

THE LENINIST



1000

THE 100th edition of *The Leninist* is of the greatest symbolic importance. Around this paper - now the central organ of the Communist Party of Great Britain - our organisation has taken shape and grown in ideological maturity and political effect.

Although the papers of 'official communism' had entire states behind them, they all face extinction; many have already fallen. Yet, in spite of the odds, in spite of often adverse conditions, in spite of losing a few faint hearts, *The Leninist* has always gone ever onwards, ever upwards.

The reason for its success is simple. Fighting singlemindedly for communism, facing up to what is needed and striving to tell the truth brings forth those with the necessary dedication. The greatest cause - the liberation of humanity - produces the greatest devotion.

Our paper had a long gestation period. Due to their youth, their origins in 'official communism', their resulting political inexperience, the comrades who financed, wrote and produced the first edition of *The Leninist* had to devote a whole year to ideological preparation, clarification and debate before venturing into print. This was rightly considered vital. They did not want anything half baked about their statements.

Before and after that year of preparation, the development of our comrades owed a great deal to the practical and ideological cooperation with comrades from Turkey exiled in Britain. The struggle of the Leninist comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey paralleled and advanced the struggle of the Leninist comrades of the Communist Party of Great Britain. We remember comrade Mevlut - Turkey's Sverdlov! We salute comrade

Yurukoglu - Turkey's leading communist! Thanks to the help and example of our comrades from Turkey we now think for ourselves.

In November 1981 *The Leninist* No1 came off the presses. Our quarterly 40 page journal located the crisis of the CPGB as being a crisis of opportunism. It stated that the logic of opportunism was "to liquidate the Party organisationally".

Publication of *The Leninist* raised the banner of disciplined communist revolt against bureaucratic centralism. It was the beginning of a relentless open ideological struggle for the unity of communists around the principles of Marxism-Leninism and against all forms of opportunism. Far from this being sectarian, a side issue for the working class, without such a struggle a successful revolution is impossible. That is why the founding statement of *The Leninist* insisted that the ideological struggle must be "unremitting and ruthless." That is why *The Leninist* from the very beginning argued against Eurocommunism, 'official communist' centrism and Labourism.

From the very first *The Leninist* located the central importance of the national liberation struggle in Ireland. "We place no conditions on our support for the Irish republican movement." "We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Britain and British troops from Irish soil, leaving the Irish people as a whole free to realise their united republic." Our theoretical understanding of the Irish question was greatly deepened with the publication of three supplements starting in October 1984 with *The Leninist* No13, something that was given practical expression in September 1988 with the formation of the Hands off Ireland! campaign.

Great emphasis was placed on the

need to return to Marx's method of political economy. Nos 1-4 of *The Leninist* contained articles dealing with capitalist crisis and the nature of the epoch. We showed that the tendency for the rate of profit to decline would again bring capitalism to the point of general crisis, and that far from the then socialist countries being the dominant force on the planet, imperialist hegemony remained and could only be ended through revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries.

This work went hand in hand with a developing critique of bureaucratic socialism. In the Spring of 1982 *The Leninist* No2 dealt with the crisis in Poland. Naturally we came out against Lech Walesa and Solidarnosc. But we also attacked those centrists who believed that Jaruzelski's martial law put an end to the danger of counterrevolution. It could only be a holding operation.

We warned that Poland's crisis was far from unique and that without the full flowering of democracy, socialism would stagnate economically and that there would thus be a threat of counterrevolution from above and below. In step with events, we have steadily broadened this analysis. In *The Leninist* No55 we stated that unless Gorbachev was overthrown through a proletarian political revolution there was a danger of a peaceful, democratic counterrevolution. Even now, many left groups refuse to admit that this is exactly what happened throughout most of Eastern Europe during the close of 1989.

There have been many milestones in the development of *The Leninist*. These have been milestones in the struggle to reforge our Communist Party, and fully reflected the struggle of our working class. Perhaps the most crucial milestone was the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5. As *The Lenin-*

ist had gone from a quarterly to a monthly it was able to develop its politics as a result of and to some extent in step with a great movement of the masses. *The Leninist* was able to show how the masses make history and how they have staggering powers of creativity once social peace is disturbed. The Great Strike was a taste of things to come; within it and its hit squads, support groups and women's movement, there were elements of what the future proletarian state in Britain will look like.

The essence of *The Leninist's* struggle has always been to reforge our Party and equip it with a Marxist-Leninist programme. That is why the critique of the *British Road to Socialism* in *The Leninist* No4, published in April 1983, was so important - a critique which laid the basis for the seven *Which Road?* supplements by Jack Conrad and the work now in progress to produce a draft programme of the CPGB.

The Leninist has as its model Lenin's *Iskra*, a polemical paper around which the working class vanguard can be won to the Party and trained. Its aim has always been to build a movement, reforge the Communist Party. That is why the history of *The Leninist* is much more than a history of a paper, why it is also the history of an organisation.

Conferences of the Leninists of the CPGB have charted the way forward. The 1st Conference, in early 1984, took the decision to launch the *The Leninist* as a monthly and thus put our organisation in a far stronger position to intervene in the miners' Great Strike. It was in order to meet our responsibilities to the working class posed by the Great Strike that the 2nd Conference, in August 1984, initiated the annual Summer Offensive, which

last year raised a magnificent £25,385.

In June 1985 the 3rd Conference met and, among other things, discussed the need for a fortnightly paper which came to fruition on May 1 1986, a year which also saw the launch of the Unemployed Workers Charter. Taking account of our progress, the existence of a 1914 type crisis in 'official communism' and the complete treachery of the Euros, the 4th Conference in December 1989 decided to form a distinct Leninist wing of the Party - the CPGB (*The Leninist*). It agreed a whole series of measures in line with this, most significantly the need for a draft programme. The 4th Conference declared that *The Leninist* was now the central organ of the Party. Detailed resolutions on our principles, aims and structure were also agreed.

A new stage was reached in November 1990 with the 5th Conference. It had one purpose. In light of the Euro leadership's unanimous vote to rename their organisation, we took the name CPGB. Nevertheless, as we emphasised: "Our main task remains re-forging the CPGB. Although we have the name of the Party, the Party itself has been liquidated."

Because of *The Leninist*, a broad outline of the theoretical foundations which we need to reforge our Party has been laid. And from the smallest organisational beginnings with No1, by No100 our paper now has around it a confident body of comrades, who constitute the nucleus of our reformed Party, a nucleus which is able to offer a practical lead to our working class on the crucial issues of the day: the poll tax, wages, South Africa, Ireland, unemployment, the Gulf War.

Hail *The Leninist!*

Provisional Central Committee,
CPGB.



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

ONE of the first acts of the Soviet government after the October Revolution was to issue a declaration on the rights of nationalities. In place of the Great Russian domination overseen by the Tsar, and then Kerensky, it guaranteed the equality of all nations and the right to self determination, up to the right to secede. Poland and Finland did just that, while other nations in what had formerly been part of the Russian empire rose to their feet for the first time under the liberating wing of Soviet power.

However, as the isolated and besieged Soviet state became increasingly bureaucratised, a new form of Great Russian chauvinism emerged from among the communists themselves.

Lenin fought such manifestations until his last breath. He scored important victories, but after his premature death, Great Russian chauvinism grew apace.

Under Stalin's leadership it became the real, underlying ideology of the Soviet leadership. Departing from the principles of socialism had tragic results.

In spite of glowing propaganda showing how the Soviet Union had abolished national antagonisms, the real picture was very different. Whole peoples were branded untrustworthy, suspect nations were uprooted, others had their legal existence abolished.

From being the liberator of small nations, the Soviet state had, like that of the Tsars, become a prison house of nations.

Gorbachev claims to have broken with the politics of Stalin. In economics this is undoubtedly the case: Gorbachev is trying, step by fitful step, to take the Soviet Union towards capitalism. In contrast, Stalin consolidated bureaucratic socialism.

When it comes to national oppression and Great Russian chauvinism though, it is clear that there has been no change.

Where Stalin wanted to keep together (and expand) the Soviet Union for the benefit of bureaucratic socialism, Gorbachev wants to keep it intact so as not to disrupt his programme to restore the market, ie capitalism. Of course, coming from the bureaucratic mould, Gorbachev knows nothing about honesty, only the baton and the bullet.

In an effort to maintain his democratic image, this blood splattered recipient of the Nobel Peace prize, this president with almost unlimited formal powers, says he was unaware that the military were about to go on the rampage in Lithuania. He says he was "asleep".

Now Gorbachev has the damned hypocrisy to accuse the Baltic governments of wanting to restore the "bourgeois system". This is true. Landsbergis and Co are restorationists. But then, so too is Gorbachev.

What attitude should workers take? Naturally we should denounce western politicians who have expressed their solidarity with the Baltic republics. If the likes of John Major are so much in favour of self determination, why don't they apply it to the Irish Nation?

Certainly there should be no calls for our government to take this or that measure in order to 'punish' the Soviet Union (even under Gorbachev the Soviet Union must be defended unconditionally against the imperialists).

As well as standing politically independent of the imperialist bourgeoisie, we must stand politically independent of the proto-bourgeoisie in Moscow and the Baltics. This must be done under the twin banners of political revolution and national self determination.

It is correct to insist that the principle of self determination must be subordinate to the struggle for socialism and communism; that should never be forgotten. The right to self determination is not absolute. Nevertheless, socialism cannot be saved, let alone grow on the basis of a denial of national rights.

It is vital for Russian workers to defend the *right* of any nation in the union to secede. Of course, defending a right and advocating its use are two different things. The last thing we want to see is the break-up of the Soviet Union. We want it strengthened through national equality and socialist democracy.

That is why we would urge workers in the Baltics to fight for the unity of workers within the Soviet Union. Current illusions in nationalism must be shattered.

Capitalist restoration will bring all sorts of horrors and new oppressions. Even now the Landsbergis government is demanding that non-Lithuanian workers learn Lithuanian of face the sack; this is after moving to ban political parties which serve a "foreign state".

Great Russian chauvinism only plays into the hands of such fascist nationalism. Proletarian internationalism is the answer.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Communist Party of Turkey

We congratulate you on reaching the 100th issue of *The Leninist*. In a period when the British communist movement disintegrated, *The Leninist* gathered strength through its struggle for the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.

As the revisionist liquidators left the CPGB, the importance of the role of your paper in the British working class movement has greatly increased. We are confident that your paper will successfully meet those demands and duties in the future.

With comradely greetings,
International Bureau of the
Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey

The Irish Marxist

The Communist Party of Great Britain, organised around *The Leninist*, can again mark a milestone in its struggle: the 100th issue of *The Leninist*. The significance of the occasion is that the durability of a most powerful weapon in the hands of the British people is proven.

In December 1900 Lenin launched Iskra to light the spark of the Russian revolution. The need was for a collective propagandist and a collective organiser; the political organ was to be "the scaffold round a building under construction", the building was to be the party of Lenin. At the turn of the century, the lack of coherence and cohesion in the social democratic movement in Russia prevented the organisation of working class struggle from reaching its ultimate height. The role of the party, and the role of the political paper in building the party, are the first and second lessons of Leninism.

That Leninism - Marxism in the age of imperialism - holds its validity today is not in doubt, and neither is the need to answer again those "burning questions of our movement". *The Leninist* is both the tool and the weapon in the hands of British communists by which the party of Lenin will be rebuilt and those burning questions be answered.

Consistently, *The Leninist* has brought the insight of theoretical clarity to the struggle of the working class. The analysis of capitalist crisis in Britain in issues one, two and three in 1981-2, laid the basis for reasserting the revolutionary road to socialism. In 1984, theoretical supplements to the then monthly paper gave British workers a valuable insight into the role of its own bourgeoisie in Ireland. In 1989 and 1990, with the paper now printed fortnightly, the "Which Road?" theoretical supplements gave a critical analysis of the programmatic alternatives offered by the various liquidationist and opportunist trends which characterise the British left.

Consistently, *The Leninist* has lived up to its slogan: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement". *The Leninist* has, from its inception, adopted a polemical stance; its purpose is to expose the false claims of the false left. In the words of L Martov, on the editorial board of Iskra, "to make sure that all that is ridiculous appears in a ridiculous form" and "to expose the very embryo of a reactionary idea hidden behind a revolutionary phrase".

The third character of *The Leninist*

is in its role as an organiser. From its call for workers' defence corps during the miners' strike and the poll tax campaign to its creation of a communist platform from which to challenge bourgeois parliamentarism in the forthcoming general election, it has shown the direction in which struggle must develop if revolution is to succeed.

The role of *The Leninist* is a precise one, an essential feature of class struggle. *The Irish Marxist* recognises the importance of *The Leninist* for the proletariat of Britain and will be pleased to see its future development as the Communist Party of Great Britain moves to assume its role as the vanguard of the British working class.

Long live *The Leninist*!
Long live Communism!

The Irish Marxist

RaheKargar

We send you our warmest fraternal greetings on the 100th issue of *The Leninist*.

The current crisis of socialism has once again reaffirmed the vital importance of a correct and living theory of revolution if the revolutionary struggle of the working people is to be successful, and the gains of the revolution are to be consolidated and deepened.

Indeed, the need for communists and revolutionaries of the world to re-emphasise the revolutionary message and recreate the revolutionary traditions of October has become more acute than ever before.

Moreover, more than ever, communists must rediscover the revolutionary traditions of the militant working class, while at the same time mercilessly criticising the weaknesses and mistakes which contributed to the present crisis.

It is only through this communist self criticism, and through the organisation of debates around the major problematics of our era, that the working class can reforge the revolutionary theory which will see it victorious in the coming struggle.

We believe that, for its part, *The Leninist* has made important contributions to this debate, in particular by isolating and exposing those reformist and liquidationist tendencies and also the left-populist trends of the left in the UK.

We on our part pledge to continue to fight alongside the heroic working peoples of Iran while taking part, to the best of our ability, in the great exchange of experience which is a necessary prelude to forging the line ups for the great battles ahead.

Long live international solidarity!
Long live freedom!
Long live socialism!

Organisation of Revolutionary
Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*),
UK Branch

Communist Labour Party

Congratulations on the publication of your 100th issue. We are living in a period in which theoretical clarity is missing in the international communist movement. Lenin, in his time, was confronted with a similar situation. The establishment of Iskra changed the political scene in Russian, and subsequently world, events. There is no alternative but for disciplined, scientific theoretical positions being put forward by the revolutionary sections of the proletariat. We wish you continued success in your

efforts to build *The Leninist*. We are confident of the eventual victory of worldwide Marxism.

Communist Labour Party of the
United States of North America

Ageism?

One way in which left politicians can always keep in with 'the lads' is by dropping the odd sexist, racist or heterosexist quip.

I can't help feeling the ageist innuendo and blatant ageist stereotyping contained in No98's article on the Euros is in the same vein. It is the politics of the Euros which are critical, not the fact that "most are over 40" or "those under 30 can be counted on one hand". I shouldn't need to tell you, but I will: people's ages do not determine their commitment to, nor ability to participate in, the class struggle.

Ageism is at base the same poisonous millstone as racism and sexism.
Dave Douglass
Doncaster

Semi-colony?

The criterion for defining a national bourgeois economy, a capitalist state, as imperialist or proto-imperialist does not appear to be solely or mainly that that state is oppressed, and is not an oppressor (P Conlon, *Letters The Leninist* No99).

A nation state may be oppressed and yet still developing towards imperialism. The argument of Lenin was that *all* capitalist economies develop towards imperialism - an economic formation, not a political one. The question is not oppression, but the stage to which the economy of any nation state has developed, and has that capitalism still any progressive vitality?

If it is so far developed that the elements of reaction and decay are dominant, then it must be rapidly progressing towards an imperialist position. Maybe it will never get there. Of course there may be flickers of revival and new growth, just as fungi grow on a decaying tree, but the general tendency is decay.

Whether that national economy can develop into full imperialism is another question. To argue in terms of oppressor and oppressed is to use bourgeois liberal terminology, where, as with the liberal economist, Hobson, imperialism is regarded as parallel to, and largely confined to, colonial occupation and conquest.

For Lenin, imperialism was a term to define a particular stage, the highest stage, in the development of capitalism; of home capitalism, of its productive decay, and of its inability to provide a future for the home proletariat. In this sense, as a national capitalism develops into its higher imperialist stage it begins to free itself from its 'imperial masters', and attempts to become an imperial master itself.

Who, today, are the imperial masters of Iraq, Iran, Egypt, or some of the other Asian countries? Of whom are they the semi-colonies? The imperial masters of such countries are more and more their own national bourgeoisie.

Harry Eastman
Kent

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

WRITE OR RING

If you wish to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*, please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 071-431 3135.

Shotgun Wedding?

The decrepit rumps of the CPB and NCP, it seems, are bound for the altar while there is still time. As we found out, despite what it said on the invitations, the engagement was a strictly private affair

ON JANUARY 19 1991 a "consultative conference on communist unity" was held at Caxton House, London, under the auspices of the Communist Party of Britain (the *Morning Star's* split). The conference was grandly advertised as being open to all communists. Surely, therefore, a good opportunity for those who call themselves communist to have an honest debate and exchange of views. It was not to be, however.

What the CPB had in mind was a carefully controlled engagement party with the New Communist Party. Nothing wrong with that, of course. If the CPB - which was formed on the basis of defending the reformist *British Road to Socialism* programme - wants to get together with the NCP - which was formed on the basis of rejecting the reformist *British Road to Socialism* - that is their right. The problem was that the prospective marriage partners want everyone to believe that their crisis ridden organisations are the only communist organisations in Britain and that their possible union has some sort of significance. That explains the way they dishonestly advertised the affair.

To achieve their ends, the "consultative conference" had to be a safe rally. There must not be any dissenting voices or awkward questions about the past. Above all, genuine communists had to be barred. Instead of openly admitting what they wanted, they chose to waste a lot of people's time, not least their own.

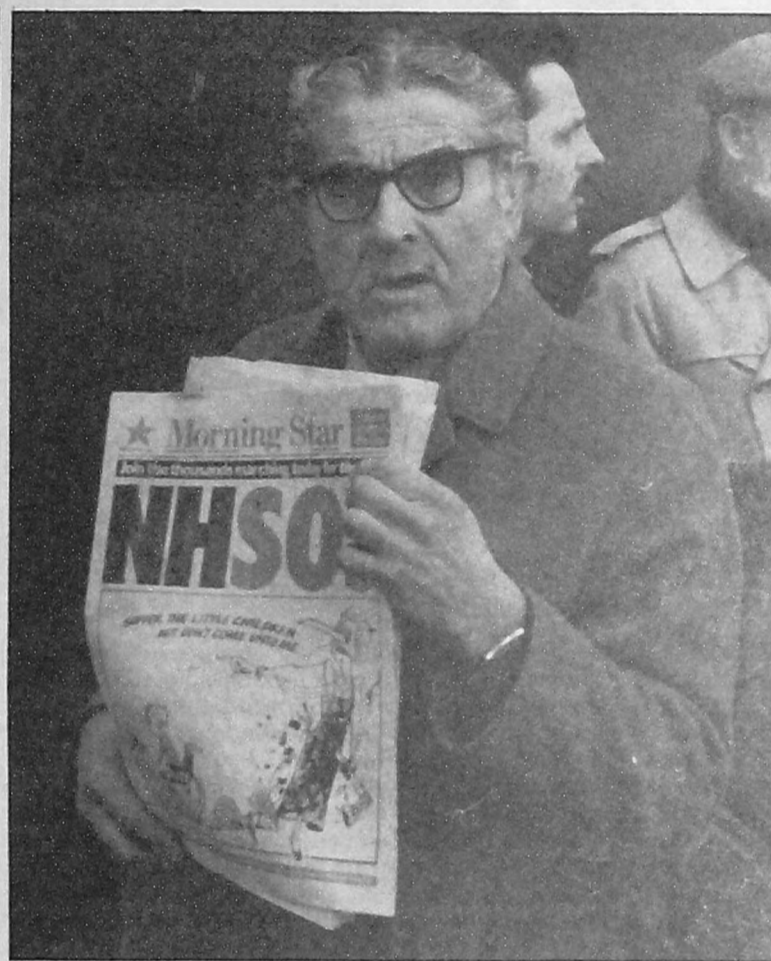
Well before the conference met, behind the scenes a bureaucratic net was put in place to exclude 'undesirables'. The Revolutionary Communist Group - which, in spite of its Trotskyite past, has undoubtedly transformed itself into something with not a few similarities to the NCP - wrote to the CPB asking for speaking rights. It received no reply. The same fate was in store for our organisation, the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB.

This is not all. A fringe meeting organised by us - and open to all participants - was to be held at the end of the conference. Again these opportunists were determined to silence genuine debate. The CPB made its wishes known to the management of Caxton House, who cancelled the booking we had made.

But the CPB/NCP hacks were determined to go further. Individual 'undesirables', too, had to be kept out. That required lies, more lies and yet more lies (in other words, for these supposed 'converts' to 'glasnost', business as usual).

Most supporters we told to apply for credentials were rejected with the excuse that the conference was 'full up'. The fact that a few comrades slipped through the net later, and were given credentials, exposed the depths the CPB/NCP had plunged.

At the start of the conference this gerrymandering was raised as a point of order. Chair, Derek Robinson, refusing to own up, insisted that the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB had nothing to do with commu-



Morning Star: from gravy train to graveyard

nism and ruled that no points of order or resolutions would be allowed. So much for working class democracy.

Yes, the CPB's "consultative conference" was to be a safe rally. A gathering of 200 mainly very elderly un-delegated 'delegates' from the CPB and NCP (with a sprinkling of *Morning Star* supporters still in the Euro organisation).

It is not mutual admiration but political and organisational bankruptcy that has brought these two organisations together. In steady and unremitting decline they have now both lost their paymasters, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. So in a desperate effort to survive, the dull bureaucrats that lead both the CPB and NCP have latched onto the slogan of 'communist unity'.

Even when it came to their own members no real debate was to be allowed. No speaker - except, that is, the general secretaries of the two organisations - was allowed more than five minutes to speak. Perhaps this was overkill. Contributions from the floor did not go beyond tired opportunists telling each other how bad capitalism was, how important peace was, etc.

The mood was summed up by a let's all get together approach. Strange, one might think. After all, the the NCP split from the CPGB in 1977 because of a programme the CPB has made its own. And the differences between the two organisations are not confined to recent history. The CPB still lauds Gorbachev, the NCP has decided to stop being "mealy mouthed", the CPB loathes the IRA, the NCP says it supports the republican movement. When it comes to the bloody Gulf War things are no different. The NCP de-

fends 'non-capitalist' Iraq, while the CPB still piously calls for imperialist sanctions to be given a chance. None of this was aired at the conference. Indeed, not one person raised their voice against opportunism.

No wonder platitudes reigned. No wonder the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe was swept under the carpet. No wonder they want to get together.

Although all our supporters handed in their speaker's slips, none were called. After five hours of listening to one vacuous prepackaged sermon after another, it was time to protest. We demanded to know why certain delegates - who had come in good faith and paid for their credentials - had been prevented from speaking. The Provisional Central Committee "does not exist", was the only answer. There was no honesty or openness here! After further demands for an explanation as to why individual supporters of the PCC had been refused credentials, the heavies were ordered in. In protest, our comrades staged a dignified walk out.

This charade of a "consultative conference" again goes to prove that the CPB/NCP 'official communists' are deep in crisis and incapable of learning from the past. Certainly these rumps are useless when it comes to the urgent task of the day - re-forging the CPGB.

Their unity, because it is based on convenience, not principle, can only but quicken the pace of their disintegration. This does not worry us. They have done nothing for the working class apart; together they will do no more. The scrapheap of history is their only destiny.

Michael Waters

Official unemployment figures for December are nudging two million, with the biggest monthly increase for a decade of 80,400. The real, unmassaged, figures are considerably higher. In such circumstances, previously employed workers are being thrown onto the dole queues. In the motor industry, Ford has announced 920 redundancies, mainly in Hailwood, and Peugeot Talbot in Coventry are laying off 350 workers. The list runs on in many other industries. The recession is biting and, as always, is making itself felt hardest on the working class. These attacks are being pressed home at a time when the trade union movement is extremely flaccid. Organisation is clearly needed. Cross union, industry wide organisation independent of the union bureaucracies is necessary as a minimum, to act as a bulwark against employers attempts to cut jobs, wage levels and increase hours. Any such fight must take place, not on the basis of profitability, but fighting on the clearly stated interests of the working class; fighting for what we need, not what they can afford. We have always argued that this should be combined with unemployed organisation on the same, anti-capitalist, basis. That is why we sponsored the Unemployed Workers Charter. This both prevents the bosses using the employed/unemployed division of the working class to their advantage, and gives the growing ranks of the unemployed a militant, organised political cutting edge. *SQ*

Against the rising tide of industrial militancy, Turkey's government has put a 60-day ban on all strike action. The main reason being given for this by president Turgut Ozal is the country's growing involvement in the Gulf War and the possible "stabilising role" of Turkey in a post-war carve up of Iraq. Talk has it that Turkey will oversee the creation of a pliant Kurdistan in oil rich northern Iraq. Such an imperialistic adventure abroad needs social peace at home. The strike wave was already taking on the political dimension of opposition to Turkish involvement in the war. Now, by putting Turkey on a war footing and giving clearance for unlimited spending on arms, Ozal himself has, with one fell swoop, politicised the economic struggle of the working class in Turkey, which faces massive inflation and continuously falling real wages. The scene is set for a decisive confrontation. Support the working class of Turkey. Picket the Turkish Embassy, 43 Belgrave Square, London SW1, 2-4 pm, Friday February 1, against the use of bases in Turkey in the Gulf War. Further details: Solidarity Committee with Turkish and Kurdish People, c/o Unit 1, 1 Millers House, Millers Terrace, London E8 (071-923 4138). *DS*



Workers in Turkey show the way: against the bosses, against the war

The Workers Theatre Movement club, *The Internationale*, met on Friday January 25 to celebrate Burns night (birth of the great Scottish poet, Robert Burns) and the birthday of the late Ewan MacColl, founding president of WTM. It was to have been at its usual venue, the Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town. The outbreak of the Gulf War, however, necessitated a change, and *The Internationale* anti-imperialist cabaret took place in front of the US embassy at the weekly Friday night rally of the International Committee's Non-Stop Picket. The two events were combined. So among a range of speakers there were the songs and poems of Burns, and the first performance of WTM's powerful 'Rap Against the War', written and rehearsed in the last few days as a weapon in the struggle to build an anti-Gulf War movement. Plans include taking it to union meetings, workplace canteens as well as onto the streets. The WTM will bust through the government's wall of lies and censorship (seemingly, the BBC has even banned John Lennon's peace songs from the airwaves). The WTM gets the truth across: "Imperialism means war - Know who and what this war is for - it's get out of trouble for a vicious twist of muscle for the big money men - But they need us to work their world - We don't need them!" *TC*

Keep it coming



The bloody horror of the Gulf War demands the most determined opposition. That is what *The Leninist* has and will provide. Our paper has taken a bold lead in the realm of theory and practice. We have shown that what lies behind the war is neither democracy nor the liberation of the Arab 'nation'; that the Gulf War is a war of robbery and plunder on both sides and that the working class must pursue its own interests. We have also shown what sort of anti-war movement is needed and how to build it. All this is fully recognised and appreciated by our readers. The monthly £600 fighting fund already stands at £570. There is every reason to expect we will end with the bumper surplus we called for in the last edition of the paper to celebrate our 100th edition and make up for December's shortfall. Special thanks to comrades AS, JM, AN, GR, ER, ST and WD for generous donations.

The Gulf War and how to stop it



Middle East 'liberation', United Nations style

Edited version of the speech given by Jack Conrad on January 20 1991 to a meeting organised by the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB for supporters of the Internationalist Committee's non-stop picket of the US embassy

BEFORE dealing with the Gulf War and what we should do about it, I think it necessary to ask a very obvious but nonetheless fundamental question. What is war? This is a question no one in the British government or the United States administration, or even for that matter in the peace movement, actually seems to ask, let alone answer.

Clearly war is an act of violence. That is of course true. But we must distinguish individual acts of violence from war, which is a social phenomenon.

One definition of war, given to us by the Prussian soldier/philosopher Clausewitz, was that war was a duel on an extended scale. We would readily agree with that. However, Clausewitz's greatest insight was that war is a continuation of policy by other, violent, means.

His definition was accepted by the founders of scientific socialism, but they were able to take things further and deeper. Marx and Engels were able to show that war was the continuation of class politics by other, violent, means. With this penetrating analysis they revealed the unity of the opposites of war and peace - that a particular war could not be understood without understanding the preceding peace, and that a particular peace could not be understood without understanding the preceding war.

In other words, war and peace should be looked at, not as simply two opposites, but opposites within a national, historical and class unity.

What does this mean for the Gulf War? It means the same for any war. Workers must not ask who is big, who is small, who attacked first, who says they stand for peace. Workers must strive to get beneath such superficialities and ask 'what is this war about in class terms?' and, more than that, 'what was the peace about before war broke out, in class terms?' Likewise, when a war comes to an end, workers should not be blinded by peace celebrations. We should not imagine that peace represents a genuine *rupture* with the preceding war. The class which wins in war *continues* its politics after it, only using other, peaceful, means.

Our approach prevents workers being befuddled by the slogan of peace, and poses the necessity of taking human society to the stage where not only does the word 'war' fall into disuse, but so does its complementary opposite, 'peace'. A society that knows only peace will, after all, have no need to call its uninterrupted state of affairs peace: which is, after all, only the opposite of war.

Having this perspective, and equipped as we are with the Marxist theory of war, it is clear why we don't make a fetish of particular weapons in the Gulf War, vile and destructive though they are. Nevertheless, at the moment our view is a minority

view. We all know that there are a lot of people who, looking at the weapons of mass destruction in the possession of Iraq, Britain, the US and its other coalition partners, locate "the problem in the weapons themselves.

This is an old, old refrain ... and it has never stopped one war, nor saved one life. In medieval times, Popes and bishops tried without success to banish the crossbow from the battlefield because it enabled the rudest rustic to down the noblest knights of Christendom with unchivalrous ease. In the nineteenth century the gatling gun was thought to have made war impossible. With it, one man could mow down whole ranks of advancing troops. It didn't, of course. Our own century has been rich with such wrong hand wringing predictions. Gas, the airplane, the nuclear bomb have all been cited in likewise fashion and with likewise no-effect.

Because of the awesome power of modern weaponry, other peace campaigners - who know that destructiveness does not mean they will never be used - condemn all wars. They claim that by definition there can be no such thing as a just war - that all wars are unjust. A prominent advocate of this S-O-S pacifist line of argument is Donald Soaper, Lord Soaper of the Methodist church, who spoke at the CND's Trafalgar Square rally a couple of weeks ago. He wanted us to believe that there might have been just wars in medieval times, when the church gave its blessing to the wars of conquest by the Western European feudalists against the lands of the Arab caliphate. But because of the numbers who can be killed, not now.

We say such pacifism, however sincere the motivation of its advocates maybe, does nothing to bring nearer the day when we can do away with weapons of mass destruction and for that matter war. Yes, there are unjust wars - reactionary wars of robbery and conquest: the sort of wars fought by the Roman emperors, the wars of the feudal king and court, the wars of capitalist colonisation.

But there are also wars waged from below. The Spartacus revolt against the Roman empire, the uprising which ended slavery and colonialism in St Domingue/Haiti by the armies of Toussaint Louverture, the October Revolution, the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation. All these were just wars. We would support such wars. Only an exploiter or a miserable excuse for a human being wouldn't. And when the objective conditions mature, we will launch our civil war in Britain, the workers' revolution against capitalism. That war will be a just war, it will be a war for peace.

To pacifists like Lord Soaper, this is nothing but a cruel paradox. How can you fight for peace? Those who can only piously preach about peace will have a problem with this, that we can appreciate;

but for those of us who are willing to go beyond sophism and word play, there is no problem.

When United States imperialism says it is fighting for peace, we can, with full justification, sneer with contempt. The peace it's fighting for is a peace of imperialism, a peace under which the United States can exploit and rob the world, a capitalist peace, where the vast mass of the world's people are exploited, and a tiny, tiny ruling class lives a life of luxury. Such a peace can only be a prelude to new wars.

Our fight for peace is different. The war that we will conduct owes nothing to hypocrisy or realpolitik. It is a genuine fight for peace.

War doesn't spring ready armed, Athena-like, from human nature. It is not the result of what theologians of the Christian religion call original sin. War is the product of class society. So, to end class society is to end war. Once we grasp that we can see that, far from there being a paradox in the idea of fighting for peace, that is exactly what we must do.

If we are going to make peace more than an empty hope, if we are really going to rid the world of war, we'll have to fight - to fight the class war unto the point where class itself is a thing of the past.

Capitalism threatens to destroy the world

If we look at the twentieth century we can see that where previous class societies often resorted to war, the present day nature of capitalism means that war is synonymous with the very system itself. Why do we say this? Not simply because the capitalists are after more profit and new markets. That's always been the case.

What is new about present day capitalism, what makes war inevitable as long as the system lasts, is that it has become imperialist. Capitalism created a world market and has now drawn into it virtually all countries and nations. The significance and danger here lies in the fact that capitalism develops unevenly between various firms, various enterprises and crucially, between countries.

Imperialist countries which have won a dominant world position - for example Britain before 1914 - will, sooner or later, find themselves with a deadly rival breathing down their necks, who, in the words of the Kaiser in 1914, demand their "place in the sun".

Having been divided, the world has to be redivided. That has been the history of the twentieth century, which the end of the great colonial empires has done nothing to change. The rivalries for

markets which has cost the lives of 75 million human beings in two wars alone, continues.

Capitalism can no longer be considered a progressive economic system. Indeed, the slow crystallisation of three rival imperialist blocs - a US led America, a Japanese led Eastern Asia and a German led Europe - and the prospect of a World War III, show that it is no longer merely a fetter on the development of what is possible. Now it threatens, with a new world war, everything that has been built up over thousands of years of civilisation. Through a nuclear autumn, or a nuclear winter, capitalism threatens to plunge the world into some sort of new age of barbarism. That's all capitalism can guarantee humanity.

New world order

Only a year ago we were gleefully told that the world was entering a new epoch of peace. Across the spectrum of establishment politics - from Thatcher on the right to Benn and 'official communists' on the left (not least the *Morning Star*) - there was universal acclaim for US/Soviet summitry. Bush's announcement of a resulting new world order, which would mean, he said, that instead of war the United Nations would peacefully sort out all the differences between the peoples of the world, capped it all. The arms race was apparently at an end and we would all soon be receiving what the media pundits invitingly called a 'peace dividend'.

Today such hype stands exposed as being more than silly. It was a sick con-trick. The UN has given the go ahead for the US and junior partner Britain to bomb the hell out of Iraq, all with the passive backing of Gorbachev. As the blood and gore shows, there's nothing peaceful about Bush's new world order. However, there can be no doubt that we in Britain have paid a price for the new world order illusions fostered by the likes of Tony Benn and the *Morning Star*.

If peace is going to be handed down from on high by grey American and Russian men in grey Italian suits, if war is to be ended through international diplomacy, why go out on the streets? Why struggle? Why fight? People might as well put up their feet and watch the age of peace unfold on TV. And that is what many people did.

Gorbachevism, and the new world order illusions fostered as a result, was responsible for taking the wind out of the sails of the CND, which, for all its faults and implicitly pro-capitalist assumptions, was able to rally hundreds of thousands against the distant threat of war in the early 1980s. Now, in the early 1990s, the CND is only able to rally tens of thousands against its reality.

That's the price of telling people that diplomacy, that powerful men, can sort out the world's problems, rather than ordinary people who have been won to take things into their own hands, who are determined to rely on their own activity, their own strength.

However, Gorbachevism has done more than disarm people intellectually. It has misled the Soviet Union to the point where it no longer operates as the vital counter to US imperialism that saved Cuba, Vietnam and other 'hot spots'. Gorbachev's appeasement of US imperialism has only played into the hands of the warmongers. We were right to condemn Gorbachev and his revisionist new political thinking. We were right to say his programme of universal peace under capitalism was an illusion. The Gulf War proves it.

In front of the children

It seems pretty clear, from Major, CNN and various US generals and politicians, that the Gulf War will for some time yet be mainly focused on air power. The United States will continue to rip into Iraq with what it reassuringly tells the world are ultra accurate go-through-the-door missiles. In this way it will take out Iraq's telecommunications, radars, airfields, strategic command centres, war associated industries and bridges. The US will also be carrying on with what it gives less publicity to: sending in giant B52s, to carpet bomb Iraqi troop concentrations so as to achieve good old fashioned World War II levels of death and destruction.

I doubt they'll be releasing video film of any of that for prime time TV. Nor will they go into details of all the sickening new high tech anti-personnel bombs they developed in the light of Vietnam experience. That would undermine the carefully constructed myth which US military PR men are peddling - the myth of US concern for humanity, the underdog and playing by the rules. If that myth was shown to be false, who can doubt that it would bring many more thousands upon thousands out onto the streets.

To prevent that happening, an already compliant media will be straight jacketed and censored. The US wants people to believe that the Gulf War is a clinically clean war, a war of machines, a war fought like a pub room shoot 'em down computer game, a war in which there are no real horrors, a

war that can be shown in front of the children.

But the time will come when the generals feel that Iraq has been sufficiently battered. Then they'll order in ground troops. That's when the political stakes will be raised. For that's when ordinary soldiers will start coming home in large numbers ... in large numbers of body bags.

That's when the tears of mothers and spouses will begin to flow. That's when, for the masses of America and Britain, the war will start to become real, when people will start to question what the war is all about. Was it worth it? Was restoring some bejewelled fat pig to the throne of Kuwait really worth the life of Bill, Mike or Max? Many, I would expect most, will say no!

Because it is very difficult to present the Gulf War as part of a crusade for freedom, the US military command will do its best to avoid as many casualties as it can (not Iraqis, but Americans, mind you). A US nation traumatised by Vietnam will not meekly accept its boys being treated like cannon fodder. Of course, what generals want and what generals get often, if not invariably, turn out to be two entirely different things.

When the US went into Vietnam, its generals thought the whole thing would be over within a matter of months. In Britain too, we cannot forget about the 'temporary deployment' of troops on the streets of the Six Counties in 1969, let alone what the generals said back in August 1914 ... the war, they said, would be over by Christmas.

The sorry history of military predictions, and the real, as opposed to the stated, war aims of the US does not lead us to share the confidence the bosses' media in this country appears to have that the Gulf War will be over in months. It could drag on for year after bloody year. Let's see why.

US aims

We should have no doubt that in purely military terms the US led coalition will win in this Gulf War. Iraq's air force, tanks and army will be destroyed. Kuwait will be liberated for Texaco, Exxon and BP. The autocratic Emir will be restored. But we should not doubt, though, that the US has other, more ambitious aims. And not only the hidden agenda of overthrowing Saddam Hussein, and the Ba'athist regime, in Baghdad. What the US seems intent on doing is imposing a *Pax Americana* on the whole region, on the whole Middle East.

To see how dangerous that could be we only need look at the region. Its oil riches are prodigious. But so too are its political landmines. Indeed, the Middle East resembles Europe before World War I. All that was needed to spark off war was the assassination of an obscure archduke. After that, domino like, one country after another was dragged into the inferno. Could Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait be the trigger for a similar generalised slaughter? It could be.

Within every Middle East country there exist all sorts of national, class and religious antagonisms which are capable of producing the most unpredictable explosions. And if that were not enough, every country is linked to every other country in a deadly embrace of interlocking pacts and hatreds. Which is precisely why Iraq could launch its militarily irrelevant Scud missiles against Israel with such hopes. (They have no military, but enormous political, weight. By provoking Israel into retaliation, Saddam Hussein thought he could neutralise Syria and whip up the masses of the whole region into a holy jihad against the age old enemy).

Again, to appreciate the danger we only need postulate what could happen if, through the very success of the US, central authority were to collapse in Iraq. Syria has claims over Iraq, so does Iran and Turkey. Then, without forgetting the possibility of a social movement or the role of Israel, there are the millions of Kurds in Iraq who yearn for self determination. What goes for the enemy of the US goes for its friends Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and Syria too. Nowhere is stable.

That is exactly why the US wants to impose its domination. However, such plans have a habit of backfiring. That we would welcome. The problem is it won't be corporate chairmen, congressmen or generals who will pay with their lives, but the ordinary soldiers, the sons and daughters of the people. That we cannot be indifferent to. That we must stop. And if we don't stop it in the Gulf, we must recognise that the stakes will be raised.

First shots of World War III

The United States might have intervened in the Middle East to redivide and stabilise it in its own image. But what sort of an order would a *Pax Americana* be? It would be neither stable nor prosperous.

It is self evident that the US is not the power it used to be. From the world's biggest creditor it has now become the world's biggest debtor. Following World War II, the US might have been able to

save Western Europe from communism through a massive export of capital, in the form of the Marshall Plan. It can hardly do that now. This is not 1947. The US no longer possesses massive amounts of surplus capital. Today the US cannot throw money at problems. Indeed, what it needs to do in the short term is to extract capital, to super-exploit.

Hence any new world order domination the United States might impose on the region can only be temporary, and very temporary; and it cannot be imposed through the dollar, rather through blood and iron.

Having spoken of the state of the US economy, its relative decline, it is vital to take a wider view of its present action in the Gulf. Although it might seem strange to say, the US is, in a real sense, firing the first shots of World War III. Saddam Hussein, Kuwait, the whole Middle East is in fact a side issue. The rising imperialisms of Germany and Japan are its real enemies. True, they are formally, at this point in time, allies; if not fighting alongside the US in the Middle East, they are at least providing it with finance. This is Danegeld.

For those who really understand the politics of imperialism, such a paradox poses no real problem. It is no different from the seeming paradox of fighting for peace.

In the early 1920s Trotsky predicted a war between Britain and the US. As so often, he was wrong, as it turned out. But again, as so often, not wrong in essence. True, as history and countless Hollywood and Pinewood films tell us, in two world wars this century Britain and the US fought on the same side. Yet the main aim of 'our US cousin' was always to supplant Britain as the world's leading power and remove the fetter the old European (primarily Britain's) empires had come to represent for its economic expansion. And that's exactly what it achieved. That this was done fighting on the same side as Britain rather than against it is, in historical terms, a detail.

We have to understand this when it comes to the Gulf War.

Iraq

Where we begin by asking what the Ba'athist regime represents in class terms, others on the left take as their starting point who is big, who is small. With that simplistic approach they end up (we won't beat about the bush) saying that workers in Britain and Iraq should line up with Saddam Hussein.

True, in an attempt to avoid being associated with Hussein's mass murder of workers, communists and democrats, they try to draw a false distinction between military and political support. But that is a slippery slope. Those who say they give the Ba'athists no political support echo, in spite of their protestations, one piece of Ba'athist propaganda after another.

For example, they tell us that the population of Kuwait cannot have any rights because the country was an artificial, British, creation. Yet it is a historical fact that all countries in the region were artificial creations, including Iraq. It was carved out of a disintegrating Ottoman empire, just like Kuwait, by the British, who were determined to keep the Germans out of the Middle East. For real as opposed to false Marxists, what that poses is the necessity of allowing *all the peoples* of the region self determination.

Such a situation can only be achieved through the revolutionary overthrow of all the reactionary regimes in the region and establishing some sort of Socialist Federation of the Middle East - but that's another matter. The point is that the idea that Saddam Hussein is some kind of barbaric, but sincere nationalist, who's going out to reunite the 'Iraqi nation' is a transparent falsehood.

As a last resort, the pro-Ba'athist left in Britain resorts to the old chestnut about Iraq being a poor little semi-colony. Now we would be the first to say that, from its formal independence in 1932 up to the 1960s, Iraq was a classic semi-colony. Political power lay not in Baghdad, but Whitehall. That's where the real decisions were made.

However, in the early 1970s, things changed. Firstly, oil prices shot up. Secondly, Iraq entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union. Of course, Iraq remained subordinate to the world market (but then, which country isn't?). Its economy was dependent on oil. Nevertheless, Iraq's per capita production went from being on a par with Bangladesh and India to the level Greece and Spain, ie medium developed countries. Oil wealth and an alliance with the Soviet Union gave Iraq a considerable freedom of manoeuvre, and it started to pursue an increasingly independent domestic and foreign policy.

Indeed, economically, having arrived at the point where it is dominated by monopoly capitalism, Iraq felt compelled to become imperialist. Either that or, in the words of Cecil Rhodes, it would face civil war.

It is clear, therefore, that in class terms the Ba'athist regime is a regime of finance capital, a

regime that is seeking to expand outwards, to become some sort of junior imperialist power like Israel or South Africa - a utopian dream, maybe, but it has led Iraq into an eight year war of attempted conquest against Iran, and now an annexation of Kuwait (an external colony to complement its internal Kurdish colony). Neo-colonies don't behave in such a way. Ex-neo-colonies do.

We do not deny that, when it comes to exploitation and plunder, the United States is master of the game, Saddam Hussein a rank amateur in comparison. Yet nor can it be denied that Iraq is not fighting imperialism, not fighting for the liberation of the Arab 'nation'. No, Iraq is a capitalist country fighting to extend its sphere of plunder and robbery. That is why we don't raise the slogan 'Hands off Iraq', let alone 'Victory to Iraq'.

For workers there is nothing progressive, nothing supportable, in the regime of Saddam Hussein. We must call for the defeat of both sides, call for workers to turn the reactionary Gulf War into a war of liberation, an unjust war into a just war.

There is every reason to be confident. In spite of Iraqi TV pictures purporting to show how Saddam Hussein is loved and adored by the masses, the country has had a rich history of revolt and resistance. The working class has traditionally been militant and communist, the Kurds yearn for self determination. Only by employing fascistic terror and a police state has Ba'athist ruled been maintained. The Gulf War could fatally undermine both Saddam Hussein and Ba'athism.

How to do it

Because of the Gulf War, in Britain and the US, in Iraq, workers should use the difficulties of our rulers as our opportunity. The working class should not bother about which side is less nasty. We should emulate the example of Russia in 1917.

It has to be said, though, that having the objective circumstances in which a 1917 type revolution is possible, and carrying it through, are not the same thing. Success relies on what we call the subjective factor: the strength, determination and experience of the Communist Party.

The truth of this can be seen in the recent past in the negative with Argentina. In the wake of its defeat in the Falklands War, far from being strengthened - as most left organisations argued - the Galtieri regime disintegrated and collapsed.

Unfortunately the left in Argentina had made exactly the same mistake as many of the left groups in Britain. During the war it had fallen in behind Galtieri. It was imagined this butcher of thousands of 'disappeared revolutionaries and progressives had suddenly become an anti-imperialist. Galtieri's claims that the Falklands were historically an integral part of Argentina, that the people there had no rights and all the rest of it, was loyally repeated by the Argentinian left. In the midst of such chauvinistic flag waving, few actually examined the imperialist ambitions of the ruling class in Argentina. There was, in short, no Bolshevik Party. And no one succeeded in building one.

As a result, when defeat came and the regime collapsed, the crisis was solved from above by the ruling class, not from below by the masses. A rare opportunity was lost.

We very much hope that the same thing will not happen in Iraq. We must make sure that the same thing does not happen in Britain. For although Britain is nowhere near as unstable as Iraq, we would be profoundly wrong to think that if the war drags on - and we've shown that if it spreads, it could - things will become very shaky.

Already there exists a significant section of the population which opposes the war. At the moment it has no clear perspective, no definite plan of action. That is why the Internationalist Committee - sponsored by our organisation - initiated the non-stop picket of the US embassy. Not because we believe that a non-stop picket of anything in itself can stop the war. But the non-stop picket can act as a powerful focal point for rallying and organising the one force in society which can - the working class.

In the Hands off Russia! campaign of 1919 we have a splendid example of the sort of movement we must build. This campaign successfully stopped Britain's surrogate war against the young Soviet Republic from below. The key to success was winning dock workers to black munitions as a focal point. Once that had happened, once one section of the working class came out in solidarity, massive demonstrations took place and the TUC was forced into a position of threatening the government with a general strike.

Taking into account the specific circumstances of today, we in the Communist Party have exactly the same perspective. For us, the non-stop picket is not an end in itself. It is a means by which we can build a working class based movement that can put itself at the head of all those committed to stopping this barbaric war: a working class movement that can stop the movement of arms and bring capitalist Britain to a halt; a movement that can stop not only this war, but all war.



OUR HISTORY

Communist Unity Convention (First Congress): policy debate

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

Our last issue's article on Poland and the left appeared just too early to include a gem of an editorial in January's Workers Power. Its ostrich like refusal to acknowledge capitalist restoration leads it into the most ludicrous self contradiction - to refute the now glaringly obvious truth, that the Trotskyists' 'political revolutions' were, in reality, counter-revolutions. The editorial rhetorically asks: 'How far along the road to capitalist restoration are these countries?', and answers that 'the greatest strides forward have been made in the state apparatus'. Yet, says WP, these are not yet capitalist states, because the 'ownership of the bulk of the factories has remained in the hands of the state' - the now capitalist state! This crude apologism for counterrevolution falls, at best, between the classless 'socialism' of Kautsky and the reformist, statist schemas of Militant. Despite ripping off our analysis of 'peaceful, democratic counterrevolution' in its latest 'theoretical' journal, WP clearly has been unable to learn anything from its past glaring failures.

The same issue of WP carries a full page on the disintegration of the old, Euro, CPGB, also dealing with the NCP, CPB, etc. But something isn't mentioned. You guessed it: the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB and the paper you're reading. Why, WP? And could it have anything to do with your recent consistent failure to print letters from our supporters, a practice you are quick to condemn in other publications? We seem to be one organisation to which these Labour loyal Trotskyists have no answer. Reading Workers Power, one can understand why.

The misnamed Revolutionary Communist Party may have turned its line on a farthing, dropping mass party strutting for a version of the downturn, but some things never change - like its grotesque inflation of the size of its events. Its Hands Off the Middle East Committee march on January 15 mobilised at peak 500 people. And a good militant affair it was too. Yet, by the appearance of the RCP's The Next Step three days later, the march had obviously grown in the telling - to 1,500! Perhaps a more appropriate title for the RCP might be the FTG: the Fisherman's Tales Group?

FOLLOWING comrade Albert Inkpin's report on negotiations leading to the 1st Congress of the CPGB (the Communist Unity Convention) fraternal greetings were read from a wide variety of different organisations and prominent individuals. Messages came from the communist parties of Germany, Austria, Holland, Hungary, Lithuania, Switzerland, and the soon to be communist parties, the Norwegian Labour Party and the Italian Socialist Party. The left group within the Independent Labour Party also sent a message (signatures included Helen Crawford, S Saklatvala and EH Brown). Among the individuals who sent their best wishes were Clara Zetkin, Tom Mann and VI Lenin.

Lenin declared his "complete sympathy" with the plan to immediately establish the CPGB and his opposition to the sectarianism of Sylvia Pankhurst's organisation, which had (for the moment at least) decided to stand aside from the process of fusion. Lenin went on to announce his intention of supporting, at the 2nd Congress of Comintern, those communists in Britain who wanted to affiliate the CPGB to the Labour Party and put forward communist candidates in parliamentary elections (the 2nd Congress of the Third International was already in progress while the Unity Convention was taking place).

Following fraternal messages, the congress immediately turned to the resolution on general policy, moved by AA Purcell (he became a member of the General Council of the TUC in 1921, left the CPGB in 1922 and went on as a left wing member of the Labour Party to play a treacherous role in the 1926 General Strike). The short, to the point resolution, moved on behalf of the Joint Provisional Committee of the CPGB, read as follows:

"The Communists in conference assembled declare for the Soviet (or Workers' Council) system as a means whereby the working class shall achieve power and take control of the forces of production; declare for the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary means for combatting the counterrevolution during the transition period between capitalism and communism; and stand for the adoption of these means as steps towards the establishment of a system of complete communism wherein the means of production shall be communally owned and controlled. This conference therefore establishes itself the Communist Party on the foregoing basis."

Purcell proceeded to argue for the resolution in a manner that clearly revealed his trade unionist limitations. This is how the official account reported his speech:

"During the last three months, wherever he and some others had gone to Russia they had been confronted with a request as to when England was

going to do something with regard to the formation of a strong Communist Party. That was because in Norway, Sweden, and elsewhere this work had already been done or, at any rate, Communists in these countries had already gathered the forces together for the purpose of being prepared to work on the necessary lines. Anybody who had seen the development that some present had seen could hardly come back to this country without being convinced, if they were members of the working class at all, of the very urgent need that existed for the formation of what he regarded as an important guide to the trade union or industrial movement in this country. We required that guide here just as it was required in the case of Russia.

He believed that in the resolution we had a clear statement that many members of the industrial movement, mainly unattached to any socialist organisation, would be prepared to rally round. A great many trade unionists today used the cry: 'Control of Industry'; most of them hardly knew at the moment - because of the want of a guide - where that was taking them to, or what was expected of them in that connection. Here we saw it clearly laid down that the purpose of the Communist Party was to assist and act as a guide to the proletarian movement.

We must make certain that we did not quarrel about mere phraseology; but that we regarded as important the need for urging the working class itself to rally for the purpose of being capable of owning and controlling the means of production in this country. He believed that if we adapted our methods we could rally round us, particularly in the large centres, masses of the working class prepared to fight and give of their best in the interests of such a movement as this.

The resolution declared for the dictatorship of the proletariat as a means of combatting the counterrevolution in the transitional period between capitalism and Communism. That, again, was a statement of the highest importance, because it urged the working class to come into the ranks of Communism as well as to assist in the work of Communist agitation. In declaring ourselves within the four corners of this resolution, we were laying down a plan that the working class of this country could rally to.

Capitalism, he believed, was decaying at its very roots. The industrial organisations might not know that; but so long as they were prepared to revolt, it was our business to go to them and say: 'While you are prepared to revolt we, at the same time, are prepared to show you the machine that must be used in order to take possession of the means of production and work them in the interests of yourselves and the community generally.' For the purpose of doing that we had to recognise the hard concrete facts of industrial organisation. It was useless continually prodding and pinpricking the working class; we were not going to get the best from the working class by doing that, we had to take them in hand and show them the way laid down in this resolution.

He thought we should do our ut-

most to be unanimous about this resolution in order that it might not merely go forth to the International Communist organisations of the world as our definite declaration, but that it could be taken to our people, and they be asked to recognise in this instrument the first step towards success in their own emancipation."

The resolution was formally seconded by William Mellor of the Guild Communist Group. Discussion was very brief. Obviously delegates had come together on the basis of the principles contained in the resolution. Support for the dictatorship of the proletariat in the period of transition between capitalism and communism was not a bone of contention. Nevertheless some delegates felt compelled to speak. Harry Webb of the Ashton Communist Group began the debate by saying:

"... delegates had come with definite mandates, and nothing that could be said would influence those mandates in the slightest degree; but what was said might be carried back by the delegates to the groups and might affect the actions of those groups in the future. Certain words had been left out of the resolution which would give it much more effectiveness; what was needed was the dictatorship of the proletariat, not only in the form of the Soviet Council, but also in the form of the man with the gun in his hand. To men who had been used by imperialism in the world war we must point out the historic and revolutionary value of the gun in the hands of the working class. In this classic home of capitalism its downfall would be in the form of a civil struggle which would be consummated in the streets, the workers battling through by the guidance of the Communist Party.

CL Gibbons, (Ferndale Socialist Society) said he wanted to make a little clearer the point in the resolution which declared for the Soviet or Workers' Council, and then went on to state the means whereby the working class should achieve power. Seeing that this was the beginning of the Communist Party, he thought that we should quite definitely state that the achieving of power would come from the soldiers' councils, and the actual control of the forces of production from the workers' councils. He thought this should be made clear and put in the resolution."

It was at this point that William Mellor intervened to make the rather obvious point that:

"... If they did not agree with the resolution they should go away, if they did agree they should pass it without making long speeches as to its meaning. But he suggested it was urgent that some reference should be made to the Third International. He had put through to the Standing Orders Committee a suggestion that the Third International should be mentioned in this resolution on general policy, and he hoped that the Conference would agree we should not only stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat, agree

with the Soviet system as the means whereby we could achieve Communism, and agree that Communism was our aim, but, as a Communist Party, we should at this crisis declare our adherence to the Third International. He asked the Chairman to use his influence with the Standing Orders Committee to get them to include in the resolution a certain declaration of our adherence to the Third International. AA Watts (BSP, Rochdale) said he rose to voice the opinion of the branch that an effort should be made to include any other body who had not seen their way yet to fall in with this Convention. We want one Communist Party here, not more.

R Stewart (Socialist Prohibition Group) said he did not want to be taken as stressing too much the point of the man with the gun. A great many people talked about guns who would run away when they saw one. He did not know whether he could use a gun if he had one, and he did not know much about the dictatorship of the proletariat. What he knew was that the dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary, and that we should require to do as circumstances determined. He did not suppose the sincerity of those who were not gun-men would be questioned; we should all count it a pleasure and pride to live and die for the Communist movement. But he thought the Provisional Committee would be wise to devote themselves to building up such an organisation as would make it possible for the minimum of violence to achieve the maximum for the Communist Party. Even the capitalist could not use guns upon us, except so far as he could persuade members of our class that somehow or other our policy was detrimental to their interests. Whether the guns came soon or late, or whether they came at all, there might be moments when it was far more revolutionary to refuse to have anything to do with guns. As to the Third International, it did not seem to him necessary to write in explicit terms that we were attached to it; the less we loaded the resolution with phrases, the better. What we needed to do was to form as soon as possible a party sufficiently strong to bear itself in any manner dictated by the circumstances of the moment."

The chairman, comrade Arthur MacManus, said he recommended that the words "and adherence to the Third International" should be added to the resolution. The amended resolution was then carried unanimously as follows:

"The Communists in conference assembled declare for the Soviet (or Workers' Council) system as a means whereby the working class shall achieve power and take control of the forces of production; declare for the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary means for combatting the counterrevolution during the transition period between capitalism and communism; and declares its adherence to the Third International; and stand for the adoption of these means as steps towards the establishment of a system of complete communism wherein the means of production shall be communally owned and controlled. This conference therefore establishes itself the Communist Party on the foregoing basis."

REVIEWS

SWP Gulf

Socialist Worker pamphlet, *No to War in the Gulf: Why Britain and the US should get out*, London, no date, pp31, 50p

THE TITLE of this pamphlet lets the SWP off the hook. While the first part of the text provides a brief history of the region this century, any solution to stop war in the Gulf and a plan for putting that solution into action are ignored.

This is typical of the SWP's attitude to politics: its reliance on spontaneity, and its lack of understanding of the duty of a revolutionary party in leading the working class to state power. A general history of the region, in particular the role of British and US imperialism in carving up the region in their own interests, is a necessary starting point, and the pamphlet provides that. It also deals with the nature of the regimes which the US and Britain are "defending" as a pretext for intervention in their own imperialist interests. This point is further illustrated by the non-existent bourgeois democratic credentials of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In Britain, the hypocrisy of both Labour and Tory parties is exposed by their desire to restore the "legitimate rulers" of Kuwait, in the shape of the al-Sabah dynasty, and to defend the barbaric and brutal Saudi regime.

Moving on to its analysis of Iraq, the pamphlet defines it economically as a "minor industrial power" (p18), which is closer to our assessment of Iraq as a medium developed capitalist economy than, say, Workers Power's, which describes it as a semi-colony. However, the SWP does not develop its analysis and fails to specify the proto-imperialist nature of the Iraqi ruling class.

To be fair, the authors identify Saddam's need to expand into Kuwait for economic and political reasons, due to the massive war debts incurred by the war with Iran, which threaten his political survival. Despite this assessment, they are equivocal on Saddam: "He is not a beacon for every reactionary element worldwide. At most he offers a limited challenge to oil sheiks and oil companies and to Western companies, whose profitability depends upon cheap oil. So Saddam is not the new Hitler. But neither is he a modern anti-imperialist hero" (p18). What he is, rather than is not, remains unsaid.

The pamphlet reluctantly takes a 'soft' pro-Iraq position: "although socialists must hope that Iraq gives the US a bloody nose and that the US is frustrated in its attempt to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait, we should have no illusions that Saddam Hussein is a genuine force for Arab liberation" (p21). This is a typical SWP 'no illusions, but...' line. Although it formally acknowledges that the task of genuine Arab liberation can only be achieved "by the workers who have taken to the streets", (p21) and that their allegiance is to those who "press for revolution everywhere in the Middle East", (p21) it fails to call for either independent working class organisation or the necessary vanguard party to lead those organisations to victory.

Instead the implication seems to be that during the conflict they will support Saddam against Western imperialism. From an internationalist perspective we must examine what the victory of Saddam would mean for the Iraqi working class. Would it really enhance the objective conditions for working class revolution? The answer to that is conclusively no! Such a victory would reinforce Saddam's reactionary rule and lead to further repression of the Kurds, the working class and communists in Iraq. Instead, communists should be using the difficulty of their own ruling class as their opportunity to strike in the interests of their class - the working class.

Having failed to support a revolutionary, working class solution in Iraq

in practice, what does the SWP see as its role and duty in the anti-war movement in Britain? Surprise, surprise, this pamphlet does not pose action independent of the Labour Party. Instead it sees its role as left advisor to the party that has always upheld and backed British imperialism. In the final two pages we are presented with the SWP's crass tailism of the Labour party.

"The Tories' dependence on the political consensus makes the Labour Party's capitulation to Thatcher's warmongering all the more despicable. Kinnock has the power to stop the war preparations in their tracks. He has the power to stop the senseless slaughter before it begins. If Kinnock had spoken against the war drive at the start, the Tories would never have dared send troops to the Gulf." (p31)

Even if Kinnock had such power, in the present climate he would not use it in the interests of the working class, because the Labour Party, in the final analysis, acts in the interests of British capitalism.

Although it goes on to make a number of correct points, including that the US and Britain "can only be stopped if the domestic political price of the war is made so high that Bush and Thatcher are no longer able to pay it", it does not present a strategy for carrying this through. True, it comes out against CND and Tony Benn and their calls to the UN. But, in practice the SWP has provided no real challenge to these politics in the Committee to Stop the War. Any 'independent' action it has taken seems more directed at outflanking those to its left than giving a lead independent of the reformists and pacifists.

It states that "the only thing that can secure peace is if the US and Britain are forced out of the Gulf." What it fails to provide, are answers to the question: how can this be achieved? We say, not through siding with the pro-imperialist politics of the Labour left. The duty of all revolutionaries, in Britain and throughout the world, is to fight for peace through revolution.

Nick Clarke

Heavy stuff

Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life*, Penguin 1989, pp607, £6.99

THE LABOUR Party's rightwing heavyweight has produced his autobiographical summing up, as he fades away over the political horizon into elder statesmanship. The *Observer* called this the best political autobiography since Rab Butler's. Not being a connoisseur of the milieu, I wouldn't know, though it certainly deserves to be read.

In comparison with the grey men on Labour's front bench today - Kinnock, Kaufman, Gould etc - Healey is a colourful character indeed. And, although he obviously does not suffer from false modesty, with his inveterate namedropping sometimes tiresome, his undoubted style, energy and wit more than saves the book.

Within these pages we get a first hand understanding, not only of the development of the man, but also of the sociology and psychology of the Labour Party leadership, its government and internal machinations.

Young Denis started his political career as a Communist Party member in Oxford University in the 30s. Like so many others from this background, Healey was attracted by the democratic, anti-fascist stance of the Party at this time, rather than class struggle and revolution - let alone dialectical materialism, which he says he "found a superficial triviality" (p28). Our wise old author claims to be more at ease with such blatantly superficial and trivial statements as "I believe it because it is incredible. It is certain

because it is impossible". (*Ibid*) Such sentiment may be closer to his colleague Tony Benn's parliamentary road to socialism. Still, that's their problem.

Anyway, Healey has never let his 'communist' past bother him. When challenged on this once, he pointed out that he used to believe in Father Christmas, too. Judging by his trusted maxims and his religious belief, he hasn't progressed much farther. One is continually reminded throughout the book how arguing through a 'logical' train of thought from an untenable class ideology makes fools out of the most intelligent men. As Healey himself puts it - with reference, of course, to others - a logical conclusion is all too often a *reductio ad absurdum*. Inhabiting the world of realpolitik rather than ideological debate, as he does, he skates over such potential problems.

By the time of World War II, Healey had decanted from the CPGB, during the course of its tortuous political flip-flops, into the Labour Party. He whisks us through his war, glossing over, a little bird tells me, the balls-up he made in landing equipment nine miles down the shore from the troops it was intended for in Italy. But let that pass.

Next, our gallant hero is demobbed and employed as a Labour Party full timer in the international department. From there he moves to Leeds MP and Labour's International Secretary. The only way is up!

As we are taken through Healey's ascent, one thing becomes more and more apparent: he has less and less to do with the working class, in any shape or form. As a Labour Party employee in Transport House, his contact is with trade union bureaucrats and aspiring intellectuals. Later, it is with ministers of state, foreign heads of state and royals. His close affiliations lie with liberal politicians, particularly US Democrats, and efficient administrators. For Healey, it is men such as these that make history, with their wives busy in the background being "radiant" and "effervescent".

Healey is at his best when he draws for us pen portraits of such men, from Malenkov to Mountbatten. We get a direct insight into the motivations, strengths and weaknesses of these people through his eyes.

There is no view of the interests of working people here. Healey's world is one of diplomatic manoeuvre (bourgeois) state interest, every bit as much as a Tory. His contact is with others of his ilk, nationally and internationally. The struggles of ordinary people, be they in Aden, Vietnam, the north of Ireland or the streets of Britain, are so many flies in the ointment. Healey is a classic example of the estrangement of the state from society. This has its pros and cons: on the one hand, Healey views social struggles with a sharp and detached mind; on the other, however sharp this mind might be, these struggles are peripheral for him. The men who turn the wheels of power are where it is at.

Committing his thoughts to print exposes the worthlessness of this view. A year before capitalism got the knives out in the Gulf, he talks of an arising "new sense of social responsibility, in which the quality of life assumes much greater importance". (p581) We see now the value of Healey's 'new world order' and his professed hopes for disarmament.

Essentially, Healey is only distinguishable from other Labour grandees in entertainment value. These are not in any way working class politicians, organically or politically. Contact with the working class and allegiance to it in any active sense is kept well away from any ability to affect decisions, party-wise, let alone in government. We have in Healey a thoroughly bourgeois politician in what Lenin termed a thoroughly bourgeois party. And if that writer and this could agree on nothing else, I'm sure we would be united in the futility of trying to turn either round.

Sean Quinn

ACTION

Communist Party

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

Collective discussion towards the Draft Programme of the CPGB:

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

February 3: Capitalism in Britain.

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

February 17: Minimum demands.

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

Hands Off Ireland!

HOI! paper No5. Bulk copies available at 5 for £1 including p&p.

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

Workers Theatre Movement

WTM club *The Internationales*:

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

March 8: Celebrate International Working Womens Day

Performers please contact Tam on 071-431 3135.

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

Internationalist Committee

Britain-Iraq: the main enemy is at home!
Imperialism out of the Gulf!

NON STOP PICKET until the end of the Gulf war: US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1 (Nearest tube Bond Street). Ring 071-431 3135 for details.

RALLY every Friday at the picket from 7pm to 9pm: speakers, anti-imperialist street theatre, song and action.

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Non-Stop Picket against the war!



ALL day and all night since Tuesday, January 15, the Internationalist Committee has been *non-stop against the imperialist's war!* Our round the clock picket of the United States embassy has been an important focus of protest since the start of the war on January 16. We have had over 1,500 attend the picket at different times and we are confident that our biggest mobilisations are yet to come.

Our symbolic action has helped impart a sense of urgency to the anti-war movement, and certainly to the people that have turned up to support our action.

What type of people have been on our non-stop picket? The majority are young people looking for some dynamic action against the war. Many have been new to politics, or even to campaigning organisations of any sort. What the non-stop picket has done is intersect with a whole layer of mostly young anti-war protesters pulled into activity for the first time, and given them a focus for their anger, a focus for action.

We have also attracted veteran peace campaigners, reservists waiting for the call up, ordinary Iraqis in tears as their country is pounded and revolutionaries from the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the war in the Gulf has thundered on. As military analysts

forecast, the western alliance was able to establish domination of the skies within an incredibly short space of time. Since then, apart from a few isolated acts of retaliation like the Scud missile forays, the imperialists have more or less been able to run their bombing missions unchallenged.

So far, then, 'public opinion' in Britain has been reassured by the extremely low levels of western casualties. But this cannot last. As the war continues, and as 'phase 2' opens - the assault by ground based forces - the injuries and fatalities on both sides must spiral upwards. Opinion in Britain will polarise as the soft middle ground disappears. Mobilising opposition to the war will become a more serious and urgent task.

Our non-stop picket is an ideal focus to attract those who want a serious fightback against the war. Over the coming period, we intend to develop the working class nature of the picket. Our comrades will mobilise from hospitals, from factories, from the ranks of civil servants, sections of whom have already raised the prospect of strike action against the war.

This work has already begun. In particular, we have targeted hospital workers, who are more aware than anyone of the effects of this war, and students. The enthusiasm with which the picket has been welcomed is en-

couraging. Many workers and students who have joined the picket in turn mobilised others. The picket's numbers have been repeatedly reinforced by demonstrators from other events who do not want to go home afterwards to wait for the next march, but who want a constant *organisational and political* focus for resistance to the war. This is what the picket exists to provide.

Our picket has been run in as democratic a way as possible. No views within the anti-war movement have been censored, no political forces have been excluded from the picket for their political stance on the war. For example, at our first Friday night rally, we gave a platform to speakers from CND.

This is not, however, some sort of 'non-aggression pact' with pacifism. Supporters of the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB have never concealed their views. Indeed, the picket has become a focal point for debating the political issues raised by the war, as well as a centre for militant action.

The picket has attracted widespread publicity from TV, Radio and newspapers. Inevitably, of course, its politics have been distorted. The two worst offenders (so far) have been the *Independent* and (surprise, surprise), the *Morning Star*.

The *Star* of January 18 carried an early morning picture of the picket, featuring three of our regular (British) picketers. The caption dubs them "US citizens protesting outside their embassy in London". In fact, the photographer went out of his way to ensure that our 'Non-Stop' banner was not featured in the photo. There was no question of confusion; the *Morning Star* deliberately lied to its readers to avoid admitting that this high profile action outside the US embassy was initiated, organised and sustained by the Internationalist Committee, sponsored by the Communist Party.

Alex Renton, for *The Independent* (January 18), was similarly inaccurate, though possibly from simple bourgeois journalist ignorance rather than sectarian malice, as with the *Star*. After interviewing Mark Fischer on the picket, Mr Renton implied in his report that we had attributed the relatively low numbers on the picket on the first morning after the attack to "public confusion". Comrade Fischer's reply, immediately faxed through to *The Independent*, but not published, corrected Renton's misreporting. He and his paper responded on the 23rd by attempting to smear the Picket by association with a lunatic-fringe Maoist sect.

But then, we do not expect impartial reporting from the press - not of our class, let alone our class enemies. The

Internationalist Committee is not out to win to its side the gaggle of tired and cynical hacks that cobble together the press in Britain. We want the active, partisan identification of the only element in Britain that can actually secure a just peace - the working class.

The picket stays despite the attacks and misrepresentations of the bourgeois press. It stays despite the unwelcome attention of the police and reactionaries. The picket is undoubtedly off to a good start, and is already attracting wide forces and fighting to dig roots among workers. Rapid growth is needed in all these areas, and more. If we are to prevent imperialism churning out hundreds of thousands of corpses, we must mobilise hundreds of thousands of people: on the picket, in occupations, in strikes. The picket will act as a catalyst for revolt against the war.

For strikes against the war!
Blockade the US embassy!

Picket the US embassy day and night as a focal point to mobilise mass action to stop the war. Ring the Internationalist Committee on 081-459 7146 to join the rota.

Rally every Friday, 7pm to 9pm: speakers, anti-imperialist street theatre, song and action. Grosvenor Square.