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The LENINIST

The Enniskillen bomb proved once again, who are and who are not, the friends of Irish freedom

Make Ireland Thatcher's Vietnam!

AFTER Enniskillen predictably, the 'true Brits' who publish *7 Days* and the *Morning Star* joined hands with the Tory *Telegraph* and *Sun* in hypocritically giving vent to their chauvinist 'outrage'. Far from standing against this venomous tide, the majority of the petty bourgeois left has instead vied for a place on next year's Queen's honours list for 'defence of the realm'. The Labourite *Militant* spat out all the fury it could muster against Irish freedom fighters: "The sectarian atrocity of Enniskillen should be unreservedly condemned by the whole of the labour movement."

From successfully achieving a united front with Kinnock and Hammond, this nasty, reformist little rag went on to blame the IRA for the oppression of the Irish people: "they have decided to bring things to a head with acts of provocation such as Enniskillen. They hope that the resulting state repression and sectarian retaliations will drive the Catholic community behind them." (*Militant*, November 13 1987) Not that they have ever blamed the ANC for apartheid, or the FMLN for the Salvadorian murder gangs.

Can there be any greater example of pro-imperialism than these empire-loyalists standing cheek by jowl with British imperialism, blaming the Irish people for their own oppression?

Socialist Worker wagged a disapproving finger from its pulpit at the troublesome Irish, informing them that acts such as the Enniskillen bomb "have nothing to do with socialism and workers have nothing to gain by them." (November 14 1987) This 'holier-than-thou' preaching to the IRA is combined with a renunciation of responsibility for taking up the issue of Irish liberation themselves, as "the violence in the north ... is rooted in a society based on the hatred of people of one religion against another." Nothing to do with British imperialism, you understand. Heaven forbid!

The SWP's oversight when it comes to opposing British imperialism led it to welcome in the troops in 1969 who, it wrote, provided a 'breathing space' for the nationalist communities besieged by loyalists. It is this blind spot on imperialism that causes the SWP to claim that the reason "why years and years of military struggle by the Provisionals have not budged the British ruling class' determination to maintain its rule" is because "the question of class division, both north and south, is considered secondary." (*Ibid*).

Any suggestion that the reason that the war is deadlocked is at least partially because the likes of the SWP refuse to resolutely fight the British imperialist beast in its lair, instead producing patronising, cowardly and reactionary editorials on acts of war such as Enniskillen,

would meet with an incredulous silence from these myopic economists.

Probably the most vitriolic in their denunciation of the liberation movement have been the 'MIS-socialists' of *Socialist Organiser*, who echo the SWP in locating the "central problem in Ireland" as "the chronic antagonism and division between the two Irish communities" (November 26 1987), call on the IRA to dump arms and even back Kinnock against Livingstone on the issue of the demand for troops out.

Given the Soggy Oggy's rightward trajectory, coupled with their affinity for unprincipled fusions, maybe we can look forward to this unpleasant crew waltzing up the aisle with the 'two nationalist' British and Irish Communist Organisation.

Communists - genuine communists - do not collapse like souffles before the barrage of propaganda and repression that the bourgeoisie levels at those fighting for Irish liberation. We unflinchingly support the democratic aspirations of the Irish people, and the reflection this finds in the programme and actions of the republican movement.

As Lenin's Communist International made clear: "the British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy - such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet," (*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, p163).

The principle of support for the right of nations to self determination is turned into a mere hypocritical phrase by those who abstract this from the right of the people of that nation to take up arms in the pursuance of that demand. It is farcical to suppose that it is possible to support Ireland's right to self determination without supporting the fight for it, no matter how 'messy' the violence at times. And that means unconditional defence of armed actions of the IRA and Inla, whether they be mortar attacks on the security forces, or the Enniskillen bomb.

Real revolutions do not take the form of the purist pipedreams which British armchair revolutionaries counterpose to the living revolutionary struggle being fought out in Ireland today.

Mocking these types, Lenin made his position abundantly clear: "So one army lines up in one place and says, 'we are for socialism', and another somewhere else and says, 'we are for imperialism', and that will be a social revolution! ... Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is."

Strange indeed that all those who react with such horror at the

very thought of lending support to the 'impure' forces of Irish liberation turn out onto the streets waving banners and placards in support of liberation in South Africa.

This is nothing new within the workers' movement in Britain. British communists were criticised by the Comintern for enthusiastically taking up the slogan 'Hands off Russia', but being somewhat less eager to raise the same demand in relation to Ireland. We see the same today.

Killing collaborators in Soweto is okay; shooting a UDR member on the Falls Road is not. The smell of blood dissipates over a distance. Or, in the words of Omar Khayyam; "Oh, the brave music of a distant drum!"

Lenin hammered this point home, if less poetically: "The struggle of the oppressed nations in Europe ... will 'sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe' to an infinitely greater degree than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. 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."

In Britain it is much more hazardous to advance demands for Irish freedom than it is to do the same for South Africa: there it is not 'our boys' who return home in body-bags, not 'our' security forces which are bombed and shot up, not 'our' state which is directly challenged.

Although imperialism is under threat in South Africa, for all Britain's economic entanglement with the regime there, revolution in South Africa is a blow British imperialism could take far better than revolution in Ireland.

The Six Counties are part of the British state, unlike South Africa; they are Britain's oldest and most integrated colony, unlike South Africa. And British imperialism fears the creation of a 'Cuba' off its own shores through revolution in Ireland - a prospect which could not arise through a South African revolution, unless you were to detach it from the African continent and tow it 6,000 miles.

It is precisely because Ireland is so important for British imperialism in politico/socio/economic terms that British anti-imperialists should take up the issue of Irish freedom in such an uncompromising manner. It is no good chasing after 'left Labour governments' to get a 'withdrawal in the lifetime of one parliament' (the favourite flight of fancy of the Troops Out Movement and the Labour Committee on Ireland). We have to recognise that the war in Ireland directly challenges the British state, something which that "thoroughly bourgeois party" (Lenin), the Labour Party, could never countenance.

You are either for or against the

IRA's struggle, for or against the British imperialist state. No prizes for guessing on which side of the equation Kinnock's party stands.

Focusing on issues like plastic bullets and internment, whilst ducking the pivotal issue of the war - as is so often done by the likes of TOM and the LCI - is farcical. Plastic bullets are an integral part of the war pursued by Britain. They are neither 'good' nor 'bad' things in and of themselves. They cannot be considered in abstraction from the war in which they are used.

British workers will only cease to support British imperialism's use of plastic - or, for that matter, lead - bullets in Ireland when they are won to a position of resolute opposition to British imperialism, not the other way round.

This is as true with the cases of the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, the Maguire family and Gilbert MacNamee - all framed by British 'justice'. Yes, we fight for their freedom on the basis that they are innocent. But we must also relate this to the reason why they have been framed. It is not, as the title of Chris Mullin's book on the Birmingham Six implies, an 'error of judgement'. To justify its war in Ireland, British imperialism must criminalise the Irish people.

The Irish in Britain are terrorised through such methods precisely because Britain is faced with a revolutionary situation and an insurgent guerilla army in the Six Counties which presents a direct threat to the British state. Since 1969 it has fought to keep the war at 'an acceptable level of violence' through these methods, combined with massive state terror in the Six Counties. Now, even the RUC, UDR, SAS, British Army and masses of repressive legislation are insufficient to maintain this 'acceptable level of violence'.

Through the Hillsborough Accord, Britain has been forced into a situation where it must cooperate with another state, the Twenty-six Counties, in its attempts to crush the resistance of the republican movement. Extradition of republicans from the south and the recent large-scale joint action of the state forces, north and south, against the republican movement are just a taste of things to come.

Once more we hear talk from government circles about proscribing Sinn Fein, and measures have already been taken in the Six Counties in an attempt to stop Sinn Fein councillors from taking their seats unless they "renounce violence". It is far from impossible that the near future may see the reintroduction of internment, this time throughout Ireland.

This, however, is a double edged sword. Every British government since '69 has known that so long as the revolutionary situation can be contained within the confines of the Six Counties then imperialism's 'iron heel' remains planted firmly

on Irish soil - or, rather, on Irish necks. The fact that imperialism must now draw in Dublin is a sign of weakness rather than strength.

The cross-border collaboration brought in through the Hillsborough Accord carries with it the danger of being a catalyst for the generalisation of the revolutionary situation throughout Ireland, sweeping away the "carnival of reaction", as James Connolly called partition, with the "festival of the oppressed" - revolution.

This task necessitates the theory and practice of communism in Ireland. Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, had strong justification for defying Britain with the call: "Do your worst. It can never match our best." But the question remains: is the republican movement's best enough to defeat Britain?

Given the politics of that movement, we must say that we do not believe so. It combines an intransigent and heroic guerilla war in the north with what is at best radical reformism in the south. (See, for example, the IRA Army Council's response to the threat of extradition from the Twenty-six Counties: "The IRA offers no threat to the 26 Counties other than the change which would occur anyway, whosoever brought it about, between the transition from a 26 County state to a 32 County state." (*AP/RN*, December 3 1987)). All this is subsumed within a distant, amorphous and classless conception of socialism, which Adams says is "not on the agenda" yet.

It is not merely the objective conditions, but also the very nature of the republican movement which has meant that the struggle in Ireland has stayed at the same level, broadly speaking, since the '70s. A communist alternative is needed in Ireland to smash British imperialism and Irish capitalism.

We do not say this in order to evade the issue of solidarity with the Irish revolution, as do those such as the SWP with their 'socialist' phrase-mongering. On the contrary, as communists we believe that this puts us on a far firmer footing to fight for Irish freedom in Britain, in solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle of Irish republicans, whatever our programmatic disagreements with them.

This expresses itself not only in our printed propaganda, but also through action. We do not abdicate responsibility for the Irish revolution solely onto the shoulders of revolutionaries there. It is our job to get 'our' troops out now, and to mobilise on the streets for this. Build the movement against British imperialism and for Irish freedom and march in London on Bloody Sunday.

Alan Merrick

Bloody Sunday Demonstration, January 30, 12.30pm, Whittington Park, Holloway Road, London N7 (Archway tube)



THE INF treaty has been greeted with such over the top hype by the official communist movement that it is clear that some have forgotten everything and learnt nothing. It was an 'historic first step' according to *Soviet Weekly* (December 12) while for others the word historic is inadequate to describe an entirely "new period" which could see the end of wars as a means of settling differences between nations (*Morning Star* December 9 1987). Frankly this is not just silly, it is downright dangerous.

Let us start with basics. War is politics continued by other (forcible) means. Peace is the continuation of the very same politics, with a registration of the changes brought about as a result of military operations. These famous axioms come from one of the most profound writers on military questions - the 19th century Prussian soldier/philosopher Clausewitz.

Marxist-Leninists have rightly always considered these axioms the theoretical foundation for their understanding of all wars. It was from this standpoint that Marx, Engels and Lenin regarded war.

Apply this idea to the present century. This has been a century of wars which were the continuation of imperialist politics. When the capitalist system is in crisis it looks to war as a solution. Two world wars and countless minor wars have seen millions die because of imperialism. Has the end of the great empires meant that the imperialist system is a thing of the past? Hardly. Has imperialism changed its warlike nature? Definitely not.

The *Morning Star* disagrees. It insists that because of technical developments, namely nuclear weapons, "war [between major powers] is no longer the pursuit of politics by other means". Supposedly the awesome power of nuclear weapons means that war is "an act of suicide".

Yet, since before the end of World War II, US imperialism has been pursuing a relentless struggle against the Soviet Union using the threat of nuclear weapons. In 1945 the US dropped nuclear devices on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This had little to do with forcing Japan to surrender in order to save the lives of US GIs, as claimed. No, the bombs were dropped to scare the Soviet Union. This is well known.

Many times since then the US has used the threat of nuclear weapons directly or indirectly against the Soviet Union. One year after World War II Truman threatened to nuke the Soviet Union if it did not withdraw from Iran within 48 hours. Later, during the Korean war further nuclear threats were used, Kennedy did the same over Cuba and Nixon has boasted how useful nuclear blackmail was to him as president.

Far from nuclear weapons being divorced from the pursuit of politics they can only be understood in the light of them. That is reality.

It is correct for the Soviet Union to engage in all sorts of tactical manoeuvres to fend off the imperialist warmonger. What is not correct, though, is to act like Neville Chamberlain and wave around a treaty which, it is claimed, represents an historic step towards peace in our time.

The INF treaty has not brought peace nearer. Not only is it an unequal treaty but it was signed at a time when US war planners are involved in a drive for a World War III winning Star Wars system.

In the long run the stock market crash, the clear signs of a new general crisis, will not starve the SDI of money. Capitalist crisis today, as yesterday, fuels the drive to war.

The only way to stop the imperialist warmonger is revolution.

The Editor

LETTERS

'Congress '86'

The Leninist (Issue 54, October 8) carried a review of *Congress '86*. We found it both encouraging and constructive. Honest criticism can only be of benefit.

There appears to be uncertainty regarding the nature of the relationship between the various political persuasions the idea of a Republican Congress would seek to embrace. Such diverse groupings ranging from Fenians, left wing nationalists to communist housed under one roof would, in all probability, see the emergence of differences of opinion, emphasis and thought. But that does not necessarily negate the basic idea.

The editorial of *Congress '86* outlined a number of proposals which the League of Communist Republicans (LCR) saw as being the basis of transforming the idea into a meaningful and lasting reality. Three proposals explicitly stated were: firstly, that there be "a general acceptance of each party's freedom of organisation and expression". Secondly, that "parties retain their own distinctive programmes" and thirdly, that "a final stipulation is that no party presume to speak for the other. Unless there is unanimous agreement, declaration must be made on an individual or party basis".

As the above extracts make clear, the idea of the Congress is not about seeking or gaining party advantage, it is not about seeking compromise or deviation from the respective parties' principles. Rather, the Congress is about uniting around the multitude of common issues (unemployment, low paid workers, emigration, the plight of small farmers, unfair laws, police brutality etc), which face all of us who seek to rectify and radically transform the society we live in.

In brief, the aim of the Congress is to harness the 'progressive forces' evident in our society into one cohesive force. The Congress seeks to unify the different forces presently engaged in the pursuit of national liberation and social and economic liberation. In reality, the question of national and social liberation is indivisible, we can't have one without the other and as such they must be fought as one struggle. The Congress facilitates that struggle!

As communists, we are only too well aware of the need for a vanguard party and it is incumbent on us as communists to set about fulfilling that task. But as communists, we also heed well the advice of comrade Lenin, "Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances" (*What is to be Done?*).

The building of a Republican Congress is the creation of an alliance of Ireland's radical and progressive forces. The struggle for social and economic freedom and the struggle against British imperialism must be unified and transformed into a popular mass struggle on a Thirty-two County basis. Bowing to spontaneity in the form of inaction or the 'ourselves alone' mentality is no substitute for a process of mass struggle. The Congress can begin that process of mass struggle!

Your review raises the question of our approach to the protestant people. If there was ambiguity on this question, it wasn't the intention of the author (of the lines you quote) to blandly dismiss the entire loyalist/protestant population.

There are two aspects which

should be taken into consideration when one looks at the loyalist/protestant population vis-a-vis socialism. Firstly, of course, it has to be made clear that in the Six Counties not all protestants are loyalists. However, two facts are pertinent. One is the common sense realisation that the vast majority of the loyalist/protestant population not only vote unionist but also clearly support the cause of the union.

Second though, and of equal importance, is the fact that this same population is not one, solid, classless monolith. We have a protestant bourgeoisie, a protestant farming class and a protestant working class. What makes these people so resistant to a united Ireland is partly the socio-historic reason, but much more so the very practical realisation of what a unified state would mean.

Bluntly, an inept economy, Roman church influenced society and a very illiberal legal system (look at divorce for example, not to mention censorship). Herein lies, we believe, a major reason for the odd sight of the protestant working class constantly voting for what are essentially capitalist politics. The alternative offered at present in any form of united Ireland would leave them so much worse off.

A socialist state hardly holds any attraction for the protestant bourgeoisie or the 'well to do' farmer. So what can realistically be done to attract the protestant working people to the idea of a socialist republic?

This is where we think the problem becomes a little complex. After at least 100 years of solid unionism, it would be day-dreaming to think that a polite or pious campaign of leafletting would achieve much, especially since unionism has maintained something of an aristocracy of labour for its supporters. However, with widespread economic recession this theory holds much less water than some years back.

What we do believe would open a path is the tangible sight of people struggling to create a better life for working people. The protest/struggle involved in fighting unemployment, emigration, government cut-backs etc. This form of struggle of necessity involves the demand for a workers' state but it also demonstrates more clearly than any number of fine promises or slick pamphlets that those involved are genuine. An important pre-requisite for such a movement, of course, would be a united front effort by all serious socialists.

It would be foolish to have exaggerated hopes of an early change of heart among the loyalist people, but at least the concrete alternative would be there to offer a rational option. If much of this sounds like the Workers' Party we would draw this distinction. One must launch the active demand for socialism in Ireland first: that it's putting the cart before the horse to talk of unifying the working class and then struggle for socialism. Put the struggle for socialism on the table and work to draw the loyalist population to its logic. Revolutions are never events or incidents. They are the culmination of a process.

The building of a Republican Congress would be an historic development in that process. With each passing day, its necessity becomes increasingly evident. While the Irish left remains fragmented, disorganised and demoralised, the forces of reaction interlock.

While republicans split, feud and compete, the forces of reaction solidify (an example of this was the deployment of thousands of armed troops and paramilitary police

throughout the Thirty-two Counties on Monday, November 23). Instead of engaging in party political squabbles, instead of the 'ourselves alone' mentality, nationalists, trade unionists, republicans, socialists and communists must search for the unity of all progressive sectors and sections of our people.

The LCR calls on all those interested, involved and committed to the cause of national and social liberation in Ireland, to begin the process of revolution. Begin now - build a new Republican Congress!

League of Communist Republicans

Her Majesty's Prison Maze

Glasnost

Though in general I support your political line, one issue on which I feel I must differ is that of the call for 'political revolution' in the USSR. I believe that the political reforms of glasnost taking place in the Soviet Union represent the beginning of the true democratisation of Soviet society.

Of course, these reforms are coming 'from above', but that does not make them meaningless. The bureaucracy is a bureaucracy of the working class, so that however distanced it may have become from its class, it still represents the dictatorship of the proletariat (and not of some 'technocratic elite'). What is happening now in the Soviet Union is a change of the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, from authoritarian 'open dictatorship' by its Party to rule by the working masses themselves.

That this process does not occur all at once is understandable in view of the considerable distortions of Leninism prevalent in the USSR until recently and still powerful. Do not condemn Gorbachev because Soviet society is not radically changed overnight: glasnost is moving in the right direction.

Its first steps, such as attempts to give the proletariat more control over local party and government bodies, to promote inner-Party democracy, to end police persecution of those deviating from the 'official line', to stop the abuse of mental institutions, can only be applauded.

Your line on perestroika I agree with. Seventy years after the revolution, the re-introduction of market mechanisms and the recognition of petty bourgeois economic relations cannot be progressive, can be at best only a tactical, temporary retreat. Any justification of NEM as a positive move by comparing it with NEP negates all the progress in between.

Argue against perestroika, yes; but do this by supporting glasnost, not by condemning it as sugar on the pill.

Paul Burgess
South London

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.



Spot the difference

In 'The Leninist' no 55 we carried a letter from CCGers who call themselves Govan branch CPGB. We have been accused of publishing a 'Zinoviev' letter

The ideological weakness and political heterogeneity of the Communist Campaign Group has dictated that it will do all it can to play dumb in the face of the polemical broadsides launched across its bows by *The Leninist*. For example, after we published the anti-British *Road to Socialism* and anti-AES *Discussion Papers* of the South Wales CCG and an extensive critique of it, the silence was deafening. This proves how deep the ideological conservatism and timidity is in the CCG, even with the most left of its supporters.

Such ideological cowardice does not bode well for the CCG party. Indeed the manifest hopelessness of its impending split, the Gorbachev lurch to the right and the disintegration of the 'official' communist movement means that many CCGers are today simply confused and bewildered.

However, the fish rots from the head, as comrades from Turkey so graphically put it. The ideological weakness of the CCG lower orders is but a reflection of the weakness of its leadership. Photis Lysandrou, Mike Hicks, Mary Davies and the like furtively read our paper 'under the covers', but have proved totally unable to honestly combat our sustained, principled and open ideological struggle.

The closest we have ever come to a political exchange with Mike Hicks for example, is his assertion, repeated *ad nauseum* that *The Leninist* is too marginal for an important leader like him to bother with. What opportunist bankruptcy! We have never boasted of our size, only our quality in terms of dedication and Marxist-Leninist theory.

In the future we will lead millions but what is crucial today is ideological clarity. The CCG party will be built on the marshy ground of the reformist *British Road* and the chauvinistic AES. And while it might start with more followers than *The Leninist* it will be no mass movement. Indeed it will be lucky if it can cobble together more than the 700 who went over with the NCP in 1977.

Moreover Hicks himself stung by accusations that the CCG party will itself be a marginal political force has brilliantly answered his own criticism of *The Leninist*. At the recent CCG rally in London he referred to the apparent 'marginalisation' of people like Marx, Ho Chi Min and Lenin and how their apparent 'marginalisation', ie their principled stand on strong principled politics, had been subsequently vindicated. Quite right Mike!

Yet strong principled politics the CCG clearly do not have. All its leadership can offer its rank and file is apologetic platitudes about developments in the USSR and the toweringly pointlessness of forming a CCG party with the same programme and ideological divisions as the 1970s CPGB only numerically far smaller.

Because of this it is only natural that CCG comrades will, in spite of themselves, become more and more open to the scientific ideas of *The Leninist*. This is already happening.

In view of this, when we received correspondence from the 'Govan branch' of the Communist Party, a CCG organisation, we were naturally pleased. It was not the content, which was typical CCG fare, but the mere fact that a CCG organisation had at last broken the silence which has become a CCG trade mark.

We sincerely hoped that a new chapter was opening between ourselves as Leninists and the centrists of the CCG, a chapter that would aid the clarification necessary to reforge the communist movement in Britain.

John Foster, the Govan CCG secretary, now insists it was a 'forgery'. We have to trust his honesty. We accept that the letter did not originate with the Govan CCG branch. However the response of some CCGers to this affair has been far from comradely or understanding. It has been used as a political weapon to attack *The Leninist*.

There have been insults flung at our militants by various CCG loyalists, who in the absence of any serious political ammunition to use against us have seized on the 'forgery' in order to throw dirt at our paper. The 'forgery' has been gleefully branded *The Leninist's* 'Zinoviev Letter'. Such accusations in no way serve the interests of communism and moreover they have no basis whatsoever in fact.

The so-called 'Zinoviev Letter' was printed by the bourgeois press as part of its concerted campaign to remove the Labour Party from office. It was a crude anti-Soviet, anti-communist smear presumably originating with a 1924 equivalent of Peter Wright. There is no way that the 'Zinoviev Letter' can be compared with our printing a politically mundane letter from Govan CCG. The charge that the two are the same says nothing about us, everything about our CCG friends complete lack of any sense of proportion and their inability to engage in honest open communist debate.

We printed the Govan letter in

good faith. If, as we are told, it was a 'forgery', it was both in political and technical terms a very 'authentic', good enough to fool anyone not actually looking for a forgery. It was 'authentically' CCG straight down the line. There are none of the political slip-ups that one might expect from someone who was not an active CCG supporter.

The forgery is also technically 'authentic'. For instance the 'John Foster' signature on the 'forgery' is very similar, to say the least, to the 'real one' we have at our disposal with the Govan CCG disclaimer letter. And we do not just refer to style, length and height but the pen pressure used in the 'J' of John.

The writer of the 'forgery' did not simply have access to 'authentic' headed branch paper, s/he also enclosed four 'authentic' pieces of recent Govan CCG/Communist Party propaganda, included presumably to add yet another 'authentic' touch. And 'authenticity' did not stop here. We do not have the expertise and equipment of Scotland Yard, nevertheless to an untrained eye the typefaces on the 'forgery' seem to be exactly the same as one of the branches official leaflets. We think they both come from an Amstrad PC printer. This is all very clever and puzzling.

So what are the origins of this 'forgery'? If it had included anything whatsoever that was conciliatory to the platform of *The Leninist* or critical of aspects of the CCG's, then the letter would have use as a provocation by say Euros or Straight Leftists (as suggested by John Foster). As we said it did not. Foster has denied the 'forgery', but he cannot deny its politics.

No matter say certain CCGers. Although the 'forgery' was 'CCG loyal', it still embarrasses the Govan comrades simply because CCGers do not want to be seen talking to *The Leninist*. This is silly.

Firstly, our paper has received letters from all sorts of people and organisations CCGers would find kosher: Tom Durkin, Mary Rosser, the ANC, the Socialist Party of Australia and Ken Gill's Tass to name a few. Secondly, a 'forgery' is bound to be exposed as a 'forgery'. Such a 'forgery' as we have printed cannot do the CCG any political damage.

So what is the truth? Perhaps, the 'forgery' was intended to cause embarrassment to ... *The Leninist*! By getting us to print a 'forgery' we could be attacked for having carried a 'Zinoviev Letter'. Frankly, we cannot come up with any other explanation.

Gustav Hussak's replacement by Milos Jakes as general secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in itself is of no great significance. Both men have the same political origins and outlook. But given moves afoot in the Soviet Union to reassess the events of 1968, when Brezhnev gave the go-ahead for a Soviet led intervention against the Party and state leadership of Alexander Dubcek, the change could have important political repercussions. Dubcek was pursuing broadly similar policies to those of Gorbachev. His removal owed little to freely arrived at decisions by the Czech CP. The 1968 intervention owed nothing to 'proletarian internationalism' as claimed at the time. The Soviet Union acted as a great power. Dubcek was taken to Moscow at gun point and treated as a rebellious satrap. While Hussak remained in office it was impossible for the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to publicly criticise Brezhnev's action. Now, though, Hussak has been safely kicked upstairs. The problem of Dubcek, of course, remains. He was not only removed from all Party positions in the wake of the Soviet led intervention but he was rudely expelled from Party membership and forced into obscurity. Anyway, if the CPSU now says it was wrong - this is possible though by no means certain - this will open a whole can of worms, not least for the centrists in Britain. They will be plunged further into crisis by any such move. The Straight Leftist, CCG, Proletarian and NCP groupings ideologically all originate in the schism the 1968 intervention caused in our CPGB. Centrist leaders like the NCP's Eric Trevett, the Straight Leftist Fergus Nicholson and the CCG's Photis Lysandrou all lined up uncritically behind the Soviet action and took to factional forms of organisation within the CPGB. Will a Soviet denunciation of its 1968 intervention produce an honest self-criticism by the centrists? We doubt it.

While most centrists have unashamedly jumped on board the Gorbachev bandwagon, Harry Steel, the leading writer of *Straight Left*, has held back somewhat. Naturally, this does not mean Steel has come out openly against *perestroika* and *glasnost*. To expect open criticism of the Soviet leadership by a centrist sycophant like Steel is to expect the impossible. No, Steel obviously has a memory of his fulsome praise for Gorbachev's *bete noir* Brezhnev and he still privately loves JV Stalin (the *Man of Steel*). Implicitly, Steel comes out against the 'rehabilitation' of Bukharin, apparently he is in no "position to judge whether the accused actually had or had not conspired with foreign enemies of socialism". Moreover he seems to fear (hope - more likely) that the Gorbachev phenomenon could be a passing episode: "Whether the current changes will be successful, we cannot in Britain tell in advance." Comrade Steel and *Straight Left*, all this is typical centrist sophistry.



● Bukharin - the Straight Leftists refuse to admit his innocence. Even though the proof is overwhelming

Things look very dangerous in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. In the market socialism of Hungary, workers are suffering falling real wages as the economy continues its relative decline. In Romania things are even worse. Following wage cuts, further restrictions on the use of electricity and food shortages, November 15 saw the city of Brasov shaken by rioting. Workers shouted "We want bread!" and "Down with the dictatorship!" Meanwhile in Poland, the government asked the people to approve a Polish version of *perestroika* in a referendum. The results were a humiliation for General Jaruzelski and the Party leadership. Only 44% of those entitled to vote supported the government's planned introduction of sweeping price rises. Even promises of a political relaxation could only secure 46% in favour. This is the first time a ruling Party has been defeated in a referendum in a socialist country.

Into Action



The next edition of *The Leninist* is planned to hit the streets in mid-January. We decided to cover the whole of December with just this issue. So comrades do not worry there is no crisis. Nonetheless there is room for concern. Not only has our £600 monthly fund target fallen short, yet again, this time by £187. But in spite of our appeal, to you our readers, for bankers orders and extra orders we have had far too few positive responses. Yes, we have had plenty of fine words of praise for the paper, but comrades, no action. With capitalism visibly tottering and profound changes about to happen in the socialist world it is vital to extend the influence of *The Leninist*. That means doubling and trebling the circulation and transforming our finances. In the last analysis this relies on you, our readers and supporters.

Jesus Christ Man and Rebel



The modern church is an ally of the ruling class

Christianity is one of the three great religions and what better time than just after Christmas to look at its supposed founder

THIS TIME of year is, as we all know, a great time for the retail trade. But behind the commercialism, tinsel and drunk good wishes there is a religious festival. And not just any religious festival, mind you, but an official festival of the state religion of Britain, the religious cult of Jesus Christ.

The myths about Jesus in a sense epitomise the contradictions of Christianity as it has evolved over the last two thousand years. Jesus was a real man but Jesus the man-god is the creation of class society which alienates mankind and which stands over and against it. Such class societies need justification and the people need solace. The mythical Jesus provides both.

For the powers that be, he is invoked in times of national distress, his name is used to bless the armies and weapons of imperialist war and the poor are urged to follow the path of Jesus and accept their lot. Jesus is therefore not only bread and wine, he is also an opiate. The people have fallen back on his promise of a better after-life, they have used his name on countless occasions to relieve their pain and sufferings. So who was the real Jesus?

Jesus was, in fact, a daring and singleminded leader of Jewish resistance to Roman rule. He staged an unsuccessful revolt against the Romans in Jerusalem and for this he was executed. In life and death he was hated by the Jewish aristocracy, the Sadducees, but to the Jewish people led by the Pharisees, and especially to the most down-trodden who rallied to the Zealots, he was an heroic freedom fighter.

We can be sure of this for a number of reasons. It is clear that the gospels, which were originally

based on oral tradition, have, since they were written down 70 years or so after Jesus's death, been edited and edited again to such an extent that they bear very little direct relationship to the events they purport to describe. This is widely accepted by those Christian theologians who prefer historical accuracy to biblical absolutism.

Using the discoveries of modern bible criticism, it is possible to peel off many of the distortions and reveal something approaching the truth about Jesus and his mission. And by looking at the class struggle in Palestine in particular and the Roman world in general we can put Jesus and his movement into historical and socio-economic context. All of this helps us discover the real Jesus.

In the New Testament Jesus is portrayed as being above the politics of his day. Indeed, when not performing showmanlike miracles and declaring himself god almighty, he is shown to be at odds with the Pharisees, the Zealots and the Jewish people as a whole.

If Jesus had really gone about claiming to be god there is no way he would have gained any following whatsoever. Ordinary Jews would simply have dismissed him as a madman. And if he was capable of walking on water, raising the dead and curing the sick at a touch, then surely this would have provoked excited comment throughout the civilised world. It did not.

The scribes of Greco-Roman society make no mention of his supernatural feats. Indeed no genuine contemporary evidence can be found which gives Jesus even a passing reference. Because of this, latter-day Christians mercifully forged and doctored not only

their own gospels but also the works of historians like Josephus.

In reality, far from being above politics Jesus was deeply involved in the struggle to liberate his people from the yoke of Roman rule. Jesus personified the clash between the Jewish nationality, with its strong cultural and economic bonds, and Rome.

Precisely because it was at the height of its power, Rome, like all other slave societies at this stage of development, was showing the early signs of internal decay. Once dynamic expansion had ceased, depopulation and economic decline began and the danger of being overrun by external forces steadily grew.

Roman occupation was as much a mystery as it was a horror for the Jews. They were an ancient people with a deep rooted culture. They thought of themselves as the chosen people and, although dispersed throughout the known world, maintained strong cultural and economic links which centred on the religious/commercial centre of Jerusalem. The Jewish people, unlike the tribes of Britain, were therefore capable of sustained and heroic resistance. They were, in point of fact, a constant thorn in the side of the Romans.

To the Jewish people Roman rule was a desecration of God's Holy Land. Clearly God was punishing them for their sins, but it was fervently hoped that soon a Messiah would be sent to throw off the idolatrous Romans and usher in a new golden age of Jewish independence and power.

Jesus and the Romans

According to the gospels, Jesus

never questioned Roman rule. If anything he defended it against the Jews. "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." In other words, the biblical Jesus insisted that Roman taxation of Palestine was just and should be paid. Clearly this is a blatant case of censorship and distortion.

We know from the Roman historian Tacitus that the Jews, like all subject peoples in the richer areas of the Roman Empire, were subject to monstrous levels of taxation. There was no pretence from the Romans that the gathering of taxes would benefit Palestine. The Romans were out to fleece their empire. Pax Romana was nothing but organised and systematic robbery.

The collection of taxes was farmed out to private contractors who were in fact little more than gangsters. The activities of the tax collectors, known as 'publicans' in the New Testament, are well documented in the writings of Philo. They used the most violent methods, including torture, to extract huge sums from their victims. Inability to pay often ended in whole families being sold into slavery. It is not surprising therefore that the appearance of the 'publicans' was a signal for revolt.

Indeed, under the leadership of the Zealots a protracted guerilla war was fought against the Romans from 6 AD. It was the Zealots who played the leading role in the full scale rising which took place in 66 AD and this was only finally repressed in 73 AD when the Romans finally stormed the Zealot controlled fortress of Massada.

Far from Roman rule of Palestine bringing civilisation, the Romans only brought suffering, pauperisation and depopulation. The Romans were to the Jews what the Germans were to the Poles and the British are to the Irish. The Romans fought the Jewish IRA, the Zealots, using the most brutal and terroristic methods. Torture, crucifixion and death in wild beast shows were the standard treatment for freedom fighters.

The real man

It was against this background of revolt and resistance that Jesus was born, lived and died. He was certainly a product of his time. We can see his career taking place over four specific stages. 1. Jesus proclaimed the coming of the 'kingdom of god'. 2. He claimed the title of 'Messiah' and was accepted as such by his followers. 3. He entered Jerusalem and 'cleansed the Temple'. 4. He was arrested and was crucified on the orders of the Roman governor Pilate.

Jesus was far from alone in his career. The Jewish historian and Roman apologist, Josephus, mentions many such figures in his *Jewish Wars*. While the later forged version mentions Jesus, the original did not. In other words, Jesus' career was so commonplace it did not command particular attention.

From what we know of the history of the Jews at this time and the facts reported in the gospels, it is clear that when Jesus used such terms as the 'kingdom of god' and the 'Messiah' he was not talking in a mystic fashion, certainly he was not proclaiming himself god.

To the Jews the 'kingdom of god' was not about heaven, but earth. It was an explicitly political slogan akin to a call in our own day for world revolution. The 'kingdom of god' was to be centred on Jerusalem and was to replace the Roman Empire (see the Revelation of Saint John).

What of the 'Messiah'? The early Christian conception of the

Messiah coincided completely with the Jewish conception. Because of this, the gospels go to great efforts to uphold Jesus' claim to be a direct descendant of the royal house of David. Stories about the Roman census in the year of Jesus's birth are sheer invention, as are stories of his royal descent.

For Jesus, though, this was a political question. By claiming to be the Messiah he was not claiming to be the 'son of god' in the way modern day Christianity sees it. No, he was putting himself forward as the king/prophet of the earthly 'kingdom of god'. Only in this context do the gospels' boring delineation of Jesus's family tree make any sense.

While modern Christianity has not purged the gospels of Jesus's royal ancestry - in spite of his supposed divine origins - his revolutionary perspectives and actions are definitely not advertised. Yet even in this respect we can still find traces of the truth in the gospels. In Matthew, for example, we have Jesus saying: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace but a sword" (x,34). This was the language of the Zealots.

Jesus was in fact an apocalyptic revolutionary who built up a considerable following in his native rural Galilee. Where the Zealots looked to physical force to deliver the Jews from Roman tyranny, others, like Jesus, recognising the overwhelming military superiority of the Roman Empire, placed their faith in god's direct aid and intervention.

With this in mind, convinced that the 'kingdom of god' was near, Jesus the king/prophet entered Jerusalem to the joy of the population and preached insurrection. He failed to rouse the masses. They viewed him with sympathy but also suspicion. They were not prepared to risk their lives. After agonising prayer Jesus took his armed followers to the temple, seized it, cleared the money lenders out and waited for god's intervention. It did not come.

The local quisling authorities effortlessly arrested him. Then, like many other revolutionaries, he was summarily crucified by the Romans. Hanging on the cross, in agony Jesus cried out to god "Why have you forsaken me?" - hardly the last words of someone who had expected to die, let alone a divine being.

But, unlike other failed revolutionaries, this was not the end of the Jesus story. In a way it was just about to begin. Where the surviving followers of other 'Messiahs' dispersed in disillusionment or looked for a new 'Messiah', the disciples of Jesus kept their identity, forming a significant sect within Judaism, the Nazarenes, which later became a religion in its own right.

The initial key to success was the claim that Jesus was not really dead, that he had in fact risen from the dead and would soon reveal himself again. But at the end of the day the triumph of Christianity came when it was turned into its opposite. Under the bishops it was transformed from a religion of resistance, a religion of the poor and the dispossessed, into a religion of passivity, a religion which accepts the status quo, the state religion of the Roman emperor.

This necessitated a most rigorous rewriting of the gospels. Jesus was turned into a pagan-like god and his Jewishness was played down. Indeed, monstrously, the Jewish people were blamed for his death, not the Romans. The revolutionary perspectives were buried in Greco-Roman philosophical stoicism.

David Sherriff



A recent meeting of the London Communist Campaign Group witnessed a disgraceful event. Leading CCG supporter and Morning Star journalist John Haylett publicly tried to fit the names of writers in our paper to Leninists at the meeting. This was (we will be generous) 'fun' for someone of Haylett's reformist political outlook. But for revolutionaries this is no laughing matter. It is well known that the bourgeois police pay careful attention to such details. They are particularly interested in groups like The Leninist which, unlike the Morning Star, take a principled stand in support of the liberation movement in Ireland. But then we should not really be surprised by Haylett's actions. After all, fingering revolutionaries is standard practice for some in his opportunist trend internationally. Many revolutionaries from Iran and Turkey, for instance, will be able to tell you of comrades arrested after Haylett's chums had cynically pointed them out to the state. There is no revolutionary situation as yet in Britain, but unlike Haylett, we know this will change. That is why we take our security and the security of other revolutionaries seriously. Politics is not a game.

Dialectics and the British left, part 37: One of our comrades recently had a most confusing encounter with two leading members of the Revolutionary Communist Group, David Reed and Carol Brickley. The conversation started between our comrade and David. David's point was that the South African Communist Party was Menshevik. When asked exactly what he meant by Menshevik, David replied "counterrevolutionary" (shades of Lev Davidovitch!). He continued in much the same vein, until the conversation ran itself into the ground. Then our comrade turned to Carol, who had missed this riveting exchange, and asked her what she thought of the SACP. Sure enough, she replied that it was Menshevik. "Like Stalin", she said. Like Mao? asked our comrade. Yes, Carol replied. Then our comrade pointed out that Mao - a Menshevik, remember - had carried out a revolution, but her comrade David had defined Menshevism as counterrevolutionary. "Well," mused Carol, "that would depend on what he means by counterrevolutionary"! If the RCG would like to write in ...

Our headline is likely to prove very popular in this festive season of excess, we imagine. But on reflection, should socialists really stand for the abolition of restrictions on the access to booze? Do we really want unlimited availability to workers of what is in fact a debilitating and physically harmful drug? After all, who among us has not experienced what should have been a pleasant, enjoyable evening marred by too much drink ending in a technicolour display into the bleak porcelain gorge of the lav?

Apart from the huge amount of physical harm that workers do to themselves accidentally when under the influence, alcohol can also unleash totally nihilistic and negative pent up frustration. After five solid days of being bossed about by some middle class twit and gritting his teeth, all it takes is a few pints on a Saturday night to metamorphasise a young worker into a psychotic Desperate Dan who is out to kill allcomers.

Descriptions in works of fiction like *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *L'Assomoir* and *Love on the Dole* of a working class male gone to the gut-rot, and the squalid degeneration that this means for both him and his family, points to a truth about working class life today. Above all, the women, the wives and daughters, suffer when a man goes off the rails.

Given all of this, it might be argued that the working class is better off with the existing licensing laws. This view is short sighted and lacks all sense of a revolutionary class outlook. To understand the role of licensing hours and why we oppose them, they must be set in their historical context.

Prior to the early part of this century, government interference and legislation in the sphere of alcohol was limited and mostly associated with combating the ills caused by cheap spirits. This was brilliantly propagandised in the early 1740s by the caricaturist William Hogarth with his famous *Gin Lane* representations of squalor and disease, contrasted with the prosperity of *Beer Lane*. It was against this background that in 1751 the government introduced a heavy tax on spirits, along with controls on the number outlets. This is credited with changing the English national drink from gin to the much less harmful beer.

The impulse behind the introduction of licensing hours, however, was the need to discipline the working class, particularly during total war.

The organisation of industry into the factory system in the 19th century created a large scale industrial proletariat. There was a need to impose on this new, raw class a rigid industrial discipline with an insistence on punctuality and sobriety. It wasn't easy. Until World War I, the struggle against lateness and drunkenness was largely conducted through ideological channels, from the pulpit and through the work of various Christian temperance organisations.

With the start of hostilities in 1914, however, all available human material was needed for the trenches and factories. Heavy indulgence in alcohol among the working class was now felt to be an area where the state had to intervene. Lloyd George, with his customary flair, declared that the country was facing three deadly foes: "Germany, Austria and Drink" and that the deadliest was drink.

Under the Defence of the Realm Act, the authorities in what were deemed to be militarily sensitive areas were given powers to impose restricted opening hours. These



After storming the Winter Palace one of the first things the Bolsheviks did was to destroy its wine cellar

No to the Licensing Hours!

were quickly followed up with two more acts of parliament: the Intoxicating Liquor (Temporary Restriction) Act of August 31 1914 and the Defence of the Realm (amendment 3) Act of May 19 1915.

Under the provisions of the latter a Central Control Board was established for the purpose of imposing liquor licensing in all areas where 'excessive' drinking could be held to be impeding the war effort. By the end of the war this extended to all the main centres of population, covering 38 million people out of a total of 41 million.

The restricted hours were backed up by discriminative taxation on spirits as opposed to beer. By 1920 spirits had been taken into the luxury class at four or five times their pre-war price. Even then beer was heavily taxed for the first time. Half the over-the-counter price of beer, now drastically reduced in gravity and known contemptuously as 'Government Ale', went in taxation.

The origins of British licensing hours as they stand today, then, lie not in concern for public health, but in the needs of the bourgeois state to discipline and regiment the working class.

Given the alienation of the proletariat under capitalism and the fractious state of its social life and relationships, some might argue that abolishing the licensing hours would have the effect of turning many working class housing estates into larger versions of the casualty department of Glasgow Royal Infirmary on a Saturday night.

The Parliamentary Labour Party, in the form of Roy Hattersley, objected in no uncertain terms to Tory proposals to boost Britain's tourist trade by extending the licensing hours. Hattersley's reason - he was afraid that unemployed youth would while away their empty lives in the boozier. What a patronising bastard!

Those who argue against abolition (or even the relaxation) of licensing hours in this way are, of course, utter hypocrites. Alcohol is readily available to workers from almost every corner shop. What is not available is somewhere outside the often fraught and tense home, a relaxed and comfortable place to consume it. This is not the case with the bourgeoisie. They have their plush clubs, not least the House of Commons bar, which can legally serve drink 24 hours a day. We demand the same rights for the working class. This does not mean we advocate this right in any absolute sense.

There are some important lessons from Russia here. In the

immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks faced the problem of large sections of the proletariat going round in a permanent alcoholic haze - hardly a healthy state of affairs.

As early as May 1918, Lenin was insisting that "when the worker became the vanguard leader of the poor, he did not thereby become a saint. He led the people forward, but he also became infected with the diseases of petty bourgeois disintegration."

The drunken reveries of the proletariat were consciously aided by the forces of counterrevolution. In *Ten Days that Shook the World*, John Reed reports the 'wine-pogrom' at the end of November 1917 which involved "looting of the wine cellars - beginning with the plundering of the Winter Palace vaults." For days there were drunken soldiers on the streets and, according to Reed, "In all this was evident the hand of the counterrevolutionists, who distributed among the regiments plans showing the location of the stores of liquor."

The Bolsheviks found it necessary to impose their own rather drastic form of licensing hours:

"The Commissars of Smolny began by pleading and arguing, which did not stop the growing disorder, followed by pitched battles between soldiers and Red Guards ... Finally the Military Revolutionary Committee sent out companies of sailors with machine guns, who fired mercilessly upon the rioters, killing many; and by executive order the wine-cellars were invaded by Committees with hatchets who smashed the bottles - or blew them up with dynamite." (*Ibid*)

In a ruthless move on December 6, Petrograd Committee to Fight Pogroms issued an 'Obligatory Ordinance', point 5 of which prohibited "the distribution, sale, or purchase of any kind of alcoholic liquor." Which is a rather emphatic way of saying: 'Time, gentlemen, please'.

The fact that alcohol was a tool in the service of reaction was clearly grasped by the Bolsheviks and consequently they desperately struggled to rein in the self-destructive impulses of sections of the victorious proletariat. While the counterrevolution fed off the befuddlement and confusion of the working class, helped along where possible with alcohol, the Bolsheviks fought to ensure the workers kept themselves alert, they fought to inculcate a clear sighted revolutionary sobriety.

This had nothing to do with the tea-totalers of the British labour movement. This had its origins in

Methodism, not Marxism. In the British labour movement, the counterpart of the patronising bourgeois philanthropic adage that 'Drink is the curse of the Working Man', was to be found in the socialistically inclined temperance societies, like the Socialist Prohibition Fellowship.

For these groups, only when the working class gave up the demon drink was it possible to get socialism. In spite of this absurd idealism some members of these organisations found themselves at the founding Congress of our CPGB in 1920, and included in their ranks such notables as Willie Gallagher and Bob Stewart.

While we do not take a passive attitude towards drunkenness in the working class, we recognise full well that such behaviour results from the alienation of mankind from society. Only communism can heal the breach. So we do not piously plead with the working class to give up drink. With this in mind it is clear that Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaigns show just how far the USSR is from the goal of communism. Workers in the Soviet Union are not turning to drink during a 'festival of the oppressed', as Marx dubbed the revolution, but because of the alienation they suffer under the bureaucratic form of socialism which exists in the USSR.

We must ensure that this does not happen in Britain. Our socialism must be based on working class initiative. Then workers will feel a sense of pride and joy in the building of socialism. Emergency measures might have their place, but only under the conditions of real and growing socialist democracy can the problems of alienation, such as alcohol abuse, be successfully combated. In the meantime, opposition to licensing hours imposed by the bourgeois state is a basic democratic demand.

Communists should fight all social prohibitions of this type imposed by the bourgeois state. As we have indicated, this does not mean that we advocate the 'joys' of drunkenness: far from it.

The proletariat will never make a revolution if its head is somewhere else at the time. The working class must raise itself to the level of becoming the ruling class in society. This obviously has both ideological and cultural aspects, which necessitate the working class beginning to 'police' and discipline its own social life, including alcohol consumption. This is part and parcel of making the British proletarian revolution.

Ian Mahoney

ALMOST BEFORE it closed, the Communist Party's 40th Congress was being shrouded in myth. This is not in the interests of genuine communists, those like us who want to equip the working class with a general staff that can lead the British revolution. We need the truth. To change the world we need to know what is real. Truth is as necessary to us as the air we breathe.

The opportunists, on the other hand, are not out to change the world but to adapt to it. Because of this they cannot achieve anything, even survival, without myth making. They need excuses, apologists and sophistry if they are to justify their reformist, centrist and liquidationist projects.

With this in mind it is easy to see why we must separate the myths about the 40th Congress from the reality. By so doing we are not just serving truth for truth's sake but delivering a powerful blow against the machinations of the various opportunist factions, shades and trends that are determinedly dragging our Party deeper and deeper into crisis.

The official myth as told by *7 Days* was that the forces of so-called 'fundamentalism' or 'sectarianism' (ie supporters of the *Morning Star*) were vanquished. Apparently because of this, and the fact that the 40th Congress was without fireworks, indeed was rather a bore, the Party crisis is now over.

There are other equally unimaginative fantasies. An unholy alliance stretching from *The Guardian* to *The New Worker* tell a predictable story of trendy designer reds taking hold of the leadership of the Party and transforming it into a vehicle for *Marxism Today*.

These and other similar reports must be exposed as the fiction they are, and this we will do. But the main purpose of this article is to confront the 40th Congress mythology created by the *Morning Star* in general and its supporters in the Communist Campaign Group in particular.

The reason for this is obvious. On the basis of its mendacious and cynical evaluation of the 40th Congress the CCG leadership cabal seeks to justify its plan to split our CPGB and form its own party. This demands of us a serious and detailed critique.

"The CPGB no longer exists" — Derek Robinson

Comrade Robinson is, like most centrists, politically schizophrenic. He told the CCG's London meeting on December 1 that the CPGB's Executive Committee might have expelled him but he was "still a Communist Party member" — a member of an organisation from which he admits he has been expelled and which he later claimed "no longer exists".

This takes Robinson out of the world that you and I know into the realm of the fantastic. It's either that or the CCG leadership has problems with elementary logic. Perhaps he meant that whatever the CPGB leadership does, he, Derek Robinson, will remain a communist. This is a worthy thought.

Or he might have been saying that he refuses to accept the discipline of the Executive Committee of a CPGB which no longer exists as a revolutionary party. Photis Lysandrou certainly thinks this is the case.

Speaking at the same meeting as Robinson he declared that the 40th Congress "officially approved the transformation of our Party into a social democratic party". The "congress was a decisive turning point" and the founders of the CPGB would not have recognised it as a Marxist-Leninist organisation. This line of thought was echoed by Ron Bellamy, one of the editors of the *Communist Campaign Review*, in the letters page of the *Morning Star*. The 40th Congress represented "a qualitative change." The "CPGB no longer functions as such", he claimed. (December 4 1987)

Like all opportunist formulations, truth and falsehood are casually mixed with gay abandon to reach the desired goal. The CCG wants to lead a split. To do this it must claim that the CPGB is sick with opportunism, a disease from which it has no hope of recovery and with which it has only just been afflicted — after all, the CCG leadership, no matter how pox ridden, must be given a clean bill of health.

So what is the truth about our CPGB? Is our CPGB suffering from opportunism, can it ever recover and when was it infected? Our CPGB has become social democratised, true. But this infection was "officially approved" long before the 40th Congress.

There can be no doubt that the foundation of the CPGB was the greatest organisational

achievement of the working class movement in Britain. It not only brought together the best and most dedicated militants in our class but also united them in a Party committed to violent revolution and the banner of international communism "on the basis of the principles and decisions of the Third International."

The founding principles of our Party were unashamedly revolutionary: it stood "against the sham of parliamentary democracy of capitalism" and for soviets. It pledged itself to "wage the class war up to the point of revolution" and rejected with "disdain all compromise and truck with capitalist reform". (*Call for a Communist Party* — statement of the Joint Provisional Committee for a Communist Party).

Looking at the current edition of our Party's programme *The British Road to Socialism* and the positions of *Marxism Today* and *7 Days*, it is clear that our CPGB is only a Communist Party in terms of its name. Formally it remains communist but its essence is reformist, its leadership revisionist and its practice class collaborationist.

It does not take a genius to work out the fact that a qualitative change has taken place. Compare the founding principles of our Party to the vast majority of branch resolutions sent to the 40th Congress — not least the truly wacky resolution from Wellingborough, which called for the CPGB to campaign around Christmas, including the demand for "Christmas cards to be sent only to real friends and relations". Clearly the form of our Party, its structure and rules, can be seen in broad terms to be a continuation from 1920 but in terms of content there has been a fundamental change and, as we all know, content in the end is primary. It is decisive in determining the nature, the essence, of a political organisation.

Those at the top of the CCG, like Photis Lysandrou, Derek Robinson, Ron Bellamy *et al.*, say that it was with the decisions of the 40th Congress that our Party finally abandoned Marxism-Leninism. Frankly, this is as cynical as it is pathetic.

While the 40th Congress marked a further quantitative step to the right there can be no question whatsoever that it was a logical continuation of the 39th, the 38th, the 37th, the 36th, the 35th ... etc etc, congresses. The crisis in our CPGB must be viewed and understood in its historical and international context. In fact the rightist decisions of the 40th Congress can only be understood in the light of the gradual, sometimes imperceptible, abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles by our world communist movement over many decades.

Obviously the CPGB is not the only party in our world communist movement to be infected with opportunism. There can be no question about it, *taken as a whole*, the world communist movement can only be characterised as opportunist.

We are not afraid to say this. We will be called all sorts of names because of it, but correct revolutionary practice can only come from those who put truth above short term popularity or official dogma.

What we have seen is a world-wide shift to the right in the communist movement, which in the capitalist countries has unleashed a process of social democratisation. Unlike the Second International though, because of the existence of proletarian state power in the form of the Soviet Union, and other particular and concrete historic factors, the transition from proletarian to bourgeois politics has been painfully slow, drawn out and uneven.

For those like the Trotskyites, who because of subjective idealism can only see a mechanical repetition in history, can only see the change in the world communist movement in terms of a direct parallel between 1933, when the Communist Party of Germany failed to prevent Hitler's rise to power, and 1914, this is heresy. Nonetheless it is the truth.

Firstly, truth must be understood in the concrete. Secondly, within a qualitative change there is continuity and thirdly, qualitative change is relative.

Where the opportunists who dominated the Second International were confronted with a decisive choice in August 1914 and dramatically went over, lock stock and barrel, to their own bourgeoisies, the founding Marxist-Leninist principles of the world communist movement have been killed by, as it were, a thousand centrist cuts. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its leaders bear prime responsibility for this. After all, the USSR is the world revolutionary centre and its CPSU the most influential party in the world communist movement.

Of course, this does not mean that at the

end of the day we do not recognise that it is bourgeois society and, in certain cases its remnants (the external), which is the cause of opportunism throughout the world communist movement. Although we can see that the forces of opportunism have temporarily defeated the forces of Marxism-Leninism within the working class movement, this is in the final analysis due to the external influence and power of bourgeois society.

Its influence and power work through and find expression internally in the working class movement because bourgeois society surrounds us and is still dominant on a world scale, opportunism being the form it takes.

The existence of bourgeois society is a constant factor. Only world revolution can change that. If its influence is not constantly and successfully fought it will find expression in this rotten concession, that bending of principle and eventually, if no fightback is organised, at the end of the day a revolutionary proletarian party will find itself transformed into its opposite — a reformist social democratised party.

While the degeneration of our world movement has been drawn out, this does not mean that within the accumulated, gradual quantitative changes there have not been decisive moments and turning points, albeit not of the same form as August 1914 when the main affiliates of the Second International voted themselves into little more than recruiting sergeants for their own respective warmongering imperialists.

The ideological origin of what has become a process of social democratisation of the communist parties in the capitalist countries lies in the acceptance, first by the CPSU in 1924 and then by the 5th Congress of Comintern, of Stalin's theory of building full socialism in one country.

The sacred, vital and necessary link between the fate of the world revolution and the survival of Soviet Russia, which had been universally accepted by communists (including Stalin in the first edition of his *Foundations of Leninism*) up until then, was thus broken. This adaption to nationalism, this putting the interests of the part above the interests of the whole, has led to what is equivalent to an opportunist dark age for world communism.

The theoretical poverty, political depravity and betrayals of this period (the end of which we have not yet seen) were generalised and crowned with the resolutions and manifesto of the 7th Congress of Comintern.

Revealingly, the 7th Congress is the only congress of Comintern that the centrists in our movement, like Lysandrou, Robinson and Bellamy, can directly quote. It is as if the previous six, especially the first four, which Lenin attended and dominated, never happened. This says it all.

The 7th Congress further undermined the ideological unity of our movement. The Leninist resolutions, manifestos and theses of the first four congresses were abandoned, buried and turned into safe myth. Affiliated parties were told to take up the national flag and seek out alliances with the 'progressive' section of finance capital — a dramatic shift to the right. While the motive behind this shift was to serve the diplomatic interests of the USSR, it nevertheless sowed the seeds of anti-working class politics which have borne fruit with the obscenity that is *Marxism Today*.

"The 40th Congress was a victory for the 'Marxism Today' clique" — Photis Lysandrou

To claim, as the CCG does, that the 40th Congress was the decisive turning point, that somehow, before it the CPGB was Marxist-Leninist and afterwards was not, says more about the CCG's subjective method and its own revisionist politics than it does about reality.

Given their present and past politics, the CCG leaders' criticisms of those who sit on our Party's Executive Committee are a case of the kettle calling the pot black. The CCG is tied body and soul to the very same opportunist theories, programmes and practices which produced *Marxism Today* and Eurocommunism.

If we want to understand how our CPGB has become communist in name only, we must fearlessly trace the degeneration back to its origins — something the CCG tops cannot and will not do. The CCG is part of the centrist problem, it is not the solution. It stands for the defence of the economic and chauvinistic Alternative Economic Strategy; it looks

CPGB 40



McLennan: wants to retire, but he fears that the CPGB apart with their factional squabble

Myth and The CCG is about to party. Whatever it split it will not Communi

back to the liquidationist 7th Congress of Comintern with fond affection and combines a slavish attitude towards the USSR and its one party state with loyalty to the reformist BRS and its solemn promise to the Tories that they will be allowed to operate with complete freedom within the socialist system.

In truth the CCG is economic, revisionist and chauvinistic to the core. It is a product of the crisis of opportunism in our communist movement. This being so, the CCG can hardly "reestablish the Communist Party on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism" (Mike Hicks). The CCG's attack on today's revisionism using yesterday's revisio-

CPGB CONGRESS



When he does the Eurocommunists will tear

Reality

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nism is doomed to fail. This does not mean that there is any room for complacency about our CPGB.

The 40th Congress showed that Party organisation is in a parlous state: membership for 1987 was reported to be only 10,350 and many branches are no longer functioning, something indicated by the pathetic 5,500 weekly sales of *7 Days*.

Politically, the resolutions voted through at the 40th Congress also show that our CPGB is still shifting to the right. The congress roundly voted down calls for organising the unemployed and campaigning for withdrawal from the European Community. It even approved the "socialist principle" of selling council

houses (112 votes to 78).

But to leave things there, in fact to conclude from this that the be all and end all of the 40th Congress was a victory for those around *Marxism Today* is a grave mistake to say the least. The 40th Congress laid bare the contradictions which are developing in what was the united Eurocommunist camp and pointed to future opportunist schisms. The leaders of the CCG know all of this. They know that, far from representing a triumph for *Marxism Today*, the 40th Congress saw this trend emerge into semi-opposition.

The evidence of this development and other schisms was there for those who were prepared to open their eyes – clearly the CCG leadership has decided to adopt the Nelsonian ploy of looking at the 40th Congress with a blind eye. Thus viewing the congress they can only see a qualitative break from the past, a triumphant *Marxism Today* and its editor Martin Jacques as the uncrowned king of the CPGB. In this way the split perspective can be justified.

As we have reported many times before in *The Leninist*, the Euros have split into two main factions: the larger, the 'left' Euros, a loose heterogeneous grouping around *7 Days* and the other around *Marxism Today*. The 'left' Euros have no united perspective. What keeps them together is dislike of the *Marxism Today* 'hidden agenda' of dropping parliamentary contests, transforming the CPGB into a neo-Fabian think tank and completely abandoning working class politics for the petty bourgeois milieu.

The existence of these two factions, and the possibility that the 'left' Euro camp could itself spawn more factions, led right opportunist Dave Priscott to urge general secretary Gordon McLennan not to step down but remain in office, at least until the debate around the *British Road* was concluded (see *News and Views* July 1987). Comrade Priscott did not fear that right Euro Martin Jacques would replace McLennan (as Jacques has declared he wants to do) but that the fight between the three other candidates, all coming from the 'left' Euro faction – comrades Ian MacKay, Nina Temple and front runner Dave Cook – would split the Party into yet more factions.

Interestingly, comrade McLennan has decided to delay his retirement. Nevertheless, and in spite of concerted efforts to tone down debate in the whole pre-congress period by keeping internal Party differences out of *Marxism Today* and *7 Days*, the rivalry between the two existing Euro factions could not be prevented from finding its way into the congress.

This was graphically reflected in the jockeying for places on the new EC. Martin Jacques publicly complained that while there were three members of the editorial team of *7 Days* on the recommended list, the much more successful *Marxism Today* was expected to be satisfied with only one: himself.

It was not just a matter of editorial teams, it was also factional. The 'left' Euros, in the form of Election Preparations Committee chairperson Nina Temple, saw to it that *Marxism Today* supporter Veronica Ralph was booted off the recommended list because of factionalism. Right Euro attempts to reverse this were, according to Nina Temple, couched in "code words for the trend around *Marxism Today*". That Veronica Ralph got 63 votes (out of a possible 226) points to the degree of support for "the trend around *Marxism Today*", in other words the right Euro faction.

So the 40th Congress was in no shape or form a *Marxism Today* rally. The votes and debates reveal a complex picture of groupings, factions, sub-factions and tendencies.

As we have said, the votes for comrade Ralph showed that the *Marxism Today* right Euros had around 60 supporters at the congress. The support for the CCG faction is also relatively easy to work out using the West Middlesex District Committee resolution 200, which got 48 votes (179 against and nine abstentions) for its call to revoke "without conditions" the expulsions and other disciplinary actions against *Morning Star* supporters.

Another pointer to the strength of the CCG camp is those who did not vote for comrade Trevor Carter. His was the highest vote to the new Executive Committee. Only 46 delegates did not vote for him – presumably embittered CCGers.

The existence of a small (less than a handful) pro-*Morning Star* 'soft left' – those who praise the "immensely valuable role of the *Morning Star*" but deplore the *Morning Star's* "attacks on the leadership of the Communist Party" – can also be seen when we look at the variation in the votes for the resolutions and amendments from West Midlands, Castle Point branch and Walton branch dealing with

the *Morning Star*. They secured respectively 49 votes (175 against with five abstentions), 51 votes (170 against with no abstentions) and 54 votes (172 against and again with no abstentions).

The Straight Leftists further complicate the picture and show that talk of a monolithic Euro 40th Congress is simply untrue. The Straight Leftists have over recent years seen their power wane considerably. Nevertheless it remains a force, if a marginalised one.

The size of its representation can be seen from a number of votes which united the Straight Leftists, first with the CCGers and then with the Euros. Opposition to council house sales and removal of comrade Frank Watters' right to hold office saw the Straight Leftist and CCG camps come together. Seventy-eight votes were secured on the council house question and 72 for Frank Watters (147 for confirming his removal from all positions).

From this and the vote for comrade Trevor Carter for the EC, which saw the Straight Leftists vote with the two Euro factions, we can safely say that Straight Left had less than two dozen comrades at the congress. This is a big come down for it as a faction; it was, after all, once the leading force in the opposition.

The Straight Leftists have not only changed in terms of numbers. Privately they are talking in more leftist terms, publicly they have shifted to the right. Yes, like the Roman god Janus these centrists are two faced. In their semi-underground, incoherent monthly *Communist* they pretend to be principled revolutionaries. But such stuff is not for general consumption.

These communists are not those who "disdain to conceal their views and aims" ... they do not "openly declare that their ends can only be attained by the forcible overthrow of existing social conditions" (*Communist Manifesto* p 96). The Straight Leftists have in effect constituted themselves as the left face of Eurocommunism – hence they seek to fudge the differences between their faction and the Eurocommunists.

This could be seen in the letter to the *Morning Star* by leading Straight Leftist, Andrew Murray. He insisted that comrades McLennan and MacKay should be taken at their word, that the "door is open" for expelled and excluded comrades (November 28 1987). This is rubbish, and comrade Murray knows it. We know of many cases of comrades applying, applying and applying yet again for Party membership, only to hear nothing. We also know of many cases of comrades simply not being recorded by Euro dominated branches and districts. Murray knows all about such instances.

There is no democratic centralism in our CPGB. What we have is bureaucratic centralism. The Euros consider the Party their private property. Surely for comrade Murray to suggest that in these conditions the debates around such questions as the *British Road to Socialism* will see "the strongest ideas" prevail is either self-delusion or an admission by him that the ideas of Straight Leftism are weak. But no, given that the 41st Congress in 1989 will almost certainly approve a Euro version of the *BRS*, it is clear that comrade Murray's real intention is to appease Eurocommunism.

The Straight Leftist influenced resolutions to the 40th Congress all sought to appeal to a non-existent middle ground. They all sought, like Murray, to appease Eurocommunism in an effort to be tolerated as a loyal opposition.

Coventry branch effusively praised the Eurocommunist *Apartheid, I Won't Buy It* campaign. The Grafton and Gospel Oak resolution on the USSR and the CPSU also attempted to find a common platform with the Euros. Gone is the CPSU right or wrong attitude of the past, in its place is conciliation. While the CPSU has made "mistakes" and suffered "tragedies" and while "our Party and the CPSU have sometimes arrived at different assessments of international events and methods of socialist construction, (sic) this has never altered our fundamental solidarity" (sic). Of course, the Euros were not convinced.

The Straight Leftists support whoever heads the CPSU. For the Euros, Gorbachev is *their* man, and they gave the Soviet fraternal delegate a standing ovation for his attack on past practices and policies pursued by former general secretaries hailed by the Straight Leftists. The Euros dismiss the Straight Leftists for not being really pro-Gorbachev but mere sycophants – truly the centrists' world has been turned upside-down.

Victoria branch took a similar centroidal position on the *Morning Star*, and West Hampstead (and again Grafton and Gospel Oak) did the same when it came to the expelled and

excluded comrades. One can only wonder if the Straight Leftists can remember when they smuggled copies of the samizdat *Congress Truth* into the 38th Congress in November 1983 and denounced the Euros in terms of fire and brimstone.

"The NCP split was too early" – Mike Hicks

So although the 40th Congress saw a further quantitative shift to the right, it was no across-the-board victory for *Marxism Today*. In fact, as we have seen, *Marxism Today* suffered serious setbacks and was forced into semi-opposition amid accusations of factionalism – a very different picture to the one painted by the CCG leaders. Where now for the CCG?

There can be no going back. The CCG is set on a split trajectory which is, according to Mike Hicks, "non-stoppable". This split is being organised under the rubric of "reestablishing" the CPGB.

This is being given theoretical justification by claiming that we have just witnessed a qualitative change in the CPGB with the 40th Congress. This is not Marxism, it is metaphysics. At best the CCG leadership substitutes for a concrete analysis of the CPGB and its development a subjective description of the sins of *Marxism Today*, at worst (and this is the norm) it engages in cynical myth making.

The CCG will lead a split. This split, though, will not reestablish the CPGB. All we will see at the CCG's 'Unity Congress' this Easter will be the formation of an NCP Mark II. How this CCG party will develop is hard to tell. However what is certain is that it will have all sorts of ideological and organisational problems.

The only way the CCG party can be united is through rigid bureaucratic centralism, through a heavy handed crushing of all oppositionist tendencies. And oppositionist tendencies there will be aplenty. Already the CCG is divided along numerous fault lines.

There are those who support the *BRS* and those who oppose it. There are those who support the *AES* and those who oppose it. There are those who favour standing in parliamentary elections and those who oppose it. There are those who support the Irish liberation movement and those who oppose it. But these questions for the CCG are, in the main, for the future.

The main divisions within the CCG now concern the split question itself. Debate on this has raged in the letters column of the *Morning Star*. While there are many different proposals (eg Newcastle-upon-Tyne Communists want to include the Straight Leftists in a Chesterfield type rally) it is those around Lysandrou and Hicks on the CCG's Steering Committee who have all the aces in their hands.

Whatever the doubting Thomases like Jack Gaster, Bill Alexander, George Anthony, John Bowden, Ben Fine, Winston Pinder *et al* do, the CCG party will be launched. The CCG leadership fear that unless they split, and split now, their rank and file will rapidly dissolve into the wilderness. But whatever the CCG tops do, or do not do, there is no way that the CCG will give birth to a revolutionary party. Revisionism can only produce revisionism!

Many comrades will go with the CCG party because it will take a number of middle ranking trade union activists with it. Such tailism will only result in disappointment. Leninist parties are not built by following trade union activists. They are built from the top downwards, on the solid foundations of unflinching Marxism-Leninism, not through various people casually declaring themselves party members through some 'Unity Congress'.

Only *The Leninist* can play this role. Only *The Leninist* can reforge the CPGB. This is the antithesis of the CCG approach of "reestablishing the CPGB". Our fight is one of open ideological struggle, it is based on going to the root of opportunism in our movement and ruthlessly destroying it. Unlike the CCG, *The Leninist* is not an unprincipled opportunist bloc, it is honest, open and above all Marxist-Leninist. It is in fact the highest expression of the contradiction between opportunism and Marxism-Leninism in the communist movement in Britain.

There can be no question about it, when we look at the founding principles of our CPGB, it is only *The Leninist* which today defends them. Only we are unambiguously committed to violent revolution, soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat and uniting genuine communists in a world party.

Join us.
Jack Conrad

Scargill yes, but ...

UNDER SCARGILL the NUM fought the longest mass strike in the history of the working class in Europe. His leadership, while it certainly had its faults, was intransigent and determined.

Since the end of the Great Strike the NUM has suffered considerable loss of membership through redundancy and, of course, through the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers. In the face of this, and a determined attempt by British Coal to make the defeat of 1984-5 stick, sections of the so-called traditional Broad Left in the NUM bureaucracy – namely Duffield, Bolton and Clarke of the Scottish and Welsh areas – have sought a ‘new realist’ compromise with the bosses on such issues as six day working and closures. As part of this shift to the right these and similarly spineless elements have attempted to knife Scargill in the back.

For the right moving left reformist, Scargill personifies the militancy which was unleashed in the Great Strike. Get rid of him and we get rid of militancy, they reason. Scargill pre-empted them by resigning and provoking an election. He threw down the gauntlet. Stand against me, he dared them. The cowards have not taken up the challenge.

This does not mean that militant miners should not take the presidential election campaign seriously. A victory for ‘new realist’ John Walsh would be a defeat for militancy in the NUM. Victory for Walsh would have very definite and detrimental repercussions for miners (not least the victimised ones).

It would mean that resistance to six day working, the disciplinary code and so on would have to be sustained, not only against the bosses, but also against active sabotage by the NUM leadership. No wonder Kinnock, Thatcher and Lynk all back this toe-rag.

Concretely, faced with the choice between Scargill and Walsh, between intransigence – with all its limitations – and crass capitulation, we urge a vote for Scargill.

He must be given a landslide yes, but the militant rank and file must not leave things there. They must organise independently of Scargill. Just backing Scargill is no answer, any more than raising your arm to fend off a flailing club wins the fight.

In the short term it saves you getting your head staved in. It does not stop, nor even beat back, the attack. The politics of Scargill, it must be remembered, are the same politics which led the miners’ Great Strike to defeat.

Although he earned the respect of militant miners and the hatred of the bosses’ press through the year long strike, he was unable to take the strike forward. This is not a personal trait, through having a weak character or a certain bent to ‘sell out’, it is a question of politics. For all Scargill’s talk of class struggle

he is still a reformist, albeit of a left variety.

He fought the strike under the banner of the class collaborationist *Plan for Coal*. Instead of standing on a platform of uncompromising class warfare, he paraded a worthless piece of paper around, which the NUM had agreed with the Coal Board under the previous Labour government, shedding bitter tears at the ‘unfairness’ of the Tories. The NUM stood by this ‘gentlemen’s agreement’, so why couldn’t the government?

Coupled with Scargill’s left reformist approach to a struggle which would brook no reformism was his bureaucratic approach to the strike. For all his ‘leftism’ he could not break from Ramsay MacKinnock, Judas Willis and the rest of the bureaucratic tops to assert an independent class approach.

At the 1984 TUC congress left reformists, like Buckton and Knapp, could sit back and nod their heads at the nebulous militancy emanating from Scargill, just so long as he did not pose any concrete demands for solidarity from them, which he did not.

Neither did he seek to circumvent the bureaucracy to reach the rank and file of the trade union movement with demands for direct solidarity action. Thus, the 1984 TUC saw the seal put on isolation of the Great Strike, and put on it by its own leader. In the last analysis Scargill was, and still is, tied to the Willises, Kinnocks and Hammonds of this world by a thousand reformist threads.

To support Scargill, and leave it at that, is woefully inadequate. Unfortunately this is all the left in Britain seems capable of, it ‘leads’ from the rear.

Up until now the election has been a low key affair. The resignation of Scargill not sparked off an independent mobilisation of the rank and file. This should be the task of revolutionaries. This is where the left should intervene. Yet, true to form, the British left has been content to relegate itself to the status of cheerleader for Scargill.

Its not what the left has said, its what is not said. It has given Scargill *uncritical* support. “**All socialists without conditions and equivocation, and indeed with excitement and enthusiasm, should take up the cry: “Scargill for President.”**” bellowed the SWP’s Paul Foot in *Socialist Worker* (November 21).

The somniferous *Socialist Action* justified its banner headline, **Vote for Scargill**, on the grounds that “**the NUM under Arthur Scargill’s leadership has been the greatest champion of black people’s and women’s rights inside the labour movement**” (November 20) – a somewhat doubtful contention by any standards. We could go on listing Arthur’s loyal shield-bearers, from the *Morning Star* to *Militant*, but it would prove little, except that the left in Britain cannot, indeed does not aspire to, play a

vanguard role.

Of course, while most of the left is content to tail Scargill there are disgraceful exceptions. None, given our Party’s honourable and vanguard past, more disgraceful than the Euro misleaders of our CPGB. They have dragged the once proud name of our CPGB in the mud of surrender and class collaboration.

It is public knowledge that our Party’s industrial misorganiser, Pete Carter, did his damndest to try and persuade George Bolton (Scottish NUM leader and Party EC member) to stand against Scargill. It is also public knowledge that the Party is *privately* advising miners to *abstain* in the election. Have no doubt about it, this is in effect to work for Walsh.

Comrade Bolton was recently quoted as saying “**we think this election is a useless waste of time**”. Considering his failure to defend miners’ jobs in Scotland, militant miners may be forgiven for believing much the same about comrade Bolton.

In line with this cowardice, 7 Days, our ‘left’ Euros withering flagship, has retained a stoney silence over the election. They are clearly embarrassed about the whole caboodle, not liking Scargill’s so-called ‘fundamentalism’ (whatever that is) but lacking the honesty to either stand their own candidate or openly throw their (diminishing) weight behind Walsh.

This, like the hidden back-stabbing by Euros in the Great Strike, shows that these vile Euro opportunists have no right to call themselves communists. They should go off and join the Labour Party, or the Greens. There can be no doubt that the opportunists are bringing the name of our Party into disrepute – under our Party’s rules an expellable offence.

Nonetheless, however revolting the sight of the Euro opportunists moving further and further to the right, this does let the revolutionary left off the hook. Its attempts to mobilise uncritically for Scargill can only lead to further despair and disillusionment among NUM militants.

It should be obvious to anyone who has been awake since the end of the strike that Scargill has no answers. He merely tries to stand still in a world he no longer understands, a world that has broken irrevocably from the ‘Marquis of Queensbury rules’ style of class struggle of Saltley Gates and the ‘72 and ‘74 miners’ strikes.

The position of militants in the pits must be to support Scargill *only insofar as he supports them*. Top down domination by a reformist, no matter how left, must be *out*. The militant minority in the NUM must use the opportunity of the election to take a political fight back into the pits, not only on why miners should vote for Scargill, but why they should advance beyond this to political independence from his bureaucratic and left reformist

The election campaign for the NUM presidency should be used to reassert rank and file militancy



Scargill – standing on militancy. Communists must critically back him

outlook.

- For periodic pit-head elections of all officials. For recallability.
- For what the miners’ need, not what British Coal can afford.

All too often in the past militant miners have seen their role *fundamentally* as a bulwark for the reformist left of the union bureaucracy against the reformist right. This is a malaise which afflicted the National Rank and File Miners’ Movement, formed in 1985. This is also why it folded.

A perspective of political independence means to strike out against the modus operandi of Scargill himself in this election. Scargill is standing in shore up his position in the bureaucracy. This must be supported *critically and independently*.

No attempt has been made by Scargill or his allies to mobilise the rank and file in the election. So far, next to no election material has been produced to ‘fire the will’. Scargill is relying on passive, not active, support.

He is being chauffeured around from rally to rally in his Jag, only to disappear over the horizon at the end of the day, leaving miners with no perspective other than where to put their crosses on January 22. Maybe you get a warm glow of leftism from his talk of ‘class struggle’, but that’s all.

The election must be seen as an opportunity to rally miners around the issues that face them now, and to orientate them for the battles that will surely come. Action Committees should be established by the militant minority, encompassing victimised miners, not only for the duration of the election campaign, but to go beyond it – politically and organisationally.

Such committees can and must root themselves in the pits, co-ordinate nationally and send out feelers into other sections of the working class, whose solidarity is needed – but cannot be delivered by Scargill – if the *next* miners’ strike is not to be a farcical repetition of the heroic tragedy of the Great Strike.

Scargill should be supported in this election not so much because of his political platform, but because of that proffered by Walsh.

The problems of division that now lay low the miners cannot be overcome by Scargill and his left bureaucratic entourage – that task falls to a rank and file that is actively mobilised around independent *revolutionary* politics. Only such politics can break through the class collaborationist, sectional and bureaucratic politics that holds back and weakens the entire trade union movement in Britain today.

Alan Merrik

LABOUR

and the Working Class

Chris Reeves, Lin Solomon, Stuart Hood, *The People's Flag*, Platform Films, Channel Four, 1987.

AMONG the roles our CPGB used to play was that of the collective memory of the working class. For example, confronted with the prospect of a strategic confrontation in 1926, our Party drew on the practical and theoretical heritage not only of the Russian experience but also the Councils of Action thrown up during the battles of 1920.

We Leninists are determined that the working class will once again have a Party which can play this role. We recognise that recent struggles could have ended in victory if past lessons had been fully assimilated. Take the miners' Great Strike of 1984/85. We said that the support groups should draw on the lessons of 1926 when the CPGB was able to make Councils of Action in certain parts of the country into embryonic organs of dual power.

We also pointed out that the heroic hit squads had to be transformed along the lines of the 1926 Workers' Defence Corps, if police violence and terror were to be successfully combatted. Above all, though, we insisted time and time again that the key to the future was re-forging the CPGB; the working class must be equipped with a vanguard party if anything permanent is to be gained.

It is in this light we must approach the Channel 4 film *The People's Flag*. Split into five one hour episodes covering the period 1914 to the present day, it uses extensive and rare film footage and a detailed yet clear commentary written by Stuart Hood (CPGB member until 1956, formerly controller of policy and planning for BBC Television, former vice-president ACTT, freelance film-maker) underscored by an atmospheric soundtrack.

Undoubtedly one of the major features of the series is the use of filmed interviews with key activists involved in the struggles of every period. Particularly valuable are the contributions from those who were around in the early decades of the century.

Obviously, these eye-witnesses and participants in this pivotal period of class struggle will not be with us much longer, so we should be grateful that their reminiscences have been preserved on film. (Indeed, two of the most prominent activists, Will Paynter and Finlay Hart have died since the making of the films). These veterans of our movement vividly convey the feeling among rank and file workers at the news of the successful Russian Revolution, the struggles of the unemployed and the General Strike.

The film does not give us any information on contributors beyond their names. This is unfortunate. While the opinions of comrades like Andrew Rothstein, Basil Barker, Tony Gilbert, Charlie Woods and Tom Durkin are of great interest, the way they are presented creates the impression



Labour has always been a barrier to the working class

The Channel 4 film, 'The People's Flag' has raised many important questions

that their assessments constitute a definitive analysis, which they certainly do not.

The programme-makers have, however, done an admirable job in weaving interviews with their overall argument about the problems of the workers' movement in Britain. The main thrust of the series is that the British workers' movement has been "unable to free itself from jingoism, at times acquiesced in policies of repression ... imperialist ideas have maintained their hold until today", this being graphically illustrated using the vile bipartisan chauvinism displayed by Labour during the Falklands War.

This was no aberration. The *People's Flag* shows very clearly that this was par for the course. Labourism has been merged into the machinery of state ever since the inter-imperialist war of 1914.

The TUC called a truce on strikes for the duration of the war, while founding father Keir Hardie, the first Labour MP and social pacifist, insisted that the "lads who have gone forward to fight the battles must not be disheartened by any discordance at home."

Since then, time and time again, the Labour Party has proved that it is an integral part of the bourgeois political frame-work. Whether as a party of crisis in the 1920s or the 'natural' party of government in the 1970s, the story is the same. In every episode of *The People's Flag* this point is hammered home.

This does not mean that the overall analysis of the film is correct. Its major problem is precisely the Labour Party. This "bourgeois party of the working class" (Lenin) is the film's centre of gravity. Given the history of the working class over the last seventy years this might seem reasonable, but it is nonetheless typical of the empiricism and subjectivism that has pla-

gued our movement. The main contradiction is not between left and right, as is implied in *The People's Flag* but between reform (left and right) and revolution. This contradiction reaches its highest expression not in the Labour Party but ironically, given its founding principles, in the Communist Party.

In other words, to come to an in-depth, rather than a superficial, understanding of the history of the labour movement in Britain it is necessary to understand the crisis of the communist movement. True, many of the contributors to *The People's Flag* are or were CPGB members, but the likes of Andrew Rothstein, Tony Gilbert, Charlie Woods and Tom Durkin are part of the opportunist problem, not the Leninist solution.

They all identify the major task for the working class as swinging the Labour Party to the left and encourage activists to view the class struggle in terms of the Labour left versus the right wing, instead of between revolution and reformism.

This is epitomised by the contribution of Dick Jones (CPGB until 1963 and AEU convener, Rolls Royce) in the final programme *The Enemy Within*. He makes the point that the one constant in the Labour Party since its founding in 1906 is its absolute adherence to parliament. He states, quite correctly, that nowhere in history can be found a situation where a ruling class gives up its power through the ballot box.

This is all very well, but the previous hour had concentrated its criticism on the right wingers like Hammond and Willis, and problems of the Labour Party 'under present management', while giving the likes of Benn and Skinner a free hand to boost their left cre-

dentials. What this fosters is the illusion that the Labour Party actually could be a vehicle for change, if only ... blah,blah,blah. The programme makers should have stuck to their intentions not to interview anyone above the position of convener. (Incidentally, a real 'if only' opens the final programme with a Thatcher speech about "an organised revolutionary minority ... intent on the destruction of parliament".)

The makers of this series would, of course, agree that capitalism needs to be replaced by socialism. And yet, though not unaware of *The Leninist*, clearly they have still to break decisively from Labourism.

Until there is an understanding that the Labour Party can offer *nothing* to the working class by way of leadership and that what is needed is a re-forged Communist Party, then this confusion will reign. Until then the *People's Flag* will continue to flutter limply in the feeble breeze of reformism.

Let us now turn to the reactions *The People's Flag* has produced. Aside from the rabid right of the labour movement, which has dismissed the whole series as a communist plot, there has been a wide variety of opinions.

One enterprising response taken up by the mainstream Labour papers such as *Tribune* and *Campaign News* is to engage in the time honoured dance *The Ostrich*. Yes, stick your head in the sand and all Labour's back stabbing and treachery goes away. For different reasons the RCP's *ins* decided to join the soft left in deafening silence. Clearly this arrogant organisation believes that before it came onto the scene nothing happened, nothing mattered and nothing need be said.

The entryists such as *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Action* *fédré*

little better, with no serious analysis of the series. The best they could manage was to tell their readers that it was 'Marxist' on this or that.

Others found it possible to write a great deal but still ignore the actual subject matter, and the prime example of this is *News Line*. It warned its readers to be on their guard because *The People's Flag* is nothing but Stalinist counter-revolutionary propaganda. For these corrupt liars the CPGB has, virtually since its foundation, done little more than stab the working class in the back.

The responses from the various shades and groupings in our CPGB have been much more interesting.

While we have taken a sympathetic but critical view, the opportunists have either wallowed in the warm glow of nostalgia or reacted with petty bourgeois hostility. The *Morning Star* loved all those pictures of Harry Pollitt and the Second Front campaign, as did the CCG's activists. Surely this should worry the producers. They were, after all, out to produce an objective account.

Nonetheless, although the CCGers could only look at the film for self justification, the Euros, as represented by comrade Brenda Kirsh in *7 Days*, did not like it at all. Why? Because it did not deal sufficiently with women. True, the film did not give a full account of the contribution of working class women to the struggle of our class over the last century. But it did touch upon it, not least the role of women during the miners' Great Strike. What is being objected to is the lack of material on the feminist movement, ie the suffragettes, the women's liberation movement and the clowning Greenham Common women.

This says everything about the Euros and nothing about *The People's Flag*. The feminist movement has only developed on the back of the struggle of working class women. It is not a working class movement anyway, but a thoroughly petty bourgeois one.

Whatever shortcomings the series has there can be no doubt that it was an extensive and sympathetic treatment of the labour movement in Britain and did not deny the very important role that our CPGB has played over the years. That the Euros object to the lack of attention given to the feminist movement shows that they, like the Fabians, identify more with the petty bourgeois milieu than the working class itself. Indeed, these Euros identify more with Greenham Common than with our Communist Party, which they factionally and bureaucratically dominate. What bankruptcy!

Gavin Kyle

The series is available on 16mm and VHS. The makers will attend showings if requested. Contact: Platform Films, 13 Tankerton House, Tankerton Street, London WC1. Tel (01) 278-8394



The Far Left

The far left in Britain, J Callaghan, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1987, pp256, £7.95

CALLAGHAN'S book, *The Far Left in British Politics* is a typical case of what might be called the 'academic' perspective on revolutionary politics. Though ostensibly an 'objective' historical account, it is of course written from a particular political viewpoint, that of the left-wing college lecturer with vague pretensions to radicalism and a theoretical outlook consisting of bourgeois empiricism muddled up with a smattering of 'Marxist' terminology.

This is clearest in the initial and concluding chapters, in which the author bases his critique of 'Communist Ideology' on the supposedly "undemocratic", "dogmatic", "simplistic", etc. nature of Lenin's thought, and the elitist nature of the Bolshevik-type party. The failure of the revolutionary left (using the term broadly) in Britain during the period 1920 to the present he ascribes to its "fundamentalism" based on the outdated ideas of Bolshevism and its antipathy to "democracy" (one presumes he means bourgeois democracy).

All the old myths surface: that the Bolsheviks made a mockery of their allegiance to Soviet democracy immediately on gaining power; that the Party was some peculiar fetish of Lenin's; that the Comintern imposed the peculiarities of the October Revolution on the West European Parties. We do have not the space to refute these distortions, which are in any case evidently unsupportable to any serious communist.

Having said this, the book remains a useful source of information on the facts of revolutionary politics in Britain, especially with regard to the 'fifty seven varieties' of the petty bourgeois left, but also as a general introductory account of our Party.

Chapters two and six, on the history of the CPGB, are informative on the difficulties of building a communist movement in what is one of the major centres of world imperialism, where reactionary ideas had a strong hold on the proletariat. These difficulties were intensified with the ascension of Stalin to effective domination of the Third International, with the CPGB following every twist and turn of the CPSU's fluctuating interpretations of the best interests of the Soviet Union.

This subservience to Soviet foreign policy paved the way for the first *British Road to Socialism* in 1951, an overt capitulation to reformism. Though every subsequent turn to the right strengthened the opportunist leadership, their ideological bankruptcy was such that the CPGB openly succumbed to anti-Sovietism under the general secretaryship of comrade Gollan and then, logically, to the anti-communism of Eurocommunism.

The decay in the theoretical field characteristic of opportunism was also a major cause of the constant decline in membership, from the 64,000 of September 1942 to the 10,000 (approx), with the majority inactive and many poised to split, of today. But more importantly the Party no longer provided real answers for any class-conscious proletarian needing the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism rather than mere sycophancy, whether to the Soviet Union or their own bourgeoisie.

The rest of the book is devoted to those excrescences given their raison d'être by the decline of the Communist Party, the myriad groups of Trotskyism and semi-Trotskyism. Perhaps the most representative of these is the WRP. It had many manifestations; from the entrisms of its first incarnation, the Socialist Labour League, in the Labour Party; to the rabid sectarianism of the 1960's and '70s WRP; and to the inevitable explosion.

Callaghan's treatment of this lot is effective, though in this case it resembles closely that not most productive of pastimes, flogging a dead horse. The 'apocalypse now' approach of this silly little sect ("Four Days to Military Dictatorship" said Worker's Press, in Feb. 1974!), its complete detachment from reality (the leaders of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International were really KGB and CIA agents they claimed), make it an easy target. Its bizarre antics continue now in the form of the six products of its explosion in 1985.

Rather more successful in utilising the entrism strategy than their erstwhile cousins of the SLL has been the Revolutionary Socialist League, with its front paper *Militant*. They are also rather more important due to their strong presence in the Labour party, though on the defensive at present, will no doubt soon rise again in all its pseudo-revolutionary chauvinistic ugliness.

The significance of *Militant*, as is evident from Callaghan's account - though his preconceptions prevent him from recognising this - is far from transforming Labour into a mass revolutionary party; rather it acts as the counterfoil to the dominant right wing, pro-capitalist, elements of the party, preventing these from alienating militant (with a small 'm') workers by seeming to offer a revolutionary perspective. Even their once r-revolutionary sloganeering is steadily being swallowed up by the reformist morass that is the Labour party.

That this fate is not confined to *Militant*/RSL is shown by the history of the International Marxist Group, which in the space of a decade have gone from 'uncompromising revolutionism' to another dreary little left pressure group in the Labour Party, with a boring little rag, notorious for its counterrevolutionary *Solidarnosc* look-a-like banner.

From those so-called Marxists who do "deign to conceal their views", we move to the SWP. It is quite easy for Callaghan to expose this group of economic chancers by simply telling us what they say and do. Their lack of any Leninist credibility is evident, from the absurd state capitalist theory to their ridiculously economic belief in the inherently political nature of trade union militancy.

Indeed, faced with all these ridiculous presentations of 'the revolutionary heritage of Lenin (and Trotsky)', the author's dismissal of Leninism becomes a little more understandable - after all, if this is what he thinks it is...!

Peter Clancy

Class questions

Questions of History, by Irish Republican Prisoners of War, Sinn Fein Education Department, pp155, £3.

QUESTIONS of History has been produced by IRA POWs as an education document for the republican movement. It reveals a powerful force within what has always been one of the most radical sections of this movement; the prisoners.

The aim of the book is to engender discussion within the movement rather than to provide all the answers; hence the title. The nature of the questions posed by the authors are such as to direct the reader to seek answers of a socialistic nature to the problems of the history of Irish republicanism.

This is done in the context of an analysis which stretches from Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen to the Republican Congress of 1934 in a way that relates to the tasks Irish revolutionaries face today.

Although the book deals effectively with elements of Irish republicanism, especially in the later stages of the study, it is only a partial critique, the authors being unable to assess their own standpoint objectively, accepting the fundamental premise of the republican movement.

For instance, the authors rightly cite Marx's support for the Fenians as a model of internationalism for today, and quote his view that "Fenianism is characterised by a socialist tendency". What is not quoted from Marx is his description of the Fenian leaders as "mostly asses and partly exploiters", (Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p156).

Marx recognised that, although the Fenians had a radical democratic programme of land reform, they were essentially petty bourgeois revolutionaries. This has been the essence of Irish republicanism since its inception with Tone until today. *Questions of History* identifies the consequences of this in the twentieth century; for example, the IRA's role in suppressing the 'soviets' which arose during the Tan War: "the IRA defended the privileges of the bourgeoisie against the rights of the workers." (p80)

Why do we define the republican movement today as being essentially petty bourgeois - not proletarian - revolutionary in nature? After all, it does claim the creed of 'socialist republicanism'. Lenin tackled this question in relation to many of the liberation movements which were coming to the fore in the early 1920s, particularly in the east.

They preached a form of 'classless socialism' which did not recognise class struggle as the motive force of history and certainly did not fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat in theory or practice.

One example of such 'classless socialism' looked at in the book was the adoption by the IRA Army Council in the early '30s of the programme of the radical Saor Eire (Free Ireland), formed by socialists within the IRA, most notably Peadar O'Donnell. This was described by O'Donnell's comrade and co-thinker, George Gilmore: "The founding of Saor Eire as a political auxiliary to the IRA was a sterile advance in mere programme making." (quoted on p127).

The socialism of Saor Eire was

manipulated by the IRA to provide it with a 'left' veneer to broaden its base among radicalized workers, and also to contain left moving volunteers. This 'socialism', in the hands of the Army Council, was window dressing with no substance.

An example of such 'classless socialism' today can be found in Gerry Adams' *The Politics of Irish Freedom* and in Sinn Fein's programme, *Eire Nua*.

In dealing with the period around the emergence of the Republican Congress, the authors reveal the nature of the republican movement then and, by implication, today: "Sinn Fein ... has claimed that there have always been three distinct tendencies within the republican movement: 'a militarist and fairly apolitical tendency; a revolutionary tendency; and a constitutional tendency'... Failure to differentiate between the tendencies and to properly discern what tendency adopted which strategy, will inevitably lead to much confusion in the future... [with reference to the 1934 split] If the IRA leadership was revolutionary, why did it refuse to commit itself to a Connolly-style republic? If the Congress leadership was constitutional, why did they ask the IRA to give an undertaking not to lay down its arms until a Connolly-style republic had been achieved?" (pp154-5).

The real issue here is not whether the IRA and Republican Congress were or were not revolutionary - both were - but what the class standpoint of their conflicting revolutionism was. The IRA Army Council represented a petty bourgeois revolutionary trend, from which the Republican Congress was breaking - in whatever a spontaneous and incomplete fashion - to the left. A trend which is not founded on proletarian theory may even vacillate between all three of the 'trends' cited in the text. Were not Collins, De Valera and Goulding all once revolutionaries?

What has been lacking in the development of a consistently socialist perspective in Ireland, whether through the Republican Congress, Saor Eire or whatever, has been the leadership of a Marxist vanguard. This is implicit in the text: "Did Connolly and Larkin fail to contribute as much to the development of a revolutionary situation by directing the bulk of their energy to union organisation as they might have done had they addressed themselves to the task of building a vanguard party comprising scientifically trained socialist revolutionaries?" ... "There were ... not enough educated revolutionaries available to Saor Eire with which to work." (pp68 and 126) The question of the vanguard proletarian party is thus posed by the authors. What, in this case, are the answers of history?

A serious attempt to build such a Marxist vanguard - the Communist Party of Ireland - foundered first because of its immaturity and shortage of 'educated revolutionaries', and later through bureaucratic handling by, and degeneration of, the Communist International, leaving the opportunist, wreck that is today's CPI. The lessons of the failure of the CPI are well worth studying by those intent on developing revolutionary working class politics in Ireland today.

That is not to say that we write the republican movement off as petty bourgeois, and that is the end of the matter. The production of this excellent book indicates that it is not. The emergence of organisations like Saor Eire and Republican Congress from it is also

indicative of the class contradictions with which the movement has historically been indelibly branded.

But, for all their revolutionary dynamism and commitment, the experience of O'Donnell, Gilmore, Frank Ryan etc, proves that socialists can exist within this movement, and even play a leading part, without it changing its class essence.

The fight for real - Marxist - socialism within the republican movement necessitates a resolute confrontation with the petty bourgeois utopias peddled by such as Adams, who are at root national, not social, revolutionaries; not to mention forces to the right of him.

Because the republican movement does not have a single class character, and is dominated by petty bourgeois ideology, those with a proletarian orientation, such as the POW authors of this work, will find it necessary to assert their independence from the representatives of non-proletarian class interests, in whatever form:

"The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most embryonic form" (*Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions*, from the second congress of the Comintern. Our emphasis).

This struggle to assert class independence in the revolutionary movement in Ireland will perforce bring forth the 'educated revolutionaries' - and, along with it, the party - that the Irish working class needs for its national and social liberation.

The struggle for communism is not one that can wait for more advantageous circumstances, but one that must be grasped firmly today. The questions of history need communist answers.

Alan Merrick

South African Reich

The Militarisation of South African Politics, Kenneth Grundy, IB Tauris, London 1986, h/b, pp153, £16.50

GRUNDY'S comprehensive and workman-like book traces, over the past thirteen years or so, the rise of "what might accurately be described as a security establishment in South Africa". The author fails, however, to locate this development in the context of the emergence of the revolutionary situation in that country and explains it almost as a question of 'attitudes'.

Thus he bemoans the dichotomous world view of Pretoria and equates it with the likes of Stalin's, Reagan's or Thatcher's. Consequently, apartheid can almost be seen to continue to exist because of a 'confusion':

"In such an apprehensive atmosphere a confusion develops (and is consciously fostered) between white survival and the maintenance of the apartheid system (along with its creator, the National Party). To lose control is to surrender and if apartheid means anything, it means control. That the South African state can actually be saved by restructuring the state in a way quite different from those suggested or entertained by its present

leadership is to think the unthinkable." (p16)

The inability to understand what material and class interests have produced apartheid is the weakest part of the book and it would be unproductive to dwell on it. Grundy is at his best where he illustrates the way the 'backs against the wall' mentality which understandably governs white South African society has allowed the security institutions to demand a role not normally associated with defence and security. Roughly over the last twenty years or so, he describes a creeping militarisation:

"Throughout the 1950s, the defence forces were not involved deeply in policy consideration or implementation, and not at all in policy making. Even into the 1960s, as the prospect of domestic civil unrest and external military threat on the 'border' (expansively defined) grew, the defence forces sort to maintain a low profile" (p9).

Other than low level projects regarding budgeting, manpower and weapons procurement that began in the late 1960s, it was not until 1977, that is, the year after the emergence of the revolutionary situation in South Africa, that the Strategic Planning Section of the South African Defence Force was created.

The security establishment, indeed the military apparatus of the state as a whole, therefore developed in an *ad hoc* manner, particularly so given the Afrikaners long harboured distrust of standing armies, but primarily in response to the upsurge of revolutionary struggle by the black masses.

The heavily militarised nature of South African government and the "Total Strategy" that guides it has led some commentators, from a variety of backgrounds, to label the regime 'fascist'. Of course, the word 'fascist' has been used to describe all sorts of regimes. Grundy's book reveals that South Africa is undergoing a slow process of fascistisation. Yet, in spite of this process, the regime cannot be described as fascist. The defining political feature of a fascist state is monolithicism. This is not yet the case.

There is still a relatively open black trade union movement. Blacks can also still politically express and organise themselves, albeit in a limited way, through various black newspapers and the churches. But fascism is not only defined as a violent closing off of all avenues of dissent for the oppressed, it is also defined by the use of force to overcome divisions within the ruling class and its popular base. At the moment, for the whites South Africa remains a bourgeois democracy. There is a liberal opposition, big business voices openly disagree with government policy and even among the folk there are divisions which are undoubtedly widening. This is expressed by the rise of the Nazi-style AWB as well as electorally through the clash between the Conservative Party, the Herstigte Nasionale Party and Botha's own National Party. This ongoing "broedertwis" (a brothers' quarrel) is proof of the fact that the regime can certainly not be labelled 'fascist' yet.

But what of the future? The main danger of fascist counterrevolution comes not only from the likes of the AWB but the military. Grundy's book cites an incident in June 1982 when foreign minister 'Pik' Botha appeared at a press conference in an operational area proudly sporting the uniform of an honorary colonel in the South African air force. 'Tantalus' of South Africa's *Sunday Express* speculated that, since 'Pik' had such a

good reputation for predicting future events, he demonstrably saw the future of his government in military terms.

Certainly, since PW Botha became prime minister he has reorganised the executive branch, with a heavy emphasis on drawing the military into planning and administrative organisation. This shows that the regime thinks of South Africa as being in a pre-civil war situation.

As Grundy notes, the military influence is not due to an apolitical desire for efficiency:

"It is very much tied to the leaders' tolerance and awareness of the need for reform, a controlled and modulated reform to be sure, that seeks better to defend the essence of the South African status quo. They debate the issue constantly. It is a contest between those who insist on a military solution and those who prefer political or diplomatic solutions."

In South Africa today there is a revolutionary situation which can be resolved in one of two ways: positively through revolution, or negatively through fascism. Grundy's book provides ample evidence of the encroachment of a military establishment whose areas of influence and concern are far wider than simply the 'technical' affairs of the military profession. It is the main danger.

Will the South African military forces stage a fascist *coup d'etat*? Grundy's book cannot, of course, answer. This life or death question will be decided by the class struggle itself, above all by the pivotal subjective factor - in short, the ability and willingness of the South African Communist Party to make revolution.

Alec Long

Glass Houses

Mike Banda et al, *The Communist*, November 1987, £1.50, pp70.

ALTHOUGH this amateurish journal is an ostensible 'number one', it is the next in line of the equally amateurish journals by the 'Communist Forum' group, headed by the erstwhile GenSec of the Workers Revolutionary Party, Mike Banda.

Banda and his micro-split (by far the smallest from the WRP) has broken from Trotskyism and shifted at a rate of knots to an opposite but equally anti-Marxist deification of the Soviet Union. This is combined with hypocritical attacks on *The Leninist* - the bastion of Marxism-Leninism in the communist movement in Britain.

The accusation by Banda that *The Leninist* has "in a very short time ... evolved from a completely uncritical attitude to the USSR and Stalin into 22 carat advocates of capitalist restoration in the USSR," says everything about him and nothing about us (p4). Perhaps Banda would like to find the issues of *The Leninist* where we indulged our "uncritical attitude to the USSR" etc. He cannot because we have not. And surely people in glass houses should not throw stones.

Under Banda the WRP pursued a viciously anti-Soviet line, branding the CPSU as the most consciously counterrevolutionary force in the workers' movement. Banda publicly supported the murder of Iraqi communists, later backed the butcher Khomeini and tolerated repeated rapes and beatings of his own members.

It was Banda who fronted the operation to set up Arthur Scargill for a gutter press witch hunt before the miners' Great Strike because of his correct characterisation of the counterrevolutionary *Solidarnosc* as "anti-socialist". Banda also publically defended the use of the bourgeois courts by the WRP against its Trotskyite opponents and at the same time knew of the systematic robbery of CPGB documents by an undercover WRP member working at St John Street.

His journal would merit no consideration but for the fact that it devotes so much space to us. Apart from Banda's editorial the major feature on *The Leninist* is an eleven page reply by Paul Thompson to a review we did of two of their *Communist Forum* journals (see *The Leninist*, July 17 1987).



Banda

Thompson's main beef against *The Leninist* is our supposed "denial of the Marxist category of irreversibility [sic] in relation to the Russian revolution." (p39) Of course, we do not deny "the Marxist category of irreversibility". It is simply that we use it scientifically. We say the Soviet revolution can only become irreversible with the creation of a World Union of Socialist States.

Claims that the Soviet revolution is irreversible now are wrong theoretically and can only lead to a contempt for practice. Why risk one's life, sacrifice one's self for the sake of the revolution when it is already irreversible. Such philosophical charlatany leads inexorably to the reformist conclusions of our CPGB's *BRS* - which is justified using the notion that the world balance of forces has *irreversibly shifted* towards the forces of socialism.

Apparently the list of those revolutions which are irreversible has

grown since we last reviewed *Communist Forum*. Before, it was just the Soviet revolution. Now this 'Marxist category' includes China, Vietnam, Nicaragua, plus other revolutions in Central America and South Africa which have not even happened yet (sic) but not revolutions in Poland and Bulgaria which have!

Think about it - Nicaragua cannot be defeated! How reassuring for Banda! But thank goodness the Nicaraguan working class is not so complacent. After all, it faces a constant threat from US imperialism and Gorbachev has expressed his willingness to do a deal with Reagan on 'international hot spots'; ie countries like Nicaragua.

Nevertheless it is ultimately in the Soviet Union these parvenues place their faith. If the Cromwellian revolution was irreversible, then so is the Russian revolution Banda insists. This shows no understanding of the different laws which govern bourgeois and socialist revolutions. We say analogies are all very well but things have to be studied in the concrete.

Banda's defender Thompson ducks the crux of the matter in any comparison between the two revolutions: Cromwellian England was the most advanced country on the face of the planet. Soviet Russia had to develop its productive forces from the level of Cromwellian England, but three centuries later, with the imperialist beast pacing its borders and dominating the world economy.

Thompson refuses to confront this ABC of the modern world. Instead he turns to the 'diabolical and hysterical mysticism', he learnt on Gerry Healy's knee. The October revolution is like an embryo, you see, and "an embryo must be distinguished from an abortion or an accident. An embryo is alive and grows. The 1917 revolution was not a stillbirth." (p39).

This is pathetic. The revolutionary process we are dealing with today is not one of national revolutions but proletarian world revolution expressed through the national terrain. The Soviet revolution must always be understood in relationship to the world revolution. It is a product of the world crisis of capitalism, it cannot be understood as a thing in itself.

Let us suppose we accept Thompson's analogy: a lot of unpleasant things can happen to even the sweetest, rosiest cheeked baby; it can fall out of a window, be murdered or die of whooping cough. This would not stop a loving couple having another child. And a tragic reverse in this or that country would not stop the world working class fighting for communism. Reverses are not inevitable but until

we have defeated imperialism on a world scale there is a constant danger of internal and external reversibility.

Thompson can only see history as a straight line. We understand socialism dialectically and historically. It moves forward unevenly. Socialism is the continuation of the class struggle of the working class, it is a transitional form of society, where the law of value/alienated social activity struggles with planning/conscious social activity under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism can thus advance, stay still or go backwards.

Gorbachev's reforms do not advance socialism. They strengthen the market and weaken the plan. By turning to the market, the forces of capitalist restorationism below and above are strengthened. Market socialism and the attendant reforms eroding the social wage, widening wage differentials and removing bonuses not only weaken the economic base of the proletarian dictatorship, but its social base, by alienating the working class.

Thompson in fact denies any internal threat just as he does the external one. He raises a 'puerile sneer at our "simplistic notion of the USA reversing the Russian revolution today by pumping over an inter-continental ballistic missile or two" (p43).

Clearly we are dealing either with someone who is stupid or someone made stupid by stupid politics. Paul, we are not in the days of good ol' 'Fatboy'. The US does not have *one or two ICBMs* but thousands of super accurate silo busters and it is driving for a World War III winning first strike with the SDI.

Talk about "irreversibility" under these conditions is frankly sick. In World War II the USSR suffered 20 million dead. It survived not because its revolution was "irreversible" but because of favourable international conditions, the skill of its generals, the determination of its soldiers, the strength of its industry and resilience of its people.

A World War III might see the Soviet Union survive. On the other hand it might go down. It depends on an infinite number of unpredictable external and internal factors, just as its victory in World War II did.

Our task is to make the Soviet revolution truly irreversible through completing the world revolution begun so heroically in October 1917. In this, revolutionary workers need so-called leaders like Banda and Thompson like they need a whole in the head.

Alan Merrick

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The leaders of the opportunist UCPT have returned to Turkey

Return of the Pink Panthers

Dramatic changes are afoot in Turkey. This is epitomised by developments within the country's communist movement. As soon as the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey and petty bourgeois reformist Workers Party of Turkey agreed to merge (to form the so-called United Communist of Turkey) plans were worked out for a dramatic return to Turkey by their top leaders.

This was no suicide mission. Communism is banned under the Turkish constitution. But the powers that be have let it be known that they want Turkey to have a legal European style Communist Party. Prime minister, Ozal, hopes this will facilitate Turkey's application to join the European Community. The leaders of the UCPT decided to force his hand and return before the general election on November 29.

Things did not go to plan.

In early October, Behice Boran died. As the founder/leader of WPT she was to have been one of the two returning leaders (the other was Haydar Kutlu of the 'official' CPT). Her death was a blow to the UCPT. Though a reformist Boran she was a respected leader. Nevertheless as an indication of its sympathy to the project of a legal Communist Party the Turkish government gave Boran a *state* funeral, using the excuse that this was normal practice as she was a former MP.

Strict instructions were given — the funeral was not going to be a working class one. The stewards of the UCPT did their best to ensure this was the case. As far as they were concerned the funeral procession, which attracted nearly 25,000 people, was to march in silence.

Again things did not go according to plan. The real Communist Party of Turkey was determined to honour Boran, not by mourning but by organising a militant working class manifestation. In spite of the protestation of the 'officials' CPTers handed out thousands of button badges bearing the legend 'We Don't Want Funeral Processions! We Want Revolution!' and they began the Leninist chant 'The Road to Democracy is the Road to Revolution'.

By the time the panicked 'officials' had fingered the CPT instigators over 1,000 people, including many WPT loyalists, had taken up the chant. A number of CPT militants were arrested but after a brief battle with the police all comrades managed to escape.

Finally after Nihat Sargin was elected as a replacement for Boran the return plans were finalised. Just before the general election Haydar Kutlu and Nihat Sargin returned from exile in a blaze of publicity ... and were arrested at the airport.

This had been expected. In spite of this the *Morning Star* totally hysterically compared the arrests with the "worst excesses of Nazi Germany". Nevertheless there is genuine cause for concern. The *Morning Star* has recently been carrying reports of the torture of the two returned leaders.

Certainly torture is standard practice in Turkish prisons. Because of this it is absolutely vital to demand the unconditional release of Kutlu and Sargin and link this to the demand that all political prisoners in Turkey must be freed. The *Morning Star* has not done this. Nor has it reported the fact that the whole return affair has been greeted by wave cynicism

affecting all sections of society; most Turks refer to the Kutlu/Sargin return as 'The Return of the Pink Panthers'. Let us see why.

Flash

The real story behind the new UCPT and the arrest of Kutlu and Sargin are fascinating and, in their own ways, quite bizarre.

It all starts with the recent visit to Europe of one Adnan Kahvagi, a Turkish state advisor and one of the flash new westernised stars that Prime Minister Ozal has surrounded himself with.

Kahvagi came to Europe not for the change of air, however: according to the mass bourgeois Turkish daily *Milyet*, he met and had extensive discussions with exiled leaders of the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey.

The discussions between this representative of the Turkish state and the Mensheviks centred on one key question — whether or not the 'official' Communist Party was to be legalised and allowed to enter the mainstream of bourgeois political life in the country.

Shortly after Kahvagi's departure, the 'official' Communist Party of Turkey agreed its unprincipled merger with the petty bourgeois socialists of the Turkish Workers Party. The two events were not unrelated.

Ideologically the merger represented a victory for the reformist WPT programme. WPT has never once since it was founded in 1961, claimed any relationship to revolutionary politics. For this thoroughly reformist party, the method was largely identical with the goal: *legality* was the beginning and end of WPT's world view.

So the while the merged party will no doubt be dominated organisationally by the Mensheviks it represents a definite shift to the right. In fact, the coming together of the 'official' CP and WPT represents far more of an 'organic' fusion than surface appearances might first suggest. A few years ago, the leadership of Menshevik CPT was captured by a faction called 'Partisan', who shortly after their victory, kicked the veteran centrist leader I Bilen upstairs.

As it happens, this 'Partisan' gang hailed originally from WPT itself. The ideology of 'Partisan' remained dominated by WPT legalism despite its new home. Indeed once in control of the CPT they set about transforming it along the lines of the WPT and having done this there was nothing that kept the two organisations apart.

The bourgeoisie certainly wants a safe Communist Party. It not only needs one if it is to be allowed into the EC but it is desperate to secure a 'breathing space' for itself from the burgeoning pressure of the class war inside the country. The working class must be diverted from revolutionary struggle, 1987 saw the greatest strike wave in Turkish history, dwarfing even the corresponding figures from the years of the profound revolutionary situation in the 1970s. In the first seven months alone, over 1.3 million workdays were lost to strikes as the class began to struggle to its feet again after the dark days of fascist reaction.

Faced with the proletariat of Turkey rising again, the bourgeoisie has desperately sort ways to divert the workers. Social democracy has proved itself to be inadequate for the task; at best it has only managed to penetrate the



Haydar Kutlu and Behice Boran: no suicide mission planned

fringe on the working class. Clearly, the 'officials' are being lined up to play the role of the bourgeois fifth column in the ranks of the proletariat.

Kutlu and Sargin are doing their best to make the UCPT fit for this role. Kutlu had been step by step announcing his organisation's flight from communism over the recent period. According to him, it is fundamentally wrong to approach the problems of Turkey from a "narrow class point of view."

It is presumably this 'broad' approach that dictates that one of the first policy statements of the UCPT was that Turkey should stay in Nato and struggle to make it a 'peaceful' organisation! As an extra 'sweetener' to Ozal, Kutlu revised his earlier statements on the general election on the eve of his departure for Turkey. From calling for a vote for social democracy, he suddenly discovered 'democratic elements' within Ozal's party, ANAP, and strongly implied that workers should vote for these people.

In fact, Kutlu gave so much away ideologically before his return that even the Turkish bourgeois papers were shouting "deal!" For although the two were "snatched" and "dramatically arrested" (turgid clichés courtesy of the Roger Trask school of bad journalism - *Morning Star*, November 17), this was obviously a stage managed stunt to designed to hoodwink the workers.

Before he left West Germany for Turkey, Kutlu declared "we know only too well that hardship is waiting for us there." Yet in an unprecedented move, the Director of the Police Political Office gave assurances that the two would under no circumstances be tortured. This is food for thought as is the claim that the two leaders are under the scrutiny of a panel of independent doctors, not ones provided by the authorities.

The authorities also claim that the two are being allowed to order any type of food they wish and have even been given a detailed schedule of all their interrogations. One of the main psychological tortures of interrogation is its unpredictability. When a prisoner does not know from one hour to the next when they are next to be disturbed and rudely dragged off to again face another grilling, the anxiety produced acts in his own way as a corrosive on his resistance.

Because of this *Hurriyet*, a mass bourgeois daily, has along with the rest of the press in Turkey, laughed at the pretensions to 'martyrdom' of Kutlu and Sargin. They have even run a joke editorial, lambasting the "scandalous" behaviour of the Turkish authorities who have not yet taken their 'guests' around the major tourist sites.

The bourgeois media's sarcasm is also echoed in most of the publications of the left because they smell a deal. And if you give it more than a moment's thought, the whole affair is indeed very wiffy.

Look at it from the point of view of the UCPT. Unless you *knew* something was going on, that a deal could be hatched then it is simply inconceivable that you would send your two most prominent leaders straight into the hands of the enemy, where arrest and torture was certain.

Leaders are not two a penny: they are the brain of an organisation. To squander them for the sake of a 'moral outrage' publicity stunt as the UCPT and *Morning Star* is trying to make us believe won't wash, frankly. Logic alone dictates that the fate of these two prominent leaders must have been at least tacitly guaranteed, a deal must have been struck before their feet got anywhere near Turkish soil.

However, we have a little more than formal logic to go by. Boran's state funeral should tell us a lot.

Also, we must look to the Soviet Union and comrade Gorbachev to understand the evolution of the 'officials' in Turkey. The current climate of inter-state relations between Turkey and the USSR are officially described as "warm". In line with this there is skulduggery afoot.

Earlier this year, US astronaut Neil Armstrong was purported to be rooting around on the top of Mount Ararat in Turkey in search of the remains of the remains of Noah's Ark. 'Poor Neil', we all thought, 'the man is evidently out to lunch'.

Now however, Turkey's bourgeois papers have revealed that Armstrong was in fact surveying sites for a new *Radio Free Europe* transmitter to beam counterrevolutionary propaganda into the Soviet Caucasus. Permission to use that site was subsequently refused by the Turkish government, much to the surprise of the Americans.

Shortly before this, the radio station of the 'officials', the *Voice of the TKP* situated in the GDR, had ceased broadcasting "in the interests of democracy" as it was strangely put.

Coincidence? We think not. The actions of the UCPT are fully in line with the use of client parties by the leadership of the CPSU as pawns in its dealings with capitalist states. Has Turkish friendship with the USSR been brought at the price of a Communist Party becoming thoroughly legalistic and the bartering of the revolutionary struggle of the working people of Turkey?

We cannot be sure. But how else are we to explain the drive to liquidation of the old menshevik CPT, the closure of *The Voice of the TKP* and the rush towards legality? Circumstantial evidence is never enough to convict, but nevertheless ...

Ian Mahoney