

# THE LENINIST

**May Day 1991:  
FOR A WORKERS' WORLD!**



**LONG LIVE  
COMMUNISM!**



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

IT IS fitting that May 1 - International Workers' Day - is the launch day of the *International Information Bulletin*. In the midst of the collapse of the 'official' world communist movement, the treachery of Gorbachevism and a carnival of bourgeois reaction, it represents a first step by communists towards reorganising our forces so that we can make the world revolution.

As the old saying goes, even the greatest journey begins with a single step. In itself the step we have taken - setting up a quarterly information bulletin - is very modest and nothing special. But taken in context of our journey, taken in the context of our communist struggle for a world party and world revolution, it is of the highest importance.

Of course, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that those who have come together to publish the *Bulletin* - the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB, the Communist Party of Turkey, the Communist Labour Party of the United States of North America and the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*) - have differences. We, for our part, have no intention of hiding them. They can be seen all too clearly in the pages of the first edition of the *Bulletin*. What is central at this moment in time though is not our differences on this or that, but where we agree.

We have all taken a stand against Gorbachevism and the social democratisation of the former 'official communist' parties. We are united in our determination to fight opportunism and keep the banner of communism aloft in spite of the flood tide of reaction. Because of this there is every reason to be confident that the sometimes difficult, sometimes smooth process of overcoming those differences will prove successful. Every reason to be confident that our organisations can act as a focal point for the world wide regroupment, reorientation and rebuilding of the communist movement.

When it comes to this, there must be no attempts to go back to the past. That door is permanently closed. Those who attempt it are doomed to end in farce. Together we communists will stand on the shoulders of our great achievements of the past; the three Internationals, the Paris Commune, the October Revolution. But we will also learn where we went wrong in the past.

Nothing and no one can be considered sacred. Everything must be critically examined. This is no academic exercise. It is necessary if we are to develop the scientific method of Marxism-Leninism and our practice as revolutionaries. Only if we ruthlessly criticise our first "miserable efforts" (Marx) can we make ourselves fit for our future tasks.

Obviously though it is not just a matter of settling accounts with our past. Our biggest reason for confidence is the capitalist system itself. For all the triumphalism, the silly talk about the end of history, even with the effective collapse of the socialist world, it is quite clear that capitalism has long ago outlived its usefulness.

It is now a thoroughly decadent system which is rotting before our very eyes. As we can see with the present recession, it acts as a relative fetter on the development of the productive forces. More than that though, in the shape of a looming new general crisis and the threat of an inter-imperialist World War III it represents an absolute danger to the achievements of seven thousand years of human civilization.

Before capitalism stands its own creation, its grave digger, the working class. During the days of Marx and Engels our class was numbered in the tens of millions and confined to a few advanced countries. Today there are proletarians by the hundreds of millions. There is hardly a country where the working class is not the most important class. In other words, the objective conditions for world revolution are in place. It is the subjective factor - the political consciousness and communist organisation of our class - which lags far, far behind, that is the *main problem*.

The gap must be closed. Only through communist leadership can the working class put itself at the head of humanity. Only through communist leadership can the working class carry through its act of self liberation and create the conditions of abundance, genuine freedom and uninterrupted peace where the real history of humanity will begin.

On the international terrain therefore the *main task* of the moment is to rally, reorganise and reorientate the communist forces. The extent that we can contribute to this is of course determined by our strength in Britain. Nevertheless, by taking our first step with the *Bulletin* we have made a start.

It is the start of a great journey that will only be completed when humanity lives under communism.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### Britain and Iraq

Many liberals and 'socialists' are oozing with the milk of human kindness at the thought of the British inspired 'enclaves' for the Kurds of Iraq. Alongside Operation Haven (in other words, further imperialist military intervention), the threat of another Band Aid inspired charity stunt looms. History, however, has other lessons about Britain's tender concern for the Kurds and the masses of the Middle East.

In the 1930s aeroplanes of the RAF were helping Iraqi troops put down Kurdish revolts, some led by Sheik Ahmed of Barzau (relative of today's Barzau?). 'Bomber' Harris had his trial run for the British war crime of Dresden as a young pilot in the 20s, blanket bombing Kurdish villages.

In 1933 Reginald Bridgeman, secretary of the League against Imperialism, said, "There have been some very disturbing accounts of the devastation wrought by the RAF in Kurdish villages as a result of revolts of the Kurds, which it was believed in some quarters that the Baghdad government had done a lot to provoke, while it was still under the control of the British mandate."

In 1918 the British replaced the Turks as rulers of Iraq. In June 1920 the British government announced the intention to establish a distinct Arab government under an Arab ruler. A provisional government was formed under the Naqib of Baghdad, which was to be replaced by a government based on an elected assembly under an Arab ruler acceptable to the imperialist club, the League of Nations. On August 23 1932 the British High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, proclaimed the Emir Feisal King of Iraq, by election of the people, as a result of a plebiscite in which 96% of the inhabitants voted in favour.

Earlier on June 30 1930, the Anglo-Iraq treaty was signed by the British Labour government. It was found to contain no express provision for the rights of minorities. When one minority, the Assyrian Christians, petitioned the League of Nations to recognise their rights, Britain told them to become "good and loyal citizens of the Iraqi state".

Commenting on the situation at the time, Bridgeman said: "The situation in the Middle East is clearly profoundly influenced by imperialist intrigue". Parallel to today's situation, he mentioned "jealousies regarding the oil supply", and went on: "Iraq has been bound to the British empire by military alliance. The Arabs are split into a number of different countries, so that their union against imperialism is difficult to accomplish. Fascism is developing among the feudalists and the bourgeoisie of Iraq just as it is developing among the Zionist Jews of Palestine ... The masses of workers in the Arab lands, now under the heel of imperialism, have need of the class support of their fellow workers in Europe, in the common struggle against fascism and imperialism."

Sixty years on, this is a more clear line than the majority of the left were able to cobble together with all the benefit of hindsight and decades of experience.

Harry Eastman  
Kent

## Election

From the statement on the front page of *The Leninist* No102, I gather that the PCC plans to field at least three parliamentary candidates at the next election. What with deposits, other propaganda material, meetings etc, this would mean an expenditure of thousands. Personally I consider it money ill spent.

It appears to me that the organisa-

tion is endeavouring to take a great leap forward which it is not equipped to deal with, either from the financial, organisational, propaganda or membership standpoint. Assuming that we obtain hundreds of contacts from such a venture, in order to make membership headway, each one of these has to be contacted personally by members of the organisation and they have to be fitted into the organisational form to make the venture worthwhile.

It appears to me that, due to slow advances in the past, comrades are making what appears to be a desperate effort to overcome our limitations. However, I consider that the proposed remedy will only exacerbate our difficulties; we cannot avoid and short circuit the need for hard grass roots ground work through high flying adventures.

Paul Conlon  
South London

Alan Merrik replies

**What determines our decision to stand a number is not finance or local contracts, but our determination to prove that the CPGB is not dead and show the working class nationally that there exists a communist alternative - no matter how weak at the moment - to the three main capitalist parties. Finance, however important, is secondary, dictated as it is by political necessity. We know from our own experience, any sustained intervention costs a great deal. As we have always done we will raise the money necessary.**

## Labour

All the pollsters predict sweeping Labour gains in the coming municipal elections. And there is little reason to doubt the predictions. Except that local elections are tricky things to analyse, and changes of seats can turn on a handful of votes.

However, the Tories will get a knock from a sullen working class fed up with the poll tax and its 'son', and who are beginning to fear the looming economic crisis. For a short time the class may put its hopes in a change to Labour. But not for long. The battle around the poll tax are deep in the present memory, and will give confidence for the fight to come.

So the sham 'revolutionary' Militant calls on voters to "defend our (!) city" and vote for "real" Labour candidates. Arise the ghost of Derek Hatton! And the SWP and other so-called anti-capitalist groups will no doubt be urging support for the 'lesser evil'.

Labour councils will not do anything but operate the rules and laws of the capitalist state. Municipal 'socialism' was exploded as a myth by the Victorian Fabians. There is no road to socialism but through democratic workers' power, in the workplaces, the estates and the streets - not in the prayer canting council chambers, filled with Tories - blue, pink and green. So on May 2 one either abstains, vote "BolloX to the poll tax" or "communist".

H Copestake  
Stoke-on-Trent

## RCG

The Revolutionary Communist Group's Trevor Rayne (*The Leninist* letters page, No102) disputes our contention that Iraq's per capita GNP figure went from being on a par with Bangladesh and India to the level of Greece and Spain, ie medium developed capitalist countries. He cites the following GNP per capita figures from *The Stateman's Year Book* for 1990-91: Iraq \$2,140, Spain \$7,740 and Greece \$5,213. This "mistake" he concludes "reflects badly on the rest of [your] analysis."

Hardly, comrade Rayne. Iraq is certainly on the bottom rung of the

category of medium level capitalist development; nevertheless, that is the category to which it belongs.

The very same year book that Rayne uses as the source to refute our analysis gives the following per capita figures; Bangladesh \$170, India \$330. In other words, the Iraqi total is over 12 and 6 times bigger respectively. Thus, the quantitative difference between Iraq and Greece or Spain is dwarfed by the quantitative difference between, say, a country of the economic level of Bangladesh and Iraq.

The essence of our analysis though is not figures, but the fact that Iraq is driven by the necessity of becoming imperialist. Here comrade Rayne ought to look not to the mote in our paper but the bloody great beam in his own.

The 'And' column in *The Leninist* No102 scores some good points against the RCG and Workers Power's hopelessly confused positions on the Gulf War. As the column points out, both sects hurriedly revised their positions on the war in the aftermath of the ignominious collapse of the Iraqi army.

Nowadays, the despicably dishonest RCG tells readers of its *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* that socialists "could not ... call for a victory for Iraq, because the war aims of Iraq were also reactionary. Some sects sought to distinguish between a military victory for Iraq (which socialists could support), and a political victory (which socialists could not). But this distinction is sophistry. A military victory for Iraq was an impossibility; even if it were not, it could only mean a political victory for Saddam, with the continued enslavement of the Kurdish people and the Iraqi working class" (*FRFI*, No100).

What lying hypocrites! In the aftermath of the war, they crudely ape the positions of Leninism for revolutionary defeatism. During the war, the RCG affiliated to the RCP-dominated Hands Off the Middle East (Home) committee, whose key distinctive slogan was "Victory to Iraq!" Not once did they raise a criticism of this aspect of Home's platform!

Furthermore, Eddie Abrahams, writing in *FRFI* No98 as the Gulf war was about to explode, explicitly rejected revolutionary defeatism: "We do not call for the defeat (revolutionary or otherwise) of Iraq ... (should we) call on Iraqi and Middle Eastern revolutionaries to organise insurrection against the Saddam Hussein regime? ... we politely refuse ... (revolutionaries should) if necessary fight alongside the Iraqi army. This (is) a necessary and preliminary stage".

Come *FRFI* No100 and the spineless Mr Abrahams is describing the Iraqi regime as "imperialistic"! Surely some explanation is required here?

Similarly, Workers Power have some explaining to do. Witness these two quotes: "If war with imperialism breaks out then for Iraqi revolutionaries insurrection must be subordinated to the tasks of defeating the imperialist onslaught", (*Workers Power*, September 1990, my emphasis); "[Workers Power] supported Iraq but simultaneously stood for the revolutionary overthrow of Saddam throughout this war" (*Workers Power* leaflet, dated March 2, 1991, my emphasis).

Do the members of organisations like the RCG or Workers Power keep back issues of their own publications? Do they ever browse through them? And if they do, don't they ever feel even a little uncomfortable?

Mark Fischer  
London

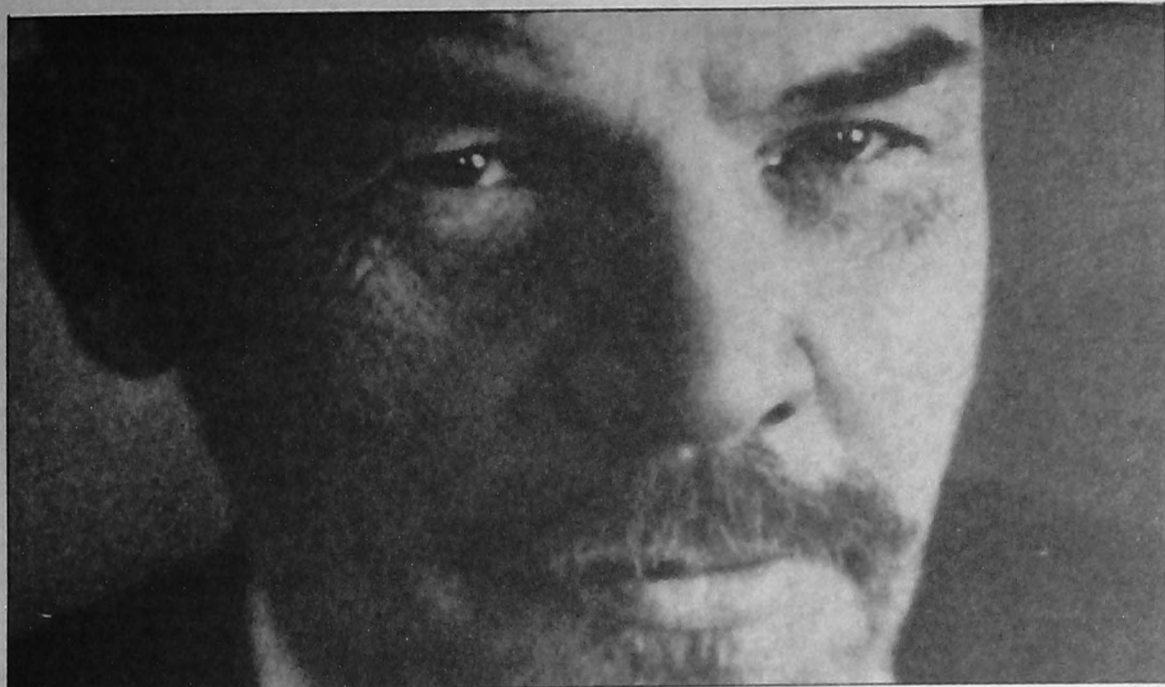
Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

## WRITE OR RING

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

# Summer Offensive 1991

The 8th Summer Offensive of the CPGB will soon begin. Now is the time to prepare



The fight for a Leninist Party demands Leninist self sacrifice

**A**LL MEMBERS, supporters and sympathisers of our organisation must start preparing now to storm the target set by the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB for this year's Summer Offensive - £30,000 to be raised in June and July, a 20% increase from last year's £25,000 total.

Like the Summer Offensives that preceded it, this year's will act as an organisational and political purge on the body politic of our Party. In many ways the Summer Offensive is the annual high point of the work of Leninists to reforge a genuine Communist Party in this country.

When new comrades are first introduced to the Summer Offensive, almost all are initially daunted by the sums they may be set to raise. Yet while they understand the financial importance of the action, few appreciate immediately the reason why our Party attaches so much political significance to the campaign. The 'bare bones' of the Summer Offensive are impressive enough.

Annually, the leadership of our Party sets the organisation a financial target to raise over a two month period. Members of the organisation are given a basic minimum to raise; sympathisers and supporters set their own targets (although all are strongly encouraged to match the exacting minimums of members).

The Summer Offensive marks a particular high point of public activity, not hermit like abstinence. Street collections, sponsored events, summer offensive sales - our comrades strain to turn the organisation outwards during the Summer Offensive, to engage as many new people as possible on whatever level. Our comrades learn the basic Leninist art of squeezing blood from a stone.

More than any other campaign the Party runs or sponsors, it expresses in the purest form what is required from the individuals who come together with the task of reforging the Communist Party of Great Britain.

In order to be a communist in bourgeois society, it is necessary to constantly swim against the tide of ideas, attitudes and norms that dominate ones' social environment. Against the anarchy of bourgeois individualism, we counterpose communist collectivism; against the poisonous 'I'm alright, Jack' attitude capitalism fosters, we pit our communist solidarity and morality;

and against the fatal complacency that bourgeois society engenders, the idea that the laws that govern this society are 'natural' and eternal so the struggle for revolution is futile, we match our communist consciousness and our fight to translate Leninist theory into Leninist practice.

Indeed, for us this is the basic definition of a communist. It is someone who consciously fights to overthrow bourgeois society and thus consciously takes the necessary steps that will lead to communism.

Many on the left criticise our approach as one that will drive away militants. This blank incomprehension is the direct political corollary of their inability to conceive of any scenario at election time other than voting Labour; of their refusal to challenge in practice the politics of left reformism in major class battles like that of the miners; of their inability to stand on solid principle on Ireland, abortion, the Gulf War, or any other question in fact.

Their incapacity to look beyond what is possible to what is necessary makes much of the 'revolutionary' left radical appendages of bourgeois politics of one sort or another. Communists on the other hand dare to link our revolutionary theory with hard practice - communists alone are thus capable of running a campaign of the scope and intensity of the annual Summer Offensive.

We shall return to the theme of the place of the Summer Offensive in the theory and practice of the Communist Party, as well as looking at details of this year's as it unfolds, in subsequent articles in *The Leninist*. In the meantime, comrades should start their preparation for the launch meeting of the campaign on June 2.

\* Tickets for the 8th Summer Offensive launch meeting in Central London are £5 employed/£2 unemployed. The meeting will take individual pledges, discuss the details of various Summer Offensive money making schemes, and will also include a speech from comrade John Bridge setting this year's Summer Offensive in political context. Food and drink will also be available at this launch meeting. If you require creche facilities to attend, please get in contact.

\* There has been a tendency in previous years' campaigns for the money raising to start very slowly and only really become a deluge in the last two

weeks or so of the campaign. Comrades should start to plan their Summer Offensive now and come to the meeting ready with money to hand in. The June 2 meeting should be a powerful launching pad to maintain a high tempo throughout the two month campaign!

\* No complacency, comrades! In articles on previous years' Summer Offensives we have noted the massive relative discrepancies between our ability to raise money and generate commitment from our members and supporters and the pathetic efforts of shambolic wrecks like the Euro organisation and the *Morning Star's* CPB. For example, in 1988 we noted that 19 districts of the Euro organisation, a group far larger than us numerically, started out on their annual 'Appeal' (note the difference), with final targets less than the amount our organisation raised in the first 24 hours of that year's Summer Offensive! Such comparisons could be repeated *ad nauseam*. The point is however, that we do not want to measure ourselves against what these has-beens can manage; we need to measure ourselves against what is necessary.

Thus, it is chastening to note that in 1988 we wrote that "we must also be aware that with a little more of a tough approach, with our sympathisers overcoming their misgivings, we could be raising in the region of £30,000 now." Comrades, we are only now fulfilling the potential we pointed to in 1988! The tasks the Party faces, the ability of the Party to translate its theory into practice has undoubtedly grown considerably since then. We should be raising significantly more than £30,000! We must aim to smash this target for the 8th Summer Offensive!

\* We call on all our readers to help overcome a negative feature of previous years' campaigns - it tends to involve simply those organised in and around our Party and its London-centric lopsidedness. Even if it is just sponsoring a comrade in some event, or contributing a work of art for raffle as Irish POWs have in previous years, we urge all our readers to get involved!

The 8th Summer Offensive of the Communist Party of Great Britain will be the most intense and wide-ranging yet! It will triumph brilliantly!

Mark Fischer

## IN STRUGGLE

April's unemployment figures show an escalating rise in the number of people out of work. Official reports claim the figure to be 2.1 million, with top economists predicting the amount of unemployed to increase to over three million within the next year. This figure of course does not take into account the twenty-plus 'fiddles' that the Tories have made to the unemployed register during their time in government in an effort to keep those claiming benefit to a minimum. The Unemployed Workers Charter was set up in 1986, emphasising the need for those out of work to be organised so as to fight back against unemployment. This fightback must involve employed workers, who continually face the risk of their jobs disappearing and their skills wasting away as they themselves are slung onto the scrapheap. In light of this, the UWC's lobby of the TUC on September 2 this year assumes the utmost importance. We know that the TUC will not back the workers, employed or unemployed, to fight back against the attacks that many working men and women face. Indeed their open support for slave labour schemes such as YTS and ET correctly exposed them as a sickening bunch of bureaucrats more interested in protecting their own pockets than campaigning for the rights of our class. For the UWC the fightback starts now. Join the lobby this September: No slave labour schemes! Fight for the right to work! Organise the unemployed! GP

Opposition to the government's Standard Assessment Tests of seven year olds is spreading quickly. The reactionary nature and implications of the testing is being grasped by parents; parents who, having seen off the poll tax now want to see off SATs. Meetings are taking place all over the country and parents are beginning to exert real 'parent power' by denying permission for their children to be tested. Each day the number of parents doing this has increased: in Scotland it is now a majority. Members of the NUT - which covers England and Wales - will know by the beginning of May the outcome of their ballot on boycotting SATs. The ballot, the most complex seen by NUT members ever, is divided into two sections. All NUT members were asked three questions about the amount of support they are prepared to give primary school teachers. Primary school teachers involved in SATs have a number of other questions to answer. But far from the NUT executive giving a positive lead it has actually come out and recommended a 'no' vote on a boycott of SATs. To top it all many members in the more militant inner-city areas, where staff turnover is high, have not even been sent a ballot paper. In such conditions, it is unlikely that the required two-thirds majority for a boycott of SATs will be achieved. Therefore militant primary school teachers will have to build their own unofficial links with other teachers throughout the country (in the NUT and other unions) and parents to oppose, boycott and finally break SATs. TC

Now it's down to rank and file teachers and working class parents



Now it's down to rank and file teachers and working class parents

The largest civil service union, the Civil and Public Services Association, is about to start balloting its members on this year's pay offer. Organising 120,000 of civil service junior clerical staff, the problem of low pay is well known to the union's members. Under the much vaunted long term pay agreement negotiated between the treasury and the CPSA in 1989-90, pay deals in the private sector are taken into consideration when deciding the year's pay rise. By their own agreement then, the pay rise for junior clerical grades should be around 10%. In our terms, of course, this is still far off a satisfactory deal for such low paid workers. The treasury, predictably, have only offered 7.6%. With inflation running around 9%, and civil service pay having fallen in real terms since 1979, this is clearly a derisory offer. The rightwing union leadership has given its usual non-committal guidance to its membership, giving no recommendation on the ballot. But they oppose industrial action, warning that the treasury will simply sweat it out. At a time when other unions are preparing for industrial action and throwing out offers of 8% or more, this is a disgraceful capitulation. CPSA members should show the treasury and the union leadership their disgust over the pitiful offer and return a resounding no vote in the ballot. Militant workplace organisation should be initiated to organise for this, and to circumvent the union bureaucracy at a rank and file level when it comes to slugging it out with the employers. CA

## More needed



Our paper relies on one source of finance alone - you, its readership. Not on the 50p cover price of the paper - this only accounts for about one third of our costs. The other two thirds is made up mainly through our £600 monthly fighting fund. Unless this is successfully raised then the future of our paper is put in jeopardy. Economically these are difficult times and our costs keep rising. That is why it is essential that all sympathisers and supporters of *The Leninist* make regular donations and don't leave it up to others. In April we ended just under target with £540. Although, because we are holding a two week school, we will not be out until late May, we still need to meet the fund target. Thanks last month to comrades AS, TG, MH, LO, DS and TC.

# Hands Off Ireland!

## the onward march



Seventy five years ago James Connolly and his comrades lit the flame of revolution in Ireland. Hands Off Ireland! marched in their honour

ON APRIL 20 Hands Off Ireland! commemorated the 75th anniversary of Ireland's Easter Rising with a demonstration in London. In a real sense, the Rising was the opening shot of the revolutionary wave that swept Europe, reaching its apex with the October Revolution in Russia.

In the Twenty-six Counties, which claims its lineage from the Rising, the official state commemoration was a shallow affair. Veterans of the Rising and the Tan War were even refused permission to hold a commemoration at the Gardens of Remembrance by the Dublin government. Irish establishment figures obviously want the memory of the Rising interned with the bodies of its leaders.

The London commemoration was entirely different. It had been built on a solidly working class and pro-republican basis, drawing support from trade unionists, trades councils, Irish republicans, solidarity organisations and political

NF intellectual

prisoners. Around a hundred people demonstrated, honouring the memory of those who fought for liberty in 1916 in the only way fit: by linking that struggle with the struggle for freedom today, in the occupied Six Counties and world-wide.

As a sort of footnote - as that's all it's worth - the National Front warned in their paper, *The Flag*, of a counter-mobilisation against the "IRA demo". In the event, this constituted around a dozen bone-heads piling out of a Holloway Road pub to wave beer-

stained flags, jeer and then hide behind police lines. Those organisations which approach such events like conspiracies, out of fear of the 'fascist menace', ought to have taken a look at our 'opposition' on the day.

The importance of the march, and of Hands Off Ireland!, is that it exists; it exists as a principled focal point for organisation against Britain's war in Ireland. The linkage of the interests of the Irish masses to the working class in Britain through revolutionary opposition to British imperialism is the only workable strategy. Building that within the workers' movement in Britain is the only way to make that strategy bite. And we have no hesitation in saying that HOI!, irrespec-

tive of its present social weight, is the only active vehicle for that strategy. Unity, both of anti-imperialists and of the working class in general, can only be won along that road, through transforming the revolutionary anti-imperialist politics of HOI! into a mass force within our class throughout Britain. April 20 represented a continuation of the fight for that revolutionary unity. Join that fight - join Hands Off Ireland!

The rally received various solidarity greetings, including from Pete Jordan, a republican socialist POW in Britain. Below we reprint excerpts from the speeches at the rally.

### David Rhys, Hands Off Ireland!

We missed one thing to commemorate the Rising: I remember it being announced in *The Irish Post* some time last year, they were going to make a film to commemorate the Easter Rising. And guess who was to play Connolly? Bob Hoskins. And Richard Harris as Thomas Clarke. Because now, three quarters of a century later, you can present it as nice and safe. You'll notice that nobody's making a film to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the hunger strike.

And in the event, even three quarters of a century since the Easter Rising, it is too much for the people who buried James Connolly, who buried Padraig Pearce, to take today. Because it's more evident than ever that the Easter Rising isn't Ireland's Alamo, with Connolly or Pearce as Davy Crockett, who you can get your equivalent of John Wayne to play; this is a living, continuing struggle. Twenty-two years of the Irish war have proven that to be the case. Ireland's resistance to imperialism continually throws forward men and women as heroic as Connolly, inspired by his memory. Bobby Sands showed that; Mairead Farrell showed that.

You can see why the establishment in the Twenty-six Counties don't want to commemorate the Easter Rising. Let's look at what it meant. Why did it take place? Not just a comparison, which is quite obvious on one level, between the IRA of today and the Irish Volunteers. But look at the Twenty-six Counties' position on women's rights. Constitutionally, it's the most reactionary catholic state on the planet. And look at what those people who fought in the Easter Rising, particularly Connolly and Constance Markievicz, said about women's rights.

Look at what the Easter Rising meant for workers' rights. The Irish Citizen Army, with Connolly at its head, was Europe's first Red Army. Of course they won't commemorate that; of course they can't honour that memory. They are what Connolly fought against.

Comparisons between then and now are easy to draw after the slaughter in the Gulf, after 22 years of the Irish war. Think what's going to happen in the future. George Bush and John Major's new world order is our blood, their profits. It's the same that our class was ordered to pay for 75 years ago that we're being asked to pay for today. And that is something that can hit home to anybody. Because what we've seen is only the start of another wave of war and oppression, so that imperialism can redivide its world in its interest.

A hell of a lot of people out there who, when they're told to put their lives on the line for George Bush's new world order, will start to be able to relate to that. But that task of fighting for our own rights is made a lot easier if we can stand up now, and fight alongside those people who are on the front line; with the Irish people in this instance.

It can be done. About 100 people marched today. We've seen in the past that 100,000 is not enough, when Karl Marx organised twice that number in solidarity with the Fenians in the last century. But a 100,000 workers and more can be mobilised, with the right strategy, in the right situation. And we can go from here, with those arguments, with that perspective, and dig roots within the working class, because those arguments, which only a few hold to today, represent the real interests of the overwhelming majority of people in this society. When they realise that, those people can move the world.

Something put forward nearly a century and a half ago now, by a long dead German, was that a nation that oppresses another can never itself be free. We've seen that. And we're seeing it today. Stick your neck out in this society and fight for what you need - from opposing the poll tax to opposing the Gulf War - and there's a good chance you'll experience at first hand some of the tricks that the British state has picked up in the Six Counties.

That direct link in terms of fundamental interests can be made. It can only be done through taking the argument into the working class that it should be taking sides against its 'own' state.

We can win on that perspective. The fight starts here. It will be won. Bobby Sands told them "tiocfaidh ar la" - "our day will come". But it's only us, comrades, that will bring it.

For the IRA, against the British Army!  
Hands off Ireland!

## Graham, Secretary, Islington Trades Council

I'm the secretary of Islington Trades Council and as such I'm supposed to represent the working class movement in Islington.

The reason why I asked the council to support this march, firstly of course because it's coming through the borough, but more to the point, because it's the only march that marks the Easter Rising of April 24 1916.

People maybe don't realise that this was the first uprising in Ireland to put the interests of the working class first.

In recent years trade unions have certainly moved in the direction of calling for troops out of Ireland, and calling for a united Ireland.

But they've been very coy on the issue of how it's going to be done. They've been very coy about whether they support the armed struggle to liberate the country.

Now, if they think that there's somehow going to be offered some kind of deal from British imperialism, then I think they're wrong.

British workers must respond not only by organising solidarity actions and events, but by helping the people to liberate themselves - by taking class action at home, right here, to bring down the imperialists that occupy that country.



## Dave Douglass, Hatfield Main NUM

This century had scarce entered its fourteenth year, when capitalism polluted its youth with the carnage, barbaric and merciless, as an inter-imperialist war surged across Europe and the gangsters struggled with each other for the domination of that continent.

Lev Trotsky commented at the time, "It seems as if this new century, this gigantic newcomer, were bent at the very moment of its appearance, to drive the optimist to pessimism ... Death to utopia. Death to faith. Death to love. And death to hope, thunders the twentieth century in salvos of fire, and in the rumble of guns. Surrender you pathetic dreamer. Here I am, your long awaited twentieth century, your future. No, replied the unhumble optimist. You are only the present."

Sad that with scarce eight years left before the death of this century, its end is sealed by that same salvo of guns, and the oceans of blood and death. But Lev was right, even if you don't agree with him about owt else: this repetitive, ruthless demonstration that capitalism leads, as night follows day, to war and barbarism; and that the longer it continues, the more it succeeds in wreaking its havoc, and the greater its war need; and the fundamental task of humanity to stop that process, and to stop that regime, to dismantle this fearful, wasteful, and brutalising system. Our goal, now as

then, lies with the achievement of a world free from oppression and hunger, from disease and alienation; a world without capitalism; a world of economic justice and social harmony.

To some extent, the long downtrodden Kurds attempted to seize just such an initiative [as the Easter Rising], seeing Iraq's misfortune as their opportunity. But what they didn't foresee is the alliance of both opposing armies in overtly and covertly uniting in an effort to crush them. The Kurds are starving and freezing to death at this moment because the United States and its allies want them to freeze to death and to starve to death.

Freedom for Kurdistan is not a slogan which can be confined to the imperialist-drawn borders of Iraq, and the issue challenges Western alliance partners. This is the reason why Bush is happy to see the Kurds wiped out and their death rate rise.

But I want to come to the Union Jack. It's our flag now. It's our flag - hasn't it been promoted; everywhere from the corner end sweet shop to Woolworths have been selling them by the bucketful.

Loads and loads of young working class lads and lasses are wearing this damned thing now for the first time in their lives. They've been persuaded to identify with the flag of the class enemy. The butcher's apron my mam used to call it. It

wasn't just pushed in the face of the Asian people during century after century of oppression on that continent. Not just pushed in the face of the Africans from one end of their continent to the other. It was waved in the face, and stuck down the throat of the Irish people, and of the Scottish people. And as the class war intensified throughout this island, it was rammed down the miners' throats too. In 1912, and in 1921, when Churchill ordered the troops to shoot down the miners. In 1926 as the tanks clanked over cobbled streets, when gunboats sailed up the Clyde and the Tyne, and marines with fixed bayonets charged the crowds in George Square in Glasgow, and the pig market in Newcastle. It wasn't our flag then, and it's not our flag now.

Black and Asian people have had it used as a threat every bit as threatening as the burning cross of the Ku Klux Klan, as Nazis and national frontists, fascists, and all sorts of racist scum have taken this flag to their bosom - as well they might embrace its gory and blood-stained crimes. "These colours don't run": I tell you what - the bastards burn easy.

Victory to the international working class, and all oppressed national minorities!

## Pete Wetherby, Manchester Martyrs

Easter 1916 is a turning point in Irish history. It signified the end of attempts by Irish parliamentarians and reformists to try and persuade the imperialist centre, Britain, to give back to the Irish people their national right to self-determination. Those attempts failed. They failed because you can't argue your way around imperialism.

Today we see ongoing talks about talks about talks, continued by Peter Brooke and the British establishment with people both north and south of the border in Ireland. Who are these people and what do they represent? The importance of these talks is that really a triangle exists. On the one hand, the British government wants to talk to the Irish government, the Free State government and their proxies in the north, the SDLP; and on the other, they want to speak to the official unionists and the democratic unionists - northern Loyalist parliamentarians. Behind these of course, in the shadows, under a cover of darkness, under the cover of SAS and police protection, operate the UDA, the UVF, the UFF, the Red Hand commandos.

What links all these groups, directly or indirectly, is that they act within the same interests as the British establishment itself.

Those of us who have been involved in the Manchester Martyrs' Committee have also been embarking on talks about talks. Those talks really centre on unity in the support for the national liberation struggle that we try to extend from this country. When we can achieve some kind of unity,

that's when marches like this will get bigger, when committees that are in solidarity with the national liberation struggle will begin to bite.

Unfortunately, I have to liken the state of the national liberation or even the withdrawal movement in this country to a film that was on TV the other night, the *Life of Brian*. It's a satire about the Judean People's Front. They won't sit around the same table, let alone engage in the same struggle against the Romans, as the People's Front for the Liberation of Judea. Unfortunately that's the state that we're in in this country.

The Martyrs' Committee in Manchester has initiated a series of peace talks about talks, hopefully with people that are a little more relevant than those that the British establishment is talking to, to try and come up with some kind of network committee that will be able to form the nucleus of something bigger and get people together. We have called it the Irish Solidarity Network, and already a lot of groups have become involved in that. Its purposes are very limited, based around the demands of 'troops out now' and 'self-determination for the Irish nation as a whole'. Its aims are to coordinate support for anti-imperialist events, such as this today, such as the Manchester Martyrs' commemoration in November, such as the Bloody Sunday march in January and a whole host of others. We call for the maximum amount of unity and we have no hesitation in supporting events like this.

Victory to the Irish People!



## OUR HISTORY

# Communist Unity Convention: parliament debate (amendments)

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

'Shame' is obviously a word that the New Communist Party leadership would have to look up in a dictionary. While the Kurdish people under Iraqi domination are paying in blood for their brave revolt against the repressive Ba'athist regime, the NCP has come out for the Iraqi regime against Kurdish self-determination. The front page of its paper *The New Worker* of April 19 leads on the situation in what it revealingly calls "Northern Iraq". This lead article then goes on to approvingly quote what it terms "anti-separatist Kurdish leaders in Baghdad", who condemned the uprising and supported the regime: in short, Uncle Toms in the pocket of Saddam Hussein. We do not use the word lightly when we call this sick position counterrevolutionary. It is all a rather disturbing proof of how far this addled little sect will go in its search for cash after being vomited up by Czechoslovakia and other ex-socialist states while in their death throes. In openly betraying the Kurdish masses, the NCP has put itself on the opposite side of the class line. It should be treated accordingly.

The Hands Off Ireland! march on April 20 brought out some of the shrinking violets of the British left - albeit somewhat fleetingly. The Irish Freedom Movement, for instance, took its boycottist strategy one step further by turning out an impressive contingent of three people, who speedily repaired to a local 'greasy spoon' before the march moved off. One supporter of the aptly named Wilkes (*Workers International League*), having omitted to bring his own banner, had his stomach turned when he saw that he might have to march behind the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB banner. So he too dropped out to ruminate over his sectarian thoughts in the 'Hope and Anchor'. There must be a moral there somewhere.

Another bunch of Euros have ended up as overtly rightwing social democrats. The Spanish Workers Party (PTE), founded by one-time Euro guru Santiago Carrillo after being sacked as Spanish CP secretary in 1983, is being "advised" by its leader to join the governing Socialist Party (PSOE). Carrillo observes: "The communist movement has worn itself out". Fairly clapped out himself, Carrillo extended his analysis: "A good socialist is no different from a good communist". And the only good Euro ... ?



Tom Bell: argued that there was no contradiction between the principle of soviets and the tactic of using parliament

**A**FTER an overwhelming 186 to 19 vote in support of the principle of parliamentary action, the delegates to the 1st Congress of the CPGB, the Communist Unity Convention, reconvened to consider amendments. The first two were rather trivial and were lost. The third, even though it was confused, was of more interest simply because it provoked a debate around the crucial question of centralism versus local autonomy. The fact that there were advocates of local autonomy shows that there were still many in the newly formed CPGB who had not grasped the real function and nature of a Communist Party, which because its aim is revolution must have the highest degree of centralism.

**J Hamilton** Liverpool Communist Group said he considered altering the words, "representatives of the Party elected to parliament" to "members of the Party contesting or elected to parliament", would help prevent careerism; and the introduction of the word "contesting" was important, because it made it explicit that the rule applied both before and after election. They had another amendment, to delete the words "according to national or local circumstances"; because they considered this phrase would give an opportunity to evade the candidate's being tied down by the resolution so far as tactics were concerned.

**W Mellor** opposed the amendment, and drew attention to what he considered a danger in the resolution as it stood. What was meant, he asked, by the phrase, "laid down by the Party"? Did this refer to the Party in delegate conference or to the executive? It seemed to him that the clause as drafted would lead to centralisation of the worst possible type, endangering local initiative and setting up a bureaucracy which future conferences would be always criticising. The convention did not accept the idea that local circumstances did not count, or alternatively, that the people at head office understood all local circumstances. From the head office manifestoes, leaflets, speakers etc, could go out for ever; but unless there was a response inside the localities all such efforts would be in vain. Neither the amendment nor the resolution as it

stood safeguarded local life, local initiative, local control, and he asked the delegates to consider seriously whether the last two sentences of the resolution expressed what the convention wanted. He thought the amendment should be rejected because of the deletion of the words "according to local or national circumstances"; but there was a more vital question before them than that. They were faced with the whole question of the relationship of the local groups of the Communist Party to the executive, and the resolution was giving the executive an awful amount of authority. He did not think it wise for the Communist Party at its birth to begin by bureaucratising its administration.

**A MacManus**, the chair, said that they were only deciding the tactical policy of the Communist Party for a few months. When the convention was finished, the first obvious duty of the executive would be to issue a call for resolutions that would be embodied in a draft constitution. That skeleton would be sent out to every member of the Party in order to ascertain every point of view as to what the constitution of the Party should be, and a later draft would be prepared for further examination and criticism.

**AA Watts** said he did not think the Party could lay down to the local branches throughout the country all items of policy for their local conduct. The resolution meant that the comrade elected to a particular body would represent the Party as against the electors, and that if he went from the policy of the Party he should no longer be regarded as one of its members. Mellor had read into the resolution an entirely different meaning. A national party could not lay down all the things that were to guide the party throughout the country. The party locally must decide on local affairs, and nationally on national affairs, but its members would sit on public bodies as representing the party, not their constituents.

**J Grierson** (BSP Openshaw) supported the amendment. They could not have one thing in Essex and another in Northumberland, but must have a Communist Party with rigid discipline. In the BSP we had seen some branches supporting Labour candidates, while others opposed them, and on one occasion Hyndman had come down to Openshaw and supported a Labour

candidate in preference to a BSP candidate run by the local branch. Such things would happen again if we were not careful.

**H Webb** said local autonomy would lead to confusion. In the north they would have half a dozen towns in close proximity to each other, but all pursuing different policies.

**Mrs Kennedy** (BSP Erith) said that if local autonomy was not allowed, more damage might be done to the Communist Party than otherwise.

**Miss E Wilkinson** (Manchester Guild Communist Group) said if we were going in for a revolutionary party we must have a general staff and be willing to obey it. After the revolution we could have local decentralisation. The present discussion was important, because if the Convention was laying down the lines on which the Communist Party was to be formed, and if it was got into the heads of the people who were to draft the constitution that they were to go on the same old lines, we could not have a revolutionary party, much less a revolution. A revolution meant discipline and obedience.

**JE Thomas** (Aberdare Communist Unity Group) said, on this point of rigid discipline, he would like to know how far the conference could tie the hands of a member of a trade union who was also a member of this Party if he was run as a candidate.

**FW Llewellyn** (BSP, Plymouth) said he supported the amendment. He had been asked only last week to run as a Labour candidate for one of the wards in Plymouth, and had replied that he would only stand as a communist candidate. Members of a trade union who were also members of the Communist Party must stand by their communist principles. There was too much local autonomy now. Elections were fought on local questions, but we wanted to have them fought on the principles of the Party, and our candidates must run on a common platform.

**CL Gibbons** (Femdale Socialist Society) said that number one resolution had been carried unanimously, and the convention had thereby agreed to the soviet or workers' council system. A part of that system was the right of local recall - not Party recall. It was going too far in paternal government for the Party to undertake to keep the representatives in order. If the man was not elected in a communist constituency there was no point in the Party controlling him, because he would not get in unless he compromised.

**T Bell** said there was no contradiction in advocating the workers' councils idea and determining the tactics that would be adopted once our representative was returned to the House of Commons. The soviet idea was our alternative to parliamentary institutions when we had achieved our revolution. We participated in local and parliamentary elections for agitational purposes. Different localities varied from each other; in parliamentary constituencies situations were continually arising that called for particular tactics to be adopted, always with a view to fomenting our revolutionary agitation. In the past members of parliament had become divorced themselves from the party that had sent them there. We wanted to ensure that our representatives on local and national bodies should keep in close contact with the Communist Party executive, and that the executive should have regard to the general situation, whether industrial or

political, and should collaborate with those representatives upon the tactics that were to be adopted in order to achieve the best values as far as revolutionary agitation was concerned. It seemed to him that the movers of the amendment had no case whatever. The Joint Committee would not quarrel about the words "members" and "representatives". Where the resolution spoke of the "Party" it meant the National Executive as appointed by the Party in conference; provision would be made in the constitution to see that that executive was elected in a properly constituted and democratic manner.

**W Mellor** asked if there would be the same measure of control over local as over national representatives.

**T Bell** replied that all the localities did not have the same degree of civic and social development as each other. There were variations of development in municipalities and so forth, and these would very largely determine the policy and tactics that would be most efficient for our propaganda purposes. That was what the Joint Committee had in mind when they used the phrase "according to local circumstances" ...

**W Saltmarsh** (Cardiff Communist Unity Group), said it seemed to him wrong that the majority of the members took parliamentary and political action seriously. If they were to abide by what they had already decided they were going to treat it as a joke. He recognised that the greatest part of the value of the work would be the educational side of the constituency. If by chance a candidate was returned and took his seat, he would be sitting on rotten eggs and nothing would come of it.

The amendment was lost by 56 to 122.

**J Fitton** then moved to add to the resolution the words: "In the event of any representative violating the decisions of the Party as embodied in the mandate which he or she has accepted or been instructed upon, he or she shall be called upon to resign his or her membership of parliament or municipality and also of the Party." He said those who talked about Party discipline ought to support the amendment.

The amendment was then voted upon and carried, 84 being in favour and 54 against. The resolution was adopted as follows:

"The Communist Party repudiates the reformist view that a social revolution can be achieved by the ordinary methods of parliamentary democracy, but regards parliamentary and electoral action generally as providing a means of propaganda and agitation towards the revolution. The tactics to be employed by representatives of the Party elected to parliament or local bodies must be laid down by the Party itself according to the national or local circumstances. In all cases such representatives must be considered as holding a mandate from the Party, and not from the particular constituency for which they happen to sit. In the event of any representative violating the decisions of the Party as embodied in the mandate which he or she has accepted or been instructed upon, he or she shall be called upon to resign his or her membership of parliament or municipality, and also of the Party."

# Only rock'n'roll

Reggie Nadelson, *Comrade Rockstar*, Chatto and Windus, 1991, pp242, £14.99 (hdbk)

BEFORE the counterrevolutions, in many socialist countries Dean Reed was a very famous person. Practically unknown in the west, icons and desk top statuettes cast in Reed's image were available alongside those of Lenin and Gagarin. He was considered a hero by many young people living in the former socialist countries. The strange thing was that he was an American.

As a young man in the 1950's, Dean Reed became involved in the new culture that was sweeping across the United States at the time - rock'n'roll.

In 1958, at the age of 20, Reed was signed up for a musical and film career. It was while he was on a tour of South America a few years later that he saw for himself the effects of imperialism; the poverty and degradation that came courtesy of Uncle Sam. This had a profound effect on him. He became politicised by what he had seen and began to supplement Everly Brothers' covers with songs about workers' struggles, peace and socialism. This outraged the music establishment, especially at the height of the Cold War.

In the 1960s the 'official' world communist movement came out against rock'n'roll, depicting it as decadent and alien to proletarian culture, just as it had against jazz a couple of decades earlier (though, by now, much jazz was acceptable, with many a long and boring article being penned in communist parties' publications justifying the somersault).

In the capitalist countries the communist parties could only moan about such 'decadence' (again, before belatedly jumping on the bandwagon), but in the countries where they ruled, rock was denounced. It became taboo.

It is clear to any real communist that, yes, the content of the vast majority of pop music is predominantly bourgeois, hedonistic and banal and we must struggle against the bourgeoisie's influence in art. But that does not mean we ban bourgeois culture.

This was the method of the socialist countries. Instead of these societies being able to develop the best from this musical form, the ruling parties just declared western music decadent, denying the masses access to it, and that was the end of it. It was no wonder that much of the youth preferred the Communards to the communists.

Dean Reed was a different kettle of fish. In 1965 he was taken on board by the Komsomol (Soviet Young Communist League) and signed up to the state recording company. He was declared a people's rockstar and was made welcome among the dignitaries of the socialist world and organisations such as the PLO. He even sang 'Yiddishe Momma' to Yasser Arafat.

Having been so impressed with the quality of life on 'the other side' he decided to leave the west behind and live in the east. He chose the GDR. Here he was adulated and surrounded by people wherever he went.

Reed lived there until his death in 1987. He was found dead in a lake in mysterious circumstances. This book goes into all kinds of myths and rumours that surround his death. One is that the Stasi had him murdered because he was thinking of going back to the US. Another has it that he had become disillusioned and committed suicide. Either way this book covers his life in a gossip column sort of way, throwing in tidbits about his friendship with Erich Honecker and Gustav Husak.

Dean Reed took the easy road to socialism. Like many other people who were attracted to living socialism, rather than fight for socialism in his own country, he took the soft option and emigrated to where this had been

done for him. Had he lived to witness the counterrevolutionary wave that swept through Eastern Europe perhaps he would undoubtedly have gone down too. Being a protege of the 'official communists' would have ended his career very quickly. The bureaucratic Berlin Wall of the mind made Reed what he was: without it, he was nothing.

But reading the book, you cannot help feel that he had an honest belief in socialism and human progress. He came to it through the experience of Central America and, in 1983, put his neck on the block by singing 'Vencemos', the radical anthem, while on tour in Chile, openly condemning the Pinchet regime.

But he was never able to take the music anywhere. Maybe he never had the talent; maybe he was never given the opportunity. "He could have been Fabian" says Nadelson. In a certain sense it is all he ever was, combining progressive folk songs with schmaltzy late 50s type numbers, and a series of films which sound like leftist versions of *Fun in Acapulco*. Politics and rock gelled for him into an amalgam which is more than a tad embarrassing. His popularity in the east owed not a little to the fact that he was American - him and Levis. Reed, though, was easier to get hold of than the latter.

Sadly, the product seems less politically convincing than the now defunct singing *Socialist Worker* editorials, the Redskins. Rock, like any art form, needs freedom to express itself, to develop. The fact that one had to resort to the black market for anything other than Abba testifies that this was not the case in the socialist countries.

It is a sad book: a poor white boy who just wanted to sing rock'n'roll and serve his class, and did not get to do either effectively. After a quarter of a century of such a stifling environment, maybe it is not surprising he wound up face down in a lake.

Michael Waters

# Lark Defiant

Bobby Sands (author), Lisa Goldman (director), *Trilogy*. For bookings contact the Workers Theatre Movement

ALTHOUGH Bobby Sands called his poetry 'crude', his brave and self-sacrificing determination to free Ireland from the stranglehold of British imperialism, his refusal to be cowed by prison warden and prison cell, his decision to fight till death produced some amazingly inspired and expressive lines. Simple and 'crude' they may be. But because they are so heartfelt they are all the more moving and powerful. Nowhere can this be seen better than in his epic work *Trilogy*.

Under sure direction, splendidly performed by Tam Dean Burn, given context at beginning and end by Peter Moloney's collection of slides and accompanied by Eithne Hannigan's improvised fiddle music, *Trilogy* should inspire us workers in Britain: inspire us to solidarity with the brave republicans in Ireland, inspire us to resist our 'own' ruling class no matter what defeats it inflicts on us, inspire us to stay true to our cause no matter what blandishments it offers.

The poetry of Bobby Sands is the poetry of revolution - poetry not of the university ivory tower nor the look-at-my-angst show off. His poetry comes from the streets, from the politics of armed struggle, from the isolation of a man in a prison cell who always keeps in the back of his tortured mind that he is not isolated. "They call us criminals but the people call us men," Sands writes with bitter defiance, but knowing certainty.

Sands talks to the masses and comes from the masses, not the bourgeois establishment or its arty farty apologists and hangers on. Through the

simple but true words of Sands we are taken into the world, mind and heart of Irish freedom fighters. All that is progressive in Irish republicanism is there; all its limitations and contradictions, yes, but the struggle to overcome them too.

Sands draws on all the imagery and iconography of the Catholic church.

The Catholic church has become fused with the Irish sense of nationhood. His pitiful, desperate appeals to god, denunciations of his tormentors as the devil, and the drawing of strength from his belief that they will be damned to hell fire, are revolutionary. The catholicism of Sands is the catholicism of the oppressed, who have made for themselves a god of liberation and popular vengeance in their image.

To 'pure' revolutionaries' this is an impossibility. But not to those of us who know that people learn from struggle, that revolution teaches in days what books cannot teach in years. It is more than interesting to note therefore that it was Sands who took a lead in winning IRA prisoners to study Marxism. He also placed great emphasis on the class that made him, the working class. Thus in spite of his religiosity, for Sands it was not god, but the masses who will liberate Ireland.

This conviction runs through *Trilogy*. Against the nightmare of Her Majesty's prisons it keeps Sands sane, it gives him hope, it fuels his defiance.

Sands never tried to portray himself as a steely eyed hero. He is never afraid to admit his fear. Fear of the waiting, fear of the routine beatings and physical abuse, fear of the humiliation, fear of attempts at bribery, fear of fear. But even in the midst of hallucination, haunting by the devil/state, courage shines through, courage of one who, no matter what, will not bow to the powers that be. All this is enhanced and given atmosphere by jarring, soaring brilliant fiddle music.

It is not all suffering, though. Sands had an open humanity, he also had a biting wit. With ironic humour he paints a picture of grotesque policeman, judge and prosecutor. They flatter, manipulate and threaten. But Sands manages to withstand the "power of the rich man's truth". There was a price to pay, though, and Sands paid it.

As officer in command of IRA prisoners in the H-blocks, Sands took the lead in coordinating the fight for political status. The prisoners wanted to force the state to officially recognise that they were not common criminals but prisoners of war. After countless broken promises it was agreed to begin a hunger strike; Sands insisted that he led it off.

Bobby Sands began his hunger strike on March 1 1981 and died 66 days later. But it is clear that it was not "all for naught".

British imperialism and its Tory and Labour governments have always tried to dismiss the IRA as nothing more than isolated terrorists. Sands exposed this once and for all as the lie it was. On March 5 1981 the independent anti-unionist MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone suddenly died. After much negotiation by anti-unionist forces it was decided to put forward Sands as a candidate. In a high poll of nearly 87% Bobby Sands (Anti-H-Block/Armagh Political Prisoner) got 30,492 votes against the 29,046 for the Official Unionist Harry West. As *The Guardian* admitted: "Years of myth-making go out the window".

Sands was buried with full IRA military honours on May 7 1981. Nearly 100,000 joined the funeral cortege of the hunger striker who had become a hero, not only for the nationalist population of the Six Counties, but for all who are fighting for freedom, liberation and socialism.

The WTM's production of *Trilogy* has already been used in well received benefits for the Irish prisoners' book fund and Hands Off Ireland! Bobby Sands might be dead, but thanks to the WTM his words live on in dramatic form, live on as a weapon. Use it.

Stephanie Ellis

# Communist Party

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135. Collective discussion towards the Draft Programme of the CPGB (plus weekly discussion on current affairs):

- May 5: No seminar.
- May 12: No seminar.
- May 19: Religion. Separation of state and church. Freedom of religious people to worship. Freedom for atheistic propaganda.
- May 26: England, Scotland and Wales: one nation, 3 peoples. The rights of the Scottish and Welsh peoples. The right to separate. The Gaelic languages.
- June 2: Launch meeting for the Eighth Summer Offensive.
- June 9: Migrant workers. The right to education in one's own language. The right to learn English. Against separate education. Against immigration controls. Assimilation.
- June 16: Black workers and racism.

## May Day London march and rally - Wednesday May 1

**March!** Join the banner of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee on the London May Day march, organised by the London Joint May Day Committee. Assemble 12 noon Highbury Fields (Highbury and Islington tube) and march to Clissold Park, Stoke Newington.

**Rally!** Immediately following the march, all sympathisers and supporters of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee are urged to join comrades from Iran, Turkey and the United States at the launch rally of the communist *Information Bulletin*. **Venue:** Union of Turkish Workers, 84, Balls Pond Road, N1 (approx. 3pm to 7pm).

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

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

# Workers Theatre Movement

**Trilogy: Bobby Sands' epic poem**, performed by WTM with live fiddle accompaniment and projected slide images. Extensive tour planned. **Bookings:** WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX (071-431 3135).

Performers for WTM Club *The Internationale* 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.

# Unemployed Workers Charter

**No TUC support for Tory cheap labour schemes! Fight British militarism! Organise the Unemployed!** UWC lobby of the TUC, Glasgow, September 2 1991: Send SAE for sponsorship circular and UWC petition to the TUC.

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

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# Arms and the workers

For some, revolution seems a far off prospect which by definition demands nothing in the here and now. Real revolutionaries, on the other hand, do not wait around for revolution to happen. They prepare in the here and now

**I**N THE LIGHT of the 'surgical' devastation of Iraq, the seemingly effortless massacre of its army, all the new stealth and smart, let alone old nuclear, technology, there are those who say that the idea of an armed revolution is outdated. What can ordinary people like you and me do in the face of such terrifying weaponry, they pathetically ask? Instead they say the masses must place their faith in yet more useless calls for disarmament. We totally and defiantly disagree.

The contradiction between the working class and capitalism is antagonistic. It can only be resolved through revolution, and as Engels said, "all revolution, no matter what form it takes, is a form of violence". Only after we have "overthrown, finally vanquished and expropriated the bourgeoisie of the whole world" (Lenin) will wars and real disarmament become possible. That is what the Gulf War proves, not the opposite.

Opportunists like Militant and the SWP often formally agree with us. At the drop of a hat they promise people a rosy future of peaceful socialism. But if we ever want to see peace and socialism, if we take socialist revolution seriously, we must do more than promise. We must practice. We must link the future with the now; and that means taking the question of weapons seriously. This the opportunists refuse to do.

Does that mean those who see the need to link our future aims with practice in the here and now should immediately set about raising money for a Libyan shipload of AK47s and a few second hand B52 bombers? No, that is obviously silly. It means the working class must use every opportunity available to take even small steps forward in arming itself; in Vietnam, El Salvador, Palestine and Ireland the liberation movements began with the most modest and rudimentary arms, and the *Morning Star* reports that the South African Communist Party is urging the setting up and development of self defence units in the townships using "legally obtainable weapons such as air rifles and pistols" (April 25 1991).

Britain has its own hidden history in this respect. The miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 produced hit squads armed with nothing more than motor cycle helmets and baseball bats; the striking News International printers followed the miners' example. As to the General Strike of 1926, we saw full blown Workers' Defence Corps, which in a number of areas successfully saw off the police and installed working class law and working class order.

Within themselves such moves might be a beginning; they are not enough, though. That is obvious. No revolution that is determined to succeed will put a rudimentarily armed unofficial army against the might of the state in a head-on confrontation, especially in an advanced country. However, as all modern revolutions show, the real power of the working class lies in politics not technology. Our class is the overwhelming majority in society. It is our sons, brothers, husbands who make up the bulk of the state's armed bodies. If the working class is led by its Communist Party - which, in the words of Vo Nguyen Giap, is the "sure guarantee of victory" - we have every reason to be confident that it can neutral-

ise or win over to our side those workers in uniform who at the moment operate for the class enemy. There are plenty of examples to show that this can happen, has happened and will happen again.

We only need to say the words 'October 1917' to throw up before our eyes sepia images of workers and soldiers standing side by side in the making of the world's first and so far classic socialist revolution. But there are many others: in a backward capitalist country, Afghanistan 1978 comes to mind; in a medium developed country, Portugal 1975 provides an outstanding example; as for those who insist that such a thing can never happen in an advanced country, we simply say 'Germany 1918-19'.

The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB is determined to achieve the same results in Britain, and equip our coming revolution in our country with a ready armed auxiliary. How do we propose going about achieving our aims? Programatically we have a two pronged approach:

1. We demand that rank and file personnel in the state's armed bodies be protected from bullying, humiliating treatment, and from being used against the working class. There must be full trade union and democratic rights, including the right to form representative bodies, up to and including soldiers' councils. The privileges of the officer caste must be abolished; officers must be elected. Workers in uniform must become allies of the masses in struggle.
2. We demand that the people have the right to bear arms. As conditions allow, the working class should arm itself with the most advanced, the most destructive, weaponry available.

These two prongs cannot be seen in isolation, one from the other. They are closely, indeed dialectically linked. Having said that though, it must be emphasised that what is primary is winning the right for the people to bear arms; it is the masses who make history. Only if the people, the working class, have been won politically by the Party to show that they mean business will wavering or sympathetic soldiers decide to change sides and "become allies of the masses in struggle". That will not happen unless there have been successful moves to break the state's monopoly on arms. To the extent that we have made moves here, demands for democratic rights for those in the state machine will go from abstract propaganda to the concrete.

One can treat the demand for democratic rights for those in the armed forces in a completely reformist way, as does the left Labourite group *Militant*. It simply says that service personnel are workers in uniform and little or nothing more. As long as they can be given trade union rights, then any attempts at using them against the masses - or what they really mean, a left Labour government - becomes unfeasible. We certainly do not take



Let's even the odds

this view. Reformism will never resolve a revolutionary situation positively, only prepare the ground for counter-revolution.

Our aim is to split the forces of the state and then use them positively, to make revolution as in Russia, Afghanistan, Portugal and Germany. That is why we are so insistent in demanding rights, including trade union rights for the rank and file in the state machine, and we must add in passing that this must include the police as well.

Some pseudo 'revolutionaries' might object to demanding trade union rights for the police. But it has to be said that such objections transparently come from those whose understanding of revolution is limited to posturing and shouting ever so leftist slogans (and not pointing a finger at anyone in particular that must ironically include those who are actually in the pay of the state).

It is important to recall that at the beginning of this century, the police not only had a trade union, the Police and Prison Officers' Union, but in 1918 they organised a successful strike, "which was only terminated when the prime minister [Lloyd George] had agreed that increases in pay should be granted" (BC Roberts, *The TUC 1868-1921*, p325). The present yellow police federation was imposed in 1919 when the government moved to crush the union (incidentally even though thousands of militant police lost their jobs and pension rights, neither the TUC nor the Labour Party were prepared to do much more than attack the leaders of the police union). From around the world there are similar examples. For instance in the 1970s in Turkey there was a militant police union, it actively identified with the masses in struggle.

Of course, trade union rights must only be seen as a means to an end. We want to promote the class struggle, a struggle that in its own peculiar way finds an extreme form of expression in the armed forces. It is fatal to treat the police and army as a monolithic block, in fact it is a complete misconception. True, that is what the enemy wants to achieve. But in the very process of going about trying to achieve military unity deep resentments, even hatreds are created and are always in danger of manifesting themselves in acts of defiance or outright mutiny.

Just ask any squaddy who his worst enemy is. The answer is unlikely to be us communists, the Russians or the IRA. Much more likely it will be his own sergeant or captain. And while those below hate those above there can be no doubt that those above regard those below with loath-

ing and contempt (for a horse's mouth account of class hatred in the army see Tony Parker's *Soldier*, soldier reviewed in *The Leninist* No27). The more we can do to bring these hatreds and conflicts out into the open the better.

There is plenty of scope. The existing officer caste enjoys a pampered existence. They strut around in flashy uniforms, eat the best food, are literally waited on hand and foot (they do not even polish their own boots). Here the demand for the election of officers and the abolition of all caste privileges throws the cat amongst the pigeons. It focuses in on the almost feudal relations that exist within the armed forces and projects a picture of the sort of relations that should exist under socialism if we are forced to create our own standing army.

When it comes to propagandising for all this, there are problems. That goes without saying. The boss class does its best to keep its armed forces - only a liberal or a fool would not include the police in this category, in spite of protestations to the contrary they are armed - isolated from the rest of society.

Young police officers live in special police housing, all have "great difficulty in mixing with civilians in ordinary social life" (Robert Reiner, *The politics of the police*, p92). The situation in the army is not that much different, though in many respects it is worse. The army recruit is not only subjected to barrack isolation, but also vicious brutalisation. Everything is done to break his - it is invariably a he - sense of individuality, independent thought or the possibility of individual action. That is why the demand to end bullying and humiliating treatment is so important.

There is another problem though. The government has a battery of draconian legislation against 'sedition' (ie laws against the circulation of revolutionary literature or class appeals amongst members of its armed services). And that is exactly what we want to do. When we demand rights for the rank and file in the armed forces we are not making a plea to John Major. When we talk about rights in the armed forces we are talking about revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary action. Not surprisingly the 'democratic' state is extraordinarily sensitive, extraordinarily vengeful when it comes to this.

No one should forget the famous case in 1912 when Tom Mann's paper *The Syndicalist* reprinted an 'Open letter to British soldiers', first written by a Liverpool building worker (Mann later became chair of the CPGB). Merely for reading the letter out at a public meeting in Salford he was sentenced to six months in Strangeways gaol. A similar fate befell our CPGB comrades in the late 1920s and early 1930s who were sent to propagandise amongst the troops.

Today things are meant to be different. These are peaceful times, or so we are told. At the moment the bourgeois rule relies mainly on consent, that is

true. It rules because the mass of the people believe in bourgeois democracy, rules because in the words of Karl Marx they vote for parties which misrepresent them every five years. But crisis is inevitable, and with crisis consent tends to disintegrate. Once that happens the bourgeoisie is forced to rule mainly through coercion. That is why it is so protective when it comes to the minds of its armed bodies, why it demands that it alone has the right to possess and use sophisticated weaponry.

But as we have emphasised, revolutionaries in Britain should not wait for a revolutionary situation. We must prepare for it. The objective situation demands the organisation of self defence now. The right to bear arms is not granted. It is won, by meeting the demands of the day.

Frankly unless the working class takes the question of arming itself, and learning about weapons, and learning how to defend itself, seriously, it is doomed to remain a subservient slave class. Those classes that do not take the question of arms seriously, will never carry out a revolution, will never become the ruling class.

What we are dealing with here is a class programme of the working class. A programme of self activity and self liberation. The demand that the people have a right to bear arms is a demand that the people have the right to make revolution.

Obviously, as we say, this right to bear arms is not granted. It is not a matter of putting forward an amendment to Britain's unwritten constitution, as Tony Benn would suggest; although we are sure Tony Benn is not agitating for the masses to take up arms. No, this right - as with all others - is won through the working class struggle, specifically in this case the development of Workers' Defence Corps.

These bodies grow out of the class struggle itself. They are not something we look to romantically in the future; something that the revolution will somehow spontaneously, automatically deliver. We must begin now.

Take for example fending off fascists. In many areas of the country black youth have taken a lead in organising themselves for self defence. The left and working class movement should follow their lead. It also has to be said at the moment the fascists' mystique owes less to their prowess and more to the left's irrational fear; the RCP's IFM has people running on its demonstrations in an effort to get away from a handful of them.

That such left organisations run before these scum means their strength is distorted out of all proportion. We must strengthen our determination and ability to challenge the fascists and take them on. As we have seen, there are plenty of examples from our own history. We must learn, prepare, then practice, the situation is crying out for it. The anti-poll tax demonstrations demand the sort of attendance the CPGB used to organise for the mass demonstrations by, and on behalf of, the unemployed in the 1930s. In a similar way resistance of bailiffs demands the same thing. Likewise workplace occupations. The list is endless, the prospects brilliant if we take up the challenge.

David Sherriff