which Road?



Part 6

### A critique of the *British Road to Socialism* (Communist Party of Britain's 1989 Draft version)

**A**LL THE myriad opportunist groupings that limp on as 'official communism' in Britain today have at one point or another in their evolution voted for one edition or another of the *British Road to Socialism*. Yet time moves on, and with it opportunist political tastes and requirements. Most like to imagine that they have now grown up.

There is, though, as is always the case, one group that in opportunist terms refuses to move with the times. That group is the Communist Party of Britain (the *Morning Star's* split). It was actually formed on the basis of defending all editions of the *BRS* up to and including the fifth, 1978, edition against the now abandoned Euro attempts in the late 1980s to 'update' it with their then latest coalitionist fads and 'Fordist' fancies.

Farce into horror is predictable with 'official communism'. The CPB was not content with defending the rotting *BRS* corpse. It wanted to revive it. True, it has produced, first, its own, new, draft and then at its 2nd Congress in November 1989 a finalised version "for the 1990s". However, as we will see only too clearly, the CPB does not have the abilities of Jesus Christ, but rather those of Mary Shelly's all too human Baron Frankenstein.

At the time of writing (April 1990) the CPB has still not published its final version of the *BRS* — although an ad in the spring edition of its *Communist Review* promises that it is "coming soon". We will therefore use here its pre-congress *Draft* version. Time permitting, perhaps we will devote a future supplement to the final version when the CPB eventually gets round to publishing it. But as the changes introduced during the course of its congress were of secondary importance, I doubt it.

Dealing with its *Draft* has a definite polemical advantage. We want our readers to be able to follow our critique from source, to judge for themselves, not simply take Jack Conrad's word for what the CPB has to say. And there is at the moment only one published source, its *Draft*. So instead of attempting to do a Sherlock Holmes investigation into what the CPB's final version of the *BRS* is, spend £1 and get hold of a copy of its *Draft*.

Another less obvious advantage exists. In opportunist organisations invariably a certain gap exists between the politics of the leadership and the politics of the activists, who

usually stand somewhat to the left of those at the top. This lopsided pyramid was illustrated in the CPB branch amendments and the votes of its congress delegates. I have read the branch resolutions and amendments thoroughly, we also had our own man in their congress to tick off what was voted through and what was not — and what was voted through corrected some of the more outrageous *rightist* blunders of the CPB leadership.

It was not only a matter of correction, however. The CPB has carried from its birth all the ideological differences with which the CPGB was riven when it last debated the *BRS* in 1977, along with a host of 'left' proto-factions and 'left' proto-splits, the only difference being that the CPB will play out its congenial liquidationism on a far smaller scale. Its splits and their polemics are those of the 1977 CPGB, only as if seen through the 'wrong' end of a telescope.

The *Draft*, by definition, unquestionably represents the views of the CPB's leadership rather than its congress. That is the other advantage we were referring to. By subjecting the *Draft* to criticism we can be sure of our target as well as our material.

In passing we can deal here with its leadership's claim to represent the continuity of the Communist Party of Great Britain from the day it was formed on July 31 1920 till its 40th Congress in November 1987 — which its fore-runner, the Communist Campaign Group, insisted marked a qualitative break from the past and in particular from the principles underlying the *BRS*.

We do not need to reiterate the CPGB's founding principles, which unlike those of the CPB were unquestionably revolutionary. As to the idea that it was the 40th Congress that represented the break from those principles, this is simply absurd, a transparent, self-serving lie (as was the NCP's founder/leaders claim that the adoption of the 1977/8 version of the *BRS* meant that the CPGB had become a social democratic organisation). True, the decisions of the 40th Congress were a further

step to the right. But far from it representing a *qualitative* break from Marxism-Leninism, the congress decisions were merely a *quantitative* development of the *rightism* in the 1978 *BRS*, just as that was a quantitative *rightist* development from the 1968 *BRS* which those who went on to found the NCP had accepted and voted for.

The CCG needed an excuse to split and form the CPB. The reason is easily explained.

Long ago the right opportunist bureaucracy — personified by recently retired general secretary Gordon McLennan and *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater, — which traditionally ran the CPGB, being without ideological and political initiative, bowed before the ghazi of 'Eurocommunism'. The right opportunist trend had become more and more reduced to the level of simple administrators of the various parts of the party machine with little or no support among the rank and file. From the mid-1980s we saw the final marginalisation of the old right opportunist bureaucracy, a natural result of the disintegration of the 'official' CPGB and the growing polarisation between Euros and centrists at grass roots level.

McLennan and Chater came from the same right opportunist bureaucratic mould, equally myopic, grey and uninspiring; in the field of theory neither has produced anything whatsoever. Chater and the *Morning Star* bureaucracy broke with the St John Street bureaucracy (fronted by McLennan), turning to the centrist opposition for support, only when it looked as if the Euros were at last strong enough to get their hands on what he had come to regard as *his* paper. Only then did Chater become anti-Euro.

The formation of the CPB was a direct product of Chater's bureaucratic rebellion. And it must be emphasised that it was not the 40th Congress but the so-called 're-establishment of the CPGB' in April 1988 and the formation of the CPB which marked the qualitative point in the disintegration of the Euro-led CPGB from being a party to a mere grouping. Who can doubt it! The Euro 'official'

CPGB is now a faction ridden petty bourgeois rump bent on its own organisational liquidation!

What of the CPB's claim to be the Communist Party? Frankly it has no right to call itself a 'party', let alone 'communist'. Organisationally the 1,000 strong CPB does not represent a unity of communists; even to call it Menshevik would be to insult the original Mensheviks. Many of its members do not even pay the paltry sums asked for as dues, its branch meetings are few and far between and sparsely attended, and although it has a number of paid full timers (one who only agreed to work for his 'party' after a pension plan had been agreed) the CPB has a record of public activity that is virtually non-existent; eg, it has only produced some half a dozen pieces of literature since it was formed. At the admission of its own leadership it does not lead the vanguard of the working class, nor a significant section of it ... in other words it is no party.

As to its 'communist' politics. It is well known that Tony Chater declared his *Morning Star* the "daily living embodiment" of the *British Road*. True! But as we have seen in our previous supplements and as we will see in this one, our critique of the CPB's version, the *BRS* has nothing, not a thing, to do with genuine communism.

Of course, there are those, like Photis Ly-sandrou, in the leadership of the *Morning Star's* 'political wing', who once thought the same thing. They correctly voted against the *BRS* in 1977 because, as they said, it was 'revisionist'. It certainly was. Yet now in order to facilitate their broad democratic alliance in the CPB these very same people champion the *BRS*; privately they say this is done in the name of tactics.

How can this be? For genuine communists it is tactics which should be subordinate to principle, not the other way round.

The publication of a new draft of the *BRS* in 1977, and its subsequent acceptance at the 35th Congress of the CPGB in the November of that year, represented an important victory for the Euro wing of the CPGB; it was, as we have shown in part five of this work, an important quantitative development of the party's *rightist* drift, which had been going on for many decades (see *The Leninist* No84).

Such a document as the *BRS* cannot legit-



imately be defended in the name of defending communism. Defence of it by certain 'tactically clever' right centrists is either cynical careerism or evidence of the degree to which, now that they are last in leadership positions, they have embraced open opportunism.

It has been widely said that the CPB's draft *BRS* is merely an updated version of the 1978 edition. There is a lot of truth here. However, as well as getting rid of some of the more obviously dated aspects of the Euro edition there are some shifts in emphasis as well as a couple of rather desperate original contributions from the CPB leadership. Therefore, as we have already devoted four supplements to the 1978 version, we will concentrate our criticism on these 'shifts' and 'contributions'.

As we will see, bureaucratic rebellion only produces bureaucratic politics, and bureaucratic politics are by definition short sighted. In point of fact the updates inserted to resuscitate its *BRS* have already become hopelessly outdated, and that is an understatement. The central pillars of its 'updated' programme have already turned to dust.

There is nothing wrong with tactical flexibility and responding to changing conditions. Real communists find no problem here. But in *The re-establishment of the Communist Party - a perspective* the CCG proto-CPBers stated that the 1978 *BRS* was in need of re-drafting because "there have been significant changes both in the world situation, and in Britain's political, economic and social situation in particular." That "significant" change will take place is easy to predict. Change is, after all, constant; it is one of the few absolute truths.

Not surprisingly the communist programme takes that into account and therefore does not concern itself with the fleeting prime ministers, facts, figures and tactical questions of the day. A real communist programme should only need changing when there has been a strategic turning point, eg when the task of capturing state power has been carried out (Lenin's party made do with one programme before the revolution and one programme after it).

Not the CPB. Having a programme that monotonously has to be rewritten and updated has become a habit. The *BRS*, "our programme" had to be "revised every five years" (*Ibid* p9), its admits with the cynical casualness of someone who divorces their spouse every five years in order to find a younger one. Such faithfulness is not the norm for communists. The regular trading in had one advantage for the CPB however. It provided the excuse its leadership needed to steal the *BRS* from the Euros (who no longer wanted it) and to limit debate within their own ranks to technical matters rather than allow questioning of the programme as such. Clever, but not very. The *BRS* is a poisoned chalice.

The 1978 *BRS* was left standing by a "significant" development which in historic terms, and it must be said in programmatic terms too, was a non-event - the Tories replacing Labour in government. The same fate has now befallen the CPB's version, only quicker, even before its final, official version has been published. Frankly, this is only to be expected.

Opportunists cannot but base their programme on pragmatism. What they are interested in is not a search for objective truth and a guide to revolutionary action, but justifications for their opportunist practice and their narrow subjective interests and desires. This leads to mind blowing myopia, of which there is more than plenty in the CPB's *BRS*.

For all its pretensions to be a "a long term strategy" (p1 - all quotes, unless otherwise stated, are from the 1989 (actually undated) CPB Executive Committee draft edition), the CPB now has the *BRS*, with all its 1989 facts and figures, its claims that socialism is striding forward, its solidarity with Gorbachevism, and its wishful thinking hope that Labour will be elected at the next general election, etc, etc, around its neck like the proverbial albatross. It deserves it.

## The CPB's introduction

The communist programme does not become dated simply because of a general election, let alone because 1989 and its socio/economic facts and figures give way to 1990 and its socio/economic facts and figures. The opportunist programme is very different. The CPB's *BRS* is rooted in 1989 and is therefore, even

on purely technical matters, already outdated.

So for all the above quoted claim that the *BRS* is a "long term strategy" its introduction lets the cat out of the bag when it admits that it is based on "British conditions in the world as it exists today" (p2), ie conditions which by definition will change tomorrow.

The CPB's introduction gives us the flavour of the whole. The bulk of it is a simple rewrite of the Euro's 1978 edition, the absurd claim that it is based on the "theory of scientific socialism", that contradictorily "only by putting an end to capitalism" can Britain's problems be solved and yet a "general improvement in living standards, a wide expansion of democracy and a genuine policy of peace" (p2) can be achieved under capitalism if the government adopts the so-called Alternative Economic and Political Strategy etc. There are however some changes.

Either by Machiavellian design, or more likely simply through nostalgia, the CPB version is slightly to the left of the 1978 one. Where the well trained Euros chase after the latest establishment kite, the CPBers hark back to their safe 'official communist' past. Thus, out goes the reformist 'broad democratic alliance' of 1978 and the reformist 'anti-monopoly alliance' of 1968 returns in its place.

However all the CPB has produced is an 'official communist' version of the Amish sect. The overall picture, even at this stage, is frankly wacky; not least with the continued insistence that there has been a "shift in the balance of forces internationally against imperialism" (p2 - more of this later).

## 1. The contemporary world situation

Or how the CPB forgets all about communism and fails to understand capitalism

The first 'chapter' of the CPB's *Draft BRS* says it all. Instead of a general description of our epoch, the epoch of the transition from capitalism to communism, we are presented with a mish mash of 1989 statistics and the claim that "the situation in Britain ... is at the most basic level characterised by the transition from capitalism to the higher system of socialism."

Not only does this halfway house truism reveal a predictable national narrowness - it is the world that is in transition - but far more importantly, in this *BRS*, unlike all previous *BRS*'s, communism as a social system is not mentioned! Not only in the first chapter but throughout the whole document! Hard to believe, but true.

The CPB criticises the Euros for wanting to drop 'communism'. We see nothing wrong with their honesty: they never had anything to do with it. The CPB leadership, though, in its *BRS*, has preempted them - but not deliberately, we must presume.

Yes, the politically illiterate CPB leadership simply forgot communism! At its congress it did not object to branch amendments putting it back in.

For any sort of 'communist' such 'forgetfulness' is unpardonable; but then the CPB leadership is communist only in name. They should follow the Euros example and start thinking up a new, more accurate, title for their organisation. How about Small Very Loose Organisation of Very British Reformists!

Forgetting to include communism in its *Draft* means, of course, that the CPB leadership can have no understanding of our epoch; it understands neither capitalism nor socialism. Socialism is nothing but the transitional stage between capitalism and communism, and cannot be understood in any other way. But before dealing with socialism (see 1.3.) let us deal with the rest of this opening subsection.

The CPB drafters understandably feel a need to explain the post-World War II boom. They fail. In their version of things the "decisive factor" in producing the boom was the emergence of "new socialist countries" which "offered new hope and optimism, to millions" and "helped the working class to achieve significant advances in wages, job prospects and living standards generally."

That the USA emerged as the capitalist world hegemon and reshaped the world in its own image is completely overlooked, a crass stupidity. It was the US dollar which provided the material basis for the post-World War II boom, not the spread of socialism, let alone

the "increased power and militancy of the working class" (the CPB claim that working class militancy increased in the 1950s and 60s compared with the 1920s and 30s is as revealing as it is silly).

Inability to see the truth flows directly from the *Draft*'s combination of wishful thinking and its failure to understand capitalism's cycle and which stage of it we are in now. For the CPB's *BRS*, world capitalism's "cyclical crises" in the 1950s and 60s and their "range and depth" were "restricted"; since then, apparently, there has been an "aggravation of the general crisis of the world capitalist system" (p4) - a classic case of not seeing the wood for the trees.

We have dealt fully with the false notion about capitalism's crises on which all previous editions of the *BRS* were based: the notion that the capitalist world has, since 1914 or 1917, been gripped by a permanent general crisis (see 'Which Road' Part 2 *The Leninist* No81). Nevertheless, as this CPB *Draft* places so much emphasis on its belief that capitalism experienced a great boom in the 1950s and 60s (which, clouding the issue, it calls a "relative boom" [p4], ie the greatest boom in its history) and could, with its AEPS, do so again - simply as a result of the subjective expectations of the working class - means we must give a materialist answer.

Capitalism; individual companies, branches of industry and countries, develop unevenly and through a business cycle of "booms and slumps" (p3). As the CPB's *BRS* admits, it cannot be otherwise, given the nature of the capitalist system itself.

Marx described three phases of capitalism's business cycle. First boom, the period of rising profits and prosperity. Second, an intermediate phase, with declining profit rates, over-production and speculation, featuring the stretching of the credit system to its limits. Third, the period of general crisis, in which the credit system collapses and production plummets.

The CPB's *BRS* is wrong to imagine that capitalism's oscillations in the 1970s and 80s are examples of booms and slumps. They are not. The epoch of imperialism has greatly expanded and generalised capitalism's cycle.

Where capitalism went through its cycle first every two years, then every five and then every ten, under imperialism the massive expansion of the credit system has allowed booms to reach unprecedented highs for unprecedented periods. Of course, a price has to be paid: the subsequent general crisis reaches unprecedented depths and lasts for an unprecedented length of time.

The last general crisis began with World War I, and included the crash of 1929 which almost overnight wiped out a third of the capitalist world's productive capacity. World War II - which cost 50 million lives - resolved the crisis, not the 'inspiration' provided by the emergence of bureaucratic socialism in Poland, Hungary etc. Because it was the US which won, its previously hemmed in dynamic capital was allowed to penetrate previously protected or closed areas of the world economy. In doing so it allowed capitalism to enjoy the long boom of the 1950s and 60s.

But nothing lasts for ever. Since the late 1960s capitalism has visibly again entered the intermediate phase of its cycle, between boom and slump, the phase of declining profit rates, over-production and speculation, featuring the stretching of the credit system to its limits. Within this phase, upturn oscillations (such as Thatcher's 1985-8 'economic miracle') have become ever more fleeting and downturn oscillations ever longer, deeper and more characteristic of the period. This means that in order to survive and keep the mass of profits up, capitalism seeks to raise the rate of exploitation; it also turns to the export of capital to find new markets. Britain is a classic case in point.

Union power has been attacked in no uncertain fashion and the export of capital has broken all records. But the main reason companies have been able to restore some of their lost profitability has been monopolisation. For all the privatisations and hype, open competition has been further curbed; capitalism in Britain has reduced itself to the omnipotent rule of a score or two giant transnational corporations and three giant banks. The fundamental contradiction of the capitalist order, between social production and private appropriation, has thus reached new heights.

As we all know, capitalism must grow in order to survive. The nature of the profit system dictates it. Every capitalist must never endingly strive to put onto the market the

greatest possible amount of commodities; it is this or certain bankruptcy. A dynamic system, yes, and a revolutionary one. The striving for profits demands increased productivity and new techniques of production. But there is a catch.

Capitalism is like the sorcerer's apprentice. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, the "conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them." Consequently, as sure as night follows day, dynamism leads to the overproduction of capital when an ever expanding mass of capital is finding it ever more difficult to realise its surplus value in a market saturated with commodities.

The overproduction of capital also means the rate of profit tends to fall (in *Grundrisse* Marx called this "in every respect the most important law of modern political economy"). As living labour is the source of all surplus value, its substitution by dead labour, ie machines, means that the rate of profit - a converted form of surplus value - must fall.

Of course, until the market has become completely saturated with commodities the tendency for the rate of profit to fall can be partially offset by extending the credit system. This is exactly what we see today. Fictitious capital - stocks, bonds and shares, whose call on existing wealth relies on nothing more than an accumulation of claims on future profits - has grown extraordinarily fast in a series of speculative booms (ie, in terms of capitalism's cycle, oscillations).

Yet because of its lack of intrinsic value, the entire credit system is extraordinarily fragile, nervous and prone to panic selling. At the least disturbance the whole pack of cards can come tumbling down and trigger a general crisis. This crisis does not result merely because workers cannot "buy all the goods being produced" (p3) but because of "the production of too much wealth", in the form of "antagonistic capital." (K Marx *Capital* Vol III, Part 3). Antagonistic, because in conditions of general crisis one capital must destroy another in order to survive. And, because imperialism has created a world economy, this now involves states and not only companies.

Today, because of uneven development, dynamic Japan and a dynamic united Germany (dominating Europe, east and west) are set on a collision course with the US, which only faces the prospect of further relative decline and decay.

In an effort to keep its economy from nose diving, the US has sucked in ever larger amounts of imports (both commodities and capital) - which it has paid for through stretching the credit system to unheard of limits. Over the last decade the US has thus been transformed from the world's principle creditor into its principle debtor. As a result protectionist demands have been raised in ruling circles, and these have been echoed by the US labour movement bureaucracy, which, as with its British counterparts in the CPB, demands import controls against 'unfair' competition. In effect these demands add up to a call for the competitors to commit harakiri.

Because of the sheer size of its economy, and its importance as a market, the US has been able to get the world's two over-exporters, Japan and Germany, to pay for its over-imports through their purchasing of US stocks and bonds. But not for ever. Sooner or later neither of these powers will be able to compromise with the US.

The need to survive will overcome the need to cooperate. And when peaceful compromise becomes impossible, jaw, jaw will become war, war. Inter-capitalist contradictions will in turn produce protectionism, trade war and finally a shooting war to open up markets. Thus, where industrial (pre-imperialist) capitalism developed through a cycle of booms and crises of overproduction, imperialism adds to this wars of redivision as a necessary and inevitable feature of capitalism's cycle.

The *Draft* recognises that the origins of World War I and II lie in overproduction. But due to its social-pacifism it cannot bring itself to admit that the increasing signs of capital overproducing itself today means that capitalism has not only become a fetter on the full development of productive forces, but that it threatens to plunge all of humanity into the most devastating war imaginable.

## 1.1. Features of state-monopoly capitalism today

This subsection is hardly worth commenting



on. It is a rather poor attempt to explain why the capitalist boom of the 1950s and 60s petered out and why government 'deregulation' has done nothing to reverse the monopolisation of capitalist production.

There is however one point we ought to touch upon. The CPBers' *Draft BRS* has, as we have said above, a peculiarly blinkered national vision of socialism, peculiarly blinkered and national even by the blinkered and national standards of 'official communism'.

The integration of the world economy is something we welcome; it lays the material foundations for the future communistic order. Correctly, the *BRS* notes that the integration of the world economy "undermines the possibilities ... for adopting an integral national economic policy". But the *BRS* does not think this is a good thing, because after all, its own 'Alternative Economic and Political Strategy' is just one such "integral national economic plan" ... we shall again briefly touch upon the AEPS below.

## 1.2. Neo-colonialism

The subsection on neo-colonialism is full of the 1989 details which we have already said have no place in a programme, eg, that debt in Latin America accounts for over 40% of national output. It also uses the term 'Third World' to describe the underdeveloped capitalist countries and perhaps the underdeveloped socialist countries. This is typically slipshod.

## 1.3. Socialism

Given the silly stuff we have had to wade through so far, it is not surprising that when it comes to the subsection on socialism we are presented with more silly stuff. There are so many misconceptions here that we must deal with them under separate headings.

### 1.3.1. Once again on the world balance

We have dealt extensively in a previous supplement with the baseless claim in the *BRS* of both 1968 and 1978 that there had been a "decisive tilt in the balance of world forces" and that it is the "main feature of the world today" (see 'Which Road' Part 2 *The Leninist* No81). So we have no wish to repeat ourselves. Nevertheless because the CPB's *Draft* insists on its own, albeit watered down claim that there continues to be a "shift in the balance of forces internationally against imperialism" (p2) we have to again return to this subject.

Many treated opportunist claims in the 1960s about a "decisive shift" in world power towards the socialist world seriously. Not in our day. The same claims from the same political trend that the "world socialist system" now "represents a dominant force in world relations" and that "the world socialist system has continued to expand" (p6) can only but seem ridiculous to everyone - except, that is, to its CPB authors.

Imperialism has not suffered a "loss" of its "world hegemony" (p6). Nor is it a "fact" that the "balance of world power continues to tilt away from imperialism towards the forces of progress and socialism" (p7). Imperialism remains the dominant force in the world. It has just won the Cold War and is successfully overseeing a world counterrevolution.

The leaders of the CPB have done their best to ignore the true nature of developments in the socialist countries. They have claimed that nothing is going on apart from reforms resulting from socialism's maturity, which "do not in any way herald a return to capitalism" (p7).

Of course, there has not been a reform of socialism. Yes, we have seen the obscene Berlin Wall breached, millions taking to the streets and corrupt governments fall. Yet, whatever the subjective intentions of the masses, objectively what began in 1989 was a process of counterrevolution through which capitalism is being restored in one country after another ie, the world balance is decisively against what was the world socialist system.

We do not need to waste much space in order to state our case. For those who are prepared to face up to real facts, what we have

to say is so obviously true. Poland can no longer be considered a socialist state in any sense of the word and nor for that matter can Czechoslovakia, Romania or Hungary ... and the GDR will soon be taken over by Federal German imperialism.

Even in the USSR itself Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are openly and unashamedly determined on the restorationist course, as is Yeltsin and the 'radical' Inter-regional group and a whole coterie around the increasingly Bonapartist Gorbachev, including his newly appointed personal economic advisor, Nikolai Petrakov. He told the *Financial Times* of his commitment to the "total transfer" of the Soviet economy to a "normal market economy" (February 10 1990).

Some CPBers insist that because in general the old state machine, the army, the police, the civil service etc have remained largely intact, they remain socialist - an example of formal logic at its most mechanical.

Long ago we said that, given the reality of bureaucratic socialism and the purely formal nature of proletarian rule, it is quite possible for a new bourgeoisie to peacefully take hold of the bureaucratic socialist state machine - which is anyway a carryover from bourgeois society - and use it for its own purposes.

Not only has this proved to be the case, but elements from the top of the socialist state machine have set their sights on becoming part of the emerging capitalist class: managers, state bureaucrats and party officials are transforming themselves into owners of newly formed joint stock companies.

The CPB will have none of it. In an act of wilful blindness it claims that the 'official communist' parties in Eastern Europe are simply correcting past "mistakes" and are displaying "courage" and "honesty" in "taking steps seeking to overcome them" (p7). Nothing could be further from the truth. These parties are taking the 'mistakes' of the past to counterrevolutionary conclusions. In the process they are displaying the cowardice, dishonesty and treachery we have long come to expect from "official communism".

Across what was the socialist world, ruling 'official communist' parties have lost all belief in themselves and in the main no longer even have the will to rule. Worse, where they have not disintegrated, as in Romania, they are going over, 1914 fashion, to the politics of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement, ie social democracy.

Even before it became social democratised in Poland, the former 'official communist' party, the PUPP, supported the Solidarnosc government, a government of the proto bourgeoisie. It has now split into two social democratic parties equally committed to Solidarnosc's marketisation programme - 80% of its industry is up for sale to home grown or foreign capitalists.

Hungary is different, but only in detail. When its social democratised former 'official communist' party was still in government it was, like its comrades in Poland, fully committed to restoring capitalism. To facilitate the turn back towards capitalism it dumped the old bureaucratic socialist constitution in favour of a bourgeois democratic one, banned political organisations from the workplaces and proposed Hungarian membership of the EC. The other former ruling parties in Eastern Europe are not far behind.

Surprisingly enough the concrete process of social democratisation and counterrevolution explains why the capitalists and their press have been so enthusiastic, ecstatic indeed, about developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. If there was a genuine renaissance of socialism it would be a different matter. This could only result from a proletarian political revolution and if this was what was being played out, one thing would be certain: the forces of international imperialism would do everything in their power to crush it.

Naturally, in order to bamboozle the gullible and further weaken the forces of communism, media pundits and establishment politicians alike find it useful to talk of revolution rather than counterrevolution. But the truth cannot be hidden. What we are seeing are democratic, largely peaceful counterrevolutions against bureaucratic socialism, which offer the imperialists the prospect of new markets and cheap labour. That is what makes the bourgeois mouth water and gutter press hacks chatter on about the 'marvels' of revolution and the 'heroism' of the masses.

One would have thought it was obvious that when the bourgeoisie supports mass demonstrations and uprisings, welcomes new popu-

lar leaders and offers massive financial aid, it would be universally recognised by those who consider themselves partisans of the working class that something untoward was going on. But not the CPB leadership, nor its membership.

Not only might it just as well have written its *Draft* on the planet Mars, but held its congress on Pluto. None of its leadership's above quoted mindboggling stupid official optimism about the expansion of the socialist world (published in the summer of 1989) was corrected at its congress in November!

### 1.3.2. Gorbachevism and the crisis of the USSR

The CPB's *BRS* is full of praise for Gorbachev and Gorbachevism. From the CPB types this is hardly surprising. They are, after all, long practised in political prostitution and the art of diplomatic internationalism. The leaders of the CPB have gone along with every general secretary of the CPSU, and only criticised them when they were safely in disgrace or in their graves. Of course, this has nothing to do with communism, which fearlessly speaks the truth. It is the method of the Vicar of Bray.

The CPB gives uncritical support to the Gorbachevite line. Echoing Gorbachev, its *Draft BRS* insists that "the growing resort to bureaucratic and administrative-command system of management progressively stunted the growth of working class and socialist democracy, and seriously hampered the further development of socialism's potential ... the twin processes of perestroika and glasnost, the restructuring of the economy and society is proceeding in conditions of fuller socialist democracy and openness, and there is a determined effort to decentralise decision making in every area of life to promote the initiative and genuine involvement of all working people." (p7)

There is no need to worry. Changes "are occurring in the context, and not to the detriment of the social ownership of the major means of production. The greater emphasis, within the framework of an overall plan, given the market mechanisms, cost accounting, and self financing, is designed to promote, not private profit, but greater efficiency, initiative and choice in a socialist environment." (p7)

Before Gorbachev, the CPB types never criticised bureaucratic socialism. Far from it. They were its most vociferous advocates. But what it is supporting now has nothing to do with "fuller socialist democracy" and giving power to the "working people". Claims that Gorbachev's perestroika programme will strengthen socialism are more than wishful thinking, more than a lie. The CPB is lining up behind the forces of capitalism.

Naturally, given the Gorbachevite bureaucracy's innate cowardice, the turn towards capitalism is not openly proclaimed. That would be - at least at the moment - to commit political suicide. Instead the Gorbachevite's seek to change things while keeping the names of things the same. They find all sorts of devious theoretical loopholes for this, violating the principles of socialism while claiming loyalty to it.

Nevertheless his plans are becoming more bold, less opaque. Dr Leonid Abalkin - promoted by Gorbachev to the post of deputy prime minister - has started to openly admit what perestroika is all about. During a meeting of the Soviet Union's 1,400 "best brains" he presented a programme, obviously with Gorbachev's "blessing", which, for all its claims to advance socialism, sounded "more like social democracy" (*Financial Times*, November 20 1989).

And no wonder. Abalkin's programme - later adopted by Gorbachev - includes the denationalisation of property, the promotion of the market system, the integration of the Soviet economy into the imperialist dominated world economy, the creation of a financial market and a stock exchange, as well as moves towards the full convertibility of the rouble.

How can the CPB's *BRS* claim that this does "not in any way herald a return to capitalism"! The changes proposed by Abalkin are not occurring in the interests of social ownership but in the interests of capitalism, they are precisely designed to undermine the plan and promote the anarchy of the market and private profit. Only a fool or a CPB opportunist could think otherwise.

### 1.3.3. Peaceful road?

Readers might be tempted to think that further polemic with such idiocy is pointless. That would be understandable, but a mistake. By confronting the CPB we confront the opportunism of 'official communism' at its point of final crisis; in the process we can learn something about opportunism in general. In reality what we are dealing with here is not a case for the psychiatrist's chair. The reason for the CPB's blind stupidity is simple. History has speeded up to such an extent that it has left the CPB's slow footed opportunist excuses for its opportunism far, far, behind events.

Prediction: the CPB will attempt sooner or later to find some new formula to excuse its opportunism. Such is the nature of opportunism ... all that distinguishes the CPB is that it is so theoretically conservative, so rooted in yesteryear revisionism and so clearly bound to routine that it might actually wait five years, if it lasts that long, before it again allows any internal discussion on its *BRS*.

Claims that there had been a "decisive tilt" in the world balance of forces were made in the first place in order to justify the peaceful parliamentary road enshrined in the *BRS*. Then and now it was hogwash. But with some sections of bourgeois opinion taking Krushchev's "we'll bury you" bombast seriously, the fact that the Soviet Union did have a growth rate well ahead of the western average and the failure of US imperialism to crush the communist led guerrilla armies of South East Asia, you could get away with it.

Logically, with the evidence of Hungary, Poland, Romania, the GDR and Czechoslovakia etc, before our eyes, the economic crisis and decline of the USSR and the shift in the world balance of forces towards imperialism, the CPB should conclude that the idea of a peaceful road should be abandoned.

Another prediction: as a to-the-marrow reformist organisation it will, of course, do no such thing.

### 1.4. The fight for peace and progress

In essence this subsection is a continuation of the CPB's daft official 1989 world balance optimism, which we have already examined above. It tells us that the "transition towards socialism on a world scale continues to be inexorable". And to prove it and keep the picture rosy the *Draft* boasts about the "significant advances" for peace and progress represented by ultra backward Zimbabwe, Mozambique (neither being socialist states), Ethiopia (which only last month abandoned its pretence to be a socialist regime) and how Nicaragua has apparently "joined Cuba as a liberated zone" (p7). Its proof is our refutation.

Yes, imperialism can only "temporarily slow down" progress towards socialism (p7). But in order to take on and defeat the imperialist monster we must never take the communistic rhetoric of petty bourgeois radicalism at face value, let alone pretend that we have not suffered massive defeats when we have.

However the main point of this subsection is to tell us all how the Soviet Union loves peace. All very well, but nowhere is the struggle for peace linked to the struggle for revolution; and without that, as we fully explained in 'Which Road' Part 4, all that is left is a pacifist attempt to fool the working class.

### 1.5. The struggle for environmental and ecological security

Here is a brand new subsection. Ten years ago environment and ecology were foreign words to the CPB types. Now, fired by adopted petty bourgeois good intent, the CPB has come out with some very dubious, and it must be said, dangerous, formulations.

Echoing neo-Malthusian claims that the cause of ecological problems is to be found in the increase of the world's population, the *Draft* bemoans "the explosive growth in population" because it is "another factor aggravating the pressure on the environment." (p9) This is to accept the unscientific view that the world is a finite, static, entity, that population



growth is therefore an evil.

In fact population growth has its own specific laws that correspond to each mode of production. Human beings cannot be treated as if they were bats, beetles or butterflies, just another animal species whose optimal population is determined by nature. We, and our population, are subject not mainly to biological, but to economic laws.

Primitive communism, based as it was on hunting and gathering, could not have supported a world population of more than 20 million, and in all likelihood the population during the Paleolithic era was only one-third or one-half of this figure at most. Advances in production, most notably agriculture, associated with slave society allowed the population to rise to 170 million, two-thirds within the Roman and Chinese empires alone. The population of high feudalism, 1600, reached some 500 million and today there are nearly 5 billion of us (figures from Isaac Asimov, *Asimov's new guide to science*, pp738-9).

Neo-Malthusians single out the masses in Africa and South America for causing deforestation and the spread of deserts. They are told to sterilise themselves or practice sexual restraint. Its that or face starvation.

We take a very different view. Under capitalism there is no fixed optimal world population, indeed capitalism creates overpopulation through the mechanism of the market (not least the labour market and unemployment). It is not possible to remove capitalism's social and environmental problems through demographic means. Instead, it is necessary to remove capitalism.

A planned communist world could easily support many, many more billions of people. Africa in particular is in objective terms actually underpopulated, with less than eight people per square mile. The same is true of vast tracts of Central Asia, Australia, North and South America. We, unlike it seems the CPB, like people and do not see why there should not be more of us.

Another rather dubious formulation is the aim of "waste free production" (p9). Measures to protect the environment from pollution are one thing, the equation of waste with pollution is another. Releasing waste mercury into the seas is not the same as releasing waste water.

## 2. Britain's crisis

The opening subsection of the second chapter of the CPB's *Draft BRS* is very much in the mould of previous editions. Imperialism is, we are told in true Kautskyan fashion, a "policy", not capitalism at its highest and last stage. The CPB wants British capitalism to completely break with "past imperialist policies". But "successive governments", Labour and Tory, have taken no notice; instead they have continued with imperialism (p10). Only an opportunist would find anything foolish or strange in such intransigence. Modern capitalism cannot break with imperialism, it *is* imperialism.

What follows is a potted reformist history of Britain from 1945 to the 1979 election. Apart from telling us that its beloved Labour Party in the form of the Callaghan government, which "promised to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families", in fact produced a "further substantial shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of the capitalist class", it is worthless (p10).

### 2.1. Tory strategy today

Equally worthless is this potted reformist history of Thatcher's Britain since 1979. It points out that Britain faces a major contradiction between its membership and further integration into the EC, and its former position as the world's number two imperialist power, characterised by its 'special relationship' with the US. The Thatcher government has also sought to restore the profitability of British capitalism and in the process trade union rights have been attacked. All true.

But nowhere does the CPB's *Draft BRS* even attempt to ask why the Tories won three successive elections and dominated parliamentary politics during the 1980s. Certainly it does not provide any answers. Given its terms of reference, this is a major fault.

The silly (in terms of bourgeois rationality) left reformist politics of Bennite Labourism

and the rise of the Alliance parties were both important factors. So too, though, was the real economic growth experienced since the end of the first quarter of the last decade.

The Tories' success in the 1980s was due to more than "an elaborate propaganda campaign extolling the virtues of private enterprise" (p11). The CPB does not want to face up to the fact that a whole upper stratum of the working class was won over to the Tories. No, not by their attacks on wages and "cuts in living standards" (p11). But precisely because under the Tories real incomes (for those in work) rose and millions of the better paid workers bought their own houses and even shares.

The CPB's one sided approach can only see grinding poverty on the one hand and the increase in wealth centralisation and concentration on the other. Not the fat crumbs used to win ideological loyalty to capitalism. Over the top claims about wage cuts, how the welfare state faces "outright abolition" and how "genuine local democracy is being extinguished" (as if there has ever been "genuine local democracy" in Britain) etc, etc, are no way to fight capitalism. To fight capitalism we must understand its strengths as well as its weaknesses.

### 2.1.1. Ireland

It is in this subsection of its *BRS* that the CPB leadership chooses to deal with that thorny subject, for reformists, of Ireland. After giving a brief history of Ireland till 1969, it continues ...

"In 1969 British troops were transferred to Northern Ireland ostensibly to keep the peace, but instead the army has consistently been used to suppress the nationalist forces seeking a united independent Ireland. It has been responsible for torture, killings, mass arrests and the maintenance of a martial law presence in working class areas. Diplock courts, hunger strikes, shoot to kill and counter-violence have become the norms in Northern Ireland. What is also ominous is the 'guinea-pig' role of Northern Ireland, as methods of repression first applied and tested there by the British state are then subsequently transferred to Britain, as instanced by the militarisation of the police, their equipping with plastic bullets, CS gas, special armed vehicles and growing attacks on the jury system.

"The Anglo-Irish Agreement is the latest manoeuvre by the British state to give the impression that it genuinely wants to seek a solution to the problems in Ireland. But there can be no solution unless the British government renounces its right to occupy Northern Ireland and declares an intention to withdraw. Far from contemplating this, British imperialism instead is seeking to use the Anglo-Irish Agreement to extend its domination over the whole of Ireland, to end its traditional neutrality and involve it in the reactionary Nato military alliance.

"The policy adopted by the Tory government towards Ireland symbolises, as it were, the identity and continuity between its reactionary domestic policies and its equally reactionary foreign policy." (pp12-13)

So that we can deal with the question at one fell swoop it is worthwhile here including what the CPB has to say about Ireland from the next chapter.

"Given that Ireland has been the subject of British imperialist domination and repression longer than any other country, Britain has a special responsibility in ensuring a democratic solution in Northern Ireland. To this end all sectarian, repressive and undemocratic laws and practices should be ended immediately, and British troops withdrawn from Ireland. At the same time Britain has a duty to provide substantial financial and other material forms of assistance in order to tackle the acute problems of poverty and unemployment caused in the main by British imperialist exploitation, opening the way for the Irish people to determine their own future as a united, sovereign and independent state." (p20)

Believe it or not, this is a shift to the left for the CPB leadership. Of course, there is not a trace of genuine communist internationalism in it. Nevertheless it is notable that this *BRS* does not go out of its way to blame the IRA and the forces of Irish nationalism for the death and destruction since 1969. In other words, this *BRS* is not an example of unadulterated anti-republicanism. Having said this it

must be emphasised that the essential reformist utopianism of previous editions of the *BRS* remains.

Instead of unequivocally calling for Ireland's freedom to exercise its democratic national rights; demanding the unconditional withdrawal of British troops (ie troops out now) and self determination for the Irish nation, the CPB indulges in all sorts of wishful thinking. British imperialism ought to do this, British imperialism ought to do that. This is not naivety. It reveals a complete lack of democratic principle. (For a full treatment of Ireland, the *BRS* and the tasks of communists in Britain see 'Which Road?' Part 5, *The Leninist* No84).

## 2.2. Right wing reformism

Right wing reformism attempts to keep "any opposition to the Tory policies confined within parliament" in order to "deflect resistance". What is more, the Labour leadership supports policies which "in general protect the economic and political power base of the capitalist class as a whole" (p14). In fact it promotes "policies that are virtually indistinguishable from those of other parties" (p15). In other words the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party, its leadership acts as a fifth column for the bourgeoisie within the organised working class. In spite of this the CPB types always have and always will automatically call for people to vote Labour.

Things start to really go wrong from here on in. We are told that the "right wing have always dominated the Labour Party leadership". This is simply not correct. Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury, Michael Foot and yes, Neil Kinnock, were all elected leaders of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the basis of their left reformist credentials. The CPB does not want to admit this, for if it did it would have to own up that the Labour left is in the last analysis no different from the Labour right.

Muddle can only produce muddle. The CPB leadership goes on to claim that Kinnock represents a break from previous post-World War II leaders of the Labour Party. Where they offered "increasing benefits", he only offers a reformism of a "more restricted type", along with "reduced incomes and living standards." (p15)

We have already referred to the last Labour government, and how it cut living standards further than any other government in the twentieth century. We do not see that Kinnock and his promise of running capitalism represents any sort of a break here. And given their age, one would have thought those who constitute the CPB leadership would personally remember the austerity, wage freeze and strike breaking of the first post-World War II government of Attlee. They should also remember the Butskellism of the Gaitskell leadership and how this was continued in the form of the classless 'white heat of the technological revolution' mumbo jumbo and 'In place of strife' by the Wilson government.

Thatchnookism does not represent any sort of fundamental break in the tradition of Labourism. Kinnock has broken with the left reformist policies he originally espoused in his *CND* and *Tribune* days, true, and taken on board Thatcherism; but this merely brings him into line with the dominant tradition within Labourism. And as such, like any run of the mill bourgeois politician, he does offer benefits for the working class within capitalism. What he would deliver if he got into No10 is, of course, another matter entirely.

For their own purposes it was under the heading of right wing reformism that the CPB leadership chose to deal with the Euro CPGB. The Euro CPGB and its *Marxism Today* have played, its *Draft BRS* says, a not unimportant role in getting people to accept Kinnock's refashioning of mainstream Labourism (p15). Nothing wrong here. The same cannot be said of what follows.

Apparently Euro calls for an electoral pact between Labour and the old Alliance parties - late last year the Euros were insisting that without such a pact the Tories could never be beaten - would lead to Labour's "complete abandonment of progressive working class policies". What is this "abandonment"! It has never been committed to "progressive working class policies". As we have seen above - including in the text of the CPB's *Draft BRS* - Labour has always been committed to the anti-working class policies of capitalism.

There is more, and yes, worse. The CPB

tells us in their *Draft BRS* that Kinnock's shift to the right and his promotion of "policies that are virtually indistinguishable from those of other parties" will not "help Labour's election chances". All we have to say here is: Mid-Staffs!

## 3. The strategy for advance

The final three chapters of the *Draft BRS* are, to all intents and purposes, a CPB rehash of the Euro 1978 version. We will therefore deal with them briefly.

Chapter three is all about what used to be called the Alternative Economic Strategy, and what the CPB inherited from the Euros as the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy. (For our most extensive critique of the AES see Frank Grafton's 'The road from Thatcherism, or the road from Marxism', *The Leninist* No1).

The AEPS is supposed to be a transitional programme linking "immediate issues facing working people" and socialism (p17). In reality though, it does not represent a strategy for socialism; which necessitates revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state, which in its state form can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat and, as a socio-economic formation, the first stage of communism. Instead the AEPS pretends that capitalism's contradictions can be resolved by a Labour government within capitalism and on this basis socialism can be ushered in through a series of parliamentary votes. Fat chance.

In reality the AEPS is a typical utopian reformist dream, along with its promises that a reformist British capitalism can prosper if it ignores the laws of capitalist accumulation laid bare by Marx, ignore the integration of the world economy and break from the EC, combat the transnationals and impose import controls.

To usher in its new, AEPS, higher, form of capitalism the CPB leadership wants to reform the House of Commons, strengthen local democracy and "eventually" abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy (p19). In passing it is also implied that Scotland and Wales are oppressed nations rather than being part of the British nation and that "genuine equality for women" can be assured under capitalism. Nonsense.

## 4. Forces for advance

The CPB leadership completely fails to understand the working class politically. While the CPB *Draft* wants, like its predecessors, to unite as many classes as possible around the AEPS, including sections of the capitalist class, for it because of its numbers the working class is the "leading force" in its "democratic anti-monopoly alliance". It sees the working class not as a class with a historical interest in uninterrupted revolution but, because of its numbers, a leading force for reform.

The lack of political understanding is continued. At the "heart of the working class is its most advanced section, those workers concentrated in large-scale enterprises". (p24) We say that the "advanced" or vanguard section of the working class should be defined politically, not sociologically.

The vanguard of the working class is that section of the working class that thinks politically, that is open to persuasion through communist propaganda. The fight for the Communist Party is the fight to win this section of the working class.

## 5. The Communist Party

From everything we have read so far it is clear that the CPB leadership does not have any possibility of building a Communist Party, which is first and foremost a revolutionary not a reformist party.

The CPB was established "on the basis" of the rules and programme of the Euro organisation (p31). Given the bureaucratic centralist nature of these rules and the hopeless updating of its reformist programme, the fate of the CPB is sealed.

Only Leninism can give the working class the communist programme it needs for its self liberation. Only Leninism can reforge the Communist Party. Long live Leninism! Long live communism!

Jack Conrad



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the workers' movement in Britain**



**MARCH**

# Take the streets for Irish liberation!

**Hands Off Ireland! shows the way forward by linking anti-imperialist politics with action – march with HOI! in London on April 21!**

**O**VER THE last decade of Tory rule in Britain a great cynicism developed. Defeats of successive groups of workers – the miners, printers, dockers, etc – along with the effective stalemate of other struggles helped to create a climate of defeatism. It became 'common knowledge' as the eighties wore on that it just wasn't worth sticking your neck out.

That is now changing. Our opposition is on the run. Working class people fighting for their rights have begun to show again that it is *us* that make history, not the leaders of the government or various parliamentary parties.

## Resistance

When it comes to Ireland the same can be seen. War exploded in the Six Counties back in 1969 when ordinary people took to the streets to protest against the systematic discrimination against the nationalist population. The British state responded with brute force and the Irish people fought back, as they still fight today. For over twenty years Irish republicans have shown that people who have grown up under the British jackboot can resist it and eventually throw it off. The demonstrations in support of the Hunger Strikers in the early eighties shook the British state. It is still shaken by the ability of the IRA to hit at its forces, such as in the recent attack at Downpatrick, where four members of the Ulster Defence Regiment were killed. This war could not be fought so successfully – if at all – by the IRA against the far better equipped British forces unless the IRA received mass support; unless it was itself an expression of mass resistance.

That resistance has presented one of the most protracted threats to British imperialism for over two decades. But, despite the heroism of this struggle, the British state has literally been able to get away with murder because the working class in Britain has not taken the side of those fighting against colonialism, for national freedom in Ireland.

Hands Off Ireland! believes that this can be changed. The working class in Britain are the natural allies of those fighting against oppression in Ireland. After all, we both face the same enemy – British imperialism. The tying of the British working class to their 'own' ruling class can and must be broken.

This will take hard, unequivocal argument. HOI! has always said that there is no middle ground: you stand with the struggle for Irish freedom and for troops out *now*, or with British imperialism. Universal, liberal condemnation of 'all violence' provides no solutions in the middle of an anti-imperialist war and is cold comfort for those



suffering under British occupation.

Argument alone, though, will not get us far. This must be backed up by *action*. Ideas only become a material force when they take on an organisational form. Hands Off Ireland! exists to root anti-imperialist ideas among the working class – and to organise that class to force their rulers out of Ireland. You cannot convince Britain out of Ireland. British imperialist domination of Ireland is the guarantor of that class' rule in Britain. That is something they will not let go of. Their grip must be broken by our power.

## Theory and practice

No one sticks their neck out on something like this for kicks. Unlike South Africa or El Salvador, the struggle in Ireland meets with no easy popularity here. We will only start to make real ground against imperialism when we combine convincing, working class, argument with the ability to convince masses of workers *in practice* that by fighting for this they can win. Militant and effective action has to be built up.

That is why we are marching in London on April 21. The demonstration is an expression of working class resistance to the British ruling class' war against the Irish people. HOI! aims to make it a focal point for our growing strength, directed openly against the oppressors of Ireland in Britain.

Historically, the Easter Rising of 1916 is a high point of this. In the thick of the slaughter of World War I, Irish revolutionaries were among the few who resisted the call to die on the fields of France for imperialist profits. Socialists internationally demanded, "turn the imperialist war into civil war". Revolutionary nationalists, such as Pádraig Pearse, and socialists, such as James Connolly, who led the Rising were the first in Europe to turn this into action. The working class force that Connolly led, the Irish Citizen Army, proclaimed "we serve neither king nor kaiser, but Ireland". The British state responded by turning their guns on

the Irish revolutionaries, executing their leaders after it had bloodily crushed the Rising. You may kill the revolutionary, but never the revolution: revolt exploded throughout Ireland as a result of the Rising.

The heroism of those who fought in 1916 should be commemorated by the working class here. But, for us, the Rising is not just an opportunity to express respect and admiration for those who took up arms for freedom 69 years ago. The Rising also expressed the unity of the struggles in Ireland and Britain. It stood out like a beacon of anti-imperialist resistance in the midst of world imperialist slaughter. It showed, especially to many workers in Britain, that the real enemy is at home. James Connolly, especially, was an expression of this united interest. He was not only in the forefront of the Rising, leading the working class ICA into the fight; he had also for many years played an active role in the workers' movement in Britain. Connolly fought the British ruling class both in Britain and Ireland, and they paid him dearly for it.

The Rising provided many lessons for today – lessons which still remain to be translated into practice: that there is no middle, peaceful road to Irish or working class freedom; that the working class in Britain have a vital place to fill in the fight for Irish freedom, one we must fill and take on 'our' state. That is why HOI! exists; to give these lessons a concrete organisational form and to drive it into the heart of British rule.

All workers, all anti-imperialists and opponents of oppression have a part to play. Real power doesn't come from the sham of parliament, but from the strength of ideas and the ability to apply them. That is what the Irish war proves: that is what HOI! aims to prove. Take the streets for Irish liberation on April 21: make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam!

■ Troops Out Now!  
■ Self Determination for the Irish Nation!

David Rhys



# No friend of freedom

**The refusal of the Twenty-six Counties to extradite three republicans recently doesn't mean that we should trust its leaders**

**T**HE RECENT decisions of the Dublin Supreme Court not to extradite three republicans to the north of Ireland has provided Thatcher with a another opportunity to parade her chauvinistic contempt for the Irish people and her vicious hatred of the Ireland's freedom fighters — the IRA and Inla.

In a statement on April 9, Thatcher explicitly linked the decisions of the Twenty-six Counties judicial establishment with the IRA's successful culvert mine action in County Down which resulted in the deaths of four UDR men and the injury of four others. As she put it; "If you take those murders of those four people today alongside the decisions of the Supreme Court in the republic

not to extradite those accused of violent crimes, one is very, very depressed. We need all the help we can get to fight people who attempt these murders and those who succeed. These people are not only against Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom. They are against democracy itself."

Of course, we should have no illusions about Thatcher's commitment to 'democracy': on her lips the very word sounds dirty. The nationalist people of the north of Ireland have come to understand the type of 'democracy' Thatcher defends — it is the 'democracy' of the rubber and lead bullet, of shoot to kill, of H Blocks and internment.

But what are we to make of her suggestion that the government in

the South is objectively aiding the 'terrorists', a claim echoed even more forcefully by reactionaries like Unionist MP Ken Maginnis and the Rev Ian Paisley?

This is our view is a false assertion to make. While we of course welcome the fact that the Dublin courts have refused to extradite men accused of fighting for Ireland's freedom — no crime at all in our view — the ruling class in the Twenty-six Counties is no friend of the national liberation movement.

Since partition in 1921, the civil war and the defeat of the 'intransigent' nationalists by the Free Staters, the rulers in the Twenty-six Counties have been a collaborating capitalist class, tied to their British patrons by a million strings.

Echoing the British establishment's bile, Haughey claimed the assassinations demonstrated the "evil of the IRA's murder campaign". He is no less an enemy of Irish liberation and socialism than Margaret Thatcher. If we don't trust one, we should certainly not trust the other.

*Mark Fischer*

## IN THE UNIONS

# Bureaucrats against Irish freedom

**British imperialism's main ally within the working class in its war against the Irish people proves repeatedly to be the trade union leaders**

**T**HE TRADE union movement has systematically excluded any discussion on Ireland ever since anyone can remember. Any union member who has ever tried to raise the question within their branch or at any other level will be well aware of this. Discussion is quickly squashed by the bureaucrats, using the excuse that "it's for our members in the Northern Ireland to decide"; that is, unions which are either overtly dominated by loyalists or by 'leftwingers' who operate an even more rigorous ban on discussion than exists in Britain.

In short, it is a cowardly and reactionary get out. But the rank and file of unions in Britain represent a potentially massive reservoir of support for Irish freedom — one that cannot be tapped so long as the union bureaucracy maintains its stranglehold on discussion, in effect, playing the role of British imperialism's fifth column in the workers' movement.

Hands Off Ireland! has always understood the importance of taking up this challenge within the unions: of demanding that British workers take sides for Irish freedom, whatever the management and bureaucracy makes of this.

As we reported in the last edition of *HOI!*, *HOI!* supporters in Westminster Civil and Public Servants Association working in the Department of the Environment have run up against this head on. To date, two union meetings with speakers from *HOI!* have been banned, as the management argued, because they were "of a political nature and not directly related to civil servant's working conditions." In other words, British workers should 'mind their own business' while their 'betters' get

on with the war in Ireland.

Activists in the branch refused to be gagged, and went along with the meetings away from the workplace. They also took further this attempt to determine what workers can and cannot discuss by the bosses.

The Branch Secretary wrote to John Ellis, the CPSA General Secretary to find out what the National Executive Committee (NEC) was going to do about the censoring of union members. The fact that workers were being denied the right to debate on a subject felt to be important to them, held very serious repercussions which had to be addressed.

The reply received from the right wing leadership was only to be expected. Ellis wrote that as the management had responsibility for the buildings, it was up to them to decide what could and what could not be done on official premises. He went on to say that the NEC were unable to change this and there was no point in trying!

But if the management can deny us the use of facilities on this issue, and are allowed to get away with it, they can do it on many others: workers attempting to organise industrial action may find themselves being victimised on the grounds that this, too, is 'not directly related to their working conditions'.

A meeting was subsequently held just after the Bloody Sunday demonstration, again rearranged to a nearby venue. At the meeting, it was decided to chase Ellis on his defeatist attitude to the censorship of the union. Not that we think Ellis or his cronies will suddenly see the light. But *HOI!* supporters are pushing for rank and file workers within the CPSA and

other unions to make a stand against employers' infringements on our rights. Supporters in other branches and unions are working to get resolutions through in their workplaces, using this as an opportunity to generate discussion on Ireland.

As an aside, it is worth noting that 'Time To Go' supporters in the SWP in this branch refused to take up this fight or show defiance to the management's attacks by affiliating to *HOI!*, on the grounds that this was 'too advanced' for the branch. In effect this is a refusal not only to support raising the question of Ireland in the union on a principled basis, but amounts to running away from the defence of basic union rights.

Links between the rights of workers in this country and the right of Irish self determination must be made whenever possible and fought through. Get hold of draft union resolutions and other materials on this from our box number.

Inevitably, this will bring union members into conflict with the union bureaucracy: the same people who stab workers in the back when they fight for their own rights connive with the denial of rights to the Irish people by presenting a block to the involvement of workers in Britain in this struggle.

To kick this off, *HOI!* will also be lobbying the forthcoming CPSA Conference in Bournemouth in May 1990, and organising a fringe meeting. The Irish war is an issue for all workers. To ignore this is to set ourselves up for defeat by the same forces that wage war in Ireland — British capitalism.

*Chris Allan*



# Breaking the chains

We recently received the letter below, which appears here in an edited form, in response to Siân Bond's article on fighting for Irish POWs in the last issue of HOI!

IN HER article Siân Bond argues that "to accept that some prisoners are 'guilty' and some are 'innocent' is to disarm ourselves". Only a British person could take such a position and deny the particular outrage felt by those innocent Irish people who are framed by the British state. Of course all Irish prisoners share a common oppression, but frame-ups are a distinctive component of British strategy, targeted specifically against the Irish civilian population. To ignore that particularity is to let Britain off the hook...

The distinction between 'prisoners of war' and 'framed prisoners' is not one that has been invented by faint-hearts on the British left. It reflects the reality of the Irish war where there are, as with all wars, combatants and non-combatants ... Joe O'Connell, whom Siân Bond so selectively quotes, drew out the distinction in his speech from the dock. The defiant words around which she bases her argument relate only to himself and his fellow IRA soldiers ...

The exposure of the frame-ups is an essential part of the challenge to Labour, and a challenge that can-

not exclude all but the most militant if it is to have any resonance within the working class. Is HOI! saying to the working class that if they don't support the IRA they cannot contribute to a campaign to free the Birmingham Six? Would HOI! have run a campaign demanding the release of the Guildford Four and the Balcombe Street Four on the same grounds? That is an ultra-left fantasy and would see Paul Hill behind bars to this day:

Jenny Sutton and Pamela Robinson

Revolutionary Communist Group  
Siân Bond replies:

Sutton and Robinson express the dismal liberalism that laid low the RCG's Irish Solidarity Movement of which I was originally the Secretary (as well as being a member of the Revolutionary Communist Group's Irish Sub-Committee).

For example, they instinctively shy away from the position of HOI! that the frame-ups have to be understood in the context of the war waged by British imperialism against the Irish people. This hardly means that we ignore the particularity of each case: as I make clear in the article Sutton

and Robinson find so hard to stomach, "While we in HOI! will continue to expose the frameups of the Birmingham Six and the Winchester Three and their inhuman treatment, we recognise that this is not the ultimate goal. The goal is to win British workers over to the cause of Ireland and to smash Britain's rule there."

Having denounced HOI!'s stance that the frameups can only be understood in the context of the war, they reveal their approach. Implicitly, they tell us any campaign for the release of the Winchester 3, for example, should concentrate exclusively on the question of their innocence, and ignore the war. They chide us; "Is HOI! saying to the working class that if they don't support the IRA they cannot contribute to a campaign to free the Birmingham Six?" No, but what we are saying is that in order to get the working class moving as a class as opposed to atomised individuals writing to their MPs or standing on picket lines you must precisely address the question of the war. Until British workers are won to break from the identification with their 'own'

state that characterises their outlook at the moment, working class individuals may be won to the campaign (which of course is excellent), but not significant sections of the class as a class.

Let's put it another way. The Birmingham 6 are 'guilty' of belonging to a nation against which Britain conducts a bloody imperialist war, a war that it manages to bamboozle the vast majority of the British working class into supporting. Until that support is broken, the British proletariat will not move in significant numbers on frameups or any other aspect of the Irish war.

And really, Sutton and Robinson could do rather better than lecture HOI! about how unrealistic our approach is. Paul Hill is indeed free today: well spotted, RCG. There is the little matter of the 15 years he spent waiting for his freedom to consider though, isn't there? That is the real test of your strategy for fighting frameups. And without the working class mobilised as a class in defence of Irish prisoners, a task that the RCG pours scorn on as an "ultra left fantasy", as Martina Shanahan points out, what is there to stop it all happening again?

It is ironic that these self-styled 'communists' have no faith in the ability of working class action to free political prisoners, or idea of how it can be achieved. HOI!'s perspective is clear: the only way to free the framed prisoners is to continually make the links between this and Britain's war in Ireland. There is no other effective way for fighting for the freedom of these prisoners, because there is no other way of mobilising the working class in Britain for this.

## POLITICAL PRISONERS

# The Winchester Three – Thatcher's Hostages

### Possession of an offensive accent

In August 1987 two young Irish people, Finbar Cullen and Martina Shanahan, were noticed by the daughter of the (at that time) secretary of state, Tom King, on a wall and public right of way on King's land in Wiltshire. She became suspicious when they did not wave and notified the security police at her father's home. Forty minutes later, the police called to the spot mentioned by Ms King and found the two people still there. According to the police they were quite cooperative and agreed to go voluntarily to the police station to help the police with their inquiries – prompted, according to the police, by the couple's Irish accents.

At the police station, it was discovered that the names given by the two were false, and the police questioned them under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. This Act, unparalleled elsewhere in Europe and rejected as repugnant by the European Court of Human Rights in 1988, enables the police to detain suspects without charge for up to seven days. The police also travelled to the campsite where the two were staying, 30 miles away in Somerset, and arrested John McCann, who had been staying with them.

Immediately after the arrests, information was passed by the police to the media, creating speculation that some major 'terrorist' act had been foiled.

Until a suspect is charged, the laws of subjudice do not apply. This is of immense significance, in that it allows unlimited media manipulation by the police and political establishment for seven days in PTA arrest cases.

In the Winchester Three case, headlines such as "IRA bomb drama at top Tories home", "IRA try to kill King" and "IRA squad out to kill Thatcher" appeared while the three were in custody. Despite there being nothing to link them with the IRA or any 'terrorist' group, in the eyes of the media they were guilty before they were even charged with anything.

On the seventh day of detention, they were charged with conspiracy to murder King with persons unknown. Later they were charged with "conspiracy to murder persons unknown with persons unknown".

### The state's conspiracy

Charges such as these are proffered when the state has no evidence to press substantial charges. The only country in Europe at present that presses such charges without requiring material evidence of a conspiracy is Britain.

The three were placed on remand for fourteen months until their trial in October 1988. Martina Shanahan was held in disgusting, barbaric conditions in Ridley remand centre, strip searched regularly, kept in solitary confinement, and suffered mental and physical decline. Her sister Deirdre was excluded from the UK under the PTA.

Their trial was fixed for Winchester, a notorious Tory heartland and home to seven British army regiments. It was also timed to coincide with the Tories' return to Brighton, their first conference there since they were bombed in 1984 by the IRA. Side by side in the media were features on the trial and the Brighton conference, thus creating a quasi link between the Winchester case and the Brighton bomb.

The three elected not to give evidence on legal advice, as there was no case to answer. The day after they announced this intention, an unscheduled impromptu press conference was organised by Tom King, the supposed victim of the conspiracy. He announced that he intended to abolish the right of silence in the north of Ireland, as exercising it was an IRA tactic and its use inferred guilt.

This crude intervention consigned the trial to farce. The judge refused defence submissions to have it stopped. Despite all this, the Special Branch vetted jury couldn't make up their minds for two days. On the second day the judge told them that he would take a majority verdict, and that dissenting jurors could change their minds to enable a verdict to be brought in. Eventually they did – guilty on both counts. The next day the three were sentenced to a savage 25 years each.

The case has been heard at the appeal court in early April, as the three applied for leave of appeal. Leave has been granted to appeal against the severity of the sentences; judgement has been reserved on whether leave to appeal against conviction will be granted.

Roger Smith

(London Winchester Three Campaign)

### Write to the three:

Finbar Cullen, T68273, and John McCann, T68272, HMP Frankland, PO Box 40, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YO.  
Martina Shanahan, P37693, HMP Durham, Old Elvert, Durham DH1 3HU.



# HANDS OFF IRELAND!

## IRELAND, SOUTH AFRICA: THE SAME FIGHT

**W**HEN NELSON Mandela walked free, the British establishment went wild. Every time you tuned into Radio 1 on the day, The Specials AKA's 'Free Nelson Mandela' seemed to be playing. Television news showed film of him, 'slo-mo', fist raised in defiance, surrounded by jubilant crowds. He even got an invitation - which he refused - from the hypocrite Thatcher.

Yet cast your mind back a little while before this, to the release of four other political prisoners: Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Carole Richardson and Paddy Armstrong - the Guildford Four. Where then was the media celebration at the release of political hostages by a brutal, corrupt and repressive state machine? No songs on Britain's radio stations for these four, no invitations to tea and biscuits at Number 10.

Ah, we are told, but there are differences. Indeed there are. Mandela was and is a leading figure in the ANC and the South African liberation struggle. He played an important role in establishing the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), which has been a severe thorn in the side of apartheid ever since. In his first speech when released, Mandela rightly defended the right of the South African masses to respond to apartheid terror with armed struggle. It is doubtful that the Guildford Four knew one end of a gun from another.

### Double standards?

You bet. It's not so long ago - at the Commonwealth Summit of 1987 in Vancouver, in fact - that



MK, IRA: What's the difference? For many radicals, only one is a freedom fighter, the other a 'terrorist'

the same Margaret Thatcher who welcomed Mandela's release stated that the ANC was "a terrorist organisation on a par with the IRA and PLO, and that she would never be seen engaging in talks with its leaders" (the *Guardian's* South African correspondent, David Beresford, quoted in *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, March 8 1990).

Ireland has had its own Sharpsville - Bloody Sunday in Derry, 1972 when British troops fired on an unarmed and peaceful demonstration, killing 14. Yet there is no condemnation of this by establishment politicians.

In 1963 John Vorster, the then South African Minister of Justice, stated, on the introduction of an apartheid Coercion Bill, that he "would be willing to exchange all the legislation of that sort for one

clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act"

The struggle in South Africa can pull massive numbers of people in Britain onto the streets in its support, when a similar struggle 'next door' pulls demonstrations that rarely nudge into the lower thousands. Kinnoek - whose party sent in the troops back in 1969 - can wax lyrical over Mandela's release, tears in his eyes, alongside advocating harsher measures against Irish republicans.

### Britain's Cuba

Britain's war in Ireland is no 'outdated colonial policy'. The British state understands full well the importance of the occupation of the Six Counties, even if much of

the British left does not. TE Utley, a former leader writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, put the imperialist interest succinctly: "British security is hardly compatible with the existence of a Cuba a few miles off our own shores. Any notion that the vacuum created by the withdrawal of United Kingdom troops would be promptly and smoothly filled by a successful invasion of the North by the Irish Republic and, as a result, the establishment throughout Ireland of a peaceful, if rather inefficient and corrupt, bourgeois state, is absurd".

For British imperialism, to withdraw from Ireland would be to concede defeat. To concede defeat in Belfast, as I believe Enoch Powell once stated, would be to invite defeat in Birmingham and Brixton. Support a struggle thousands of

miles away, yes; but support a struggle which threatens the very existence of the ruling class here, and watch out! The smell of blood dissipates over a distance.

This makes it all the more important to fight for that freedom, and relating this to a fight for our rights in Britain. This is no new thing, but a fact that Lenin recognised after the Easter Rising of 1916: "A blow delivered against the power of the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or Africa".

Any campaign for Irish freedom in Britain must therefore be willing and able to challenge the British state. You cannot reason British imperialism round into charitably giving Ireland its freedom, any more than you can talk the apartheid regime into quietly dismantling the system which guarantees the super-exploitation of millions.

Nobody argued Nelson Mandela's 'innocence' to justify the campaign to release him. Absolutely right: he was 'guilty' of fighting for his people's freedom. The same is true of the Volunteers of the IRA and Inla incarcerated in British and Twenty-six County jails. There is no such thing as a 'guilty' political prisoner: free them all, in Ireland and South Africa.

Support freedom in South Africa - support freedom in Ireland! Imperialism is the same enemy. Join the resistance on April 21. Take the streets for Irish liberation!

■ Troops Out Now!  
■ Make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam!

Alan Merrick

## JOIN THE RESISTANCE!



You've read *Hands Off Ireland!*, now do something about it! Join us and build a mass working class solidarity movement with the struggle for Irish self determination.

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