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Scotland: Right to self determination

The right of the people of Scotland to self determination must become a central demand for the working class movement in Britain

AN OPINION poll for *The Scotsman* (January 29 1992) indicated that 27% of people in Scotland favour a devolved Scottish Assembly within the United Kingdom and 50% want independence. There is a clear and indisputable feeling in Scotland that Tory dominated Westminster is causing more problems than it is worth, and that there needs to be radical answers.

The reasons for this are clear. Over the last decade the Tory government has overseen the decimation of traditional industry in Scotland, with the run down of shipbuilding, destruction of mining and now the closure of Ravenscraig. Returning Labour MPs has done nothing to stop the haemorrhaging nor to stop the hated poll tax. In fact Labour councils have cruelly imposed the Tory tax and Labour MPs have rounded on non-payers and witch-hunted their leaders.

Given the low ebb of the working class movement in Britain, not least because of the defeat of the heroic miners' Great Strike in 1984-5, it is not surprising that opinion in Scotland has swung towards the nationalism of the SNP. It offers a simple solution. England and the Sassenach are the source of all Scotland's problems, independence (within Europe the SNP now contradictorily insists) will lead to a Scottish renaissance.

Of course, it is not going to happen. An independent Scotland would have exactly the same sort of problems as today. Unemployment, poverty, low pay and economic stagnation are products of capitalism. They affect small capitalist states just as much as they affect larger capitalist states. Indeed given the realities of power small capitalist states often fare rather worse, not better, in the international order.

The SNP under Alec Salmond has it is true, adopted a 'left' pose, but only to attract Scottish workers. Beneath the rhetoric the SNP is a thoroughly respectable party. It backed the US slaughter in the Gulf War, just as it backs British imperialism's unofficial war against the IRA in the Six Counties. In spite of, or more accurately because of the presence of disproportionately large numbers of Scottish soldiers in the British army, the SNP considers its role is to give imperialism technical advice.

The SNP is also a thoroughly capitalist party. It has no thought of revolution, let alone socialism, which objectively can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no doubt then that in the event of the SNP getting independence, the priority of its new state would be the survival of big business and the profitability of capital.

Maybe the SNP would nationalise Ravenscraig, but this would be *capitalist nationalisation*. The new bosses in Edinburgh would be Tartan Tories. Capitalism's iron logic would force it to demand concessions from the workers; speed ups, pay cuts and cooperation in their own exploitation would be the result. Even then, if we take into account the unforgiving realities of international capitalist competition, jobs and livelihoods would be far from safe.

In recent years the Tories have attempted to counter the growth of the SNP with lurid scare stories. Painting Scotland as a scrounger, they list tax revenue balances, grants and services expenditure. Where the SNP claim independence will bring prosperity the Tories pull the opposite lie, that Scotland would be plunged into chaos and economic collapse; obviously the Tories will never admit that capitalism is the problem.

However over the last few months the Tories have changed tack. Recognising that they have no immediate prospects in Scotland, except extinction, above all fearing defeat in the coming general election, the Tories are playing their own version of the nationalist card. They are doing their best to foster nationalism in Scotland and undermine the unity of workers in Britain. To achieve this, they and their allies are resorting to insults and the most cynical and devious tactics.

In London the loyal Tory mouthpiece, the *Evening Standard*, brands the whole Scottish population "subsidy-junkies" because they dare oppose the closure of Ravenscraig and the human catastrophe it represents for thousands of workers. We can assure the people of Scotland that very few Londoners fall for this line. Nevertheless the quicker printers regain the power to pull the plugs on such filth the better.

But the main thrust of Tory strategy is to polarise opinion in Scotland itself between keeping things as they are - which only they stand for - and SNP separatism. That is why Scottish Secretary, Ian Lang, tells the Scots that "any referendum he may allow, will be limited to a choice between outright independence and the status quo" (Maria Fife MP *Morning Star* February 11 1992).

By doing this they hope to strengthen the SNP, weaken the Labour Party, reduce the number of Labour MPs returned from Scotland ... and keep John Major in No10. This strategy is the key to explaining the sudden conversion of the Scottish version of *The Sun* to Scottish nationalism, separatism and all. Having failed to win Scotland to the Tory Party, it hopes to keep Britain

Tory by backing the SNP against the Labour Party.

Such willingness to gamble with the unity of the United Kingdom shows how desperate the Tories have become and how unfit they are as representatives of the nation and capitalism alike. Labour says it will do better. Maybe, maybe not. Our concern is not capitalism. It is the working class first and last. And it is axiomatic for us that the interests of capitalism and the working class stand in antagonistic contradiction. Capitalism can only prosper through the ever increasing exploitation and pauperisation of the working class.

For the working class then, there is only one solution, getting rid of capitalism and its state. Therefore everything we fight and strive for serves this task of making revolution.

It is in this light that we approach the Labour Party and its proposals to save the union through constitutional tinkering. Frankly devolution is a diversion. Instead of building on the tradition of Tom Bell, John McLean, William Paul, Arthur MacManus and Willie Gallacher, fighting the poll tax and price rises, slum housing and poor health, sackings and closures, with the militant weapons of the class struggle, Labour hires a piper, invites the kirk, waves the Saltire and marches everyone into the dead end of the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

If it were to prove successful, if it got its assembly what would it amount to? It would be, and could only be, another layer of the capitalist state, no different in essence from any other part of the capitalist state. A Scottish assembly or parliament would produce nothing positive for the working class. Whether it uses the first past the post system, proportional representation, or some other method by which the Scottish people can decide every five years who will *misrepresent* them, our task would remain the same. Our task would be to smash Labour's Scottish assembly and replace it with the active mass democracy of the proletarian state.

There are important elements on the left which claim otherwise. Both Militant and the Socialist Workers Party back Labour's capitalist assembly plan. Militant actually wants to lay hold of it and use it as a vehicle which "will bring socialism nearer". This goes to show how far these organisations embrace both Labourism and Scottish nationalism. Indeed Militant's Scottish Militant Labour, no matter how 'federally' united around the paper *Militant*, is a classic case of nationalist opportunism. Militant became Scottish Militant Labour because of a desire to swim with nationalism and pick up easy recruits.

In contrast with this opportunism the position of communists is perfectly clear. We are against nationalism and the break up of Britain, we favour maintaining the economic and political unity of Great Britain. Why? Because it serves the interests of the working class. We favour the organisation of the working class in the largest possible units, both in terms of trade unions, political parties and state power. Our main enemy, the British state is best overthrown and replaced through *united* working class action.

Of course, that unity must be voluntary. The Communist Party of Great Britain, as represented by its Provisional Central Committee, is unequivocal in stating that both the Scottish and Welsh nationalities have the *right* to self determination, up to and including complete succession. This is one of the minimum demands of our Platform for Working Class Defence which we will be fighting around during the general election, not just in Scotland but throughout Britain.

The demand for Scottish self determination is one that must be recognised by all workers in Britain. Not to do so would mean advocating unwilling and

forced unity. This is exactly what the Labour Party does. Neither under the Act of Union which it defends, nor under the assembly plans which it champions, is there any constitutional right for Scotland or Wales to decide on their own future. Any constitutional change requires permission from the English dominated House of Commons and House of Lords.

There is no contradiction between the right to secede and the unity of workers in Britain against the bosses state, because that right will in all probability only become real through the united revolutionary action of the workers. We can guarantee that the proletarian revolution will do away with all forms of regional and national privileges. Under socialism, centralisation will be combined with the most extensive forms of local autonomy, including the rights of nationalities to form their own states if they so wish. So if the working class of Scotland wants the *right* to establish an independent Scottish state it must seek it where it can really be found, in the overthrow of the British state by the *united* working class in Britain.

Jack Conrad

Out of the woodwork

IN THE latest 'official communist' split, the group around *Alert Scotland* claims to have formed what it calls the Communist Party of Scotland on January 26. Its founding conference, with an attendance of around 100 mainly elderly supporters, made only three decisions. The first was the decision to affiliate to the Scottish Constitutional Convention; constituting itself as a 'party' was relegated to second place; and the third momentous decision was to meet again.

Like the formation of Scottish Militant Labour in December 1991, this is a further example of retrograde nationalism crawling out of the opportunist woodwork. Just as the offshoots of Trotskyism and 'official communism' found their lowest common de-

nominator in support for the Labour Party, they meet again in Labourite Scottish nationalism.

Of course, the 'Communist Party of Scotland' is *not* a Communist Party. If its programme ever materialises, it will be a *Scottish Road to Socialism*, with even less chance than the *British Road to Socialism*. Certainly it will have nothing in common with the communist principles of revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, soviet form of government and proletarian internationalism. This 'party' is no more than a coalescing lump of fractionated 'official communism' in Scotland, opportunist through and through and destined for oblivion.

Mike Smith



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

WHEN it comes to racism, what passes itself off as the 'broad left' accepts the most reactionary politics. Organisationally it fosters separatism and in its theory it implicitly blames white workers for racism and excuses capitalism. Typical are the semi-detached Democratic Lefters, Trevor Carter and Jeff Rodrigues. According to them, Marxism does not focus in on "individual" racism and fails to explain how "racism predated class societies" (*Morning Star* January 23 1992).

Carter and Rodrigues use the term 'racism' in such a way as to make it useless. For them it is interchangeable with distrust of strangers or xenophobia. Obviously, that "predated class society" (Marxists categorically do not believe in any pre-capitalist golden age). Racism, though, only emerged with the rise of capitalism.

Capitalism was made possible through sordid robbery and plunder, what Marx called primitive accumulation. With Britain, central to this was the trade in, and exploitation of, black flesh; many of the tobacco and sugar slavocracy in the Americas were British. Their system of capitalist slavery was uniquely based on a distinct *people class* of Negroes. To justify and perpetuate *race slavery*, a racist ideology was invented which claimed that whites had a god-given mission to rule over 'biologically inferior' blacks. Nothing fundamentally changed with the end of slavery in the 19th century.

The people class of slaves became a people class of serf-like agricultural workers, and then in the 20th century, with the help of racism, the *worst paid* section of the working class, not only in the Americas but, with mass migration, in Britain too. So racism is not just an irrational idea, but a form of capitalist oppression. As Lenin condemned "the Zionist fable about anti-Semitism being eternal" (CW Vol 6 p332) we must condemn the myth that "racism predates class societies".

Let us now turn to organisation. In his day Lenin ruthlessly polemicised against separatism. He correctly argued it "is harmful because it sanctions segregation and alienation, elevates them to a principle, to a law. Complete alienation does indeed prevail among us, and we ought not to sanction it, or cover it with a fig leaf, but combat it and resolutely acknowledge and proclaim the necessity of firmly and unswervingly advancing towards the *closest unity*" (CW Vol 6 p484).

Carter and Rodrigues say: "black and white people have not generally mixed together ... we really do live segregated lives". Instead of trying to overcome these divisions, Carter and Rodrigues want to develop separatist politics, given organisational form in the invite-only Anti Racist Alliance. The whole rationale behind the ARA claim to represent an "alliance between black self-organisation and the labour movement" is separatism and getting votes for Kinnock. The results stink. In the *Morning Star* an un-named ARA spokesperson was approvingly quoted attacking: "white individuals, supported by the SWP" who "set themselves up as the defenders of the black communities" (December 18 1992). Using his regular column in *The Sun* (a racist and scab outfit if ever there was one), Ken Livingstone also promoted ARA separatism by red baiting the ANL. Lee Jasper of ARA, talks of the "white left" and claims the political agenda has been changed because the "anti-racist movement" now has "black people in its leadership" (*New Times* January 25 1992).

The "alliance" politics of ARA can do nothing for the mass of blacks. It will promote the careers of black Labourites like Marc Wadsworth, whose party unashamedly proclaims its intention to run and defend capitalism, the source of racism (that is one promise it will keep). As to ARA-type 'black self-organisation', it will amount to nothing more than organising impotence.

Naturally we defend the *right* of any oppressed section of the population to organise, but that does not mean we are going to pretend separatism is a virtue. As Lenin said: "we must act as a single and centralised militant organisation, have behind us the whole of the proletariat, without distinction of language or nationality, a proletariat whose unity is cemented by the continual joint solution of problems of theory and practice, of tactics and organisation; and we must not set up organisations that would march separately, each along its own track; we must not weaken the force of our offensive by breaking up into numerous independent political parties" (CW Vol 6 p333).

In Britain we need a "single and centralised militant organisation", the reformed Communist Party of Great Britain, which has behind it the "whole of the proletariat", without distinction of language or nationality. Only then can we really confront the task of getting rid of capitalism and its racist poison.

The Editor

Six month subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £8; Europe £11; Rest of World £13 (airmail £20.50). Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £16 (Institutions £26); Europe £22 (Institutions £32); Rest of World £26, airmail £41 (Institutions £36, airmail £46). Back issues: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. Other issues 50p plus p&p. Cheques (in UK currency) payable to November Publications Ltd. Printed by: Multiline Systems Ltd, 22-24 Powell Road, London E5 (081-985 3753). Published by: November Publications Ltd, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX (071-431 3135). © February 1992 ISSN 0262-1649

LETTERS

African Analogy

To comment on the South Africa article in *The Leninist* No114, Eddie Ford eloquently draws our attention to the dominant Menshevik tendencies in the SACP, the centrism of the leadership and the dark possibility of a negative resolution of the revolutionary situation there. Comrade Ford's analysis is given weight by a BBC news report that while Mandela and Buthelezi were conducting a joint 'peace' rally, in another part of the country an ANC squatter camp was being butchered by Inkatha forces. This was not an uncharacteristic event.

In agreeing with the substance of the article, I would express only two reservations. Firstly, while revolutions separated in history are characterised by common social forces, and contemporary revolutions will undoubtedly be fought in the language of October 1917, the ANC/Cadet, apartheid/Tsar analogy used by comrade Ford is in need of qualification. The ANC's capacity for counterrevolution is not in dispute, but its Cadet character is not so clear cut. The ANC played a revolutionary role for over 30 years under illegal conditions, it functioned in an alliance with the proletariat, and still has a mass base within the oppressed majority. The Cadets cannot easily be fitted into this mould. An extension of the analogy, which is not ruled out by the article, would place the ANC in defence of apartheid seeking a 'Kornilov' to oppose a 'Kerensky'. Obviously the analogy breaks down, a President Mandela would more comfortably fit into the pants of Kerensky himself. The use of 1917 analogies is clearly of great value as an analytical tool, but should be themselves clearly qualified to avoid ambiguity.

Secondly, it is not an ambiguity to characterise South Africa as *proto-imperialist*, it is an inaccuracy. South Africa is fully an imperialist state, although a junior ranking one.
Steve Riley
London

David Sherriff replies:

The Cadets in pre-October 1917 Russia did enjoy mass support, but the key point is that the Cadets and the ANC are liberal bourgeois parties. An ANC government would in all likelihood *not* balance between revolution and counterrevolution, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. True, because of pressure from below and the peculiar and narrow nature of the apartheid state the ANC called for its overthrow. But now that the perks and privileges of office seem within its grasp all such talk has been ditched. In true Menshevik fashion the South African Communist Party has gone along with this. This has nothing to do with analogy. It is fact. Finally yes, it is inaccurate to say that South Africa is *proto-imperialist*, it is a junior imperialist power.

Cape Town communists

While in Cape Town recently, I contacted the South African Communist Party office with a view to exchanging literature and holding informal discussions. I introduced myself as a supporter of the Provisional Central Committee to the comrades concerned, Lawrence Maduma, Regional Organiser for the Western Cape, and Noluntu Mda, regional committee member.

Comrade Maduma was convinced that the PCC had sent a delegate to the SACP Congress in November ("all three British parties attended"), and I spent some time persuading him that

this was not the case and attempting to explain the difference between ourselves and the Democratic Left! I gave them 25 copies of *The Leninist* No113, as well as a copy of *New Times* with Ian McKay's report back from their congress. I explained that *Umsebenzi* and *African Communist* could no longer be purchased in London.

They asked about our views on events in Eastern Europe, which I explained and said I would send them material on this, as well as back copies of *The Leninist* containing articles on South Africa.

They refused to discuss internal differences within the SACP, including those expressed at their congress. They stated that unity with the ANC was of prime importance, so they would not be standing SACP candidates in any election, although they expected to get many elected as ANC candidates. I asked how they viewed the role and identity of the Party, as the ANC became more embroiled into the state apparatus. Wouldn't they rapidly lose support which they had previously earned precisely because of their revolutionary reputation?

They thought they had a problem with anti-communism because of events in Eastern Europe and many people's strong religious beliefs. They said the main task after "liberation" would be a programme of economic recovery. Would not this be a *capitalist* economic recovery? Yes, but it would be capitalism without exploitation!

The SACP would fight for improvements for the working class. Did they think that great improvements could be made under capitalism (there are more squatters and homeless than the entire white population)? No, but the Party would win support by fighting in this way. I asked how they envisaged achieving socialism, but they could give no clear answer. The most important thing for them was to avoid creating divisions within the liberation movement.

I stated that in my opinion the SACP had compressed into a few short years the progression from revolutionary to reformist politics that most of the 'official' world communist movement had experienced over many decades. I said that their previous platform, "From Ungovernability to Revolution", had been an inspiration to many in Britain, and that we were greatly disappointed by the positions they were now adopting.

They seemed genuinely pleased to have met me, despite the strong criticisms I made.
Peter Manson
London

Pensioners

I was pleasantly surprised to read the report on pensions by Mary Goodwin. However, while she mentions the Pensioners Liaison Forum and the National Pensioners Convention, both as she says supported by the TUC and attended each year by about a thousand representatives, she makes no mention of the Pensioners Rights Campaign.

This body of pensioners does not meet on a yearly basis but is active all the year round. The demands which they make are way out in front of anything the Jack Jones mob are prepared to settle for, but the organisation works and is ready to work with any other group, provided its charter remains intact in doing so. Its main plank is the demand for the full minimum wage (if and when such legislation is passed). Obviously there is more to it than that, and anyone who cares to join them or assist them in any way should contact Jim Barnes, 2 Hartington Place, Carlisle.

The organisation now covers most of the country from as far north as Aberdeen down to Hastings. One demo among many for which they were responsible was chaining themselves to Westminster Bridge, where they

stopped traffic for 30 minutes. This, I can assure you, is no reformist body but as revolutionary as possible for a pensioners' organisation.

Ted Wallis
Bishop Auckland

CPUSA

It seems the recent convention of the CPUSA has divided the remnants of 'official communism' on both sides of the Atlantic.

According to Gus Hall, the party's chairman, the collapse of bureaucratic socialism was all the fault of Gorbachev's wrong policies. The convention went on to reaffirm Marxism-Leninism and purge from leading positions a group which had attempted to initiate a "deeprooted discussion of the party's basis for existence and style of work".

This group, which includes Angela Davis, reeks of liquidationism. It has taken on the task of setting up a "network for the exchange of information, promotion of education and discussion and the coordination of activities."

We would expect such a position to be in tune with our own liquidated Democratic Left, but the *Morning Star* on February 1 carried a report of the split by deputy editor John Haylett openly siding with the 'networkers'. This, and its recent espousal of gender and other non-class politics, show where the *Star* is heading.

However, in a letter to Gus Hall reported in *The New Worker* on February 7, Eric Trevett, leader of the New Communist Party, heaps praise on the CPUSA. Where this leaves their 'unity' courtship is hard to imagine. Surely the prospects for the next 'Communist Unity Conference' look bleak.
Vernon Douglas
Manchester

ANL illusion

You are, of course, right to attack the ANL for their decision to go to the Brockwell Park concert and neglect Brick Lane in 1978. I pointed this out in my book *Struggle in Babylon* four years ago and was attacked by one SWP reviewer (David Widgery) for saying so. And, yes, they probably would have lost some of their 'respectable' support if they had changed their strategy, though I am not sure, since many of those people were so remote it wouldn't have affected them.

But that is not the whole story. I lived just off Brick Lane in those years and I knew the local situation better than the SWP/ANL people who came and left. I am not convinced that they had the grass roots awareness of the East End situation, while Bishop Huddleston, whom you stupidly and ignorantly write off as an "establishment" figure, was far closer to working people than most of the left groups were.

A major part of the problem in the ANL was that it came and went, never had any real roots in the communities, and left those of us who did do the hard, long and tedious work of combating fascism at the level of the back streets. And we are still here, and we welcome them back to the struggle, but we don't swallow their illusions.
Rev Ken Leech
East London

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

To reply to letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*,
WRITE to The Editor,
BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.
PHONE us on 071-431 3135 or
FAX us on 081-459 5905.

9th Party Offensive: gathering pace

Your Communist Party needs you. Support the 9th Party Offensive



Raising the banner in the general election is going to cost money

THE Communist Party of Great Britain has ambitious plans for 1992: our support for the National Demonstration against Unemployment on February 29; our active sponsorship of the Hands Off Ireland! annual commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising; the Party's general election campaign in four constituencies; our publication of a major series of books and, of course, the initiative we have taken in calling for a Workers in Europe conference in Edinburgh for December of this year, timed to coincide with the EC heads of government summit.

The 1992 general election is now no more than five months away. The most likely months, according to the pundits, are April or May. Our Party will, as all who call themselves communist or claim the tradition of Lenin must do, aim to intervene in a revolutionary way, at as high a level as possible in this bourgeois democratic process. Our aim will be to present a genuine, independent, working class alternative to the tired, moribund policies of the parties of British imperialism, namely the Tories, Labour and the Liberal Democrats. To this end, as we announced in mid-1991, we shall be standing candidates in four constituencies: Glasgow Central, Rhondda, Brent East, and Bethnal Green and Stepney.

The major bourgeois parties are already behaving as if the date has been set and the official campaign has already commenced. To use racing terminology, 'they're under starter's

orders'. On an almost daily basis they are holding press conferences, giving photo opportunities, offering their leaders for radio and TV interviews, and other high profile media stunts.

Now while we plan - and must - use such events in our election campaign, to get to as wide an audience as possible, our main aim is to show the working class that the Provisional Central Committee is fighting to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain, by fighting in the here and now. Fighting, not in a reformist way, but in a revolutionary way, for what our class needs not what capitalism says it can afford. We are offering real solutions to unemployment, poverty, racism and other attacks on the working class. Our Party's campaign and candidates will offer an alternative to the usual tweedle-dee tweedle-dum rubbish served up by Labour and the Tories.

The extent to which this undertaking is made real and becomes a serious, dynamic and professional campaign is dependent on the question of finance. For instance, in the constituencies in which we are standing candidates, we are aiming to send an election address to every single voter, this will probably total nearly a quarter of a million pieces of propaganda which we will need to pay for.

While the main parties have their millionaire backers in big business or the support of the bureaucrats that control the purse strings of the trade unions, we have no such benefactors.

Thus if our organisation's aims and objectives are not to be weakened politically through lack of money, fundraising must be one of the most urgent political tasks that our Party needs to fulfil.

In line with these aims we have set a substantial, but necessary target for the 9th Party Offensive of £70,000. The Party Offensive campaign was launched on January 5 and will continue until the end of July. The first stage will last until the end of February, and the target we must raise by then is £15,000.

So far we have received pledges totalling £14,000. Although this is an excellent start, we still require pledges bringing in a further thousand pounds if we are to break through this first stage. From the beginning of March we will then be taking pledges on a monthly basis. We therefore urge supporters and readers to phone or send pledges and donations for February and for the whole period of the Party Offensive to us as soon as possible.

For our Party to unfurl and proudly fly the red banner of communism, for us to show that in spite of claims to the contrary the CPGB is not dead, but is in the process of reforging itself, through serious actions, initiatives and interventions like our general election campaign, we need the full backing of all our supporters, sympathisers and readers in achieving victory in the 9th Party Offensive!

Nick Clarke

The Tory controlled London Borough of Brent continues to cut services hand over fist! Latest attacks include the lay-off of 260 binmen as yet another service is privatised, and the closure of Gladstone school, one of the main secondary schools in the borough. Many jobs in libraries and housing have recently come under the axe. Council rents have been increased by a massive 20%, and the Tories are busily victimising poll tax non-payers, using the local yellow press, the *Brent Recorder*, to print names and addresses and offer rewards for 'shopping' non-payers. In March they will begin jailing non-payers. These vindictive attacks on our class demand an intransigent working class fightback. A march initiated by Brent Nalgo on February 3 against the recent attacks was a good step towards such a fightback. Unfortunately the turnout on the march was undermined by sabotage on the part of the local branch of the SWP, for whom the march was "too long". True to its anti-working class form, the Labour Party was quick to condemn the demonstration and publicly dissociate itself from those activists involved in building it. The CPGB, however, was there in force and formed a disciplined and loud contingent on the demo, drawing many others into taking up our militant slogans. A follow up meeting was organised by the CPGB to discuss the way forward, with speakers from Brent Nalgo, London Link and Brent Against the Poll Tax. Anne Murphy, our prospective parliamentary candidate, spoke on behalf of the CPGB. Those present were united in wanting to take further action, and it was decided to set up a broad-based campaign to spearhead the fightback that the working class of Brent so desperately needs. AM

On the Anti Nazi League mobilisation in London's East End on February 2, CPGB comrades took part in the mass leafleting and canvassing door-to-door by about 100 ANL supporters. It was important not only to demonstrate from the beginning our commitment to the fight against fascism but also to stress the platform which we believe should be adopted to ensure that the fight will be successful. Centrally, the fight against fascism must be linked to the fight against capitalism. Many of the assembled anti-fascists - almost entirely SWP members and supporters - were willing to discuss the issues, and buy *The Leninist*. This is fortunate. The official ANL leaflet we helped to distribute contained elements of the very tendencies we were warning against - in particular, the danger of portraying fascism as a 'foreign' or even distinctly German phenomenon. Nevertheless, the Tower Hamlets canvass represented a good start, it highlighted both the difficulties of overcoming racist ideas and the potential for building a mass anti-fascist movement. PM



Carmakers across Europe announced over 15,000 redundancies in the first week of February. This includes 2,400 in Britain at Ford and Vauxhall, 3,000 at BMW in Germany, and 10,300 at Italy's Fiat. Ford management insisted their sackings were not a result of the recession - but "part of a long-term efficiency programme". Whatever the cause, workers need a strategy that will defend jobs and fight back against the devastation and misery of unemployment. The European nature of this attack on workers conditions is significant. The ongoing integration of a bosses' Europe is necessary if the European bourgeoisie is to beat off and surpass the rival imperialist blocs being consolidated around Japan and the United States. Naturally European capitalists will aim to get higher productivity and efficiency - ie increased exploitation - from the working class of Europe. This demands the unity of European workers, including the creation of European trade unions. Such questions will be addressed at the Workers' European Conference. This conference, initiated by the CPGB Provisional Central Committee, will take place in December 1992 in Edinburgh, alongside and in opposition to the European bosses' conference. NC

No delays please



Bad news for those rich and overpaid pillars of the establishment, the judges, generals and top civil servants. Their 'Top Salaries Review Body' believes these representatives of the class enemy deserve huge pay rises, but to avoid any embarrassing debate of their worth during the general election campaign it has offered to delay its report until the summer. Then, whoever wins can quietly approve the rises, with no opportunity for us to object. While the rich can afford to wait a few months for their booty, the finances of *The Leninist* are far more precarious. We rely on a steady supply of donations from our supporters to meet our production costs, hence our £600 monthly fighting fund. Donations from AS and CC were part of a late burst which took the January total to £511. Let's make good the £89 shortfall this month.

Vernon Douglas, Fund Organiser

Labour and Ireland

Ireland must be made into a central issue in the forthcoming general election



Livingstone and Corbyn: marching down that familiar road paved with reformist good intentions

SINCE the launch of *The Leninist* in 1981, our paper and organisation has considered it of central importance to win working class solidarity for the revolutionary struggle being waged in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. In this spirit we are committed to making the question of Irish liberation central in the forthcoming general election.

As readers will be aware, we have made this possible by carrying out our communist duty and making sure that there is a communist input in the general election. We will be standing candidates in four constituencies: Brent East, Bethnal Green and Stepney, Glasgow Central and Rhondda. Where we are not standing we are prepared to support candidates from other organisations and parties if they are prepared to endorse our 'Platform for working class defence':

- Smash the poll tax and end victimisation of non-payers. No taxes on the working class.
- Abolish all immigration controls.
- Abolish laws which discriminate against lesbians and gays.
- Abolish all anti-trade unions laws.
- Enforce a national minimum wage of £250 for a 35 hour week.
- Work or full benefit equal to national minimum wage.
- State pension equal to national minimum wage.
- Free abortion on demand, free 24 hour creche facilities.
- Self determination for the people of Scotland and Wales.
- Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Self determination for the Irish nation.

Where no candidate is prepared to endorse such a basic platform - obviously a big stumbling block for many will be Ireland - we call upon voters to write 'communist' across their ballot papers.

At present, opinion polls show the two main bourgeois parties neck and neck. Yet as time passes, Major's options are shrinking. The economy is in recession, despite Lamont's pleas that the end is just around the next corner, unemployment is rising steeply and the tail end of the poll tax - Thatcher's flagship - is as unpopular as ever. So there is a distinct possibility that in April, May, June or July Labour could end 13 successive years of Tory government by winning the general election, or at least become the biggest party in parliament. As a straw in the wind there can be no doubt that the bourgeois press, both quality and tabloid, are in their own ways

preparing themselves and their readers for a Labour victory - the replacement of Tory-run capitalism with Labour-run capitalism.

With the whiff of a Labour government in the air it is essential to examine the Labour Party's record on Ireland. In doing so we will show that the election of a Labour government would be no gain for those committed to achieving Irish liberation. Finally we will identify how genuine anti-imperialists should raise the issue of Ireland during the general election.

In recent years we have seen Kinnock and the right wing of the Labour Party complete their defeat of the Bennite left wing. Since Benn and Heffer narrowly lost their leadership bid in the early 80s the fortunes of the Labour left have gone steadily downhill, leading to marginalisation not just in parliament, but in the constituency parties and also at conference.

This has gone hand in hand with witch-hunts against Militant Tendency and the expulsion of other activists. 'Lefties' like Clare Short - who some claim has a 'good line' on Ireland - have willingly prostituted themselves in an attempt to justify these expulsions. Kinnock's determination to shift the Labour Party to the right is all about making it fit to run capitalism at home and abroad. We can be sure therefore that a Kinnock-led government will continue to oppress Ireland through maintaining the artificial border which separates the Twenty-six Counties from the Six Counties. Let us prove our point.

Naturally just as the Labour Party has consistently opposed the militant actions of the working class in Britain (from the 1926 General Strike to the miners' 1984-5 Great Strike), so the second eleven of British imperialism has always opposed the fight of the Irish people embodied in the slogans 'Troops Out Now!' and 'Self Determination for the Irish Nation!'

Labour's response to the Easter Rising of 1916 is as good a place as any to start. This heroic revolt was a brave attempt by Irish anti-imperialist forces to end British occupation of Ireland through armed insurrection and replace it with a democratic, secular republic. These forces represented an alliance of the most advanced sections of the Irish working class, in the Irish Citizens Army led by James Connolly, with the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie of the Irish Volunteers, led by Padraig Pearse. The rising lasted almost one week, until it was put down by the British army, using naked terror. A number of the leaders, including Connolly, were executed to the delight of the bourgeoisie ... and its Labour lieutenants. Arthur Henderson, a member of the war cabinet which gave instructions for the rising to be crushed, led Labour

MPs in spontaneous applause when news of Connolly's execution reached parliament.

In May 1949 the Labour government, under the leadership of Attlee, introduced the Government of Ireland Act, giving constitutional guarantees to maintain a loyalist state in the Six Counties. This ensured partition by affirming "that in no event would Northern Ireland cease to be part of the United Kingdom except with the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland." However, when we consider the gerrymandered nature of the statelet and the bureaucratic measures enacted to ensure loyalist control, we can easily pinpoint the real agenda of Britain's Labour government.

This is shown by the following extract from a report made to the cabinet by its secretary, Norman Brook. "It will never", said his report, "be to Great Britain's advantage that Northern Ireland should form part of a territory outside His Majesty's jurisdiction. Indeed it seems unlikely that Great Britain would ever be able to agree to this even if the people of Northern Ireland desired it" (G Bell *The Labour Party and the Irish Question: Troublesome Business* p81).

This shows that Labour never gave a damn about the protestant population, nor democracy. It used them as an excuse to further imperialism's interests. That does not mean that the protestant masses are taken for granted. By offering 'crumbs from the imperialist table', successive governments have managed to buy off the protestant/loyalist population of the Six Counties, through better housing, better jobs and the entitlements that came with these, thus turning it into a labour aristocracy, which serves the interests of imperialism. So far this has successfully prevented united working class struggle for the socialist task of throwing off the shackles of capitalism.

Crucially, in more recent, revolutionary, times the Labour Party has definitively proved its loyalty to British imperialism. It was the Wilson Labour government which on August 14 1969 sent British troops onto the streets of insurrectionary Derry, and the following day Belfast. They were deployed to relieve the RUC and the B-Specials, who had failed to contain and put down the nationalist community after it had responded defensively to the attacks by loyalists and their state sponsored defenders.

It has to be emphasised that the nationalist community first moved into action as a result of the campaign around a series of democratic demands put forward by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, including one-person-one vote, removal of

gerrymandered boundaries and the repeal of the Special Powers Act. Given the inherently unstable nature of the Northern Ireland statelet the fight for such demands led very quickly to direct conflict with the loyalist state and a revolutionary situation.

By putting in British troops Labour showed where its loyalties lay. Its priority was to defend the existing British state and crush the revolutionary movement of the nationalist community. As we know it failed. The revolutionary situation was not resolved negatively, the masses refused to be ruled in the old way, and because of that the rulers could no longer rule in the old way.

Proving it, five years later, in 1974, the Labour government successfully introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act without any objection or revolt from the left wing of the party. The PTA legitimised the systematic harassment of the Irish in Britain. Eighteen years later it is still widely used, mainly in Britain, to threaten the Irish and anyone else prepared to stand up to the British state. Over these years many have been detained under the PTA on 'suspicion'. To date only 7% of those detained have been charged, giving substantive proof that its purpose is to intimidate.

Labour today

Let us now look at official Labour Party policy on the Six Counties, with reference to its manifesto-like document, *Meet the challenge, make the change*. The most notable thing about it is how little space is given to Ireland - half a page!

In an attempt to appear radical it says "the long term solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland lies in the establishment of a united Ireland" (p58). However what it gives with the hand it takes with the spoon. The Labour Party is actually committed to the maintenance of the status quo. Not surprisingly this is given a democratic veneer: "We firmly reject the use of violence from whatever quarter it comes. A united Ireland can only be achieved through consensual, peaceful and democratic means" (our emphasis, p58).

But no matter how much Labour attempts to shroud its pro-imperialist politics in a veil of pacifism no one should be fooled. As we have seen, when in government Labour showed no compunction whatsoever in sanctioning the terrorism and violence of the British army, RUC, and UDR (and their predecessors the B-Specials). In opposition it is no different. Even when British state forces have been shown to be killers, its spokespersons, both in the House of Commons and in the media, do no more than offer mild criticism and put all the blame on the forces of the IRA and national liberation. Labour does not reject violence. The only violence it rejects is that of the oppressed. For it, state terrorism is perfectly legitimate. After all the British army is in Ireland to 'defend the peace', ie imperialism's interests.

Labour's commitment to democracy is as fake as its commitment to non-violence. Its insistence that "any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland" (p58) appears perfectly democratic. Of course, it is not. What "consent of the majority" means is not self-determination for the Irish nation but the continuation of oppression. Using as its excuse the 'rights' of the pro-imperialist majority - secured by the boundaries of the artificial and gerrymandered statelet created by British imperialism in 1921 - Labour can safely talk about "consent".

Under imperialism the 'rights' of the protestant/loyalists mean a denial of rights for the 42% catholic/nationalist minority. Labour claims that "the material and political causes of sectarianism must be eradicated. A Labour government would set to work to put an end to the deprivation, injustice and fear which so disfigures Northern Ireland" (p58). But such a statement is a cynical lie. The roots of sectarianism are not to be found in the supposed inbred hatred between catholics and protestants. No, these divisions have been carefully cultivated and maintained by imperialism.

By sustaining the protestant working class as a labour aristocracy, imperialism can secure its domination over the Six Counties and Ireland as a whole. Thus to "eradicate sectarianism" means to eradicate imperialism. This is something we are prepared to do, but the Labour Party is not.

Of course, Labour does promise it will repeal the PTA, amend and eventual repeal the Emergency Provisions Act, and carry out all manner of other reforms. Well, we shall wait to see on the PTA, but the promise that Diplock Court cases will be heard by three judges instead of one gives us more than a clue as to its real intention to change names while keeping things as they are. The same applies to its pledge to end strip searching and the use of plastic bullets. As we have said in *The Leninist* many times before, while plastic bullets do kill and maim, the security forces will kill and injure even more people with real bullets ... the bullets are not the problem, British imperialism is. Its promises are a guarantee that if a Labour government is elected British imperialism will continue its reign of terror in the Six Counties.

Labour left

While the leadership and the mainstream of the Labour Party are openly pro-imperialist, some such as the SWP claim that its left wing offers some kind of a lesser evil or even a principled alternative. The particular champions of these sorts include Tony Benn and *Sun* journalist Ken Livingstone, who claim we can bring liberation for the Irish masses and socialism for the working class in Britain through a vote in Westminster and the bourgeois state machine. Clare Short took this logic to its perverted conclusion when she justified the intervention of British troops in 1969 "because the local security forces weren't neutral, somebody had to intervene" (*Morning Star* November 19 1988).

The very suggestion of a neutral and benevolent British army is a sick joke as far as the nationalist masses in the Six Counties are concerned; but not the SWP, who at the time also welcomed their intervention as providing a "breathing space". Objectively what the Labour left does is to divert the anti-imperialist movement through its campaigns such as 'Time To Go' and organisations like the Labour Committee on Ireland. These bodies set themselves up as the liberal conscience of the bourgeoisie. Instead of trying to break the link between the British working class and its ruling class, the logic of their arguments end up reinforcing it.

The timid calls coming from them for a withdrawal of British troops are invariably put in the context of what would be best for Britain's national interest, ie saving tax payers' money and bringing 'our boys back home'. The Labour left also likes to emphasise that a withdrawal of troops would not harm British (bourgeois) interests.

Let us be clear, however. They do not mean troops out now. They want a conditional withdrawal, a withdrawal after a given pro-imperialist period and under given pro-imperialist conditions. One such pro-imperialist target date often quoted is five years after the election of the next Labour government. Mike Watson, Labour MP for Glasgow Central, speaking recently at a rally organised by the LCI to commemorate the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, advocated just this. He also expressed support for the idea of a UN peacekeeping force. This just goes to show how useless and treacherous the Labour left is.

We all know in whose interests the UN operates. It is a capitalist club. The Arab masses and anti-imperialist will certainly remember the UN's role in the Gulf war. With the 100,000 slaughter in the name of the UN fresh in the mind only the Labour left can make a call for a UN role in Northern Ireland in order to prevent a 'bloodbath'.

The idea that a British withdrawal would end in a slaughter, with protestants and catholics butchering each other, is a phantom. It is British imperialism which willingly kills and tortures if it finds its interests under threat. It will not withdraw from Ireland because of persuasion or argument. It will have to be forced out of Ireland ... by a revolutionary movement on both sides of the Irish Sea.

The reason we say "Troops out now" is not because we imagine British imperialism will do as we say now, but because we want to emphasise that we are for the unconditional withdrawal of British troops and for the defeat of British imperialism. It engineered the sectarian divide and has the death of millions of Irish men and women on its hands. No imperialist British government, Tory or Labour, can play a progressive role in Ireland. Moreover the British ruling class is well aware that any withdrawal from Ireland would trigger off a crisis both in Ireland and Britain. In Ireland and Britain the way the ruling class rules would be thrown into crisis and this would carry with it the danger of a generalised revolutionary situation.

Election

Returning to the approaching election, as I mentioned earlier the opinion polls over the past couple of months have shown Labour and Tory neck and neck. Therefore it is not unthinkable that there could be a hung parliament, ie no party has an overall majority. If this happens then we can expect to see some serious bargaining going on, particularly with a view to getting support from the smaller parties.

The fact that the Labour Party has returned to its traditional mould after the Bennite wobble of the early 1980s, the fact that its leaders and hangers on have been denied the perks, corruptions and privileges of office for 13 years and its willingness to dump anything and anybody in order to get Kinnock into No10 should set all working class and anti-imperialist alarm bells ringing. In the event of a hung parliament it is hardly beyond the realms of possibility that the Ulster Unionist MPs - both Democratic and Official - will be courted by Kinnock ... and given all sorts of concessions.

In July 1977, the Callaghan Labour government came to a 'gentlemen's agreement' with the Official Unionists. In exchange for helping his government retain power, he agreed to increase Northern Ireland's

representation at Westminster, which could only mean more seats for the unionists. After the coming election Labour could again be in the position of giving concessions to the unionists to facilitate another pact. Such concessions would obviously not further the democratic struggle in the Six Counties. Instead we can be fairly certain that they would lead to further attacks on working class rights both in Ireland and in Britain ... perhaps even internment.

So while many on the left in Britain advocate a vote for Labour as 'the lesser of two evils', such a scenario as that described above would surely leave it as the worse of two evils, particularly for the nationalist communities of the Six Counties. A vote for Kinnock could be a vote for Paisley!

Through word and deed the Labour Party has, over the years, proved itself a thoroughly pro-imperialist party. It has tied the working class to the side of British imperialism, both with regards to Ireland and in other struggles. What communists and anti-imperialists in Britain need to do is to win the working class to take sides against the ruling class, to recognise that our main enemy is at home.

The Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain recognises that the

general election will be a time of heightened political activity which will facilitate debate and clarification. There can be no standing aside, no boycott, no tame call to vote Labour everywhere before resuming 'normal' political activity. Communists must intervene, not least by raising the thorny question of Ireland, the acid test of proletarian internationalism in Britain.

Marx, Engels and later Lenin identified the struggle for Irish self-determination as a key to the British revolution. In our general election campaign we too plan to make Ireland a central issue. That is why a central plank of our 'Platform for working class defence' is the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and self-determination for the Irish nation!

We call upon all anti-imperialists, all who are committed to Irish liberation to support our campaign and our four candidates. A communist vote is a vote against British imperialism, it is the only vote that is guaranteed not to be a wasted vote.

Jim Cook

Commemorate and learn



With 1992 marking the 20th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, we might have expected solidarity action in Britain to shift up a gear or two. This was not really the case

THE annual Bloody Sunday commemoration in London, organised by the Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland (CBWI) on January 25, repeated the pattern laid down over the past few years. Although successful as a commemoration of the murder of 14 civilians in Derry in 1972, it made no political advances and was attended by the regular crowd which continues to dwindle slowly year by year. The march, from Hyde Park to Kilburn, numbered about 2,500 and was indeed interspersed with some militant sections. Without being partisan, the Hands Off Ireland! contingent, despite only numbering about 50, was remarkable within the general crowd for its discipline and militancy, maintaining a continuous barrage of anti-imperialist slogans from beginning to end.

This was no accident. The politics of HOI!, like its contingents, stands in stark contrast to the Labourism and liberal concern of the Troops Out Movement and the Labour Committee on Ireland, which coordinate the CBWI. This brand of politics cannot prepare the working class of Britain for the tasks it will have to face in support of the Irish revolution. The diversion it presents continues to channel working class feeling against British imperialism into events like 'Time to Go' three years ago. As we predicted at the time, TTG went, and has not been seen since.

HOI! takes up the real issues of Irish solidarity. It recognises the need for the working class of Britain to support the Irish revolution. The troops on the streets of the Six Counties must be undermined

by action on the streets of Britain. The war machine of British imperialism must be attacked from within, by British workers. Only when British workers take sides against their own ruling class in the Irish revolution will they learn the necessity to take on their own state, not just in solidarity with their Irish comrades, but for themselves, to make revolution in Britain.

That is why HOI! demands 'troops out now', not in five years time when a British government has had time to fix things. HOI! demands 'self-determination for the Irish nation', not some bourgeois stitch-up between the ruling classes. On the Bloody Sunday Commemoration, marchers were attracted to the politics of HOI! by its clarity in posing the tasks of solidarity: 'For the IRA, against the British Army!', and 'Britain's defeat - our victory!' was heard blasting through the megaphones.

The lessons of Bloody Sunday must be learned by the working class in Britain and Ireland. If workers demand the right to political freedom, this state is prepared to kill them. The only defence against this is for workers to take on the state itself. This was well understood by James Connolly, who led the Irish Citizen Army, our class's first Red Guard, against the British state in 1916. This is why HOI! makes the Easter Rising of that year its political focus. Learn the lessons of the Irish revolution. March with Hands Off Ireland! on Saturday April 18. Assemble 1pm at Willesden Green tube, London NW2.

Mike Smith



CPGB mobilises the unemployed

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

Marchers on the London Bloody Sunday commemoration in January were treated to what can only be called a counterdemonstration by New Consensus in Kilburn Square. Holding placards against political violence and refusing to join the body of the march, these apologists for British imperialism set themselves against the marchers. We should remember this when faced with Families Against Intimidation and Terror, Peace Train or other Stickle oriented campaigns to which the Labourite left gives its sympathy. Remember too that Prionsias de Rossa, Stickle president, this week joined loyalist politicians in calling for the reintroduction of internment, north and south of the border.

Talking of 'big Stick' de Rossa, he says he still cannot control his 'little twigs'. He announced that his party is riven with splits so he is to purge all members of the Official IRA from the party, and "Leninists" too. But Prionsias, you bad boy, all those years you spent damning the provos, you were telling us that the 'officials' didn't exist. Do you mean to say that you were telling porkies all along?

Not since the heady days of the pro-imperialist Peace People has a Belfast demonstration been given prior national media coverage, as was given by the BBC, among others, for the February 4 'anti-sectarian' protest called by the unionist-friendly Irish Confederation of Trade Unions. Of course not a word was said about the blatant sectarianism of the security forces, or that the Six County statelet itself is built upon sectarianism, or of the non-sectarian tradition of republicanism. Just blanket condemnation of the paramilitaries. This was just what the BBC wanted to hear from the 2,000 demonstrators it reported. But the following day the Morning Star was so enthused by it all that it reported 20,000 demonstrators. Or was it just a typographical error ... hmmm, I wonder?

Kenny Coyle, leading member of the Communist Party of Britain's 'youth' wing, penned a polemic in the Morning Star of February 5 - a rare occurrence in the Star's political armoury - against the Trotskyite Militant Tendency. Surveying the long history of disintegration produced by the parliamentary programme of 'official communism', the CPB's British Road to Socialism, comrade Coyle mindlessly advised Militant to follow suit.

THE BOOM following World War I was short lived. In the 12 months from September 1920 unemployment in Britain rose from 250,000 to 2 million. Soon after its foundation the Communist Party of Great Britain instructed members to participate in and lead the struggles of the unemployed. In October 1920 the party's weekly paper carried an account of the fruits of this work in Coventry.

Coventry Unemployed: A soviet formed

Comrade J Stewart, Communist Party Organiser for the Midlands, is doing good work at Coventry. At the request of the Unemployed Workers Committee he has been addressing huge meetings of unemployed, and his suggestions have already led to practical action which is having a marked effect on the town authorities.

At the head of 2,000 men he marched to the Deasy works and demanded to be allowed to address the men still at work there. Opposition was useless, and so at the head of his army, Stewart marched into the works and held a joint meeting of employed and unemployed. The manager wished to speak first, but the meeting insisted on him waiting until Stewart had finished.

Stewart told them that unemployment could only be finally abolished by the abolition of the capitalist system, but suggested as an immediate step that the men already employed should reduce their hours of labour until all the unemployed were absorbed.

Tom Dingley also spoke, and then the manager said that the firm would do all in its power to do something for them. Stewart stated, both here and at other factories that were visited, that the men were coming back again and again until they could control the entire factories.

During the week-end more large meetings have been held at various works. Complete order is being maintained by a police force formed from the workers themselves, and the ordinary police are conspicuous by their absence. The Mayor has called a town's meeting to deal with the situation and "to consider the method whereby the growing volume of unemployment prevalent in this city may be overcome, and a full living wage be assured to all citizens willing to render service to the community."

The men are in no mood to consider proposals of the usual charity dole order, and their demands are of a practical and far-reaching character, as embodied in the following resolutions:

"Seeing that everyone willing to render useful service to the community has the right to enjoy all the benefits won by labour from nature, we demand that all workers shall have maintenance, whether working or not.

"We demand, as a practical solution to unemployment, that the civic authorities invite the Russian trade delegation to meet them in order to dis-



The CPGB took the lead in organising the unemployed

cover what commodities Russia is prepared to purchase from Coventry.

"We demand that a factory be taken in the interests of the community to produce such commodities, the workers to elect their own management.

"Further, we demand that the civic authority uses its power to prevent private interests hindering the work of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council."

Comrade Emery has been elected secretary of the local Soviet, and Comrade Stewart has been instructed to assist the Unemployed Workers' Committee to the best of his ability.

The old features of pre-war unemployed demonstrations are entirely absent from these manifestations. Here is no cringing body of half-starved men begging for bread, or, on the other hand, a crowd of potential rioters out for loot. It is an ordered demonstration by intelligent organised workers that will not starve at the behest of capitalism; but that if production cannot be carried on by the present owners of factories and plant without inflicting suffering on large masses of the community, the workers can and will. Other towns please copy.

Let those workers still in employment resolutely refuse to work a single minute over the time necessary to ensure employment for all. Control production instead of being controlled by it. If a single man in any industry seeks employment and cannot obtain it, it is a reflection on all his fellow workers.

The workers can stop unemployment; it is clear the capitalists cannot. It is up to the workers to make the attempt."

The Communist October 7 1920

"Full maintenance at trade union rates of wages" was the main demand advanced by communists. This was taken up in the form of marches by the unemployed to local Boards of Guardians who were responsible for providing Poor Law relief to the unemployed. Often the march would end with an occupation of the Board office until extra money was forth-

coming. The following report describes the actions of the London unemployed.

The London Unemployed Movement

To the Islington Unemployed Relief Committee is to be given the credit of starting the direct action campaign of the unemployed, which has now assumed such large proportions in London and the neighbourhood.

The committee, when first formed, found itself faced with the difficulty of obtaining suitable accommodation for holding its meetings, or for storing and distributing the food presented by shopkeepers in the borough.

The South East Library in Essex Road, which during the war had been used by the Food Ministry for controlled purposes, was empty, and seemed an admirable place for the purpose. So the committee took possession and there the Islington unemployed still remain.

Apart from a summons for obstruction by taking a collection with a box, and another for chalking the pavement, there has been no trouble with the police.

The Islington unemployed are well organised. A demonstration recently to the Guardian was lined up in military formation - ie, platoons of 20 with a sergeant in charge of each. These sergeants were elected from the men themselves, and are ex-Service men.

In Edmonton, Tottenham, Walthamstow, Hackney, Southwark, Camberwell, Peckham, and St. Pancras similar movements are now organised. Town halls, public libraries and empty houses have been seized in all these places.

A Central Committee, composed of delegates from the different localities in and around London, now meets at the library in Essex Road, Islington, daily.

All this is not to say that a revolu-

tion is in progress. Nevertheless, it is a very good sign that the unemployed have determined to make their discontent open and organised, instead of keeping it secret and shameful. Already local authorities have been compelled to take steps to remedy the existing distress far beyond what they would have taken had the unemployed remained quiescent. They will be wise if they break through their present powers entirely and throw the whole blame on the Government. They will be lucky if they escape being compelled to do so.

In all these movements the active spirits have been Communists, themselves unemployed. They know how impossible it is to solve unemployment while the capitalist system remains, but they realise also the necessity for organised action in order to drive the lesson home, and to ensure that something, at any rate, is done to alleviate immediate distress. Communist branches everywhere should neglect no opportunity of giving support and guidance to the unemployed movement. In most localities they are already doing so.

The day of ragged processions is over. The demands now being made are put forward by men who are resolute to redress their wrongs because they have not lost their self-respect. They are learning by bitter experience the Communist lesson that only in a new order of society will unemployment be finally abolished. They are learning, too, how futile capitalism is to touch even the fringe of the problem. The Communist, December 9 1920

In 1921 the Party was instrumental in forming the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, a body which organised the unemployed on a national basis in the years between the wars, years characterised by permanent high levels of unemployment.

Compiled by Doug Hulme

REVIEWS

Stoned again

Oliver Stone (director), *JFK*

OLIVER STONE'S *JFK* is a grand liberal epic which supports the image of Camelot, despite any more jaundiced views which may have become fashionable during the last 29 years. Kennedy was gunned down on Pentagon orders because of his commitment to peace, justice and the American way, as was his brother and later Martin Luther King.

This is reinforced by the film's opening sequence: President Eisenhower's 'peacenik' speech, "beware the military-industrial complex". The bourgeoisie in the white hats are set up by the shadowy bourgeoisie in the black hats from the Pentagon.

Stone's role models are fundamentally part of the system, not against it. *JFK*'s theme tune might well have been Marvin Gaye's 'Abraham, Martin and John'; certainly not Public Enemy's 'Fight the Power'. You will have to wait for Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* for that one.

A lot of flashy editing presents original footage of Kennedy smiling and waving. Beautiful black and white film of Lee Harvey Oswald (Gary Oldman) lurking in the book repository building. Bannister (Ed Asner) pistol whipping Jack Lemmon. Shadowy figures taking a position behind the picket fence. A cunning colour sequence of Kennedy's brain repeatedly being blown out of the back of his head...

Kevin Costner watches on TV in a sepia tinted bar. Starring as New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, he commences an investigation while luminaries in the supporting cast refuse to testify before a grand jury or else die horribly in suspicious circumstances as the plot thickens.

Dallas police allow Oswald to be killed by Jack Ruby, who dies in jail. Ruby and Oswald were involved with mafiosi and Cuban fascists organised by 'Black Ops' CIA out of Bannister's front office in New Orleans. Gay businessman Clay Shaw is implicated by an ex-convict character (apparently invented by Stone).

No matter how wild the conspiracy theories get, the most far fetched of all remains the Warren Commission's official line that Kennedy was shot by Oswald, or any other lone sniper. It becomes hard to deny that Oswald was an accomplished intelligence agent, that there was a military style ambush on Dealy Plaza, or that the secret service permitted the firing parties to leave the scene and then destroyed most of the evidence.

Garrison's wife (Spacek) leaves him because she wants her comfortable old life back and the establishment is putting pressure on him to shut up. Just when he is getting nowhere he meets a mysterious Pentagon 'Black Ops' ex-general played by Donald Sutherland - "I won't give you a phoney name. Just call me X".

I laughed out loud in the cinema when 'X' told us his masters had deployed him to the South Pole in order to put him out of the way during the Dallas visit. Normally he would have been responsible for arranging extra security in a hostile town like Dallas. In the event, the local secret service was stood down. Who stood to benefit from putting a Texan in the White House? Who could disable every telephone in Washington DC for the crucial hour following the shooting? What power could control the selection and conduct of the Warren Commission?

Oliver Stone's thesis is that Kennedy had upset the Chiefs of Staff by calling off the projected invasion of Cuba and announcing his intention to withdraw all military personnel, including advisors, from Vietnam. His assassination and the swearing in of LB Johnson as president was therefore

effectively a coup.

Jim Garrison is caught in a dilemma. What do you do when you find that your country is being terrorised by the secret service backed by the functionaries of the armaments industries? What you or I might do is say 'told you so' and continue to organise for a revolution. That was pretty much the reaction of Malcolm X and Fidel Castro at the time. But Jim Garrison is a judge. He goes back home to New Orleans and prosecutes the gay businessman.

The trial of Clay Shaw is the climax of the picture and a vehicle to allow Garrison to go public with his evidence of the conspiracy. Stone gives us the works: the flashbacks, the ballistics evidence, the patriotic rhetoric, more tear-jerking cliches than you could shake a stick at, but no evidence to implicate Shaw, who is acquitted.

And why not? Garrison, we are told, went on to be re-elected as a judge, wrote his memoirs, appear in movies.

The spin off for the cinema-going public is the overwhelming evidence of Costner's acting talent. The long term effect on popular mythology may cause the makers of *Trivial Pursuit* to delete their stock answer to the question: "Who shot John Fitzgerald Kennedy?"

Mike Fielding

Travels in India

Norman Lewis, *A goddess in the stones: travels in India*, Jonathan Cape 1991, pp322, £14.99

WRITING AT the time of the elections, about a country he referred to as "once democratic", Lewis witnessed a country subjected to endemic violence and deceit. Before his travelogue begins, Lewis notes that this has roots deep in history.

However, with the growth of capitalism India's seemingly frozen social relations and traditions are melting. As Marx wrote on India in the mid 19th century, "Modern industry resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power." Today, no longer dependent on agriculture, the population has been sucked into the gigantic caldrons of Calcutta, Bombay and other sprawling urban hellholes.

The opening pages set the scene for the grinding poverty found in all the cities Lewis visited. He describes the city of Patna as shrouded with adverts selling Scotch whisky, investments and luxury footwear, inhabited by rickshaw pullers who looked like Ethiopian refugees. A fifth of the population live on the streets.

Lewis is observant and sensitive to all the problems in India, and indeed knows the country well. He sees the effects, but nowhere throughout the book does he understand the cause or look to any way of resolving the poverty of the masses at the expense of the few's oppressive opulence.

India was easily the biggest of the direct colonial possessions of British imperialism, and made up more than half of the colonial population of the world. It is therefore a classic example of the contradictory effects on an ancient and established civilization that has fallen prey to capitalist imperialism.

Lewis claims that India plays host to the most polarised levels of social and cultural differences of anywhere in the world. Debatable though this is there can be no denying that alongside advanced industry lies appalling levels of poverty and servitude. Alongside finance capital there exists feudal remnants and tribal hills people.

Debts equivalent to a few pounds can take decades to repay and are then

inherited by the children, who are often forced into slavery or prostitution. The conquest of India by the west is one of the major pillars of the capitalist development in Europe, and at the beginning of the century of British world supremacy. Unfortunately, any mention of politics or colonialisation are absent throughout Lewis's travelogue. He is content to see, but not ask why India is subjected to the oppression and backwardness.

In the unequal relationship between the peasant plough and the transnational food industry the latter always wins. The burden of peasant debt continues to spiral and can only result in serfdom, expropriation and the squandering of human life. Patronisingly, blame has been put on the cost of weddings and funerals. Of course, the real source is the impossibility of peasant agriculture in the modern world.

Lewis reveals the dichotomy of a land clouded by death and persecution, but one ancient and beautiful in tradition. The book is rich in story and myth of times past, which in their own way stand in judgement of today. Lewis is told that one hundred schoolboys had disappeared. This is no fairy story, there is no happy ending. The Indian papers write "whatever it is suitable for them to say", ie, not the horror story that is the truth.

In the west it is different. We get plenty of horror stories, reports of Indian poverty, film stars, religious irrationality, holy men, Mother Teresa and floods. But what we do not get is the class struggle of one of the world's largest working classes. The politics of India's massive communist parties, such as CPI, CPI(M) and the Socialist Unity Centre.

Lewis aids this process of systematic distortion in the way that he deals with the position of women by concentrating on sati - or widow burning. This makes good copy. Mass strikes, occupations and demonstrations by women workers do not. There are, according to Lewis, approximately 400 cases of sati every month, which he puts down to "loveless marriages" not India's part feudal, part capitalist politics of land, dowry and laws of inheritance.

Although forced marriages are illegal, parents only face fifteen days in prison. And although 100,000 are meant to take place every year, no one has ever been sent to prison. As well as this, female infanticide is practised, often taking the form of young girls dying in "tragic accidents". Not surprisingly boys prove remarkably accident free.

Lewis also goes into detail about Devadasi. This is in effect the pimping of girls, supposedly "marrying" the goddess Yellamma in mass groups. This relieves the poverty-stricken families of the dowry burden. Lewis believes that it is the corruption, the scarcity and underpayment of the police that leads them to overlook this pernicious way of life "incapable of reform".

In Calcutta, Lewis sees the "bundles of rugs", which turned out to be "human forms" and he is shocked to find they have been left there to die. Lewis finds an old woman lying in the street, her face covered, but she lay legs apart, vagina exposed. This, he points out, was less than twenty yards away from a doorman dressed like a maharajah in turban and scarlet coat. To step over the dead is part of Calcutta protocol.

But the reason for this is not overpopulation. India is not brimming over with people, as Lewis and others would have us believe. In his classic study, our Palme Dutt rightly slammed the myth that overpopulation was the problem as "easy lies that comfort cruel men".

It is his failure to grapple with the politics of class, not the vastness and disparity of the peoples that are the cause of Lewis' open admission that he does not understand India. Lewis' visit to India may have been carefully planned, but it was a journey of the body not the mind.

Sally Taylor

ACTION

Communist Party

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

Weekly discussion on current political developments. The first part of each seminar constitutes a comprehensive course throughout 1992 on Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism: February 16: Opponents of philosophical materialism. February 23: Academic 'Marxism'. March 1: Universal connection of phenomena.

International Working Women's Day, Sunday March 8 CPGB rally with speakers invited from Communist Party of Turkey, Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rahe Kargar), Communist Party of Cuba. Ring for details.

Communist Party streetwork and campaigning in the four constituencies where we have adopted prospective parliamentary candidates: Glasgow (Tam Dean Burn). Rhondda (Mark Fischer). Bethnal Green and Stepney (Stan Kelsey): Weekly activist meetings in the constituency. Brent East (Anne Murphy). Offers of help please to 071-431 3135.

Hands Off Ireland!

Saturday April 18: HOI! march and rally to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising and demand Troops out now! and Self determination for the Irish Nation! Leaflets and posters available now. Has your organisation sponsored yet?

Unemployed Workers Charter

Saturday February 29: NATIONAL MARCH AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT - Assemble 12 noon, Clerkenwell Green. March moves off 1pm. Rally in Trafalgar Square 3pm.

Support for the march is coming in from the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the Socialist Workers Party and TUC Unemployed Centres up and down the country. The UWC is taking the lead in building for the demonstration on the ground. We need people to commit themselves to distributing *Unemployed Organiser*; we need donations to cover the cost of the march; but most of all we need you to be there on February 29 to march with the UWC, as we demand - *Organise the Unemployed! Work or Full Benefit! House the Homeless!*

● London organising meetings every week.

● *Unemployed Organiser* - 20p each plus 10p p&p, or £1.50 for 10.

● Poster and leaflets available. Ask for details of bulk rates/postage. For further information on CPGB, HOI! or UWC activities, write to BCM Box 928, LONDON WC1N 3XX or phone 071-431 3135.

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A series of four books by Jack Conrad, a member of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee.

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All four books for £22 postfree. Cheques to November Publications Ltd, BCM Box 928, London, WC1N 3XX.

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SUBSCRIBE

Unemployment: Mass action against the system, for our rights!

Official unemployment has reached 2,673,864. The Unemployed Workers Charter says 'enough is enough'. The time to fight back is now!

ON FEBRUARY 29 the Unemployed Workers Charter is marching with others on the National Demonstration against Unemployment in London (see box for details). The march will be a militant and uncompromising statement by unemployed workers and their supporters.

But however successful our action is, the UWC says that this march should only be the beginning of the fightback!

Not a single day goes past without another attack on the unemployed by this viciously anti-working class government. According to the 'official' government figures (which have been fiddled more times than you can count) unemployment now stands at over 2.5 million. Even bourgeois commentators have had to concede that unemployment could easily creep over the 3 million mark by the end of 1992. This means that the 'real' level of unemployment now stands at about 4 million, which represents misery and poverty on a devastating scale.

The current recession is significantly different to the one inflicted upon us in the early 1980s. Then it was confined mainly to Wales, Scotland and the north of England, with the Midlands and the South East left comparatively unscarred. Now unemployment is sweeping these areas indiscriminately. Capitalist economics is no respecter of geographical boundaries. Nor should we be.

Another significant difference is the nature of its 'victims'. People who had previously thought themselves immune to the iniquities of unemployment - such as professionals from middle and even top management - have now discovered a new 'counter-culture': signing-on. Executive Job Clubs are quite a flourishing mini-industry these days.

Understandably, many unemployed workers may derive a sort of malicious glee from the current misfortunes of the professional classes. During the early 1980's many professionals looked upon the 'newly-created' unemployed with a smug indifference or even downright selfishness. But to derive some perverse satisfaction from their plight would be a profound mistake. It means that further impoverishment is on the capitalist agenda for the working class. Unemployment is a powerful weapon in the bourgeoisie's armoury.

How much more does unemployment have to rise before we say 'enough is enough' and start to fight back? If you listened to some there can only be one answer: forever. Some people want the Labour Party to act like a knight in white armour and save the day for the unemployed. The best that can be said for such people is that they are myopically naive.

As the ruling class circus known as a general election looms, it is even clearer than normal that the Labour Party is committed to the same capitalist economics as the Tories - it just quibbles over the small print. Today's Labour Party does not even make promises (empty though they would be) to implement full employment or

**End Unemployment!
Organise the Unemployed!
House the Homeless!**

MARCH! AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

- ASSEMBLE Saturday February 29
12 noon, Clerkenwell Green, London.
- RALLY Trafalgar Square, 3pm

Sponsors include: Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, TUC, Unemployed Workers' Centres, Constituency Labour Parties, Communist Party of Great Britain, Unemployed Workers Charter, Socialist Workers Party, Peter Lenahan Chair of UCATT, Ron Brown MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Bob Cryer MP, Dennis Canavan MP.

even reduce it substantially. The best we get from the Kinnockites is vague rhetoric about a Labour Party "investing in Britain" by "increasing the manufacturing base", which during the "lifetime of a Labour government" will apparently reduce unemployment by a non-specified amount. Impressed?

A history lesson is instructive here for all class conscious workers, especially those who might still have some form of illusions in the Labour Party, even if it is only the "lesser of two evils" argument.

The incoming 1929 Labour government of Ramsay MacDonald raised big expectations among the unemployed, who felt that it would alleviate - even if only partially - their misery. They could not have been more wrong. MacDonald viciously *escalated* the attacks on the unemployed, such as 'task force' - working for your dole - and 'relief debts' (miners were forced to take out loans, which were virtually impossible to pay back). Unemployment during the 1929-31 Labour government *doubled*.

This MacDonald government was a minority government. It is very possible that any future Kinnock government will be a minority government too. Given the proven anti-working class record of Kinnock, who can say that history will not repeat itself? It is not for nothing that the British miners called Kinnock "Ramsay MacKinnock" during the 1984-5 Great Strike.

A sordid rag-bag of Labourites, Trotskyites, and 'official communists' (who make perfect bedmates) will call on you to vote Labour at the general election and they will present you with all manner of spurious reasons, ranging from mindless pro-Labour opportunism to sophisticated 'Marxist' ones. Ignore them. The Labour Party promises us the same, if not *more* of the same. Who was it that started the attacks on public spending and the unemployed? The Labour government under Jim Callaghan.

We need to organise a genuine effective resistance against *whoever* wins the general election.

What hope has Norman Willis got to offer to the increasing legions of the unemployed? Salvation is at hand! Willis "urges Chancellor Lamont to produce an expansionary budget to create 500,000 new jobs and extra places on training schemes and special measures" (*Morning Star* February 3 1992).

What miserable servility. We are supposed to go on our hands and knees to the man - and the capitalist system - who said that mass unemployment was a "price well worth paying". We are no longer prepared to beg for crumbs from the bosses' table. Even if, 'brother' Norman, the Tory government does create 500,000 jobs (flying in the face of capitalist reality), what about the other 3.5 million unemployed workers - do they matter or not?

To fight back against the scourge of unemployment means we must look to our strengths, not to the bosses, the Labour Party or the TUC bureaucracy. We must organise ourselves and stop being victims - together we can unite like a fist and smash the ruling class assault against us.

The Unemployed Workers Charter, initiated by our Communist Party of Great Britain, was formed in 1986 with this objective in mind. It fights for what workers need, not what the system says it can afford. Our basic, non-negotiable demands are:

- End all collaboration with Tory cheap labour schemes!
- Fight all harassment of the unemployed!
- Organise the unemployed!
- Fight for real jobs with real pay!
- Fight against British militarism!

Any system which cannot grant these basic civilised needs must be thrown into the dustbin of history. Any party, group or organisation which claims to represent working class interests yet cannot support these minimum demands should be treated with utter contempt. We urge all workers, whether they be employed or unemployed, to join the national demonstration against unemployment on February 29 and start the fightback.

Eddie Ford

Unwelcome party for Labour



THE LATEST unemployment statistics for January were announced on Thursday February 13. These showed the 'seasonally adjusted' jobless total rise to 2.6 million, the highest for four years. Obviously, as most workers are aware, the way these totals are calculated has been altered on

many occasions over the past 13 years, to camouflage the genuine scale of the disease of unemployment.

The Unemployed Workers Charter certainly is not going to let this new rise in unemployment go unnoticed, or take the accompanying attacks on unemployed workers lying down. As soon as the figures were announced a

group from the UWC descended on Downing Street to make our protest heard. A delegation handed a letter in to No10.

This was a token picket necessary in response to the rising levels of unemployment, but we have no illusion that either the Tories or the Labour Party can offer any solution. In the lead up to

the general election both these parties are being made aware that workers are uniting to fight back against the threat and reality of unemployment and homelessness. Workers will no longer sit back and wait for the long promised upturn, but will demand what we need now; if this or any government cannot provide it, they must get out; this was the message that was taken to Downing Street.

Later in the evening the UWC arrived as uninvited guests at the Labour Party Spring Gala. The noise with which our protest was heard here was quite clearly unwelcome to all the Labour Party guests arriving in their finest evening wear, paid for off the backs of the workers.

As they sat down for their £500 meal the real working class fighters sent their message to the country, via the bourgeois press, which had turned up in force to catch a glimpse of Neil Kinnock dressed up to the nines. The Labour Party has done nothing for employed or unemployed workers. Workers will wage war against the bourgeois enemy before, during and after the general election.

Linda Addison