

# The LENINIST

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## Non-stop picket

**W**AR in the Gulf looks ever more certain. Unless Saddam Hussein does a politically suicidal about turn, the US-led coalition will unleash its awesome war machine. The death and destruction will be horrendous.

The massed Iraqi frontline troops and tank concentrations will be sitting targets for US aircraft, which will dominate the skies within minutes. Military analysts say that in the course of the following high tech blitzkrieg 100,000 Iraqis will be killed and many more will suffer excruciating injuries. While casualties on the other side will be far smaller, they will nonetheless be numbered in the tens of thousands.

For what? Not for the sake of democracy, as Bush, Major and other US and British leaders lyingly claim from the safety of the stage managed desert media opportunity, the TV studio, parliament or push office.

Leaving aside the sham nature of democracy in advanced capitalist countries like the US and Britain, Saudi Arabia does not even bother with the trappings of bourgeois democracy; nor did Kuwait before it was invaded and annexed by Iraq. Nor are the US and Britain out to stop a regional Adolf Hitler II. The US and

Join the non-stop picket of the US embassy.  
Build the anti-war movement

Britain have supported all sorts of fascist and fascistic regimes around the world, including that of Saddam Hussein throughout most of his eight year war with Iran.

The US is determined to secure control over half the world's oil supplies. But it is out to do more than that. It wants to reassert its hegemony over other capitalist states in the emerging post-Cold War new world order.

By invading Iraq and 'liberating' its Kuwaiti 19th Province for the Emir it will be in a good position to redivide the whole of the Middle East and impose a *Pax Americana* on it. While inter-imperialist antagonisms can only heighten, this will put the US one up, for the moment at least, over its more dynamic Japanese and German rivals; in that sense the Gulf War will be the first shots of an inter-imperialist World War III.

Saddam Hussein's regime is equally hypocritical.

The Ba'athists have tortured and murdered countless workers and peasants in their own country, including thousands of Kurds killed with chemical weapons. Who can believe these

butchers when they say they are fighting for the liberation of the Arab 'nation' and the rights of the Palestinians. The reality is that the Iraqi ruling class needs to join the imperialist club, albeit as a junior partner, or face the prospect of revolution.

It is greed and plunder that drives both sides. Whoever wins, it will cost the lives of thousands upon thousands of rank and file soldiers, who are seen as nothing more than cannon fodder in the service of the only god our rulers believe in: profit.

The Gulf War will be a bosses' war, in essence no different from any other war of robbery. Given this, there is every reason for servicemen and women not to slaughter each other.

Soldiers, sailors and aircrew, remember World War I. Remember those British and German soldiers who exchanged gifts and fraternised in the no-man's land in between the trenches of Flanders at Christmas 1914. Above all remember the Russian soldiers and sailors of 1917. They turned their guns away from their German brothers and instead used them against the main enemy: the ruling class and its system.

What the 1917 October Revolution showed is that even a world war can be stopped from below. So no one should doubt that the Gulf War can be stopped from below.

Unfortunately it has to be admitted that so far the anti-war movement in Britain has proved woefully inadequate. While some constitute themselves as a support group for Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi bourgeoisie, others have concentrated on giving advice to the British government that war against Iraq would be unprofitable.

But whatever criticisms we have of others in the anti-war movement, we can all recognise that far more needs to be done. What is needed is imagination, a real sense of urgency and immediate unity in action.

One off demonstrations might have been okay during the protracted Vietnam War. What is needed today, though, must take into account the different nature of this war: the fact that it will, if it comes, last only days, not years.

That is why the Internationalist Committee to Stop the Gulf War - sponsored by the Provisional Central

Committee of the CPGB - has initiated a non-stop picket of the US embassy in London's Grosvenor Square (nearest tube Bond Street). It must be supported.

Whatever the admittedly symbolic nature of such an action may be, it does have the unbeatable virtue of giving a sense of urgency to the anti-war movement, a powerful focal point around which the anti-war movement can steadily be built up.

The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB calls upon all workers, all who hate war and imperialism, to support the non-stop picket of the US embassy.

It will be run in the broadest and most democratic way possible. No one will be expected to change, or keep to themselves, their particular political views. So there is no excuse for sectarianism or complacency. War threatens. The time to act is now.

Members of the Labour Party, CNDers, muslims, Christians, communists - all who want to see a just peace - must support and build the non-stop picket. Mobilise delegations from organisations, workplaces, trade union branches and shop stewards committees. Pass resolutions of support. Fight for strike action the day war breaks out, and blockade the US embassy.

## Communist Unity

For unity around the Marxist-Leninist principles of proletarian internationalism, proletarian revolution and proletarian rule

**W**E URGE readers to attend the Communist Party of Britain's 'Consultative Conference on Communist Unity' on January 19 - not because we imagine that it has anything to do with genuine communist unity; nor because we think that there exists a large pool of Marxist-Leninists in the CPB or in the other main participating organisation, the New Communist Party. There just might be a few potentially good individuals in them. But both these organisations are in profound ideological crisis and in an advanced stage of organisational decomposition.

The reason we urge readers to attend is because we want to test in practice the sincerity of the promise of the 'official communists' to engage in open debate and discussion, and to show that in the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB the working class in Britain has a force for real communist unity, an alternative to opportunism and revisionism.

Those who mean what they say about 'communist unity' will have no problem with debate. That is why the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB wrote to the CPB on November 17 1990 asking for full speaking rights and suggesting ways to facilitate the fullest exchange of views. Unfortunately they have not deigned to reply. This is arrogant and unnes-

sary. It is also very revealing.

Does the CPB fear our organisation? Is it determined to stage a tightly controlled, undemocratic event? It would seem so. That is why no invitation has been sent to our organisation, no provision made which would allow us to present our views to the conference, and why the CPB will not even reply to our letter. This undemocratic way of going about things should be challenged, and not only by our readers. Members of the CPB and NCP who are serious about calls for communist unity have a duty to demand equal rights for all communist organisations. Failure to do so is a denial of elementary working class democracy and an act of opportunism.

Of course, the fact that the CPB leadership organises a conference on 'communist unity' and then refuses to even reply to the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB comes as no surprise: the conference was forced on them from below at their last congress, and - more importantly - the CPB is communist in name only.

It is social democratic to the core.

The CPB is tied to the falling *Morning Star*, which fulsomely praises the traitor Gorbachev, his pro-capitalist perestroika and so-called new political thinking. Indeed, the CPB was formed on the basis of defending a reformist programme, the 1978 version of the *British Road to Socialism*, which imagines that capitalism can be done away with primarily through parliament and a Labour government (it was drafted by arch Euro Martin Jacques). Since then the CPB has gone on to produce its own essentially indistinguishable updated version - the draft that came from the CPB leadership left out all mention of the aim of communism.

Superficially then the CPB would seem to be a strange unity partner for the centrist NCP. After all, the NCP was formed on the basis of opposition to the 1978 *BRS* and has recently decided to 'stop being mealy mouthed' and come out against Gorbachev. However, the NCP has good opportunistic reasons to court the CPB.

The drying up of funds with the fall of the Communist Party government in

Czechoslovakia has put its very existence in doubt. Having no influence in the working class movement, losing members at a steady and unremitting trickle, the NCP leadership decided to play the unity card as the only way to save itself; its slogan for communist unity has nothing to do with principle, nothing to do with serving the working class.

There can be no doubt that what our working class in Britain needs is a strong Communist Party. But it is ABC that such a Communist Party cannot be built through some sort of opportunist lash up by crisis ridden 'official communist' rumps. Communist unity must be built on the basis of unity around communist principles. That is what the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB stands for and is committed to achieve.

Our principles are as clear as they are strong:

● **Proletarian internationalism:** The working class is a world class which can only find liberation through world revolution. The revolutionary struggle in one country must be subordinated to

the worldwide struggle. That means the struggle to reforge the CPGB is intimately linked to the struggle to reforge a democratic centralist world party of revolution.

● **Revolution:** The capitalists will never yield to the working class unless we are able to use violence to overcome and crush all resistance. There can be no Labour Party or parliamentary road to socialism.

● **Working class democracy:** Communists must fight to overthrow the sham of parliament and to replace it with a system of soviets, or workers' councils: organs of working class struggle that are, in the course of the revolution, transformed into organs of working class state power, organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Those attending the CPB's 'Consultative Conference' are invited to attend our fringe meeting, which will begin as soon as the conference finishes. Discuss the proceedings of the conference and the need for principled communist unity. Saturday January 19, 6.30pm, Caxton House.

CPB 'Consultative Conference on Communist Unity' 12.30pm - 6.30pm (refreshments available from 11.30am), Saturday January 19, Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19 (Archway tube). Credentials £5/£2.50 from CPB, 3 Victoria Chambers, Luke Street, London EC2A 4EE.





Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

THE *Morning Star* has been rudely nose dived yet deeper into crisis by the Soviet Union's unilateral decision to cancel its entire order, which until last year accounted for over half the sales (irony or ironies, it would seem that *The Leninist* now has a bigger circulation there). Staff is to be cut again and another "survival" appeal has been launched. But the *Morning Star's* end is nigh. The coffers can only keep it afloat for another year. After that, extinction's certain finger beckons.

Of course, the crisis is not primarily financial. Given the terminal crisis of 'official communism', it was only a matter of time before the chronic post-World War II decline of the paper reached, as its editorial says with monstrous complacency, "a difficult period", ie, the point where its demise as a daily paper seems almost certain (January 8 1991). For genuine communists this is no matter for indifference. Lessons must be learned.

The launch of the *Morning Star's* forerunner, the *Daily Worker*, on January 1 1930 might have owed something to the "Moscow gold" of the Communist International. It owed more, much more, though, to the brilliant editorship of a youthful comrade William Rust, and to the CPGB which won a generation of militant workers to Lenin's call for a daily "proletarian communist newspaper" in Britain. It was the tireless hard work and selfless sacrifice of our Party's cadres which gave birth to, and then built and sustained the *Daily Worker* against bans by wholesalers and government and numerous prosecutions for contempt, libel and sedition (many of its staff receiving stiff prison sentences).

The *Daily Worker* was, first and foremost, a communist paper. To the extent that it succeeded in winning workers against class collaboration, Labour Party reformism, imperialist war and the evils of capitalism, it secured love and loyalty, and survived and prospered. So there was nothing inevitable about the present crisis. Tragically the gain the *Daily Worker/Morning Star* represented for our class was eaten away from within by the opportunist cancer that came to dominate the CPGB and was then squandered by the bureaucratic rebellion of today's epigone of an editor, Tony Chater. Showing the moral degeneration of 'official communism', by the early 1980s Chater came to consider the paper his private property. In an effort to save his paper he split away from the CPGB and sought instead to rely on clever business moves, the support of trade union tops and the Soviet leadership. He proved disastrously wrong on all three counts.

As capitalists, the Chaterites proved rank amateurs. Almost within a year of paying out for a £1.5 million Goss Urbanite Mark II - the "foundation for the future" that would, according to Chater, "print our way out of trouble" - all printers and a whole swathe of journalists were sacked and the Farringdon Road building, new press and all, was sold (for £2.1 million to soft porn publisher David Sullivan, who just three months later got £3 million for it). Since then things have gone from bad to worse. Predictably, the trade union bureaucracy's willingness to donate its members' money proved insufficient, let alone a substitute for communist dedication. Indeed the more the *Morning Star* relied on union bosses, the more it became indistinguishable from Labourism and the more politically irrelevant it became.

A similar problem manifested itself with cheerleading for Gorbachev. He might have taken the Soviet Union to the point of insolvency, but that is not the main reason for Mezkhkni's "suspension" of the *Morning Star* order. Past Soviet leaders opposed imperialism and defended the gains of socialism, albeit often in a ham fisted and totally bureaucratic fashion. Gorbachev is different. He serves imperialism, wants to reintroduce the (capitalist) market. As such he is feted by the bourgeois media. Why subsidise a typically boring, typically declining circulation product of 'official communism' when one can get fulsome praise from the BBC, *The Guardian*, *The Sun*, etc, gratis?

Yet, looking at the growing epidemic of unemployment and homelessness, the slide of capitalism towards war and barbarism, the bankruptcy of Labourism and 'official communism', who can doubt the need for a communist daily. Only with such a weapon can our class be organised to end the crime of capitalism.

Clearly that task falls squarely onto the shoulders of those fighting to reforge the Party that gave birth to and sustained the *Daily Worker*: the membership of the CPGB led by its Provisional Central Committee. Our comrades will prove worthy successors of the past, worthy fighters for the future.

Reforging our CPGB will reforge our *Daily Worker*!

The Editor

## LETTERS Workers' defence

In *The Leninist* No 96, Josh Gibbons recalls that the 1930s National Unemployed Workers Movement equipped "its supporters with intransigent leadership and, yes, makeshift weapons against police attack".

So it is appropriate to recall that it was not only in the General Strike of 1926 that workers built defence corps. In the great unemployed struggles of 1931 the lesson was learnt too.

Allen Hutt, in his *Postwar History of the British Working Class*, tells of a 20,000 strong demonstration which was attacked by police; "next day a second demonstration was called and 50,000 turned out, among them a defence corps 500 strong, carrying heavy sticks, this time no clash with the police was reported." And Hutt quotes the description by Wal Hannington, leader of the NUWM, of another 50,000 demonstration at Glasgow Green a month later: "mounted and foot police charged into the multitude of unarmed workers. The workers, however, fought back ferociously; iron railings around the Green were torn up and used as weapons. The fighting spirit of the Glasgow workers had been stirred by the unprovoked attack and they fought their way out of the Green onto the main roads; the battle which had started at the Green rapidly extended through the centre of the city. For hours it raged. Shop windows were smashed and extensive damage was done, and not until after midnight did the struggle come to an end."

It was the same all over Britain, and in Northern Ireland. Throughout 1931 and into 1932 the workers marched and fought. Tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands: a three day battle with the police in Birkenhead. *The Times* said: "The police ... were met with a rain of bolts, stones, lumps of lead, hammer heads and other missiles ... from windows ... women threw all kinds of missiles."

In Belfast police turned out in armoured cars, Catholic and Protestant workers fought side by side, barricades went up, trenches were dug across streets. Two workers were killed by police bullets. And the fight was successful. The Northern Ireland government raised benefits by a third. Later, in Britain, the cuts were restored.

Robert Belling  
Leicester

## Gulf

I write regarding our position on the Gulf question, which although I consider correct in its conclusions - of defeat on both sides - is nonetheless weak on the premise from which the conclusion is drawn, ie that Iraq is a proto-imperialist nation. I don't deny that Iraq may be at the stage of being a proto-imperialist nation, but I consider that this argument is really irrelevant to the debate and should not constitute the basic reason for the policy of defeatism by the Iraqi workers.

Let us assume that the opposition is correct when they declare that Iraq is a semi-colony. Does this justify their policy of defence of Iraq? I say no. Conversely, does their definition of Iraq destroy our conclusion, that of defeatism? Again I say no. However, if we follow the logic of our present policy through, ie that defeatism is conditional upon Iraq not being a semi-colony, then we must conclude that if other economically oppressed countries opposed world imperialism, such as Bolivia, Peru etc, for example, which are not proto-imperialists, then we would favour the workers of those countries fighting in defence of their national bourgeoisie, on the basis presumably that they are oppressed and

not oppressor nations.

The question posed here is: does the criterion for defeatism or defeatism depend upon whether a nation is oppressed as a semi-colony, or is an oppressor by virtue of the fact that it is imperialistic or proto-imperialistic?

I consider that this is an incorrect criterion as, due to the stage of development of the national bourgeoisie, in both semi-colonial and proto-imperialist, (both of which can be defined as oppressed by world superpower imperialist standards) they are integrated with and are a compliant partner of world imperialism, in the exploitation and oppression of the working class.

In other words the national bourgeoisie is itself an oppressor of the working class of its own country. It is from this class angle, of the world bourgeoisie versus the world working class, - as the Iranian comrade at the last Internationalist Committee public meeting pointed out - that we must judge the question of revolutionary defeatism in these oppressed countries.

Lenin, contrary to what the Trotskyists declare, did not give carte blanche support to the oppressed bourgeois nation. Writing in *The Right of Nations to Self Determination*, he declares that a "strict distinction must be drawn between two periods of capitalism, which radically differ from each other". The first period is that of the "downfall of feudalism and absolutism ... the formation of the bourgeois democratic society and states, when the national movements ... draw all classes of the population into politics."

The second period "of definitely crystallized capitalist states with long established constitutional regime, with a strongly developed antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie - the period that may be called the eve of the downfall of capitalism." In other words the first stage is that of the struggle of all classes for liberation from both feudalism and the foreign imperialist direct military, political and economic oppression, in order to establish an independent nation state, which is a progressive development insofar as its content is one of democratic demands and rights, in which, the "working class supports the bourgeoisie ... to create better conditions for the class struggle" (Lenin points out that the workers' interests are never completely identical with that of the bourgeoisie even at this stage).

From the inception of such a state in which the national bourgeoisie invariably dominates, the second stage is entered into, "typical features" of which is the "absence of mass bourgeois-democratic movements ... pushes into the forefront the antagonism between internationally united capital and the international labour movement." In other words the national bourgeoisie, once seizing power, becomes a partner of world imperialism in the common struggle to oppress and exploit the working class, and as such ceases to play a progressive role.

Regarding these two stages mentioned above Lenin writes: "The important thing for the workers is to distinguish the principles of two trends. If the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights against the oppressing one, we are always, in every case, and more resolutely than anyone else, in favour; for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But if the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we are opposed. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation, but we do not condone the strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation."

As Lenin writes further on, the fight of the masses against the oppressing nation alongside the national bourgeoisie is conditional on the content of the first, bourgeois democratic stage, where, "bourgeois nationalism of every oppressed nation has a general democratic content that we support unconditionally".

From this historical standpoint, of the development of the national bour-

geoisie, from a mass democratic movement fighting imperialist oppression, to that of a national bourgeoisie which has established its state power and oppresses and exploits the workers in collaboration with world imperialism, we must judge and determine our attitude on the question of defeatism or defeatism whenever this national bourgeoisie conflicts with its imperialist masters.

The conflict is not in the interest of greater democracy and freedom for the workers of the semi-colonial nation, but rather a struggle to enhance the wealth, power and privileges of the junior capitalist partner. With rare exception, the bourgeois national states of the semi-colonial countries are in the second stage of development, and should have the policy of defeatism applied to any struggle that they are involved in with their imperialist masters.

I consider that this must be our answer to the Trotskyist generalised proposition of critical support for bourgeois nationalists, not only during military conflicts, but also during trade war conflicts when the national bourgeoisie nationalises imperialist interests. Such actions are not advancing the welfare of the working class, but a means of enhancing the power and wealth of the national bourgeoisie in its strivings for a larger slice of the profits extracted by the exploitation of the working class.

P Conlon  
South London

## RCG

The Revolutionary Communist Group school on the Gulf crisis in December underlined how theoretically weak this particular organisation actually is. For the RCG, calling for the defeat of imperialism means supporting the reactionary bourgeoisie of Iraq. The RCG therefore does not offer any solutions for the working class of Iraq, the only solution being revolution. The RCG is implying that the working class of Iraq must face the possibility of being blown off the face of the earth in a reactionary war of redivision.

As a supporter of the CPGB, I argued that we use the same method as Lenin, when in World War I the Bolsheviks called for the defeat of the Russian and German bourgeoisie. A leading member of the RCG then replied: "Lenin would never have called for the defeat of the German bourgeoisie." This comrade should go back and read Lenin.

Another leading member then went on to argue that the CPGB does not call for the defeat of British imperialism. Is this comrade unable to read, or is he simply dishonest? I feel he is the latter.

Having said the RCG has no solution for the Iraqi working class, what about the British working class?

We believe that without a reformed Communist Party, revolution will remain just talk. That is why we place emphasis on the formation of the CPGB in 1920. For the RCG, however, the formation of the CPGB was nothing so marvellous. Oh no! It was only Lenin's party, the British section of Comintern, whose comrades organised the Hands Off Russia! campaign, formed the backbone of the general strike, elected MPs to parliament on a revolutionary platform, etc. No, there is nothing special in that, is there?

Adam Levy  
London

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

## WRITE OR RING

If you wish 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 071-431 3135.

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## REVIEWS

### Union Blues

Dan La Botz, *Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union*, Verso, London 1990, pp336. £11.95 pbk, £34.95 hbk

DURING the past decade, the US government, courts and employers have cooperated to erode the rights of workers and crush the trade unions. In addition to this attack by the ruling class and the resulting drop in living standards, American workers have to put up with corrupt and lazy union leaders, who collaborate with both the employers and the mafia, inherit their posts from their fathers, contemptuously ignore union democracy, arrange for thugs to beat up any members who speak up against them, and defraud union pension and other funds.

The failure of class collaborationist misleaders to resist attacks by employers has led to an upsurge in rank and file militancy and the growth of organisations committed to fight for reform of their unions. This book is the story of one such organisation, Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

Teamsters are mostly truck drivers and associated workers in docks and warehouses. La Botz describes the growth of unionism among them in the 1930s, part of the huge union movement throughout the country which led to the formation in 1935 of the Congress of Industrial Organisations which organised the industrial workers. He traces the bureaucratisation of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters to the decision of its leadership to stick with the American Federation of Labour which organised the craft unions, "joining with the employers in condemning the CIO and the strategies that were succeeding in bringing millions of workers into the Labor movement." (p115)

The IBT grew rapidly through a combination of raids on other unions and agreements with employers to take entire workforces into the membership. La Botz blames the bureaucratisation and degeneration of the union on this tactic of organising from above. Although this is true, it is only a symptom of a much deeper problem, the absence of any socialist influence within the union. When the leaders and members of a working class organisation are so steeped in the dominant bourgeois ideology that 'socialism' has become a dirty word, it is inevitable that the bureaucracy will adopt the ideas and methods of the ruling class. La Botz gives some amazing examples of how corrupt the IBT leaders have become: "Union officials were in many cases receiving direct payments from employers, literally selling out the members." (p51)

He locates the origin of TDU in the wildcat strike in 1970, a manifestation of the wave of militancy which had spread from the campuses and the anti-Vietnam war protests to the working class. Since its foundation in 1976 TDU has campaigned to eliminate corruption by democratising the union. TDU activists stand against mafia stooges for election to the presidency of locals (IBT branches), and in 1985 TDU organised a national petition to campaign for direct election of IBT top officials (p286). It wants to return control of the union to the members, to change it from "a racket, an organisation they had to pay off to keep their jobs" (p136) into a union that would be "a force for progressive social change in America." (pxiii)

By 1988 TDU had grown into a national opposition to the IBT leadership, which felt compelled to adopt some reformist policies to take the initiative from TDU. Illustrating this, La Botz describes general president William McCarthy announcing "that there would be no more concessionary bargaining and that relief would be granted only to truly needy firms." (p319) "Relief" means the wage cuts and other concessions that weak and corrupt IBT leaders regu-

larly concede to recession-hit employers who insist that the alternative is massive loss of jobs.

The growth of TDU largely stemmed from members' dissatisfaction with such deals, but TDU lacks the communist perspective of fighting for what the workers need, not what the system can afford. TDU organisers remain reformists, and their demand for "union democracy and justice from the employer" remains a demand for bourgeois justice; for skilled, honest, democratically elected reformists to lead reformist struggles. As the decline of US capitalism continues and the number of "genuinely needy firms" increases, the scope for working class gains through such methods will be reduced even further. Life itself will prove to teamsters and all US workers that only the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state can permanently put an end to unemployment and wage cuts.

TDU contributes admirably to the working class struggle by bringing together local activists "so that they could share their experiences and generalise from them" helping to "overcome the parochialism of workers in different cities or crafts." (p327) But it lacks this communist leadership and programme, and its victories in the last ten years, described in the last section of the book, have been correspondingly modest. "In the end, they went back to work with a pay cut ... but they had saved their union." (p280)

La Botz reports without comment that the TDU National Steering Committee had refused to exclude socialists from the organisation, but in response to red baiting by employers had published a statement saying: "As anyone knows who has read our program, TDU is not about socialism or dual unionism. It is about returning our union to the rank and file." (p188) Black separatist wings of the TDU (p218) and prayers at the start of TDU branch meetings (p300) are also described without any criticism.

La Botz combines straight factual history with the personal stories of leading activists. This provides the immediacy and vividness which makes it a fascinating and even exciting book to read, but combined with La Botz's obvious and uncritical admiration for the people he writes about, it also prevents any depth of insight into the prospects of TDU movement or analysis of its reformist limitations.

Mary Goodwin

### Lynch Law

Nick Davies, *White Lies*, Chatto and Windus, 1991, pp449, £14.99 (hbk)

NICK DAVIES uses the life story of Clarence Brandley, a black man framed for rape and murder in Conroe, Texas. In the process he exposes not only active, aggressive red neck racism and middle class passive racism - that of "failing to notice that their town was still physically segregated, failing to be shocked at black inequality" (p421) - but, almost in spite of himself, also the racism inherent in the development of US capitalism.

Blacks were taken to America as slaves and subjected to indescribably cruel treatment under the whip of the capitalist/aristocratic slave owner. This superexploited source of labour power picked the cotton, cleared the forests, built the roads and railways that enabled the US to become a world power. In return they got poverty, illiteracy and degradation.

The black population responded with a history of revolt and resistance which gives it a crucial position in the struggle to liberate the entire Negro race. However all attempts to free themselves were met with savage oppression. They were tortured into submission, something which, as capital-

ism developed, became fully institutionalised in US society. Clarence Brandley was a typical victim.

He was an innocent school janitor in Conroe in 1987, who happened to be the only black man near the scene of the rape and murder of 14 year old Cheryl Ferguson. His nine and a half year prison ordeal started with an investigating police officer saying "One of you is gonna hang for this ... Since you're the nigger, you're elected." (p25) From there onwards the prejudice, corruption and racism became more and more organised and foul.

The Civil Rights movement meant that blacks were no longer burnt at the stake or hung from the nearest tree, and the Ku Klux Klan no longer published its social events in the local newspaper. Instead 'legitimate' means of terror were used, headed by the judicial system of elected judges and mayors.

It is clear from Davies' book that a whole stratum of the state bureaucracy in the US is imbued with racism. Not surprisingly, therefore, the death penalty (still in force in the 'civilised' US) is passed on a far higher percentage of cases of those classified as being part of an ethnic minority (there is no room for British arrogance here - the story of Clarence Brandley serves as a reminder of similar cases in Britain, such as that of Colin Roach who died under very dubious circumstances in Stoke Newington police station in 1983, as have others since).

The black question lies at the heart of US politics. It has to be said that Davies does not fully appreciate this. "Just as a secret police force tries to quell the courage of a whole people by arresting its figureheads ... so the white people of Montgomery County had for years ruled black people with fear by picking off their young men. Murder was disguised as a necessary social task." (p443) This illustrates the major failing of the book - Davies' unconscious assumption that the racism stems simply from ignorance, from the claim that "coloured people are different".

He views the situation as a problem of whites against blacks. He fails to locate the material basis that keeps these ignorant assumptions alive. He makes only one reference to how these attitudes had first taken shape: "six generations back, her family had owned slaves but her own father wouldn't stand for any racism ... Of course, Peggy Riggle added, her father and mother never would have let a black person visit their house - never would have dreamed of it. They didn't even know any black people. But each generation got better, she believed." (p422)

This line of thinking should have led the author into analysing the fact that capitalist society developed for 250 years in the southern states on the backs of black slaves. Effectively this continued after the American Civil War, with the 'emancipated' ex-slaves surviving on pitiful plots of land and kept down through naked terror, official and unofficial. The capitalists played the poor whites off against the former slaves, producing a crippling split within the working class throughout the US. Working class whites were kept in their place by their relative position to the blacks living in shacks across the railway line.

This latter point is well illustrated. White workers are willing to purger themselves, no matter how transparent the lies. Again, however, Davies fails to deal with the reasons for this, even though he points out that these people would normally be considered decent and law abiding citizens. He refuses to admit that such actions have origins deep in the history of the US.

There are many instances in the book of intimidation of workers by their employers, but again it is just seen in the light of whites against the blacks. If you take away the history and social structure of a capitalist society, you take away the ability to understand its inevitable individual tragedies, like that of Clarence Brandley.

Jade Scott

## ACTION

### Communist Party

Gulf war: how to stop it: Invitation meeting 5pm Sunday January 20. Details 071-431 3135.

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135.

Collective discussion towards the Draft Programme of the CPGB:

January 27: The nature of our epoch - socialist revolutions and capitalist counterrevolutions.

February 3: Capitalism in Britain.

February 10: Social and political consequences of Britain's imperialist development.

CPB Consultative Conference on Communist Unity: Readers are urged to attend. 12.30pm - 6.30pm (doors open 11.30am and refreshments available) Saturday January 19, Caxton House, St Johns Way, London N19 (Archway tube). Apply for credentials, £5/£2.50, to: CPB, 3 Victoria Chambers, Luke Street, London EC2A 4EE.

Fringe Meeting: 6.30pm to 7.30pm, The Meeting Room, 1st Floor, Caxton House. Participants in the Consultative Conference on Communist Unity are invited to hear the viewpoint of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee.

Leninism Lives! posters (A2) and stickers, advertising our organisation and paper. Ring 071-431 3135, or send donation with order to our box number.

### Hands Off Ireland!

Saturday January 26: March with the HOI! contingent to commemorate Bloody Sunday, Derry 1972. Assemble 12 noon Hyde Park (Marble Arch tube). Rally in Kilburn.

Sell HOI! paper No5. Bulk copies available at 5 for £1 including p&p. London activists' meetings: London, 7.30pm every Thursday: Phone 071-431 3135 for details.

HOI! T-Shirts: Be the sharpest anti-imperialist on your street. T-shirts, all extra large, £6 each (including p&p) from our box number.

### Workers Theatre Movement

WTM club *The Internationale*: Venue: Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1 (Camden Town tube). Admission £3, unwaged £2. Theatre, music, dance, poetry. Doors open 7.30pm.

January 25: Burns Night and commemoration of the birth of the late Ewan MacColl, founding president of WTM.

Performers please contact Tam on 071-431 3135.

Rehearsals: Every Sunday in London. Phone Tam on 071-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

### Internationalist Committee

Britain-Iraq: the main enemy is at home! Peace through revolution!

NON STOP PICKET from Tuesday January 15, 5.30pm, until hostilities cease: US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1 (Nearest tube Bond Street). Imperialism out of the Gulf! Ring 071-431 3135 for details and to book your regular rota period.

### Unemployed Workers Charter

London: activist meetings and actions. Details 071-431 3135.

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# Hail the workers of Turkey

The working class in Turkey is on the move. Its present struggles herald great things to come

**O**N JANUARY 3, Turkey was brought to a halt by a one day general strike - the first since the 1970s. Such action is illegal under Turkish law, but the state proved powerless to prevent it. The strike, called by the largest trade union centre, Turk Is, was joined by the majority of organised workers in independent unions. 90 percent of the 1.5 million members of Turk Is came out for the day. Even the Islamic Hak Is union centre, Turkey's equivalent of a western European Catholic trade union, had 75% of its 200,000 members on strike.

The one day general strike was just a moment in what has become an unprecedented strike wave. It began on December 6, when 48,000 miners came out on strike. They were joined on December 26 by 130,000 metal workers, organised in three different unions. At the time of writing, it will be a matter of days before 103,000 textile workers - the producers of Turkey's major export goods - come out. By January 10, it is expected that 10,000 workers in the paper industry will also be out on strike. The snowball grows: within the first quarter of 1991 it is estimated that 250,000 workers will be on indefinite strike. Not even during the 'anarchy' of the late 1970s was such protracted mass trade union action seen.

Over 40,000 miners and their wives were stalled in their 150 mile march on the capital city of Ankara, 18 miles short of their destination. The prime minister, Turgut Ozal, has been forced into offering to resume pay talks with them, and so the union has called off the march while negotiations take place. The miners wait to see what will happen. If their demands of 500% plus pay rises are not satisfied, the march will be resumed. This will lead to a major clash with state forces, as the government has pledged to prevent the marchers entering the city. Now it is trying to bargain its way out of such a potentially damaging confrontation, which would enrage large sections of the working class and give them more fronts to fight on. The government is clearly - for the moment - in retreat.

The strike wave is spreading; workers' confidence and combativity is growing. Class forces are tipping in favour of the working class. The government's weakness in the face of working class resistance is clear. In addition, and importantly, it has to fight on the front of Kurdistan as well, where a powerful revolt for self-determination challenges Turkish domination.

On various levels, the struggle is becoming more and more politicised. Much of the economic action is directed against state employers. The state itself intervenes ever more directly in society. The enemy is very clear for the workers of Turkey. One of the central slogans of the strikers is "We'll crush Cankaya" - the location of the presidential palace.

The strikes also have a powerful

underlying *directly* political content, that of overt opposition to the looming Gulf war. Turkish capitalism is losing a considerable amount of revenue because of the United Nations blockade of Iraq, but hopes to reap considerable benefits as a result of any imperialist redivision of the region. It has there-

the *Financial Times* recently pointed out, "urban migration is creating horrendous strains on the already overstretched city infrastructures ... It is among the urban waged labour that inflation is now most acute. Consumer prices are rising at a rate of 8% a month ... sustained high in-

counterrevolution.

Counterrevolution triumphed, in the form of the military coup, led by General Evren, who the US magazine *Time* chose to call a "stern but kindly schoolmaster" - who arrested tens of thousands of workers, torturing and butchering many, not to mention vigor-

through the coup of September 1980, the working class has once more risen to its feet.

That class is now looking for leadership and direction. It has forced the yellow trade union bureaucracy of Turk Is into action. But these obviously cannot be relied on. Turk Is was established in 1952 with American Federation of Labour (read CIA) backing. Yet workers have surged into this union centre, shaking and forcing into action their venal 'leaders'. Their hands, though, are still on the tiller, even if they are being pressurised by the rank and file. An alternative leadership has yet to win hegemony.

Social democracy seems to have little attraction for the working class. Equally so, it seems, 'official communism'. The 'official' party merged with the petty bourgeois reformist Workers Party of Turkey in 1987 to produce the 'United Communist Party of Turkey'. At much the same time, its two leaders, Kutlu and Sargin, handed themselves over to the Turkish bourgeoisie from exile and pleaded to be legalised. At the end of last year the party agreed to liquidate itself to set up a 'broader' party. Like the rest of the Gorbachevites they find the title 'communist' sits uneasily with them. We agree.

No organisation within the revolutionary left has hegemony within that movement, let alone the working class. One, Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left), has had some success with armed actions such as the assassination of reactionaries. This has passive support among many workers, but is very far from mass active involvement. Our own comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey - reformed by the supporters of *Iscin Sesi* - are fighting to win the masses to their communist programme. The task for communists is still, as one CPT comrade put it, "to fuse the Marxist movement with the working class movement".

The fate of the revolution in Turkey hangs on the ability of the Communist Party of Turkey to do this. Like 1905 in Russia, the 70s represented the dress rehearsal for the revolution. Today Turkey is in a pre-revolutionary situation. This is maturing into a fully blown revolutionary situation. The realisation by the working class of Turkey of their own October would be a massive blow for the world's working class.

New battles are at hand. That day approaches. Victory to the working class of Turkey and its Communist Party!

● The miners of Turkey are in the vanguard of the class war. A victory for them will be a victory for all workers, not only in Turkey itself, but the world over. They need our solidarity. A committee has been set up in London to raise money and solidarity. Contact the committee for speakers, model resolutions and other materials at: Solidarity Committee with Turkish and Kurdish People, c/o Unit 1, 1 Millers House, Millers Terrace, London E8. Telephone: (071) 923 4138.

Alan Merrik

## Turkish militants under attack

IN LONDON the large Turkish community took solidarity action with their sisters and brothers in Turkey. Strike action took place and factories were shut down.

One factory owner called the police on militants who attempted to shut his workshop down for the day. Consequently, 25 Turkish workers were arrested in the afternoon at a Turkish community centre, Halkevi, in Hackney. Immediately, a protest picket was called at Stoke Newington police station, attended by 600 demonstrators. It

was first stated that those held would be released at 6pm. This did not occur. The police responded violently, attacking the picket and arresting a further 40 people, all of whom, except one, were from Turkey. The picket lasted until 3.30am the next morning, at which time three people were still being held. Later, they too were released.

It seems that around 30 people are to be charged with various offences, including assault on the thugs in blue who attacked the picket!

This is a blatant attack by local police on the Turkish community - a police force which has the blood of black and migrant workers on its hands, from Colin Roach eight years ago to Tunay Hassan two years ago, both murdered in Stoke Newington police station.

Some of those arrested will be making their first appearance in court in mid January. Militants need to crush yet another attempt to criminalise those who fight back. Drop the charges! Police out of our communities!

fore given its unqualified backing to the US engineered war drive. Workers in Turkey have other ideas.

This situation has arisen out of the fall in living standards that workers have experienced - a depreciation which started from a situation where workers had to take a second or even a third job just to survive, and where child labour is rife. Comrade Emine Engin of the Communist Party of Turkey emphasised this five years ago when she wrote, "However good one is in algebra, one cannot solve the equation consisting of the average income of the workers and working people on the one side, and the minimum amount of expenses that they have to make in order just to survive, on the other ... Under such conditions, there is no need to emphasise the literally vital importance of trade union activity and struggles." (*Turkey Today*, May 1985) Since then the situation has deteriorated.

The mechanism for this erosion in living standards, in good old Keynesian fashion, has been inflation. The reason this has come to a head now is that Turkey's biennial round of collective bargaining is due, at a time of particular hardship for the working class, with increasing regional and national instability. This period of collective bargaining lasts for 60 days, by law, then - strike!

Turkey is hurtling towards the depths of recession with many weak points in its society ready to blow. As

flation remains the overriding cause of Turkey's current ills. It is already feeding through to the shop-floor. Organised labour is flexing its muscles after a decade of wage restraint." (November 21 1990) We may take the view that inflation is a symptom, rather than the cause, of Turkey's capitalist crisis, but that symptom is none the less virulent.

The eighties were a period when the bourgeoisie found it ever more difficult to restrain the working class. Confidence was slowly and painfully regained after the crushing defeat of the fascist regime imposed by the military coup of September 1980. The working class has gained much experience from this and from the protracted revolutionary situation of the 1970s. This saw some of the largest workers' demonstrations - in particular May Day - in the capitalist world, by and large organised by the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DISK), which had split off from Turk Is in 1965.

In 1976, half a million workers took to the streets of Istanbul to illegally celebrate the first May Day action for 50 years. The next year an even bigger demonstration came under attack by fascists armed with automatic weapons, with forty workers shot dead. Workers responded by developing their own armed defence. A revolutionary situation had developed and by the late 70s had reached the point where it could only be resolved by victorious revolution or

ously pursuing the Turkish state's genocidal war against the Kurdish people.

This was achieved, in part, by the division of the organised working class between Turk Is and the smaller DISK, which by the late 70s was under the leadership of the 'official' Communist Party. This is well illustrated by mass DISK rallies of the period, resplendent with thousands of scarlet Communist Party banners, the workers chanting its slogans. The Party had exploded in size from 1973, when it existed only as a foreign bureau, to a situation where it had a mass following by the late 70s.

The majority of the party leadership, however, proved unequal to the task. Mass working class action was demobilised by them in the face of renewed bourgeois and fascist gang attack. No attempt was made to prepare the working class for power. Those Leninists at all levels of the party who objected were persecuted and expelled, regrouping around the paper *Iscin Sesi* (*Workers Voice*). The comrades were prevented by the objective situation and the effects of a debilitating split from breaking the hold of opportunism within the revolutionary movement and working class. Today, the possibility presents itself once more.

Now the working class is directly confronting the state again - the first time for ten years on a class wide, rather than sectional, basis. The workers will fight because they must. The same is true of the bourgeoisie. A period of massive struggle is developing. After the defeat inflicted upon it