

# The LENINIST

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## Peace through revolution

**The Committee to Stop War in the Gulf has called a national demonstration in London on Saturday November 24. Whatever their subjective intentions the CND and Labour left organisers are nothing but pacifist covers for western imperialism in the Gulf**

**T**HE GENERAL ELECTION campaign has already begun. As we predicted, a discernible 'Falklands factor' in British politics was bound to emerge, and it has. Because of Labour's miserable bipartisan approach to British imperialism's war plans in the Middle East, the 'international stateswoman' Thatcher has been allowed to stand above 'petty party politics'. Labour's opinion poll lead has, according to NOP, dwindled from 20% to 5%; and Thatcher is at last seeing an opportunity open up before her to 'cut and run' out of the gloom of poll tax, slugflation, rising unemployment, the 'crime wave' and general social putrefaction.

Frankly, we would prefer to see US and British forces pulverised by Iraq than any sort of imperialist victory. But, as opposed to either a US-British triumph or a successful Iraqi rearguard action, there is another possibility: the struggle for revolution! Yes, in Britain and Iraq we must use our own country's difficulties as our opportunity to deal with the enemy within: our own ruling class.

Have no doubt about it, war is coming, and war breeds revolution.

The 120 Challenger tanks of the 7th Armoured Brigade – the so-called 'desert rats' – are, or so they say, being deployed in the Gulf to secure peace. An obscene lie. The build up of US and British forces is far in excess of anything needed to defend Saudi Arabia from some last ditch, mad cap attack by Saddam Hussein or some such nonsense. Everything we know about the military build up in the Gulf tells us that the US, Britain and their western and Arab allies are preparing for an all out attack on Iraqi armed forces sometime around Christmas, either directly in Iraq itself or indirectly through its so-called nineteenth province (ie Kuwait).

Whether the Gulf war turns out to be a seven day blitzkrieg as the US hopes or a seven year Vietnam II as Saddam Hussein threatens, is a matter of debate. What is not a matter of debate, though, is that thousands, perhaps tens of thousands will be maimed, butchered, gassed and poisoned on the altar of capitalism.

The coming war in the Gulf is about oil, power and capitalist profit, not the well being of ordinary people. Naturally both sets of monsters try and hide their base imperialist intentions behind a rich veil of democratic lies, hypocrisy and cant. The US says it only wants to defend the rights of 'poor little Kuwait'. There is as much truth here as Britain's claim that it went to war with Germany, first in 1914 to defend 'poor little Belgium', and then in 1939 to defend 'poor little Poland'. The US, like Britain, has never had the slightest concern for small nations, except, that is, a potential victim; as the people of Ireland, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama and Libya, to name a few recent examples, can well attest.

What the US means by the 'rights of Kuwait' is not the rights of the masses of the country (native and migrant). No, the only right US imperialism understands is the right of the dollar. The right to continue to exploit the Gulf region through feudal-capitalist oligarchies, like the al-Sababs, who ruled Kuwait from billion dollar gold plated palaces without any of the niceties of bourgeois democracy or the bother of elections.

Iraq might have a smaller population, territory and GNP than the US, as the RCP's *The Next Step* brilliantly points out, but its lies are just as big. Saddam Hussein says Kuwait was always part of Iraq; in fact both countries were created by the British out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of World War I. He says that he is fighting for the liberation of the 'Arab nation' against imperialism; the 'Arab nation' is, of course, a modern myth, used by Ba'ath and other bourgeois nationalists to rally the masses to their banner.

As to fighting imperialism, this is again designed purely for the consumption of the masses in the region. It has no basis in truth. Saddam Hussein stands at the head of a class based on monopoly capital which desperately needs to become imperialist itself if it is to avoid internal revolution. Iraq has long had an internal colony in the form of Iraqi Kurdistan, now it has another in the form of an annexed Kuwait (for eight years it fought a bloody war after it tried to do the same with western Iran).

Hussein does not want to overthrow the existing imperialist dominated world order. He wants to join it as a junior partner, and as such he wants to do a deal with Bush ... his problem is that Bush did not want to know. Bush was just itching for another opportunity to reassert a relatively declining United States' position as No1 imperialist power.

... Another problem for Hussein has been the counterrevolutionary process taking place in the USSR. In the name of Gorbachev's utopian and reactionary so-called 'New World Order' the USSR is now against any disturbance of the existing (ie, old) imperialist dominated world order and will line up with international imperialism, and against former allies, to preserve it.

In essence this is exactly the position of the Labour left and CND sponsors of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf; though, if anything, these forces are more mealy-mouthed than Gorbachev. Again in the name of the 'New World Order' the Labour left and the

CND call for peace in the Gulf – not, mind you, by demanding that US, British and other imperialist armies get out – that only applies to the Iraqi presence in Kuwait.

In fact the only point on which these Labour leftists and CNDers differ from mainstream imperialist politics is on the question of method. Where Bush and Thatcher are preparing to reimpose the old in the name of the new through force, the Labour left and the CND prefer peaceful, non-violent forms of persuasion. Naturally, cool headed imperialists like Bush and Thatcher are not affected one iota by such pacifist advice. The role of pacifism is not to befuddle the bourgeoisie, rather the proletariat.

The Labour left and CND leaders of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf huff and puff against war and about how Bush and Thatcher once armed and supported Hussein's Iraq. It's all good 'anti-imperialist' stuff, except they fully accept the agenda set by imperialism, ie how to preserve the old.

Where this leads is best seen in the 'official communist' *Morning Star* (taking its cue from the leadership of the Soviet Union, as ever, even if it is now restoring capitalism and working hand in glove with imperialism). Its editorial on September 27 says that "the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate (sic) government" and the "withdrawal" of Iraqi forces should be achieved through sanctions (Tony Benn sanctimoniously says they should not hurt ordinary people – which is like saying in a war that bullets should not kill ordinary soldiers).

Of course, if after "many months" its "political, peaceful and non-military, including economic" forms of imperialist "pressure" do not succeed "we" are left with the inescapable conclusion, the option of "military action". For this to be acceptable the *Morning Star* wants it carried out behind the fig leaf of the UN: "If there is to be a policeman to enforce UN decisions as required – and the present unstable world situation seems to demand this – it must be the UN, not the US which provides it."

It goes without saying that although the UN is not simply an updated version of the League of Nations (which Lenin called a "den of thieves and rogues") it is not a body in which communists should place any hope whatsoever. Its counterrevolutionary role in Korea and the Congo is well known; but what should decide the matter is its membership. Of its 160 members only a handful are now even for-

mally socialist. The rest are capitalist governments, most of which operate in cooperation and at the behest of imperialism. A UN war against Iraq would, if the US could get it past the security council vetos of China and the Soviet Union, in essence be no different from a US war against Iraq.

Communists, that is real communists, understand that war is inevitable as long as capitalism dominates the world. Peace will only come through revolution. That is why we say: Britain, Iraq, the main enemy is at home! and why we will be organising a distinct, militant, anti-imperialist contingent on the November 24 demonstration. We will not and cannot let the implicit pro-imperialism of the Labour left and CND go unchallenged.

Unfortunately, in spite of our honest efforts to unite all left groups on a principled anti-imperialist position, this contingent will almost entirely consist of supporters of the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

The prospect of war in the Gulf has produced a rich harvest of confusion on the left in Britain. Basically, apart from the pro-imperialist reformist left – ie, the Bennite Labour left, the *Morning Star*'s CPB and rump Euro organisation – the rest of the left has adopted a pro-Saddam Hussein position.

In the name of anti-imperialism the RCG, SWP, *Socialist Organiser*, NCP, WRP, RCP, Workers Power and a host of smaller Trotskyite, semi-Trotskyite and Mao-oid groups say that we should support Saddam Hussein. With some we suspect this is simply a matter of political prostitution; the WRP (*News Line*) has a long record of this; not so long ago it actually sent photographers to pickets outside the Iraqi embassy in order to finger communists to Hussein's regime. Now the 'official communist' New Communist Party, being equally adrift ideologically, is prone to such disgusting crimes against the working class.

Historically the NCP would, as a reflex reaction, fall in behind the Soviet bureaucracy. Flung into crisis by Gorbachev's trampling on the Brezhnevite orthodoxies on which Sid French founded the NCP, the current Eric Trevett leadership is desperate ... for finance. This is the only 'internationalism' he understands. And in the name of such 'internationalism' the NCP has already crossed class lines, acting as a press agency for the openly bourgeois Ethiopia. Is it now trying to carry out the same role for finance capital in Iraq?

Perhaps. Speaking on a New

*Worker* platform on September 20, which included the Association of Muslims in Britain, Andy Brooks, the International Secretary of the NCP, actually praised the butcher Saddam Hussein as a great revolutionary and claimed that Iraq was not a capitalist country! How long will it be before the NCP ends up doing a WRP?

If the NCP and the WRP constitutes the 'prostitute left', the other groups mentioned above must constitute the 'naive Ba'ath left'. The 'naive Ba'ath left' divides on many technical issues, eg, support for different anti-war committees; and when to support Hussein – before or after US soldiers cross the Iraqi border. But at the end of the day they adopt the same position as the WRP and NCP, but for less despicable reasons.

We too say that the Iraqi working class should fight imperialism. But where the 'naive Ba'ath left' says this is best done shoulder to shoulder with the proto imperialism of Saddam Hussein, we say it is best done by making revolution against his unstable regime and raising the red flag of proletarian internationalism. That would really challenge imperialism.

Revolutionaries in Iraq should prefer the defeat of their own country to its victory. They should not give an inch on working class political independence from the Ba'ath regime. They should certainly not "subordinate" their struggle against Saddam Hussein to the "task of defeating imperialist onslaught", as Workers Power wants them to do. Saddam Hussein's difficulties should be turned into opportunities by the Kurdish and working class masses of Iraq.

The only progressive war in Iraq is a civil war against Hussein. If imperialism invades and takes over the country, then, and only then, will it become the main enemy. We do not begin by asking "Who was the aggressor?" or "Which side is the most powerful?", but "What class interests are involved?" Hussein is not fighting against imperialism, rather for the proto imperialism of Iraqi finance capitalism. That means that the main enemy of the Iraqi people, Arab and Kurdish, above all the working class of Iraq, is not *abroad*. No, as in Britain the main enemy is at home.

- No to imperialist sanctions!
- Not a penny, not a man for the imperialist war drive!
- For workers' sanctions against the imperialist war drive!
- US and British forces out of the Gulf!
- Down with Bush, Thatcher and Hussein!
- Down with Labour Party social imperialism!
- Down with social pacifism and social proto imperialism!
- For proletarian revolution!
- Join the anti-imperialist contingent on November 24. Assemble 12 noon outside Embankment tube.

David Sherriff



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

WE HAVE long argued that bureaucratic socialism has run out of all progressive possibilities, that it faced the prospect of either political revolution or a return to capitalism. Events in Eastern Europe have proved us only too right and surely all honest observers will admit that a similar process is now well advanced in the world's revolutionary centre itself, the Soviet Union.

It is far more than just symbolic that there are moves afoot to change the name of the country: to either drop the word 'soviet' or the word 'socialist', or both, from its title. Demands from those in the highest positions – such as professor Stanislav Shatalin, a member of Gorbachev's presidential council – for the *speediest* transition to capitalism, are now *almost* official policy.

Whether or not his 500 day crash programme "to convert the Soviet Union into a market economy" is ever made operational remains to be seen. Shatalin told the *Financial Times* correspondent in Moscow that he is "convinced" it will be "put into effect" by Gorbachev in the "very near future" (October 1 1990). Whatever doubts we have about this, it is clear that in spite of all their well publicised differences, the Soviet Union's leading politicians are hell bent on counterrevolution.

What passes for debate in their circles is about which way to achieve the restoration of capitalism. Should it be through "a very cruel policy" but effective (Shatalin), or be less cruel, but acceptable to a desperate population (Ryzhkov)?

The Soviet Union is certainly in profound crisis. Under the stagnation of Brezhnev, workers had to join long queues, even for basic necessities. Under the 'dynamic' perestroika, workers no longer have to bother queuing ... the shelves are bare. But as well as plunging deeper into economic chaos, the Soviet Union is being pulled apart politically. This has above all manifested itself in the form of nationalism, not least in the Russian core of the country.

Although Gorbachev has been granted sweeping presidential powers ("tsarist" powers, admits Shatalin), the West's statesman of the year has been exposed as the political pigmy he really is. It is easy to give imperialism Eastern Europe on a platter and agree to unequal arms treaties. It is another thing entirely to prevent the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its economy.

While Gorbachev dithers about the 500 day plan, tries to blend it with Ryzhkov's "alternative plan" for a "centrally managed transition to a market system" (capitalism), Yeltsin has gone ahead with his own 500 day programme. As to the Baltic republics, they are determined on full *capitalist* independence, and want nothing to do with Moscow, whether it is headed by Gorbachev or Yeltsin.

As a result of centrifugal nationalism and economic chaos, Gorbachev issues his presidential decrees to the wind. If Yeltsin were to replace him, he would surely suffer the same fate. Counterrevolution is a blind and ungrateful god. Having used and discarded Gorbachev, it will then use Yeltsin, and then when he in turn has outlived his usefulness he too will face political extinction. The administrative stratum in the Soviet Union might be intent on transforming itself into a full blown capitalist class but, as the GDR has shown, at the end of the day what capitalism prefers to serve it is not reformed 'official communist' populists.

Of course, if capitalism is restored it will be the masses who will pay for it. Unemployment, already predicted to soar to between 30 and 40 million, can only but be further exacerbated as world capitalism goes into another of its pre-general crisis downward oscillations. Soviet capitalism will hardly be stable; in fact it will be prone, very prone, to a new proletarian revolution.

The Editor

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## LETTERS

### NCP ... again

So now we have at least two different versions of what is claimed to be the position adopted by three members of the New Communist Party, who attended a *Leninist* seminar a few months back, and their supposed political supporters. There is Ian Mahoney's (*The Leninist* No91, June 8) and now Nick Clarke's (*The Leninist* No94, August 31).

They are both entitled to their differing views, but what they are not entitled to do, if they are *honest* in their demand for 'honest debate', is to persist with the assertion that the recently resigned members of the NCP, including myself, constituted a faction.

After the unscrupulous way in which Mahoney has tried to make easy political capital out of those three members of the NCP who attended the *Leninist* seminar, other members of the NCP and, for that matter, members of other organisations could be very wary of attending such seminars in the future.

Ian Mahoney's mistake stems directly from his well worn, polemical tactic – that of making unsubstantiated assertions and, on that false basis, to formulate a 'criticism' of the conduct of others. It is an approach that is compounded by his attempt to draw a parallel between the precursors of *The Leninist*, who conducted a sustained campaign as a faction within the NCP, leading to expulsions, with a *disparate group* of comrades who resigned from the NCP.

In the next issue of *The Leninist* perhaps we will see a bit of honest self criticism from Ian Mahoney.

Jerry Spring  
West London

Alan Merrik replies:

Quite what the 'differences of opinion' that comrade Spring refers to between comrades Mahoney and Clarke are, I cannot tell. It is a shame Spring does not see fit to tell us, or substantiate his own unsubstantiated assertions about Mahoney's "dishonesty".

And, no, we did not finger Spring's 'disparate group' of ex-NCPers as a faction. But neither were Spring and crew that disparate, either. Certainly, they had enough cohesiveness to draft a joint letter of resignation to the West London branch and a statement before the NCP ideological conference – even if they didn't quite have the coherence to distribute this.

What we emphasised with these comrades, both before and after their resignations, was precisely that they were not enough of a 'faction'. Comrade Spring, you have the wrong end of the stick entirely! That this grouping remained as 'disparate' as it did, organisationally and above all politically, was *precisely* its weakness. That, after all, is how we were able to establish and build our paper and the organisation around it and, conversely, why comrade Spring is merely able to use its pages to make unsubstantiated, technical criticisms.

### Sparts and the Gulf

We have received your letter of August 22 1990, concerning your proposal for a demonstration on the Gulf war crisis.

While we are in favour of principled united front actions directed against the imperialist oil grab in the Gulf, we disagree with the slogans you propose for a demonstration. We call for all imperialist forces, bases and fleets to be withdrawn from the Gulf, and take the side militarily of Iraq against these forces in the event of war. We have called on the USSR to give Iraq the weapons needed to deter the US imperialists and their robber allies...

However, we do not call for "Iraq out of Kuwait". This slogan implies that the world working class has some interest in maintaining the border established by British imperialism which divides Iraq from Kuwait.

To the contrary, for us the working class has *no side* in the squalid wars over oil, ports and territory which have plagued the region under the rule of assorted sheiks and colonels. We *do* have an interest in the profits sweated out of oil workers in the Gulf to the North Sea to the Gulf of Mexico: our interest is that this wealth go to the working people of the world...

For these reasons we view your 'Iraq out of Kuwait' slogan as a concession to the British/US imperialist hysteria over "poor little Kuwait", and we would not support any demonstration organised on that basis.

Alistair Green  
For the Spartacist League/Britain

### RCG and the Gulf

We received your letter dated August 22 regarding the demonstration on September 22 and the committee to organise it.

We will not be supporting the demonstration as we do not support the demands you are proposing to organise the demonstration around.

Lorna Reid  
For Revolutionary Communist Group

Alan Merrik replies:

That the Spartacists have adopted a position of defence of the barbaric Iraqi regime – a clear departure from their positions with regard to the previous Gulf conflict and the Malvinas – testifies to the increasing degeneration of this sorry sect. One can only presume that its "military defence" for Iraq will lead it to organise 'international brigades' – a game it pretended to play with over Afghanistan.

The RCG's frankly apolitical reply merely testifies to its own incoherence and fear of confronting Leninism.

This is especially so as our initial proposal of a demonstration put forward the two demands as a bottom line. Participating organisations, we emphasised, would be free to advance their own slogans within this – which of course, would include the RCG's shopping list of demands.

### Tax raids

The successful raid by bailiffs on the homes of four non-poll tax payers in the borough of Wandsworth has come as a shock to anti-poll tax campaigners. The raids, carried out without warning, reveal grave weaknesses in the anti-poll tax campaign, which can, if not

immediately rectified, threaten the whole credibility of the anti-poll tax movement.

Court obstructions as a form of struggle are secondary to that of mobilising the masses of working people to actively participate in the struggle against the tax. This approach, consistently argued for by *The Leninist* and ridiculed by other so-called lefts, starts from the premise that the anti-poll tax struggle is not an issue in itself, but a part of the wider class struggle, against not only the present Tory government, but against a future Labour capitalist administration and the capitalist system itself.

The pathetic constitutionalism of Militant, which says that we have legal rights and defences against bailiffs who 'are not allowed' to force entry, is the recipe for disaster. Thatcher is out to intimidate workers into paying in order to speed up the collection of the tax. With four successes under their belts in Wandsworth one can foresee a wave of bailiff raids, which can seriously demoralise and possibly break the anti-poll tax movement.

It is urgent that we break with court obstruction as the main strategy and get out onto the estates and streets, and organise neighbourhood bailiff watch committees, so that as soon as bailiffs approach, the estate or street raises hell with sirens, whistles, pots and pans, and congregates as a mass to physically prevent entry into workers' property.

We of the APTUs with our meagre forces cannot substitute for the masses' organisation and action; neither must we plead legalistic arguments to excuse lack of action by the masses, and then plead for the election of a Labour government as the solution to the poll tax problem. Rather we must provide the leadership to organise the masses and give a class perspective of struggle, united around class slogans and through united class organisation such as Councils of Action. United class struggle alone can win the battle against the poll tax.

Tom Cowan  
Secretary, Tooting APTU (personal capacity)

### Cul-de-sac

The *British Road to Socialism* really has ended up in a cul-de-sac against a brick wall.

The Euros apparently have decided to ditch the word 'communist'. Good riddance to them. They have never been entitled to it.

But the British working class will in its good time take vengeance on these cowards and traitors. The fight, the class struggle, cannot but go on; the capitalists seldom flinch.

Now there is a Leninist wing of the Communist Party of Great Britain to carry on that fight. Seventy years have not been in vain.

Long live communism! Leninism lives!  
Reg Weston  
Member of Kent District Committee, CPGB

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.

# Goodbye to all that

Whatever it ends up calling itself the Euro CPGB organisation will not much longer be with us

THE EURO organisation, still bearing the name "Communist Party of Great Britain" is making the best contribution it possibly could to commemorating the 70th anniversary of the CPGB. It is winding itself up.

Already it has moved shop from St John Street to the more modest premises of Cynthia Street. The new bi-weekly journal *Changes* (doesn't David Bowie hold the copyright for this one?) replaces both the dire weekly *7 Days* and the soporific monthly *News and Views*. Ardent readers of the old press, if such exist, should not fret though. Standards have been maintained: *Changes* manages to be both dire and soporific, or so we gather from issue one.

The net financial gain from such measures will no doubt suffice to pay the salaries of secretary Nina Temple and other full timers as they drive the remnants of their 'party' over the precipice. This, by the way, is to happen at a special congress on December 8-9.

You don't learn much of this from *Changes*. A better title might have been *Waffle*, the paper's eight pages being preoccupied with the vacuous musings of Nina Temple, Chalmers of the Yard (both of whom presided over the equally precipitous decline of the Young Communist League) along with other dismal Euro hacks. It lacks clarity, style, interest and, thankfully, pages. One cannot really envisage it continuing publication for very long.

The Euro 'leadership's' current position is most adequately expressed in the draft resolution to congress *Making New Times Better Times*. Here it admits that its recently published *Manifesto for New Times* is already "outdated", particularly by "the collapse of the so called socialist regimes". What the Euros now think these states that bankrolled them for so long were, one can only guess, but Temple is reported as saying that the state capitalist Socialist Workers Party has been proven right. Maybe it will reserve a seat for her on its CC after her own organisation collapses. Certainly, the Euros have greeted the collapse of socialism and rise of reaction with uncooled glee.

Now today's reactionary bile of the draft resolution must be plastered over the yawning cracks in yesterday's *Manifesto*. This is now the Euros at their most openly liquidationist. The resolution has a stated "objective of a humane, democratic, green socialism" (p2), which unsurprisingly involves accommodation to every right wing reformist and nationalist phenomenon that they can slither near, from the Scottish Constitutional Convention to Charter 88. You can bet they will not make up the left wing of either.

Of course, for them this demands the "Bolshevik shell" be thrown off (p4). The aim is there-



Temple: goodbye and no regrets

fore "to adopt aims and values that drop Marxism-Leninism" (p7), commitment to which, incredibly, is still contained within their rules. In order to snuggle up to the bourgeoisie in the desired fashion, obviously the traditions and name of communism are problematic, to say the least. They will therefore be dumped forthwith, and the liquidation of their organisation completed.

The new organisation "will be federal ... The transformed party will not be called the Communist Party of Great Britain. The new name will be decided at a constitutional follow-up congress. The preferred name offered by the retiring EC is Radical Socialist Federation" (p7). This new federation, it seems, will not contest elections, and will be open to members of other political parties.

A minority on the EC advocates an even looser arrangement, as an 'association', which makes the Independent Labour Publications look a model of Bolshevik hardness.

The liquidation of the Euro CPGB takes its constituents out of working class politics altogether. It represents a fundamental break with even a formal identification with the past. For the Euros, "1989 marked the end of an era. The political project of 1917 ended in disaster" (p3). This is echoed by Eric Hobsbawm in October's *Marxism Today*.

To blame "Bolshevism" for their crisis is more than a little dishonest. Nina Temple is the latest in the line of individuals, back through Gordon McLennan and John Gollan to "Stalin's man" Harry Pollitt who, through death by a thousand cuts, destroyed the CPGB as a Bolshevik-type party in Britain. The inner party democracy that Temple and her Euro gaggle harp on about rings hollow when one considers the bureaucratic imposition of the Euro leadership in the preceding years. Those that have discredited the name of communism are now shuffling off the stage because ... its name has been discredited! You can no doubt find them at their Cynthia Street address by following the stench of hypocrisy.

Of course, the draft resolution, like *Manifesto for New Times* or, for that matter, the *British Road to Socialism*, is no finished set of principles but moments in a process

towards the bourgeoisie. Whether the Euros will survive this process intact is extremely doubtful. There are too many stresses on them; pulls towards the Greens (eg, its one councillor in England, John Peck), to the welcomed "recovery by the Democrats", or, indeed, a return to private life. After all, why sacrifice your time for something which has lost all confidence in itself?

Furthermore, given that there are minority and majority positions being put forward on the EC, minorities within them and divisions in the ranks, what will these minorities who lose their line do? Bow down to 'party' (or federation, or association) discipline, or walk out the door? In addition, federal structure or not, it looks increasingly likely that the Scottish Euros, who stood in the last council elections as the 'Scottish Communist Party', will break off to pursue their own nationalist project.

Give it a year, and we wager that not even the authors of this amorphous resolution will remember what it said. Like all opportunist statements, it is outdated before it is adopted - no more than another step through the gateway to oblivion for these anti-communist 'communists'.

We welcome it. That one more sect dragging the banner of communism through the filth should liquidate can only be to the good. The 'official communists' of the Communist Party of Britain and New Communist Party also have their own roads to nowhere, propelled by the collapse of the world communist movement into the arms of the bourgeoisie through the agency of Gorbachevism. In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the end of 'official communism' has been tragic. For readers with a taste for low farce, there are the British Euros.

'Official communism' long ago abandoned the principles of Marxism-Leninism that it now claims to be jettisoning after having proven them bankrupt. The thunder of the October Revolution and the Communist International has not ended with the idiocy of Nina Temple. Opportunism, not communism, has been proven desolate.

The contradictions within society, driving it to war and destruction, demand that the principles of Lenin's Comintern become a material force to the destruction of that society. But the death rattle of that which is old and rotten will not automatically call forth new forces to battle.

For this, the genuine communist forces must be seen to take and develop those principles in theory and practice; to be able, as imperialism squares up once more for war, to pose the ultimatum: socialism or barbarism. That means fighting to build the real inheritors of October - the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

Sean Quinn

Discontent in the classroom is forcing the leadership of the biggest teachers' union to make militant sounding noises. The NUT executive, in preparation for the special salaries conference in November, has outlined plans for a flat rate increase of £1,500, plus 10%. This, they believe, will be achieved by lobbying and a bill-board campaign. Within days of their announcement, John MacGregor outlined plans to limit teachers' pay increases to between 8 and 10%. Leftwingers in the NUT met in mid-September to work out a common policy for Conference. They agreed to push for a flat-rate increase of £3,200 linked to a campaign on increasing workload, rising class sizes and a growing shortage of teachers in many areas. As a first step the left is calling for a national strike ballot before Christmas and action next term. The agenda for the conference has the item on action as the last point, which means it could well not be discussed. United action from the left will be needed to force it through, as a preliminary to industrial action. Supporters of *Socialist Action* and other right moving Trotskyists have broken with this collective position. Instead, they want a token campaign solely on the pay issue, which in practical terms will do little to motivate the membership and will be used by the right wing as a wrecking motion. TC

On September 5 the new lesbian and gay rights group, Outrage, organised a Piccadilly Circus 'kiss-in' against the Public Order Act 1986, which would have gathered more than 300 protestors if the police had not confined it to a narrow wedge around the statue of Eros. The basis of the protest was at best outrageously naive. The Outrage leaflets stated that the Act was introduced because of "football hooliganism" and that parliament never intended this law to repress lesbian and gay people. It was, in fact, introduced as a direct result of the miners' strike and has been used to attack working class struggles ever since. Outrage apparently hopes to end gay oppression through appealing to the real intentions of parliament. Will it apply this to Clause 28? Surely not. Lesbians and gays are well aware here of parliament's deeply reactionary and authoritarian intentions. What we must do is not look to the state to defend gays, rather to the working class. The police loiter around public toilets looking for 'gay prey', while 'gay bashers' are given virtual encouragement by the bosses' press and media. Appealing to the better instincts of the capitalist state can only dangerously divide and weaken the working class, attempting to set the heterosexual majority against lesbians and gays. AA

Militant's pride and joy, the three pronged Glasgow-Liverpool-Bristol to London "People's March Against the Poll Tax", is causing this left cover for law abiding Kinnockism more than a few worries. Rank and file Militant activists in the local Anti-Poll Tax Unions, naturally enough, do not readily grasp the desire of their leadership not to work for the biggest 'militant' mass action when the march reaches London. The leadership's plan for a controlled pay-to-enter festival was scuppered when their supporters in the London APT Federation backed a Trafalgar Square Defendant's Campaign proposal for a march through Trafalgar Square on Saturday October 20th. Since then pressure from above has been applied. The London Federation delegates have been persuaded to have the march elsewhere, and the TSDC's feeder march has also been diverted away from the Square. Nevertheless, members of the CPGB (TL) following the People's March to challenge Militant's Labourism with our strategy for victory against the poll tax have reported coaches being organised from towns all along the route, promising a significant national demonstration on the 20th - despite Militant's leadership! TL readers should be there on the day to help put across the CPGB (TL) strategy. Latest information is: 10am TSDC picket of Horseferry Road Magistrates Court, 11am feeder march to join main London Federation march: 12 noon Kennington Park (Oval tube) to Brockwell Park. Offers of help to 071-431 3135. SK

## Funding the future



While the Euros will soon drop all pretence at have anything to do with communism, the *Morning Star* 'official communists' are being dragged towards the camp of capitalism through another road, through trailing behind the counterrevolutionary Gorbachev. The *Morning Star* has no real choice in the matter. Around half of its circulation goes to the Soviet Union. Rather than risk closure, these political prostitutes prefer excusing Gorbachev's treachery to exposing it. We will never follow that course. We are and will remain politically honest, because we are, thanks to you our readers and your generosity, financially independent.



Class action is needed to smash the criminalisation of lesbians and gays

**Today, as with the Falklands in 1982, British imperialism and the British left line up for war. As they both enter the fray in their respective ways, we look at the lessons from eight years ago for today**

One other difference is the role of the Soviet Union. Eight years ago it confined itself to pacifist and pseudo-anti-imperialist musing so typical of the Brezhnev period. Now, with Gorbachev steering hard right, it has lined up behind the imperialist offensive. Yet the dynamic of the belligerent states remains the same. To intervene correctly in present and future struggles we must learn the lessons of past ones.

### Labour: Britain's recruiting sergeant

As soon as the first Argentinian troops set foot on South Georgia on April 2 1982, the Labour Party again proved itself British imperialism's most loyal defender. The then party leader - Michael Foot, 'inveterate peacemonger' - came out four-square behind Thatcher's war plan's, just as has that one

No22, p4, June 1982, our emphasis). Which is not far off the position of Kerensky and the right Mensheviks in World War I, who also pursued a 'socialist' war after the February Revolution.

Or are we being too generous? After all, Militant did not even require a revolution. An election putting the thoroughly bourgeois Labour Party into power was just as good an excuse.

Militant's cant today about a "working class solution" to the danger of war in the Gulf should not be taken at face value. The nature of the beast has not changed. In the intervening eight years it has rattled on further down the reformist road. We should have no doubt that, when pushed, it will once again pick up on the hoary old 'socialist' colonial policy.

### Revolutionary defencism?

Returning to the present Gulf crisis, many on

of the latter by violent means.

This, again, is nothing new. Most organisations who take this position adopted an identical one in the Falklands war, with the exception of the increasingly erratic and surreal Spartacist League which, unlike today, adopted a revolutionary defeatist position in 1982.

Back then, we stated that the "only principled communist position is to call for the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie, to take advantage of any weakness of the ruling class during the crisis and to advance any opportunity for its revolutionary overthrow" (*The Leninist*, September 1982, No3). Our view has not changed eight years on.

In 1982, as today, the rationale of the petty bourgeois left was that one country was a non-imperialist and therefore oppressed state, and therefore must be defended. But Argentina was and is no banana - or corned beef - republic. It has a per capita production closer to Spain, which is a member of the imperialist EC club, than to Turkey, which is only a candidate. It "is a politically independent country which is inserted into the world market in a way that combines financial and technical dependence with its emergence as a world power." (Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina, the Malvinas and the end of Military Rule*, p1, Verso, 1984).

Argentine finance capital had developed to the point where it was the dominant section of capital, capturing the state. The development of finance capital, whatever the level of development of the country, brings with it the necessity to expand - to, as Rhodes put it, become imperialist or face revolution. Such a level of development indicates the moribund nature of the ruling class in such states. The bourgeoisie as a whole has become entirely reactionary. It can play no progressive role, internally or externally.

This was undoubtedly the situation that Galtieri and the Argentine bourgeoisie faced. In the early 80s the country was deep in economic and political crisis. Things were fast degenerating. Real wages and GDP plummeted, with the economy racked by hyperinflation. Galtieri sought a resolution - or at the very least, a distraction - externally. Argentina's foreign policy was nothing more than an extension of its totally reactionary domestic policy.

He contended with his doppelganger Pinochet over the Beagle Channel; Argentine intervention in Central America was mooted. Finally the general lighted on the old contention over the Malvinas/Falkland isles. So unstable was the situation that the date for their annexation was moved forward from July or May to early April, in an attempt to head off growing working class action against austerity. Unlike the petty bourgeois left, we did not cut Argentina's foreign policy from its domestic policy. If the latter was reactionary - which the likes of the RCP, Workers Power et al did not dispute - then so was the former. There is therefore no way that communists could lend any support to Argentina against imperialism. There was no anti-imperialist content to the regime's actions, only the machinations of a moribund proto-imperialist class.

The only response to the reactionary expansionist moves of the Argentine bourgeoisie by genuine communists there should have been resolute and revolutionary opposition. Anything else would have sacrificed working class independence, tying them to the strings of the junta's bloody apron. This was forcefully argued in *The Leninist* of September 1982: "The only interest the Argentine workers have, is in exposing the imperialist ambitions of the bourgeoisie and calling for its defeat."

Contrary to this, some organisations said that victory for Britain's opponent would breed revolution there. The RCP's Mike Freeman argued this in its 1982 pamphlet, *The Malvinas are Argentina's*: "Should Britain succeed in clubbing its old slave back into submission it will probably lead to the fall of Galtieri. We may be sure he will be replaced by a ruler even more servile to the demands of his imperialist masters and, in response to these demands, even more coercive towards the masses. A British victory would mean even tighter imperialist control over Argentina, and more poverty, torture and murder for its people."

"On the other hand a defeat for Britain in the South Atlantic would be the best result for the masses of Argentina ... A victory would be a tremendous boost for the anti-imperialist struggle. It would create conditions in which the working class could, for the first time, take the lead in challenging imperialism. The workers would not be slow in exposing and casting aside those bourgeois rulers who

# Once more unto the breach...



Against Thatcher, Bush, Saddam: for the working class

**H**ISTORY, as history will, is repeating itself - not in the same form, but certainly with enough continuity for those armed with the correct method to reach the correct conclusions.

In the Gulf the comparison is not, as the hacks of Wapping would have us believe, between the personalities of Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler (both having moustaches and a penchant for uniforms). You needn't look nearly so far back. The lineup of forces only two years ago in the same region holds such comparisons, although that time it was the Iranians who wore the black hats, with Saddam playing Gabby Hayes to Reagan's John Wayne.

More telling is the comparison with the war in the South Atlantic over the Falklands in 1982, where Britannia once more strove to prove she still ruled the waves, defending 'democracy' against the foreign dictator - again, conveniently enough, with a predilection towards military dress.

This time, conflict breaks out at a higher level. In 1982 the conflict itself drew in only two countries, with others lining up on the diplomatic front. Now, many more are drawn into the vortex, giving this Gulf crisis truly world dimensions.

time 'dangerous leftist', Kinnock, today. And, as usual, the Labour left wanted the humane face of imperialism, the UN, used to sort out the little altercation in the South Atlantic. They were not against imperialism, you understand: they just wanted it to smile and straighten its tie. The left, far more so than the right in the Labour party, played the role of ensuring working class loyalty to the institutions of the British state. This took the form of worries as to whether Britain was steaming to war with nuclear weapons on board. Conventional weapons, especially when wielded through the good offices of the UN, were the much preferred option.

This extended into the ranks of self-proclaimed 'revolutionaries'. The most revealing, and sickening, reaction to that war came from those Labourite 'Marxists' of the Militant Tendency. The problem was not the imperialist war drive, but who was fronting it: "The Labour movement should be mobilised to force a general election to open the way for the return of a Labour government to implement socialist policies at home and abroad ... A Labour government could not just abandon the Falklanders and let Galtieri get on with it. But it would continue the war on socialist lines." (*Militant International Review*,

the left argue not only that it is a duty to work for the defeat of our own ruling class in any potential war against Iraq - which is an undoubted internationalist duty - but also that it is in the interests of workers in both the West and Iraq that this should be the case.

One group, Workers Power, cites Rudolf Klement, first secretary of the Trotskyist 'Fourth International', in its favour: the proletariat in non-imperialist nations "cannot and does not, as in the imperialist camp, seek revolutionary victory at the cost of military defeat, but rather along the road of military victory of this country" (quoted in *Workers Power*, September). WP, along with other organisations on the petty bourgeois left, therefore raises the slogan of "victory to Iraq". On the revolutionary left this is the dominant position (with the majority of its adherents now affiliated to the Revolutionary Communist Party initiated Ad Hoc Hands off the Middle East Committee), albeit with multifarious provisos from the many groups pushing the line. After all, Saddam Hussein is a none too palatable bedmate.

The favoured formulation seems to boil down to 'military, not political, defence' of the Iraqi regime, as if the two were practically separable, and the former not the application

try to exploit the anti-imperialist sentiments of the masses to strengthen their bargaining position with the imperialists" (p17).

So what happened? Did Freeman's prediction which, remember, we could be so sure about in 1982, come to pass? Was Galtieri replaced by a ruler that made him look like Andy Pandy? Obviously not. In fact, fully in line with the logic of revolutionary defeatism, Argentinian defeat let immediate crisis tear forth. This arose in a stronger form than before the war, which was designed to head off just such a situation: "Galtieri's gamble cost him everything ... popular disillusionment erupted in a wave of violent clashes with the police in the Plaza de Mayo outside the Casa Rosada [Government House]. Most Argentines now recognised that the junta had used the invasion to manipulate patriotic sentiment in order to recharge the fading Process of National Reorganisation" (David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, p381).

Of course, while there was no consolidation of reaction to the right of Galtieri, as the RCP, Workers Power and others absurdly predicted - and predict today in the context of Iraq - neither was there revolution. But the reason is not that the masses were exhausted, defeated and demoralised after the war. No way: defeat for the generals had revived the masses' combativity. Once again they were taking to the streets under their own banners.

The ability of the Argentine bourgeois regime to stabilise and consolidate must be sought among its sorry bunch of left organisations, particularly the Communist Party of Argentina. In effect, it held the same position as the RCP et al. Like them, the CPA came out with a position which "fully supports the recovery of the Islas Malvinas" (*Comment*, May 1 1982). Exiled Argentinian leftists in Cuba duly lined up outside the embassy of the regime which had jailed, tortured and murdered their comrades, in order to volunteer their services to it in the name of a spurious anti-imperialism.

In the light of this, our statement after the war's conclusion rings true for both the situation then and today: "Had the Communist Party there adopted a Leninist position, it would now have indeed been unpopular during the war, as were the Bolsheviks during their 'July Days'. Yet the working class is rising in anger, and a principled revolutionary position by the Communist Party five months ago could have now been channelling that discontent into definite revolutionary mass action" (*op cit*, *The Leninist*).

After the collapse of the regime, the CPA again sacrificed any potential for independent working class action. In the ensuing elections it rallied support for the thoroughly reactionary and bourgeois Peronists. Opportunism therefore once again handed a mass movement to capitalism on a plate. Defeat for Argentina was instrumental in creating revolutionary potential. 'Official communism', through its failure to pursue any kind of independent working class perspective, allowed Argentine capitalism to stabilise.

Defeat for Argentina created the possibility of revolution there. Iraq is a state which, like Argentina, is a medium developed capitalist country. As such, it is racked by contradictions from which it cannot escape unless through domestic repression and expansionist war. Defeat for these aims, just as with imperialism, is the best result for that country's working class. To argue otherwise is to argue that it is in the interests of the Iraqi or Argentine bourgeoisie to lose in a conflict with imperialism. Maybe someone should tell Saddam.

In Britain and Argentina, the working class could take advantage of the situation if it marched under its own internationalist banners. For revolutionaries in Argentina, that could only mean a rejection of the anti-imperialist pretensions of its own bourgeoisie, whether coming from the junta, the Peronists or whoever. The logic of this is to stand for the defeat of one's own side.

For us in Britain, the position is essentially the same. The 'pacifism' of the reformists is simply an imperialist smokescreen and must be rejected as explicitly as Thatcher's overt warmongering. But the petty bourgeois left through their support for the other country, also demobilises the independent struggle of the working class through its illusions in Thatcher's opposite numbers, whether they be Galtieri or Saddam. There is only one road for the working class, the road of its own self-liberation.

Alan Merrick

# Iraq: history, economy and class

## From being a classic neo-colony in the 1930s, Iraq has developed its own imperialist ambitions

WHATEVER Saddam Hussein tells us to the contrary, Iraq is no nation state with a history going back to Nebuchadnezzar. Twenty percent of its population is Kurdish, and even the majority Arabs are bitterly divided between the rival Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. What is today Iraq existed as three separate provinces of the Ottoman empire from the 16th century until 1917, when the British, long fearful of growing German influence, occupied the area. It was the British who drew the country's arbitrary borders. They also established a subservient feudalistic monarchy, which operated as little more than a local wing of the British Foreign Office in Whitehall. Even after independence was granted in 1932, Britain maintained its political and economic domination through military bases and the Iraq Petroleum Company, which owned the country's oil wealth and repatriated almost all its steadily expanding profits to London.

Iraq was therefore a classic neo-colony, its independence was purely formal. Real political and economic power lay outside the country. This situation and the resulting social conditions fuelled growing resentment among the vast mass of the Iraqi people, including the country's powerful communist led workers' movement and the national bourgeoisie. In 1948 this reached new heights and a revolutionary situation began to mature. Strikes, demonstrations and other semi-insurrectionary protests forced the Prince Regent to repudiate the London treaty with Britain which, while reaffirming Iraq's nominal independence, provided for continued British control through the setting up of a "joint defence board".

From this point onwards the crisis of neo-colonialism and the monarchy gathered pace, and in 1952 there was another outburst of

peasants of land in excess of a certain minimum ownership, but the peasants were expected to pay the landlords for the land. Ten years later less than half of the land had been redistributed.

Because of these failures a new revolutionary situation began to develop. In response, in July 1959, Kassim banned political parties and sought a foreign diversion. He proclaimed that the emirate of Kuwait belonged to Iraq. The stationing of British troops, assisted by the Arab League, then controlled by Egypt, blocked Kassim and left him humiliated and vulnerable. In 1963 the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party engineered its own coup.

Ba'athism originated in the 1940s, inspired by the writings of Michel Aflaq in Syria. Although it espoused socialism, it was violently hostile to Marxism and the working class - a fact proved after the 1963 coup by its 'dissident' Iraqi wing. Kassim was shot, as were thousands of communists and workers.

This Ba'ath national bourgeois revolution from below proved short lived. Yet after a brief five year interregnum a 'regrouped' Ba'ath party staged a second coup. This time the stick was combined with the carrot. As well as persecuting the Communist Party of Iraq and the Kurdish people, the Ba'athists sought to politically neuter them through incorporation. In 1970 the Kurds were given local autonomy and after an abortive coup by the head of security police in 1973, the Ba'athists established a National Front to shore up their regime. The Front, which was heralded as "a voluntary union among progressive parties and groups", had a 16 member Executive Committee, on which the Ba'ath Party had eight seats, the Communist Party three, the Kurdish Democratic Party three, and the Progressive Nationalists and Independent Demo-

While the Ba'ath regime nationalised some Western transnationals, including of course the oil industry, and has spouted socialistic rhetoric, it is neither anti-capitalist nor anti-imperialist.

This is not the case according to Andy Brooks, the International Secretary of the New Communist Party. Speaking at a *New Worker* public meeting in London on September 20 he stated that Iraq is "not capitalist"; indeed he claimed that Saddam Hussein is a great "revolutionary". Such talk is political prostitution of the worst sort. The truth is very different.

The Ba'ath Party is now a thoroughly counter-revolutionary political formation; it is an organisation of the bourgeoisie committed to making Iraq a great regional power by developing capitalism in the style of Bismarkian Germany. Through the riches provided by oil a whole layer of bureaucrats, contractors, managers and middlemen has grown rich in wealth and power. Connected by birth and marriage, it lives off and controls the petroleum and other industries, financial enterprises, and transport and communication facilities, and constitutes the ruling, capitalist, class. In comparison to this *state monopoly capitalist class*, private capital - which still accounts for about half of industrial production - is marginal, and certainly unable to compete in the world market against US, Japanese and EC capital.

As to its supposed anti-imperialism, this is as much a sham as its anti-capitalism. Its alliance with the Soviet Union was merely diplomatic, designed to secure arms and help it pursue an independent foreign policy. Throughout the 1970s there was a steady trickle of Western capital invested in the country. More importantly, during its bloody war with Iran, especially in the later stages, it got the active assistance of the US and the Nato powers, receiving spy satellite information along with huge deliveries of arms.

While it is still very heavily dependant on oil - obtaining 95% of its foreign exchange from it - and occupies a subordinate position in the world economy, Iraq is certainly no longer a neo-colony as many leftists in Britain insist. Politically Iraq has its own ambitions; it is no longer operating under the direction of London, Washington or anywhere else. Economically it is a medium developed capitalist country with a per capita production of \$3,900, which is just lower than that of Greece, though just higher than Portugal - both members of the EC.

Nevertheless there can be no doubt that the capitalist order in Iraq is far from stable. The masses remain a constant threat and any hint of opposition is met with repression, as evidenced by the existence of an all pervasive police state, the continuing pogrom against the Kurds and the crushing of the Communist Party of Iraq, which was in 1979 accused - incidentally with the support of the WRP - of conspiracy in the army, where according to the constitution political activity may be carried out only by the Ba'ath Party.

What limited social advances there have been for the masses rely on the world price of oil and an ability to service a massive foreign debt. During the Gulf war of 1980-88 Iraq built up debts of \$70-80 billion, including \$10 billion to Kuwait, which supported it during the war. If the regime is to survive and not face civil war, Iraq must therefore expand: it must become imperialist. That was what its incorporation of Kuwait was all about, as was its attempted annexation of western Iran and its never ending brutal oppression of Kurdistan - which is in all but name an internal colony.

Saddam Hussein's present standoff with imperialism has nothing to do with fighting imperialism. What Hussein wants is a better deal from imperialism and permission to operate as the region's local imperialist power - much as South Africa operates in Southern Africa. To Hussein's chagrin Bush said no, and has gone out to reassert US imperialist interests in the region. Workers in Iraq, or in any other country, have no interest in supporting Bush, Thatcher or Hussein. Neither imperialism nor proto imperialism: for all of us the main enemy is at home.

Mary Goodwin

## Statement

IN THE wake of the Hands off the Middle East demonstration of September 15, the CPGB (*The Leninist*) has withdrawn from the Ad Hoc Hands off the Middle East Committee.

This committee, initiated by the RCP, now comprises the majority of left organisations which take an Iraq-defencist position of one form or another. Our sponsorship of the committee was on the basis of the initial demonstration. While we will, of course, continue to support all principled anti-imperialist initiatives of the Ad Hoc committee and other forces, we consider that the only consistent anti-imperialist and internationalist stance is that based around the demands, 'Peace through revolution!' and 'Britain, Iraq: the main enemy is at home!' These politics need to be expressed through independent organisation. The Ad Hoc committee's inability to advance such a perspective leaves the door open to political prostitutes like the WRP (*News Line*) and the NCP as well as ultra-reactionary Islamic and Pan-Arabist forces.

We urge all consistent anti-imperialists to join us in raising the banner of internationalism, to translate such politics into action.

National Committee  
Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*)

popular anger. The army managed to maintain the status quo; but, bowing to nationalist sentiments and in an attempt to yet again fend off popular resentment, the Iraq Petroleum Company agreed to renegotiate its royalties agreement; an increased share of the profit ended up going to the government.

Things came to a head in July 1958. A military coup headed by general Abdul Karim Kassim saw the royal family executed and a republic declared. The new constitution made Islam the state religion and maintained that Iraq formed an integral part "of the Arab Nation" and that Arabs and Kurds are "partners in this homeland".

Kassim's national bourgeois revolution from above proved to be rather superficial. He tried to loosen Iraq's dependence on the West by cultivating links with the Soviet Union and China, but the Iraq Petroleum company continued to dominate the economy. Kassim also carried out a land reform, although this hardly broke the back of the great landlords. The Agricultural Reform Law of 1958 provided for the distribution to

crats one each.

What really maintained Ba'ath rule, though, was oil. The Iraq Oil Company was nationalised and between 1969 and 1972 Iraq concluded agreements with the Soviet Union and other countries to provide the new Iraq National Oil Company with capital and technical skills needed to exploit the oil fields. In the conditions that prevailed in the post-1973 oil price boom the Ba'athists were on the receiving end of windfall revenues and were able to temporarily buy off large sections of the population through extensive socio-economic reforms and the development of industry.

Its agrarian reform finally ended the power of landlords and gave land to the tillers. The workers too, although tightly controlled by the Ba'athists, also made limited economic gains. There was an expansion of welfare services, including health facilities and housing projects, particularly in Baghdad. Primary and secondary education were made free; as a result literacy rates, although low, are increasing: 14% in 1977, 24% in 1983, 43% in 1987.



# Those against unity

At the pacifist 'Stop the War' demo, one of our comrades had a run in with the Morning Star's Communist Party of Britain Gen-sec, Mike Hicks. Mike has taken umbrage at us pointing out the part time nature of his position, given he isn't prepared to go full time for the CPB and no longer keep himself in the manner to which he has become accustomed in his print job. Plughole bound as the CPB is, you can't really blame him. Mike accused us of "taking the piss" out of workers (ie, himself), seeing as he'd selflessly given over a day's pay to attend the march - which, fair play, is probably more than an unemployed worker's dole for a month. No, Mike, we most certainly aren't taking the piss out of workers. But we think anyone who claims to be general secretary of a 'communist party' - which Lenin insisted should be led by committed, professional revolutionaries - and does it part time, most certainly is.

Arithmetic, the Revolutionary Communist Party way: its paper, The Next Step (September 21), gives a head count of about 3,000 on the pacifist dominated Gulf demo on September 15, which we reckon to be about right. So how come the same paper, on September 14, finds 3,000 people on the Hands off the Middle East demo which the RCP initiated? Given that we were one of the sponsors of the march, and spoke at the rally, we'd be the last to deflate it - but really, RCP, don't you think that your inflation of a less than a 1,000-strong demo to 'keep up with the Benns' is a little too much?

Following the 'Peoples march against the poll tax' down the country, a comrade ran into the Glasgow gaggle of the Spartacist League, a leading member of which branded the CPGB in 1920 ("the party of Lenin and Trotsky", to use their own verbiage) as "a dead duck". Why? Because it didn't have John MacLean as a member. Actually, MacLean took a nationalist stand against Lenin and the Comintern. How to explain this bizarre anti-Leninist stand? In London the Sparts froth against the revolutionary nationalism of the IRA, but when in Scotland they refuse to campaign against reactionary Scottish nationalism. Whichever part of the British Isles you come from, we believe the word for this is 'cowardice'.

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



Sylvia Pankhurst: formed the 'Communist Party: British section of the Third International' against the principles of the Third International

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by the British Socialist Party and the Communist Unity Group that they were to form a united Communist Party at a Unity Convention on July 31 1920 provoked the active opposition of the disintegrating sectarian rump of the Socialist Labour Party and Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation, both which had previously taken part in unity negotiations: the SLP, because the BSP refused to agree as a matter of principle that the future CPGB should not seek affiliation to the Labour Party; and the WSF for the same reason, plus the refusal to always boycott the bourgeois parliament.

The views of these anti-unity organisations were put in their most precise and articulate form in two open letters: the "Open Letter to SLP members" from its leader James Clunie and the "Open Letter to the delegates of the Unity Convention" from the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International) - which was in fact no Communist Party nor the British Section of the Third International, but what the WSF illegitimately called itself after June 19 1920 in a vain attempt to steal the thunder of the soon to be formed CPGB.

## Open Letter to the SLP

Comrades, False impressions bring disastrous results when they are given free play, because herein the building up of the past is surrendered with all its strength and possibilities, thereby courting disaster, to the seeming consolidation forms that are evolving into actual existence. Such a position confronts you, comrades, at this present moment.

I refer in particular to the question of unity. And might I say frankly at this point that the question of unity does not embrace what my or your feelings are in respect of Comrades Clarke, Paul, etc [SLPers who had formed the pro-unity CUG - Ed]. Personally, they may be admirable fellows, but policy and comradeship are not a dual character...

The vindication of the continued existence of the SLP, just as it has been up to now, will be its correct analysis and interpretation of the economic, social, and political forces which are bound to impress upon us the practicability of suiting our policy to harmonise with our outlook. At the moment the elements do not exist for unity. Hence only by compromise can we have a United (?) Communist Party. Such a party would continue to contain within itself the very conflicting factions that today, before its formation, compels the need for compromise in order to bring it into being. A party such as the proposed new Communist Party is not a practical proposition, because the vital question to the SLP is the cardinal cause of disagreement. No number of Conferences or National Conventions can settle that question. Unity is not a question of window-dressing, talk and advertisement. It is principle as expressed in policy. Above all remember, comrades, that cheap phrases or popular names or subsidised delegations do not even possess the rudiments of principle and unity. A real strong man is he who can stand alone in the belief that his conduct is correct.

It is not a matter of personality but belief. And do we not find in such a case that belief shows the character of the man when he adheres true to his reading of a situation because it is in the interests of Revolution ... I say down with all the self-imposed leaders! Give us men, good,

sound, staunch and true, solid in organisation, united in purpose, clear in objective, then we may have unity - not before. Have we not learned that the really great Lenin, who, to his immortal credit, always thinks in terms of Revolution, has on many occasions occupied the glorious position of Ibsen's great man by standing alone in his reading of situations, in determining tactics and policy. With him the ideal is the ultimate, the practical and the present problem. Here we find expressed real strength, unity, solid revolutionary purpose. Comrades of the SLP, yours is a problem of a similar character to those which have been solved many times by the ingenious and great President of the Russian Republic. If we are content to follow men in preference to principles then we are weak and lack Revolutionary character. If we are able to take action consistent with our beliefs, then we will insist on the will of the party without in any way violating the first essentials of comradeship. The political situation is of such a character in this country that a strong body like the SLP is absolutely essential to safeguard the Revolutionary development of the Working Class Movement. Real Revolutionary Unity is the combination of the working class. Mass Action is meaningless without that form of strength and consciousness. The only logical form of unity - namely, the combination of parties or individuals having a common line of action - seems to me inevitable, just as the proposed United (?) Communist Party cannot mean anything else but nominal fusion. If the question of Labour Party affiliation is the vital question, then the very existence of the SLP is the proper answer. The SLP branch which is not decided on this matter does not appreciate where it stands. And I am sure that the loyal SLP does appreciably know its party purpose and function. "Know thyself. All wisdom centres there." ... One more attempt at disintegration, no doubt, will soon be made, but our former wisdom will again show itself, and the SLP will continue to live even in greater strength until the real unity of the Revolutionary period shows itself.

James Clunie  
The Socialist No22, Vol 14, June 3 1920

## An Open Letter to the delegates of the Unity Convention

Dear Comrade, Some of you may naturally ask why we are not represented at the Unity Conference. For this reason. It is useless to say that the differences between ourselves and those who have summoned the Unity Conference are purely tactical, and that, therefore, we ought to sink our differences and unite with them. Tactical differences, when sufficiently vital, become differences of principle, rendering united action impossible.

We refuse to run candidates for Parliament because:

1. That tactic entails grave dangers of the movement lapsing into reformism;
2. Any attempt to use the Parliamentary system encourages among the workers the delusion that leaders can fight their battles for them. Not leadership, but mass action is essential, now that the last struggle is approaching;
3. What we want is not class talk, but class war;
4. Under present conditions in this country, any participation in Parliamentism confuses the issue of the class struggle, wastes the energies of the revolutionary workers, and delays full adherence to the Soviet system;
5. Today Parliament is nothing but an instrument of bourgeois domination, a warder off of revolution, a safety valve through which the revolutionary urge escapes in wind. Today Parliament cannot be the arena of the revolutionary struggle;
6. Parliamentism as a form of government has never secured, and can never secure, self-government by the masses.

We reject affiliation to the Labour Party because:

1. In constitution and actual working the Labour Party is a committee of leaders who divert the revolutionary will of the workers into Parliamentary and reformist channels;
2. The Trade Union leaders of Parliamentarians who control the Labour Party have, through their bourgeois associations, acquired a middle-class mentality which inevitably makes them support the tactics of class collaboration in place of the tactics of class war;
3. The Labour Party is based on Parliamentary bourgeois democracy, whereas the Communist Party is out for Working Class Dictatorship...

Comrade, this party has been formed in the firm conviction that in Britain today there is a higher proportion of revolutionaries than existed in France of 1789. We do not believe that our immediate task is to make Communists but rather to organise on uncompromising lines those who already hold Communist views. This is not to say that the work of Communist propaganda is not likewise of supreme importance. But, pending the revolutionary crisis, what is needed is not construction but destruction. We must destroy bourgeois ideas and values, bourgeois morality, the bourgeois standards which create the mental and moral slavery of the proletariat. In so far as we have constructive work before the revolution, this can only be to establish independent proletarian standards and ideals. Hence our uncompromising programme. We will have nothing to do either with bourgeois or with social-democratic parties, organisations, and institutions. We call upon all genuinely Bolshevik groups and individuals to rally to the standard we have raised, to share in the up-building of our Party, to join with us in the spearhead of the revolution. Yours for Revolutionary Communism,  
The National Organising Council  
The Workers Dreadnought July 31 1920

Local heroes

Ciaran de Baroid, *Ballymurphy and the Irish War*, Pluto Press, London, pp322, £5.50 paperback, £12.50 hardback.

CIARAN de Baroid was a community worker in Ballymurphy from 1972-6 who returned to live in the area in 1979. Thankfully his book is not a series of army press releases, Queen's University academic 'Marxist' dross or a puff for Northern Ireland's latest peace-monger - ie the sort of stuff we get from most publishing houses. His view of Ireland is from the street. His subject the heroic ordinary men and women of Ballymurphy.

Ballymurphy is "a small tightly-knit community of some 12,000 people spread over eight housing estates in one square mile of West Belfast". It was built after World War II to alleviate Belfast's chronic housing shortage. As a majority of the homeless were Catholics, the loyalist controlled Belfast Corporation built the new houses with the cheapest material and with the minimum of thought.

De Baroid's book traces the battles for improved housing, community facilities and jobs ... and how these battles became fused with the battle against the British army, RUC and loyalist murder gangs. In the process his book repeatedly illustrates how the IRA did not come from outside, but was part of the community - a community without which it could not exist for more than a day.

As de Baroid explains, when in 1969 the RUC and loyalist mobs attacked the area it was the IRA which provided the only form of protection. In return the people supported the IRA.

In the section dealing with internment de Baroid writes "as the soldiers raked houses with gunfire ... contingents of volunteers fired back from the blacked-out alleys and gardens. Immediately people unlocked their front and back doors and impromptu first aid centres were set up" (p88).

Cooperation with the IRA became institutionalised over time. For example de Baroid tells how one particular house was considered an ideal point to attack the army. On the first occasion the IRA entered the house its occupants were out. They got in through simply breaking a glass panel in the front door. Next time the IRA used the house it was agreed that it should pay £4 to have the glass replaced. Later the tenant became so tired of this arrangement that he had a spare key cut ... for the IRA!

Unable to prise the people of Ballymurphy from the IRA through violence, the state turned to the Catholic Church. Every IRA action was quickly denounced from the pulpit. In contrast the bloody activities of the 'security forces' were greeted with mild rebuke or silence.

By the early 1970s the British army had given up the battle to win 'hearts and minds'. Instead Ballymurphy suffered everything from random house searches to carefully selected assassinations. In spite of this repression nothing could break the spirit of the people.

De Baroid's book is more than a 'tell it as it is'. He has a worthwhile political brain, which leads him to point out the negative consequences of settling political difference in the revolutionary camp through assassination as a first resort. He critically charts, first, the bloody feud the Officials launched against the Provisional republican movements, and then the more re-

cent liquidationist breakaways from the IRSP-Inla.

The killings of leading IRSP-Inla comrades by politically hollow elements was certainly criminal. It deprived Ireland of some of its potentially best fighters, and served no one but the British state. As de Baroid observes with typical understatement: "Nationalists were disgusted and angry at the apparently senseless killings". No wonder. He writes that the Springhill area, which had become a focus of the fighting, had become known locally as "Little Beirut" because at night, its streets were deserted by the people, who were not prepared to "risk an Inla fusillade" (p293). Lesson: real revolutionaries fight out political differences with (ex)comrades using polemic, not the bullet.

During the past 20 years "British policies in Ireland have transformed a transient working class community with little interest in politics into a square mile of solid anti-state conspiracy" (p317). They are ripe for Leninism.

Tony Coughlin

Cowardice and dishonesty

*Poll Tax: we won't pay*, Militant pamphlet, 1990, pp46, £0.75

MILITANT is the leading organisation in the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. So this pamphlet must have some degree of authority, importance and influence. Of course, as one would expect from Militant, a large chunk of the pamphlet is spent on chastising the Labour Party leadership for their inactivity on the question.

According to Militant there "has never been a better time for Labour leaders to go on the offensive, backing mass non-payment, to force an immediate general election" (p8). What does Militant hope to gain from such a general election? They "above all want a Labour government that is committed to real socialist policies" (p35).

Militant pins its hopes on the election of the Labour Party. It will therefore find all sorts of excuses for this "failure of Labour and trade union leaderships" to fight the poll tax (p12); as it will for Kinnock's admission that if elected, Labour will not even repeal the poll tax for at least a year.

And what is its alternative to the poll tax? At the moment a return to rates. How does Militant respond to this? Again with mealy mouthed excuses. "The rates were really unpopular, but the poll tax makes them look really good" it says, and therefore "We would support the idea of an inquiry into alternatives based on the ability to pay" (p42).

Because Militant believes that the bourgeois state can be transformed into its opposite through the Labour Party, it is committed to ensuring that taxes to pay for it are collected. Because we are out to smash it, we take a different view. Any tax introduced by the bourgeois state on the working class is an attack on its living standards. That is why we say no taxes on the workers.

The existence of the ABAPTF and local Anti-Poll Tax Unions are obviously a vital organisational step towards smashing the poll tax, but what is Militant's strategy to utilise the full potential of the national network of APTUs and the millions of non-payers? Well Militant does not really give one. It

does say, however, that: "Mass non-payment of the poll tax is the only weapon that can defeat Thatcher" and "will become the biggest movement of civil disobedience seen in British history" (p11).

Mass non-payment is the basis of the fight against the poll tax, but not an end in itself. Non-payment is not the "only weapon". Militant's position of sucking up to Labour leads it to placing limits upon the struggle against the poll tax; ie, violence. We believe the struggle should be taken as far as necessary to guarantee victory.

The tactics of clogging up the courts and stopping the bailiffs are worthwhile, but hardly enough; they are defensive reactions to the poll tax. Thatcher has by no means exhausted all her possibilities for extracting the poll tax from non-payers; she has just started. Soon approximately two million attachment-of-earnings orders will be issued, for example. The working class must go on the offensive, not least by taking strike action against the poll tax.

We won't pay barely mentions strike action, simply stating, "Industrial action has become ... a focal point for struggle" (p29) or "Benefit arretments from the poorest sections will be met by industrial action". Militant loosely calls for "Action by civil servants and wage clerks" (p34), but as we have seen from past struggles, strike action by isolated sections of the working class have been defeated by the Thatcher government. The struggle against the poll tax is a class wide struggle. This is why our class must unite in a general strike to bring the government to its knees.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the pamphlet is the section on the Trafalgar Square demonstration on March 31. This is because Militant exposes its organisational dishonesty and cowardice. It points towards the police attack as the spark of the riot, which is not quite the same cause for the riot as expressed by Tommy Sheridan on April 1. Sheridan located the source of the trouble as "200 to 250 of these individuals [ie, demonstrators] intent on causing trouble". Despite finding the police as the cause, Militant could not bring itself to side with those who fought back. The pamphlet says "It is one thing to understand the cause of the almost nihilistic and violent behaviour of a big layer of the youth, and it is another thing to justify it" (p23). Militant seems to have come down with a case of pacifism: its revolutionary veneer has worn thin to the point of transparency.

It then tries to justify itself but just exposes its cowardice further. Militant is apparently not pacifist. Why? Because they "entirely support the South African workers' right to arm themselves" (p23). Also "the working class ... has every right ... to protect its meetings and demonstrations against the violent onslaught of the state machine" (p23, our emphasis). Now this is frankly blatant hypocrisy. If Militant's revolutionary rhetoric were not merely shallow words, it would at least have explicitly sided with the working class against "the onslaught of the state machine", even if not organising workers defence on March 31 and on future actions.

Militant says its task "has been to take the standpoint of our class and to draw all the necessary practical conclusions" (p34, my emphasis). From what we have read in this pamphlet its "class" seems to be the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy, not the working class.

Josh Leaversuch

The Leninist

**Hands off the Middle East!** Torchlit March, Wednesday October 10. Join the "Main Enemy is at Home" banner, 6pm Marble Arch (next to the arch itself). Organised by the Ad Hoc Hands off the Middle East Committee.

**Smash the Poll Tax!** Saturday October 20 - culmination of Glasgow-Liverpool-Bristol to London ABAPTF Peoples March Against the Poll Tax. Join *The Leninist* contingent 10am at the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign picket of Horseferry Road Magistrates Court and march to Kennington Park. Main demonstration assembles 12 noon Kennington Park, marching to Brockwell Park.

**Britain-Iraq: The Main Enemy is at Home!** Public meeting, with speakers from the Middle East. Wednesday October 24, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Holborn tube.

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

Series on Trotsky and the Trotskyites:

October 7: Lenin's Last Testament.

October 14: The Left Opposition.

October 21: Was 1933 as significant as Trotsky claimed?

October 28: From Comintern oppositionist to social democratic oppositionist.

November 4: Invitation meeting - see below.

November 11: Trotsky and the "degenerate workers' state".

**Sunday November 4:** Commemoration of the 73rd anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and the 9th anniversary of the launch of *The Leninist*. Phone 071-431 3135 for details.

Hands Off Ireland!

**London activists' meetings:** Central London, 7.30pm every Thursday: Phone 071-431 3135 for details.

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

Workers Theatre Movement

**WTM club The Internationale:** 7.30pm Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1 (Camden Town tube). Late bar, food. Admission £3, unwaged £2. Music, dance, theatre:

Monday October 22: A tribute to Ewan MacColl, late honorary president of WTM.

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

Unemployed Workers Charter

**London:** activist meetings and anti-poll tax actions: For details ring 071-431 3135.

**Execute Thatcher with the UWC's anti-poll tax T-Shirt:** "Axe The Tax!" All extra large, £6 each (including p&p) from UWC, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

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# Socialist Organiser: The final cut?

**A**FTER receiving a wonderfully imaginative – or simply lying – report from Joyce Gould (a former member of the WRP), Labour's National Executive Committee overwhelmingly voted to ban the Socialist Organiser organisation on July 25 1990. Neither the editor nor supporters of *Socialist Organiser* were allowed to reply to the charges contained in the Gould report; indeed none of them were even officially allowed to see it. The NEC acted as policeman, prosecutor, court, judge and jury!

Naturally we communists condemn such a basic denial of democracy. Our Communist Party was subject to similar treatment from the Labour leadership in the 1920s. And today, as yesterday, we defend the right of all left and revolutionary trends – including our own – to operate in the Labour Party.

However, the response to the ban by Socialist Organiser itself shows how far to the right it has travelled during its stay in the Labour Party, and how it is prepared to go still far further to the right in order to stay there. Editor John O'Mahony defended his paper and organisation in such a way that amounted, for all its escape clauses, to an attack on other left organisations, especially what he dismissively calls "Leninist sects".

Leninist organisations, he implies, have no right to operate in the Labour party, as we are "organised as tight single faction organisations" with "a pre-designated leadership, and a narrowly defined set of ideas which function as shibboleths and are not open to discussion". It is we – not Labour – which do not allow "internal dissent" because we are like a "narrow, persecuting religious sect" (*Socialist Organiser* July 19 1990).

After his dishonest and totally distorted, but typically bourgeois, description of the Leninist party of the new type, O'Mahony grovelingly argues that the Labour NEC should not ban Socialist Organiser because it is (quite rightly) "demonstrably ... not of that type". O'Mahony says SO should therefore be treated as a friend of the Labour leadership, not an enemy. This is a disgraceful attempt to appease the witch hunters and confirm anti-communist prejudices. But it is fully in line with the politics of Socialist Organiser.

*Socialist Organiser* claims that it is a Marxist paper, a worthless claim considering it also says that arch reformist, ex-minister of the crown and practising Christian, Eric Heffer, "puts forward a broadly Marxist approach" in parliament.

According to its recently published platform, *We Stand for Workers Liberty*, SO says it started in 1978 from an organisation called the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. However the real origins of SO are older and less electoral. In fact it can trace itself back through the International Communist League, to Tony

**On July 25 Kinnock's anti-left witch hunt went beyond Militant to include Socialist Organiser, the organisation behind the paper, 'Socialist Organiser'. So what are the politics of SO? Is it the enemy of Labourism Kinnock would have us believe?**

Cliff's International Socialists and beyond, to the Trotskyist organisations of the 1950s. During this history it has gone through a bemusing series of fusions and splits, one of which included Workers Power, back in the 70s (which we are sure both would now rather forget).

Socialist Organiser now stands as a brilliant example of the consequences of what happens to opportunist left organisations that enter the Labour Party in order to win quick mass influence and change it into a vehicle for socialism. In spite of all its work, the Labour Party remains the same as it always was. SO on the other hand has been propelled to the right – and at what a rate! So much so that after the Labour Party NEC banned SO, despite initial fighting talk, it seems that, while the paper continues publication, the national organisation underpinning it has liquidated itself. In this way O'Mahony and Co hope to avoid the witch hunt and further integrate themselves into the mainstream of the Labour Party.

This Trotskyite road to the right is well trod. Where SO is now travelling, Militant has gone before, so have the International Socialist Group (*Socialist Outlook*) and the Socialist League (ex-IMG), whose few remaining supporters can be seen trying to sell the dismal *Campaign Group News*.

As model Labour entryists the leaders of SO must have viewed the prospect of having their party cards taken away from them with horror. For these committee room 'revolutionaries', to be ousted from the Labour Party is to be cast into the wilderness. They would rather their organisation formally cease to exist than face the real world. So much so that the 'campaign' for the un-banning of SO was, considering all the hype in *Socialist Organiser*, eerily low key, with members of other organisations complaining of the reluctance of SO supporters to turn up to its own pickets (heads down chaps, there's a fight on).

We have seen from 'official communism' that opportunism never stops half way. In the end it always proves fatal. As SO's own Trotsky put it: from a scratch to gangrene. Just how far advanced the rot is in SO can be seen if we look at its positions on a few key questions.

•**The Labour Party.** Those outside the Labour Party are, for SO, the "sectarian left", and those like us who do not call for Labour election victories are the "crazier sectarians". For SO, to be outside the Labour Party is to have turned your back on the working class and effectively to abandon the class

struggle, as if the Labour Party and the working class are synonymous. However, as we have said many times, quoting Lenin, the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers party which exists to systematically dupe the working class into futile attempts to pursue their demands through the bourgeois state. Five Labour governments have shattered any honest or serious illusions in the Labour Party as a vehicle for socialism. When, as a tactic, Lenin said communists should support Labour he said such support should be like a noose supports a hanging man. Whatever the tactics, though, Lenin always insisted on the need to build the communist alternative to the Labour Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain.

•**Ireland.** SO advocated "some sort of federal Ireland ... British withdrawal without such a settlement would not, we believe, mean a united Ireland, but a Protestant-Irish drive to secure their self determination against the Irish majority, sectarian civil war, and bloody and permanent repartition" (*We stand for workers liberty*, p6). This bloodbath scenario is cheap, cheaper still considering SO claims that "We base ourselves on the teaching of Marx and Lenin here" (*Ibid*, p6). However, as is well known Marx stood four-square behind the Fenians of his day, and Lenin the IRA, demanding an unconditional withdrawal of Britain from Ireland. By not arguing for troops out now, SO implicitly ascribed a progressive role to British imperialism, seeing it as part of the solution rather than the problem. In fact if anything would cause a bloodbath it would be the conditional graduated withdrawal that SO calls for. SO makes much of "the fact that demonstrations and campaigns on Ireland were all very, very small" (*Ibid*, p18) as evidence that to call for troops out now is incorrect. Not that it has mobilised any greater numbers around its own craven slogans, mind you. Quite the reverse. The fact that only a small number of people participate in anything that approaches principled Irish solidarity work shows that Ireland is the acid test for revolutionaries in Britain and therefore where opportunism is most likely to manifest itself. The very fact that SO presents this argument speaks volumes for its opportunism.

•**Palestine.** SO has distinguished itself from the rest of the British left (although not the right) on the question of Palestinian self determination. It rejects "all calls for a secular democratic state in all Palestine" because the slogan serves as camouflage for the "subju-

gation of Israel by the surrounding Arab states" (*Ibid*, p6). Israel, we are told is "extremely democratic for its Jewish majority. Its army is pretty close to being a citizen army ... for an external force to 'smash the state' is not a matter of destroying the repressive apparatus, or defeating it in war, but of overrunning Israel and forcibly destroying the Jewish nation" (*SO*, December 3 1988). However, Israel's democracy rests on the fact that it is a junior imperialist partner and acts as an arm of US imperialism in the Middle East. Israel is a bourgeois democracy based on the denial of the democratic rights of the Palestinian people. SO advocates a two state 'solution' with the Gaza Strip and the West Bank forming the Palestinian state. This would in effect create a Bantustan sandwiched between reactionary Jordan and imperialist Israel. Blind to the reality of oppressed and oppressing nations, SO raises no objection to 'right of return' of any Jewish person (ie someone whose links with Israel go back as far as your average person from the North of India does with Scandinavia) to Israel. However, "Mass Palestinian Arab return to Israel would mean the surrender of the Jewish nation of its desire to be a nation" (*We stand for workers liberty* – for a more in depth look at SO and Palestine see 'Down with Israel's apologists', *The Leninist*, No64).

•**The Gulf.** Once you get past the Benn and Heffer speeches, SO seems on the face of it to have a reasonable position on the Gulf. It calls for "Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!" (*SO*, September 13 1990), rejecting the UN and sanctions, describing Iraq as sub-imperialist – a position you might think not very different to our own. But: "If the war escalated to an attempt by the US effectively to conquer Iraq, we would need to raise the argument for the defence of Iraq's national rights ... Saddam's sub-imperialist gambit would no longer be the main issue" (original emphasis, *Ibid*, p9). This is hardly a communist attitude. Either the Iraqi ruling class is progressive or it is not: this applies whether it is invading or being invaded. Communists do not judge wars on a 'who started it' or a 'who's invading who' basis. The fact that capitalism in Iraq has reached the stage of monopoly capitalism – even though it is not yet fully imperialist – means that the Iraqi bourgeoisie is thoroughly reactionary. Its invasion of Kuwait must therefore be seen as an attempt to become imperialist. To wait until it succeeds (if it does) is to be doctrinaire in the extreme, to

fetishise the word imperialist without looking at the substance of it. This is no small point or niggles, for it means that SO's apparently correct stand, up until the US invades, despite being cloaked in defeatist rhetoric is really a 'revolutionary' cover for the same un-Marxist, one sided 'anti-imperialism' as the rest of the left. And, remember, this stands combined with an implicitly pro-imperialist position. The same paper gives over pages to Benn's speeches calling for sanctions and imperialist intervention in the form of the UN. Those who lie down with dogs...

•**Eastern Europe and the USSR.** SO is the most rabidly anti-communist of all the left groups in Britain today with an evil empire phraseology that would put the late Senator Joseph McCarthy to shame, reckoning that Frank Chapple, former leader of the EETPU and well known red baiter, 'had a good line on international questions'. SO has no single view of the former socialist countries; instead we are offered a rich selection – degenerate workers' states, bureaucratic collectivist, state capitalist, etc. But whatever the title, SO refuses to defend these gains of the world revolution. Indeed in the name of opposing "Russian imperialism" it lined up behind the most reactionary counterrevolutionaries, even excusing those with fascist sympathies. This reactionary stance has, of late, taken the organisational form of the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (a recent co-sponsor of which was SO's one time bedmate Workers Power). CSWEB gained notoriety through touting Fighting Solidarity, Yuri Butchenko and other reactionaries around the workers' movement in Britain (see *The Leninist*, No93). SO justifies its support for counterrevolution, which it recognises as restoring market capitalism, because, it says, it is understandable that "workers [will] take on the motto 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' and accept as their answer their immediate class enemy's enemy ... Both the pro-Stalinist Arthur Scargill and the pro-capitalist Lech Walesa are terrible examples of what such politics can do to people, who want to be working class militants" (*We stand for workers liberty*, p28). Are we then to support people fighting for capitalism because we understand why or because they are well intentioned? This is what SO is saying.

Following this logic, should we not then give our support to Thatcher? After all, her Tory father, background and culture made it almost inevitable she would become a partisan of the bourgeoisie if she entered politics, and surely she genuinely believes this to be the best way of running things. Given the pace of its rightward trajectory it will be sooner rather than later before SO arrives at this conclusion.

*Boris Kaplan*