

# The LENINIST

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## No to the bosses' Europe - No to a Maastricht referendum For a workers' Europe!

**W**ONDERFUL, wonderful Copenhagen' sang Denis Skinner, and the Tory backbenchers joined in on the chorus. An unholy alliance of left-wingers and the Tory far right against mainstream, pro-Maastricht, bourgeois opinion.

The reason for the Labour left and others finding themselves with such strange bedfellows (ie, Baroness Thatcher) is their knee jerk response against moves towards European integration via the bosses' club of the European Community. Sinn Fein's paper *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, puts the case for much of the left, albeit more articulately than Skinner, when it states that it "stands by the rights and sovereignty of the nation state as opposed to the domination of large, imperial power blocks" (June 18).

This is a misconception. The Irish people, economically dominated by imperialist capital and politically oppressed by the British dissection and occupation of the country, have no objective interest in the form - pan European or national - their domination takes. The campaign for a 'no' vote in the referendum was a de facto defence of the reactionary states north and south of the border, whatever the intentions of those who fought for it. Like the Labour left in Britain, Sinn Fein found some very dubious allies; namely the bigots of the Catholic church hierarchy and its anti-abortion and anti-divorce pack.

What is true for Ireland, an oppressed nation within the imperialist EC club, is doubly true for the 'mainstream' imperialist members. The enemy facing the peoples of Europe is their respective ruling classes. It is *their* states that the little Englanders of the Labour left are so keen to defend. The devolvement of some functions of the parliamentary farce of Westminster, or Dublin, to the parliamentary farce of the Hague makes no difference to the real control European workers have over the "sovereignty of the nation". We have none.

This seems to escape the parliamentary cretinist *Morning Star*, sometimes mouthpiece for the misnamed Communist Party of Britain. It frets that European Union means "that the national parliament will simply be reduced to the status of county council working within the terms of reference set by Brussels". The *Star* shrieks that Maastricht threatens "the bed-rock of our democracy", aiming "to smash that to bits". Maastricht, it concludes, means "subservience to the transnationals which dominate capitalist Europe" (June 29).

Throughout this century, workers have been dominated by imperial power blocks. Big or small, national or multinational, one imperialist is as reactionary as the next. To defend the sovereignty of the imperialist British state when faced with the prospect of an imperialist EC superstate is reactionary. In true Colonel Blimp style, the CPB's *Star* wants the domination of good old fashioned British instead of European capital. Arguing that European union is in the interest of big business is an obvious but meaningless point. After all, who are we ruled by now?

There is a spectre haunting Europe. As European capitalism converges, the threat of working class resistance looms

What is more, these little Englander reformists are consciously allying themselves with some of the most viciously rightwing elements within the workers' movement, such as Labour MP Peter Shore, described by the *Star* as a "veteran anti-Common Market campaigner" (him, Enoch Powell and John Tyndall, that is). Shore is also a member of the far right Bruges Group. By their friends, so shall ye know them.

The logic of this is very dangerous. The 'Eurosceptics' unite left and right on a reactionary procapitalist basis. Denis Skinner demanded that the Commons summon the French ambassador and buttonhole him for the lorry drivers' strike!

Communists, on the other hand, have long recognised that the workers have no country. We are opposed to *all* imperialist states. The question is how we express this as active, effective working class opposition.

That is why we oppose the Tory right and the Labour left's call for a referendum on the Maastricht treaty. Of course we do not support Maastricht, or any deal thrown together by the EC heads. But neither do we support its rejection in favour of 'national sovereignty'. The working class should not be in a situation of calling heads or tails when the bosses toss the coin. Workers must not be limited by the terms of debate as to what is best for the bosses' Europe. And this is all the debate on Maastricht is. Communists fight for an independent proletarian agenda. If we could get our own question on the agenda - such as "are you in favour of a united Europe under working class rule?" - then we would be as eager for a referendum as the good Baroness and her shield bearer Skinner. But we cannot. Referendums in Britain, like Hitler's plebiscites, do not mean very much. Any campaign for a referendum sows illusions in this fake democracy and accepts the agenda of the EC leaders. In reality, yes or no to Maastricht is like asking the workers of Europe whether they would like to be kicked in the head by brown or black boots. We say: reject both and kick back.

The march to economic and monetary union is not proceeding in step. Each new development creates a chain reaction of new difficulties. Capitalism may have outgrown the nation state, but it cannot leave it behind with the ease of a snake shedding its skin. The process of Emu is fraught with incipient crises.

The establishment, despite itself, is digging up the phrases of a man whose ideas they figured they had definitively buried so recently: "A spectre is haunting Europe. It is the ghost of chaos past, in a continent that has produced two world wars this century. The European Community was meant to be a beacon of stability in the aftermath of communism's collapse. But the Community is in disarray, thanks to Danish voters' rejection of its

Maastricht reforms. Europe is threatening to become the world's problem continent again" (*The Economist* June 13 1992). Karl Marx's body may be a mouldering in the grave, but his metaphors go marching on!

One such crisis is that of Maastricht. The Danish 'no' vote formally invalidates the treaty and has thus opened up a Pandora's box of renegotiation. Incorporating the European Free Trade Area and dealing with Eastern Europe further complicates this.

Moves are now afoot to either reincorporate or circumvent the Danes - no one seems to have decided the appropriate way yet. The EC Lisbon summit over the weekend of June 27-8 was devoted to resolving this. You can get a flavour of its success by the *Financial Times*'s description of Lisbon as the "do nothing summit". By rights, according to the Treaty of Rome, the Danish 'no' vote should bring Emu to a grinding halt. But, as the *Financial Times* again notes, "in the final resort, EC government leaders can make the rules up as they go along" (June 29). So in one way or another, legal niceties aside, the process of Emu will eclectically accommodate for the Danish upset and role on. But, as so often happens in children's games, the rules are set by the biggest kid in the neighbourhood. This role is taken by Germany.

As Europe's strongest economy, Germany is in the best position to call the shots. It is already well on the road to supplant London as the major financial centre in Europe, with the site of the European Central Bank now almost certain to be in Bonn (much to Major's chagrin). Germany is the economic centre of gravity for Europe: the Deutschmark is the anchor currency for the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and even the members of Efta in effect shadow the D-mark.

But Germany has its own problems. The reason for this is straightforward: reunification. One German banker described the process of integration for the West as like a python swallowing a sheep - it will take a very long time to digest. The costs are proving to be far higher than Chancellor Kohl's optimistic predictions of 1989. The expected net transfer from West to East Germany for this year runs to an expected DM180 billion, or 6% of GNP. The minimum net transfer for the next 10 years is projected as DM100 billion per annum. Optimistic businessmen are not predicting a return on invested capital in the east until 1996 at the earliest. Even then, this will leave the east woefully underdeveloped by western standards.

One result of the costs of integration is to send the German budget deficit and public sector debt spiralling upwards. This will put Germany outside the criterion for convergence after 1997. And Germany is the one country that is indispensable for convergence to take place. No other national economy is

powerful enough to act as the anchor for this process. The drain on capital to the east both mars German competitiveness and makes its bourgeoisie reluctant to prop up weaker economies in the EC. And then, of course, there is the threat of a resurgent and united working class, which the recent pay deal stalled, but has not stopped.

All of which has done much to cool the ardour of the German establishment for European union. On June 24, German industrialists and trade union leaders issued a statement in support of Maastricht, but at the same time emphasising the "visible fears and reservations in the population at large"; "population at large" pertaining mainly to businessmen. Heinrich Weiss, president of Germany's version of the CBI suggested that many of his fellows "would now prefer to postpone [Emu] well into the next century" (*Financial Times* June 25).

Paradoxically, the strongest economy with the most to gain from union also has the most to lose. The speed, form and ease of Emu will depend on how Germany resolves this situation - or, rather, on how the situation resolves Germany. Put in a position where it has a firmer hold on the EC purse strings, it may rediscover its enthusiasm for unity, using the wider resources of the EC in an attempt to stabilise the east and re-float the east German economy (although this would inevitably create strains with the poorer southern economies, which are reliant on heavy EC subsidies). Increased threat from the world market may force the EC to throw caution to the wind and tighten protectionism. Whichever way the increasingly complex threat to the east affects the process of European union, there is no doubt that it is looming large in the debates of the EC leaders.

*The Economist* neatly summed up the fears of the Euro bosses, warning that "reasons for alarm are multiplying. The worst worries are still in the East, afflicted not only by economic slump ... and a growing refugee problem ... the disintegration habit is spreading from ex-Yugoslavia and the ex-Soviet Union into Central Europe" (*The Economist* June 13 1992).

Now we can add Czechoslovakia to that. Once the bourgeoisie would have loved to have seen Eastern Europe disintegrate. But the reality of the situation today means that the creation of ever smaller 'national' economies makes them more expensive to exploit for increasingly pan-national capital. And, of course, there is the multiplying danger of conflict and war.

Ghosts seem to be in vogue with the European bourgeoisie, what with the headlines of the *Financial Times* warning of the "spectre of falling Balkan dominoes" (June 17 1992). Any number of countries, from the ex-Soviet Union to ex-Czechoslovakia are ripe for such events. The Lebanonisation of the

Yugoslav republics has exploded a bombshell on the borders of the EC. Other countries are tottering on the brink. There is a possibility of Bulgarian or Albanian intervention and, should Yugoslav Macedonia become involved, of the EC member Greece.

The situation has gone beyond the point where money could just be thrown at it, even if the EC was prepared to. Military intervention remains a possibility for EC imperialism, though such a prospect is an unwelcome one, both because it could embroil the EC in a war it is unable to resolve, and also because such an intervention would prise wider the differences between its member states. It should be noted, however, that France and Germany are preparing the ground for a more viable military policy for the EC by launching their joint force earlier this year, a possible embryo of an EC state army.

Whatever the outcome of this, the EC has no progressive 'peacekeeping' role to play in Yugoslavia, any more than Britain has in Ireland or the West in the Gulf. We are opposed to all western imperialist intervention to solve its eastern 'problem'.

One aspect of this 'problem' was highlighted by *The Economist*, that a "dangerous novelty is the gathering conservative backlash across much of Eastern Europe" (*The Economist* June 13 1992). By 'conservative', the journal means those who are resisting the effects of the market. Within this diverse mass, there will be elements who are, by various and often tortuous routes, reaching for communist answers. Already, there are workers organising on a class struggle basis against the attacks of capital. It is these, rather than ex-bureaucrats guarding their own little pile, that the bourgeoisie is especially worried about. The recent strikes in Germany offered the opportunity of workers in the west linking up with those in the east for the first time in decades. In drawing the ex-socialist countries under the domination of capital, sections of the capitalist class are beginning to figure that they have just increased the size of the powder keg that they are sitting on.

A capitalist united states of Europe is becoming a real possibility. That is, after all, the only logical conclusion of Maastricht. But the logical conclusions of capitalism have a strange way of exploding in the faces of the capitalists. Planning the integration of the anarchy of capitalist economies is fraught with contradiction - dangers for them, possibilities for us.

Europe's bosses' difficulty is our opportunity. The tentative groping of the European bourgeois towards unity, if they can avoid cutting each others' throats, opens up the possibility of a coordinated response by European workers seizing the initiative.

Tomorrow the real spectre that is haunting Europe can be just as Marx said - communism. Nearly 150 years after he gave that warning, let us make sure the spectre is all too tangible for the tastes of Delors, Major and Kohl.

Alan Merrik



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

BEFORE it was passed by the Diet on June 15, Japan's United Nations peacekeeping bill caused no end of parliamentary fuss and bother. Yet superficially its terms would appear innocuous enough, reasonable, innocent almost. Now Japan will be allowed to send a maximum 2,000 troops abroad. Even then they will not be allowed heavy weapons or to engage in any combat role. Japanese troops serving abroad will be under UN control and will withdraw at the first sign of trouble. Nothing to worry about here, surely. If you think so, think again.

The fact of the matter is that by making this bill law the well paid (and bribed) representatives of Japanese imperialism have crossed a Rubicon and put the last nail into the coffin of the post-1945 world order. Japan has taken the first decisive step in the long journey towards bringing the country's world military/diplomatic standing into line with its economic strength, the first step towards developing and deploying armed forces capable of forcibly imposing Japanese imperialism's interests on others and standing up to the US. Here we have the seeds of World War III.

This being the case (and it is), it is undoubtedly one of history's greatest ironies that Japan was encouraged, pushed and bullied into taking this more 'active' world role by none other than the US itself. Such self defeating blindness is inevitable for those whose diplomatic stock in trade, when it comes to Japan, is hypocrisy and humiliation.

Having been primarily responsible for imposing a pacifist constitution on a defeated Japan at the point of a nuclear bomb, it was the height of hypocrisy for the US administration to rail against Japan for its refusal to physically support the anti-Iraqi coalition during the build up for Gulf War II. Constrained and shackled by the US imposed pacifist constitution, the Japanese had no choice in the matter.

As punishment for its past military defeat and present day successes in outcompeting the US economically, Bush demanded huge payments from Japan. This was Danegeld. A cash strapped US fought a war which was designed to assert its world domination over rivals, small like Iraq and big like Japan (and in the process keep control over vital oil reserves) using money extracted from Japan as well as Germany, the other defeated power in World War II. To cap it all, after the war was over Japan was barred from bidding for Kuwaiti reconstruction orders. All that Bush needed to do was to puke up all over Japan's PM for its humiliation to be complete.

Of course in the last analysis, the reason why Japan has begun to water down its constitution and is destined to junk it entirely is far more than US hectoring or a sneaky desire for revenge. The capitalist world might have temporarily exorcised the spectre of communism. However in its very moment of triumph the signs are all too clear that the US-led imperialist world will soon break apart into three antagonistic blocs: namely a German-led EC, a US-led Nafta and a Japanese-led eastern Asia.

The reason for this is straightforward. Capitalism is approaching the abyss of a new general crisis, a general crisis that will dwarf the last capitalist general crisis which spanned the years 1914-49, and which triggered two world wars. Under conditions of pre-general crisis, the leading capitalist powers are forced against each other, not only by irrational hatreds, but by the inescapable necessity to survive. That is why capitalism means war and why war can only be prevented if we end capitalism.

Naturally, it is highly unlikely that the antagonistic imperialist blocs we see crystallising before us today will launch themselves directly against each other in the near future. The main danger of inter-imperialist war comes from regional wars, from the danger of the imperialist blocs finding themselves lined up on opposite sides in wars not immediately of their own making.

For all the anti-Serb unanimity at the moment, the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia and the whole Balkan region threatens to draw Nato allies Turkey and Greece, and thus the US and the EC, into a deadly dance of death where present day partners can easily end up on opposite sides. Likewise east Asia. As evidenced by Thailand, Burma and the Philippines, it is pregnant with crisis and the possibility of large scale Japanese military intervention.

But as well as defending existing east Asian sources of cheap labour, Japan has other ambitions. German imperialism is now carving up the countries of the former Warsaw Pact, Japan obviously has similar designs on the serving socialist countries of Asia - Vietnam, North Korea and above all China.

Transparently, capitalism offers the certainty of war and barbarism. The situation cries out for a revolutionary proletarian answer. In Britain this means the reformed CPGB. Comrades, join us now in our vital and urgent struggle. There is no time to waste!

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### Union strategy

It was stimulating to read the series of articles in *The Leninist* (Nos 119-120) regarding the German workers' strikes and the problems confronting the British working class. However, I would suggest that the heading of the article, 'Rethinking our tactics' should read 'Rethinking our strategy'. It is time that we broke from established and ossified concepts of trade unions, based upon the outdated and incorrect pronouncements of former leaders, and that we objectively and critically re-examine them in the light of history and draw the necessary conclusions on the basis of this re-examination.

The approach of *The Leninist* in its rethinking has some highly commendable points to make, such as that calls for strikes are not necessarily good in themselves; that if badly timed and organised can lead to defeat and disillusionment of the workers; that it is not enough to "win" the strike vote, for unless the overwhelming majority of workers are convinced of the need for struggle, that particular dispute can be fore-doomed to fail. However, where I wish to take issue with *The Leninist* (and the majority of the left movement for that matter) is upon the question of the role and form of the union movement in struggle.

The role of the union movement (trade or industrial) is that of bargaining, with the employers, on behalf of the workers, for the best wages and conditions in the sale of the workers' labour power. In other words, the unions' historical role is, with the assistance of the strike weapon when necessary, to defend within the capitalist system the conditions and standard of living of the workers. By its very nature, unionism cannot perform a revolutionary role for the destruction of capital; in fact the existence of capital is the pre-condition for the existence of unionism. Therefore, to pursue a policy of capturing the unions, or changing their form from trade to industrial, with the aim of transforming them into revolutionary weapons is doomed to failure.

According to your editorial (*The Leninist* No119), the reason for the magnificent response of the German workers in the recent strike was due precisely to the question of form of organisation. We read, "the main lesson Germany has to teach us is organisation" (my emphasis). Therefore, "One industry, one union must be our slogan. Not imposed from above; though even then, with this and that proviso, we would welcome it". In other words, the industrial form of unionism is the key to German (and workers in general) success.

How very politically naive! Does it not remotely occur to the editor that it was not form of organisation, but rather the burden of extra taxes, higher inflation etc, with worse to come, due to incorporating the GDR, that the rightwing German union leaders were forced (as comrade Merrick agrees) by the rank and file to take action and that the leaders acted as a safety valve for German capitalism, by calling a strike. That they served their masters well is shown by the fact that they settled for far less than that demanded, and then used their undivided industrial form of union control to totally end the strike, causing German workers to condemn the leadership for the sellout? And these are the people the editor, on behalf of a communist organisation, praises, sends letters of congratulations, and invites to a joint conference; their only apparent fault is, no, not reformist treachery, but being "limited"!

Industrial unionism has a dual reactionary and progressive potential. On the one hand it enables the bureaucracy to more effectively control the members, and enforce industrial peace and stability on behalf of the employers, as in Germany since the

end of the war. On the other hand it eliminates inter-union conflicts, and enables a more concentrated pressure to be placed on the bosses, by the bureaucracy, for a speedy and if possible peaceful settlement, during negotiations. Although one would undoubtedly declare for industrial rather than trade type of unionism, insofar as it gives a sense of rank and file solidarity, it by no means can be considered as a key weapon in the workers' armoury.

In conclusion I would suggest that through your columns this most essential question be further discussed and debated, fetching into the discussion the question raised by comrade Merrick in the article 'Copy the German model' (*The Leninist* No119) when he writes of a "form of organisation that goes beyond trade union struggle". This can only mean a class type of organisation, reflecting the need and possibility for class action, organised independent of, but not as a substitute for the unions.  
Paul Conlon  
London

### Get serious

Maybe I'm missing something, but I was a little bemused by comrade Jack Conrad's reply to my letter ('On the road', *The Leninist* No119).

In my letter I very briefly outlined the theory of crisis that Marx presents in *Capital* Vol III. In the context of this, which puts the tendency for the rate of profit to fall as the cause of capitalist crisis, I criticised the postulate of the *British Road to Socialism* that crisis results from the "level of wages and salaries" which "restricts the market in each country". I therefore disagreed with comrade Conrad's assertion that "This theory is okay as far as it goes" (*Which Road?*, p11).

Now, let us get something straight: I did not dispute the outline of crisis explained elsewhere in *Which Road?*, with which I fully agree. I pointed out one inconsistency. As Lenin said, a spoonful of tar can mar a barrelful of honey.

After all, this formulation from the *BRS* was a very important one for 'official communism' in the postwar period. By positing the basis of crisis as being one of "markets", the *BRS* and other programmes could establish a programme which was essentially based on redistribution within the capitalist system of production, rather than overthrowing that system, excusing such pipe dreams as the old *Alternative Economic Strategy*, which owes far more to Keynes than it does to Marx.

So, while underconsumption of the masses is undoubtedly a feature of capitalist crisis, it is not a cause. In his reply in No119 comrade Conrad tries to beat me over the head with the idea that I deny the former. Well, fine. But I was attacking its identification as a cause, which underpins the 'official communist' analysis of crisis and the quoted formulation from the *BRS*. Does comrade Conrad not understand the distinction, or is he deliberately muddying the waters?

Instead of throwing around a lot of extraneous detail, heavily laden with misplaced irony - as comrade Conrad did in his wildly overdefensive reply - a serious answer would have to justify this particular statement being "okay as far as it goes". Is it? Yes or no? If so, why? Then, maybe Jack, we can fulfil your plea for "serious debate".  
Alan Merrick  
London

### The Irish ML

I strongly support your action in participating in the recent elections. I think that in the present conditions the only reasons for not participating would be serious financial difficulties or a decision to temporarily conserve forces for

other activities.

Revolutionary politics have become stereotyped and are having problems breaking the mould and dealing with the present situation. I think that the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the first socialist state caused more profound changes than is realised. Stalin did not apply dialectical materialism to the new period in a profound way. He had the view that the opposition was a type of carbuncle that could be cut off, and failed to understand the inevitability of the opposition and of struggle at all stages in all areas at all times. He saw the opposition as an evil phenomena caused by bad people and outside forces. He didn't understand and teach the people that the opposition was there because progress was there. The status quo was a balance of the two.

The point was to move forward. Not to leap to some pure state without opposition. This is an important issue that needs discussion in its own right.

The approach of Stalin - stagnant, non dialectical and mechanical - has carried on, with communists thinking that the idea is to get support for a series of demands, get elected, get power, and then as special and dedicated people the world will be fine.

The East European countries, and practical experience in our own work shows that this is not true. Unless everything and everyone is questioned, subject to recall, is seen as part of a dynamic process. Unless the ordinary people are continuously and genuinely drawn into all issues, and given increasing rights, a clique takes over. The leaders become detached, become arrogant, lose their way and do desperate and stupid things.

The actual revolution is a result of the masses consciously rejecting the old order.

It is not the party, but the masses that make the revolution. The party can and must aim to take leadership of these millions. The idea that the communists are on the out is a nonsense. The problem has been the bourgeois arrogance and characteristics of many of the parties and leaders. This has to go. This arrogance comes from the idea that special people know best and that it is not necessary to win the conscious and full support of the comrades who make up the party, or the masses who carry out the revolution. That it is enough to whip up mass hysteria and anger around important issues, and smash a few details of the old.

In every situation there is a struggle. This reflects and affects the central struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the establishment of socialism. The establishment of socialism is the crucial next step in the liberation of all aspects of humanity, in allowing consolidation and the unfolding of a new period of world history. The battle has to be fought everywhere by millions of ordinary people against what is backward and stagnant.

You deal with other left groups in a way that implies, at times, that they are on opposite sides. An example of this would be the use of insults. Unless these groups are police agents, then they are part of a left movement against the bourgeoisie. They are fundamental allies. It is only really possible to get to the heart of and sort out the ideological differences, (these have to be pursued and never blurred), when there is appropriate mutual respect, and an atmosphere of being prepared and able to agree and cooperate when there is agreement and the possibility of cooperation.  
A Evans  
Ireland

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.

# Comrades in overdrive

We are now in the final stretch of this year's financial Offensive. This will pay for the general election campaign, and more ambitious plans for the future



The struggle for the future must be paid for now

ON SUNDAY July 5 our organisation launched itself, with a vengeance, into the last month of the 9th Party Offensive. This is an intensive month of money raising for all comrades as we struggle to fulfil our pledges before July 31. Last week pledges made still fell a long way short of the £70,000 target, set as the amount needed for the organisation's political tasks this year. At the meeting we came nearer to the target with all comrades making an extra effort, squeezing themselves that extra bit dry. Over £2,000 extra was pledged at the meeting, taking the total to £45,533, still some way off the £70,000.

We can only rely on our comrades, supporters and sympathisers to raise the money necessary to continue our tasks. Unlike London Zoo, there is no Emir of Kuwait waiting around the corner to give the PCC a few thousand. If there was we would have to wonder why! It has to be recognised that we may not reach the £70,000 set by the end of the month but comrades will be fighting harder this month to achieve it, struggling against the powerful forces of reaction we experience today. An appeal to sympathisers last week brought in £900. Thank you to all those that contributed to this struggle. We will be coming to you again this week for your help to achieve the total.

Over £2,000 was collected in at the meeting on Sunday from comrades, none of whom are in the top earning bracket, but all of whom have been out collecting, selling their last worldly goods, doing sponsored swims and also out collecting business for our printing press. One of our most important expenses this year is beginning to start paying us back; but it does not work alone, it survives on the hard work and commitment of comrades. One comrade recently made redundant gave £1,000 at the meeting. Another raised their pledge by £300. Several unemployed comrades raised their pledges by £100. The highest pledge now stands at £4,000 and the next at

£3,500.

Prior to the meeting the organisation had an extra push to collect money in. Cash in now stands at nearly £32,000. The money collected last week was vital in order to have our new publication *From October to August*, by Jack Conrad, off the presses in time for the meeting. At the last minute comrades were able to come up with enough money to satisfy the printers and the book arrived at the meeting, very much hot off the press. Comrades now are engaged in work to market this important new book; it is a vital theoretical tool for all communists and of interest to all those concerned by the chain of events in what was the Soviet Union. Now it has been published, the task is to make sure it is as widely read as possible, both in Britain and around the world; analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union is of course necessary for communists all over the world.

The money collected at the meeting is not residing in some Swiss bank account but is already spent. This is how communists must work in today's conditions; hand to mouth. We do not store up money ready for political work, or put off political work until we have collected enough money. The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB undertakes the political work that is necessary and then goes about raising the funds needed to complete this. That is where the £70,000 figure came from. It is not an arbitrary amount plucked from air but the estimated amount necessary for our political tasks this year.

Of course the largest task that the PCC took on this year was the general election campaign, and we are still paying for this economically, although the political gain pales the economic cost into insignificance. However, on top of this, we have two books out, another nearly ready for the printers and two more on the way.

The next book out will be *In the enemy camp*. This book analyses the work of communists in parliamentary elections, and shows how elections can,

and in normal circumstances must, be used as a weapon by communists. It is written with the experience gained by the Party in the recent election campaign, and we are keen to have it printed while the campaign is fresh in all comrades' minds; those who criticised us for the decision to take part, those who had their doubts, and other organisations who criticised, laughed at, or tried to ignore both us and the election, as well as those who agreed with and fought alongside us. This book provides clear theoretical and practical answers to those criticisms, and keeps the debate alive; it is an important question which must be tackled, not shied away from.

The next major event in the communist calendar is the European conference in Edinburgh. As Major gathers together the heads of state from the EC, the PCC of the CPGB will be gathering together representatives from workers' organisations around Europe, and around the world, notably representatives from trade unions in South Africa, to discuss the workers alternative to the bourgeois Europe of exploitation and oppression. The conference will be an important step in uniting workers across Europe on a class struggle basis.

Finances have never stopped us from carrying out our political tasks, but our most urgent task this month is to achieve our goal, fight for the £70,000 and win all comrades to the necessity of digging even deeper, looking further outward, working even harder and being even more creative this month to achieve a total that we can really celebrate on August 1.

If you support the fight for a reformed Communist Party, then you should express this with the life blood of communist work: your active cooperation and your finance. Too often workers have been asked to back a loser; Kinnock, the union bureaucrats, the 'official communists' or whatever. This time it is different. We know we are building the winning alternative. Be in on that victory from today.

Linda Addison

Over the past three years there have been extensive discussions between the trade unions Nalgo, Nupe and Cohse on merging to create one public sector union. The final report has now been approved by the annual conferences of all the unions involved. The next stage in the process will be a secret ballot of the entire membership that will take place in November-December 1992. If the ballot returns in favour of merger, then 'Unison', as it will be called, will come into existence on July 1 1993. It will have a membership of about 1.5 million workers, making it the largest union affiliated to the TUC. While we recognise that the move for this merger has come from the union bureaucrats, it still improves the conditions for overcoming sectionalism among workers in the public sector. There needs to be a campaign, led by the rank and file, that fights for the union to be controlled by the membership, not by the fulltimers. The struggle must be for full accountability of all union officials to the rank and file. Another disputed area is finance. The central distribution of funds provides a potential bargaining tool for the bureaucrats for bringing militant branches etc into line. Behave yourselves, do as we say or we will cut off your money! The autonomy of branches, financially and on campaigning, must be protected. This merger provides a basis for workers' organisation across the public sector, in overcoming sectionalism, and taking on the bosses and winning. NC

Aids has again been whipped up to hysteria pitch following the case of the Birmingham man, a haemophiliac HIV victim, who allegedly deliberately infected four women, one of whom subsequently died. As a result, there have been fresh calls on the government to introduce new laws which would punish those members of society acting

"irresponsibly" as they "knowingly" spread the HIV virus. The fact that one individual can make so much headline news as he "infects" heterosexuals is sickening hypocrisy. The virus, in Britain anyway, is overwhelmingly spread by the non 'out' section of the homosexual community where prejudice and social stigma closet an individual's sexuality and where their sexual contact is often spontaneous, furtive and unplanned. Such conditions restrict information on how not to catch the virus, causing scores of men from this section of the community to be diagnosed as body positive each day. Things must be put into perspective. Only 300 women in Britain have Aids - a tragedy, but there is little evidence to suggest that the virus is spreading to women within society in general. Using the Birmingham man as a scapegoat and introducing laws to curb "irresponsible" action will do little to stop the spread of the deadly virus. The complete decriminalisation of all anti-lesbian and gay legislation, as a starting point to remove anti-homosexual prejudice, will. GP



The media is trying to turn Aids victims into criminals

The reopening of Monktonhall colliery in Scotland by a workers' cooperative is a desperate reaction to the failure to prevent pit closures. When Monktonhall was mothballed two years ago, British Coal had no intention of reconsidering its future. Now there are 42 men working to reopen the pit, projected to rise to over 450 over a three year period. At its height in the mid 1970s it employed 2,000. The miners say that they can work the pit indefinitely. They even intend to extend their endeavour to the Francis colliery, Fife, which is also closed. Rather than showing the strength of Scottish miners, this is an indication of their weakness, and the lack of effectiveness of the NUM since the 1984-5 strike. As heroic as the miners' Great Strike was, it failed to prevent the destruction of the industry. Miners at Monktonhall feel deserted by the Scottish NUM leadership and have no faith in a new strike. They see the current road as the only way to keep their pit open. But the fate of the miners still lies with the lottery of capitalism. In the past, cooperative ventures have left workers picking up the tab, such as Meriden in the 1970s. But the fact that the miners of Monktonhall have resorted to trying to carve themselves a niche in the capitalist market is a result of the failure of the leadership to provide a strategy directed against that market. SR

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## New money

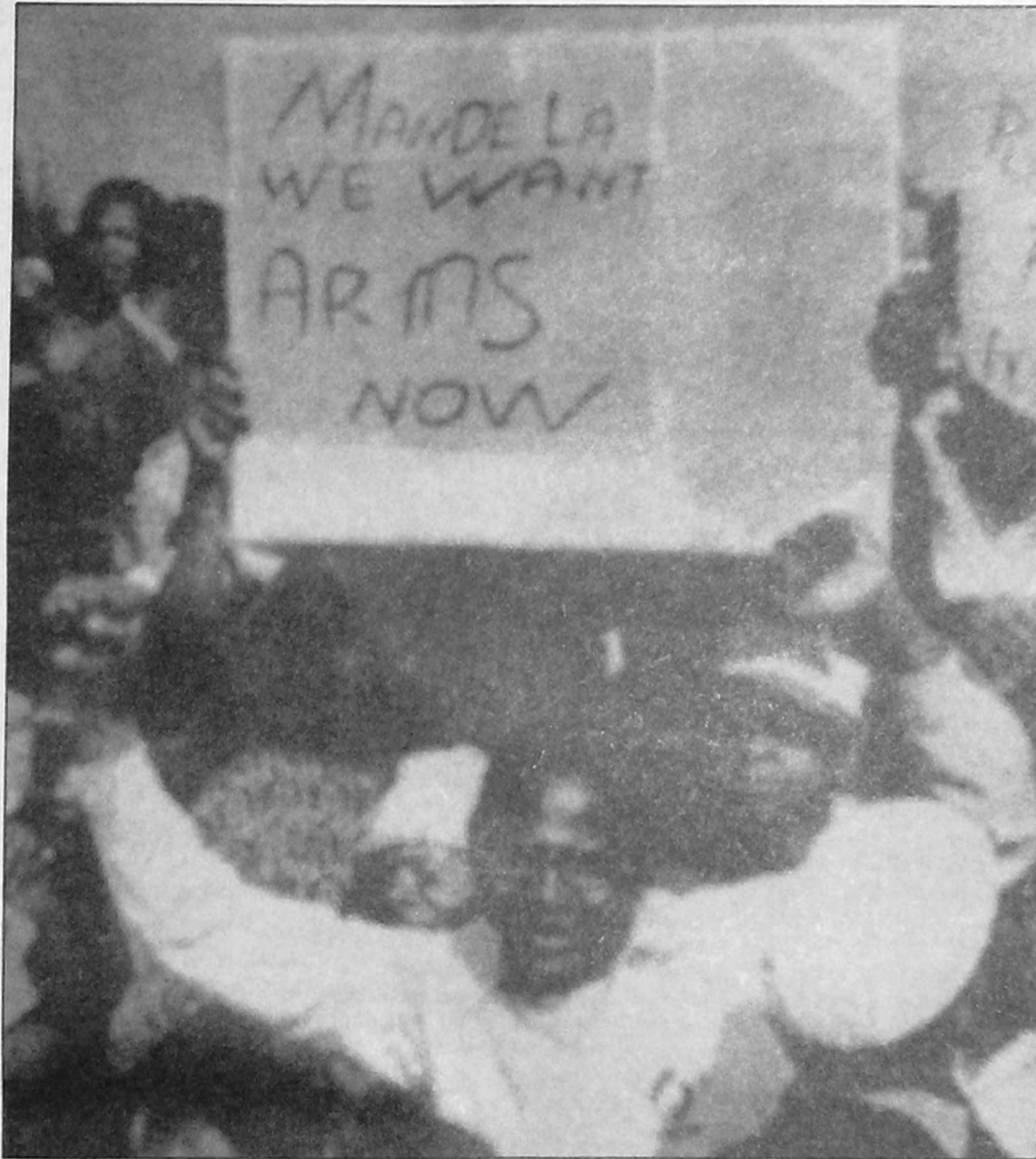


Comrades have been raking in money for the important political work of our organisation this year. This means that regular contributors have been channelling their funds towards the organisation, not the paper recently. Now, more than ever, we are looking to those of you who have not put their hands in their pockets for us. We rely on our readers' support - from single pounds to thousands - for the regular publication of this paper. We know you can: you know you should.

Vernon Douglas  
Fund organiser

# South Africa: revolution on a knives' edge

The crisis that grips South African society will not last forever



The ANC leaders want reform, the masses want guns. And the masses are right

**‘E**NOUGH,” read the banners at the protest rally to bury the victims of the Boipatong township massacre, “is enough”.

Forty two people hacked, stabbed and shot to death by the fascistic thugs of Inkatha on June 17 were mourned by over 40,000 black South Africans who packed into the rundown Boipatong football stadium to bury their dead.

During the course of the funeral rally, they heard fiery, angry speeches from Jay Naidoo, general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, Chris Hani, leader of the South African Communist Party, key figures of the Pan African Congress and Azapo, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's secretary general. These leaders in the liberation movement threatened general strikes, denounced the “murderous De Klerk regime” and pointed out the undoubted complicity of the army and government in training and unleashing the Inkatha “vigilantes” on the black communities.

The black working people of South Africa have heard this sort of rhetoric before. The willingness of the ‘ordinary’ people of this country to fight, to sacrifice and suffer for the revolution, for the end of the hated system of apartheid and the economics of superexploitation that fostered it has never been in doubt. Their leaders - whatever their fine words - are squandering that raw energy. They are leading the black masses of South Africa towards counter-

revolutionary disaster. That is why genuine revolutionary forces in the movement, and in particular organised in and around the South African Communist Party, have a duty to provide leadership.

And they must do this now. The revolutionary crisis that currently grips South African society will not last forever.

The *Financial Times* is an intelligent bourgeois paper written for the bourgeoisie, not a bourgeois paper written for the masses. As such, it does not set out to bamboozle its readership. It needs to have an accurate assessment of the state of the revolution in order to defeat it. Thus when in article after article it talks about South Africa heading towards what it chooses to call “ungovernability”, we understand what it means. Although it uses different vocabulary reflecting its position as a defender of the capitalist order - the people who do the ‘governing’ at the moment - what this sober, level-headed paper of the British establishment is pointing to is what communists have been saying since 1976.

South Africa is in a profoundly revolutionary situation. But what do communists mean by a revolutionary situation?

A revolutionary situation is a state of deep, organic crisis. It is a situation in which the revolution can take place if, taking advantage of the deteriorating economic, social and political conditions, the working class and its revolutionary allies are organised and able to strike at the old regime with sufficient ferocity.

Contrary to what opportunists and renegades from

Marxism think, revolutionary situations are not arbitrary options that can be turned on and off like a tap. They express fundamental, organic crises of capitalism. They can only be resolved positively by revolution and the victory of the progressive working masses, or negatively by the imposition of fascist barbarism to save the regime.

They cannot, as the leaders of the ANC and SACP seem to think, be negotiated out of existence by well meaning platitudes around a table with cynics like De Klerk. Indeed, the longer the leadership of the movement prevaricates and deflects the revolutionary anger of the people, the more likely it is that anger and energy will be dissipated and exhausted. The compromising, reformist strategy of the leadership of the ANC and SACP is in effect making the victory of capitalist barbarism more likely in South Africa.

## Lenin

Lenin outlined three symptoms that characterise the existence of a revolutionary situation.

●First, when the suffering and the oppression of the masses has grown even more acute than usual and they can no longer tolerate life in the old way.

●Second, when there is a crisis, in one form or another, in the politics of the ruling class, when its monolithic unity in the face of the masses is disturbed producing fissures through which the outraged activity of the oppressed classes burst forth.

●Third, as a consequence of these two features there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses who uncomplaining allow themselves to be robbed in “peace time”. (see Lenin CW Vol 21 pp213-217).

As Lenin said: “Without these objective changes”, which are “independent of the will, not only of individual groups and parties but even of individual classes, a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible” (our emphasis, *Ibid* p214).

The totality of these factors constitutes a revolutionary situation. When these economic and socio-political conditions, which are objective and outside the will of people to affect, have matured, the subjective factor becomes all important. The subjective element in a revolutionary situation is conscious human activity. It consists of three relatively independent, but closely related factors: the revolutionary consciousness of the masses; the level of organisation of all the working people, the working class first and foremost; the Communist Party, its capacity to lead and organise correctly.

## Soweto

The revolutionary situation was born in 1976 with the Soweto uprising, triggered nominally by the insulting attempt to make black students learn in Afrikaans. At a deeper level, the explosion was rooted in the objective social and economic conditions of South Africa.

With the end of the world capitalist boom of the 1960s and early 1970s in the world economy, South Africa ran into trouble. Its economy was highly integrated with those of Britain and US imperialism and it was unable to protect itself from the general recessionary wave that swept across the capitalist world.

The crisis was characterised by instability of gold prices and rising inflation and an increase in unemployment to 2 million. It hardly needs to be stated that the black masses of South Africa bore the brunt of this economic crisis.

Thus, in 1976, the underlying economic system of superexploitation and the increasingly intolerable national oppression and denial of democracy for Indians, coloureds and blacks gave rise to one of the symptoms of revolutionary situations - where the masses “do not want to live in the old way”.

The second symptom - a “crisis in the policy of the ruling class leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the masses burst forth” - also erupted in 1976 and continues to this day. There developed a shortage of skilled workers that the numerically small privileged white labour aristocracy could not fill.

Hence the Wiehahn Commission was established just three months after Soweto uprising, charged with finding solutions to this problem in the structure of the South African labour market and ways to monitor and control the growing black trade unions.

The ‘liberal’ proposals of the Wiehahn Commission provoked a backlash from ‘diehard’ elements of the white establishment. Under pressure from the revolution on one side and reaction on the other, Botha adopted the slogan ‘adapt or die’ as the country entered the 1980s. This approach provoked further fissures with the emergence of the verligte (“enlightened”) and verkrampte (“hard”) wings of the National Party. The split was formalised in 1982 with the breakaway of the rightwing Conservative Party.

The differing methods of containment of the revolutionary situation adopted by the white establishment over the years - and the failure of all of them thus far - express the inability of the ruling class to rule in old way. From Vorster’s eternal ‘separate development’, Botha’s alternation between reform with

his 'adapt or die' slogan and his terroristic 'state of emergency' to De Klerk's 'peace negotiations' - the people have frustrated every manoeuvre of the old regime.

The inability to forge a united front in the face of the revolution today is electorally expressed by the "broedertwis" (a brothers' quarrel) between the Conservative Party, the Nats and the rise of the fascist AWB. The white establishment is deeply split over how to deal with the crisis in society.

So, as a result, the third element Lenin identified as 'symptomatic' of a revolutionary crisis - a "considerable increase in the activity of the masses" has emerged and became permanent. While the mass activity of the people ebbs and flows, the 3 millions strong stay-away against VAT in the autumn of last year, as well as the countless actions and demonstrations day to day in the townships indicate that the masses are on the move.

## Leadership

Under these life and death conditions, the subjective factor, centrally the leadership of the working class embodied in the Communist Party, becomes the key question to the positive resolution of the crisis.

This is why communists - as people who are passionately concerned with the fate of the revolution in that country - must judge the statements and policies of the SACP with absolute clarity, sobriety and scientific detachment.

Numerically the people subjectively seeking revolution in South Africa are certainly strong; politically though there is a lagging behind. Rank and file ANC supporters greet Mandela with banners demanding "give us arms!" when he visits the site of the latest massacre. But these forces are being given no coherent, cutting political platform to mobilise around. This must be the urgent task of genuine communists, since the official leadership of the movement - the ANC and SACP tops - are trying their best to actively behead the revolution.

In effect, the leadership of the ANC are using the threat of the masses as a big stick to cajole the government to the negotiating table. In the aftermath of the Boipatong massacre, the ANC broke off all negotiations with the De Klerk government, while underlining that they remained committed to a "negotiated settlement". The talks did not founder because of Boipatong, however. As *The Economist* noted, "the negotiations have all along coexisted with bloodshed" (June 27 1992).

In fact, the breakdown of the Codesa (the negotiating bloc of 19 organisations including the ANC, the National Party and the murderous Inkatha Freedom Party) talks last month was precipitated by arguments over the percentage of reserved white seats in a 'post apartheid' constitution.

Boipatong came the day after the ANC began a campaign of "mass protests" against the government's Codesa stance. In fact, sickeningly, government ministers led by De Klerk blamed the massacre on this ANC 'provocation'.

The ANC has turned 'mass mobilisation' on and off as a compliment to their fruitless talks with the fowl Pretoria regime. The problem for the ANC - and ultimately the government - is that the masses will begin to slip from the hands of Mandela and co.

Of course, Mandela and the ANC leadership are heroes of progressive opinion of all humanity. But at the same time, we must say that they will unconsciously lead the South African masses to disaster unless they are replaced by others. The logic of their programme will take these individually heroic people to the same position as a Kautsky or as the leaders of German social democracy who murdered Luxemburg and Leibnecht, who unleashed the Freikorps on the Berlin masses. These too were sincere individuals who probably thought they were doing the best thing for the working class; they were certainly committed socialists who had made great personal sacrifices for their cause.

Despite their personal calibre, the ANC leadership are not even socialists. Their movement has an implicitly bourgeois programme - the Freedom Charter. Mandela himself is not compelled anymore to come out with pro-communist statements as he once did. The reason is simple, of course. His movement is no longer given arms and support by the Soviet Union. If anyone is now getting the support of what was the Soviet Union, it is the government of the butcher De Klerk.

Broadly, the ANC is replicating the approach of the Constitutional Democrats in pre-October 1917 Russia. 'It is either us, or the revolution' they tell the regime.

It is in this context that we must evaluate the negotiations that they have undertaken with the government. Of course, it would be foolish to say that revolutionaries never negotiated. But in the concrete circumstances of today's South Africa, with the brutal nature of the De Klerk regime so blindingly obvious - why?

Strategically it is wrong to talk to the De Klerk government, tactically it is wrong. Implicitly, the ANC is telling the masses that their main enemy is no longer the regime, but those who could replace the regime. Yet the source of Inkatha, of the AWB, of all

reaction is the state, the regime itself.

Of course, it may be legitimate tactically for the forces of the revolution to negotiate with elements who are disgruntled with the government, perhaps sections of the liberal white business community. But this would have only the limited aim of exacerbating the splits in the ruling class front, of prising your enemy further apart. By talking directly to the government in today's conditions, the ANC is presenting the main problem of the people to them as part of the solution.

The working masses of South Africa need to be given one central aim - to fight and smash their main enemy - the state. This does not mean we ignore other enemies, but rather we deal with them on the way. We must not be diverted into dealing with them exclusively, or even thinking that the government can 'deal' with the likes of the AWB.

We say - no negotiations with the state! Arm the workers against it! Those who are not positively equipping the masses, ideologically and physically to make the revolution, are in effect disarming them in the face of fascism and counterrevolution.

If the broadly correct historical analogy for the ANC is that of the Constitutional Democrats in pre-revolutionary Russia - liberal capitalist politicians concerned above all else to make sure that the revolution does not happen - what of the other wing of the 'liberation alliance', the mass South African Communist Party?

To further develop the historical parallel, the SACP could be said to be playing the role of the Russian Mensheviks to the ANC's Constitutional Democrats.

Counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union, initiated from the top by the traitor Gorbachev in the 1980s and culminating in the August 19 counterrevolution of last year, has had profound effects on the SACP leadership. They have moved from a position of left centrism, to right centrism - from at least a formal commitment to the revolution and armed struggle, to reformist betrayal of the black masses.

In 1985, the leadership of the Party was able to correctly characterise the situation in the country. Along with us, they could recognise that "the revolutionary situation in South Africa is maturing. The nation-wide crisis is deepening, affecting both the oppressed and exploited as well as the oppressors and exploiters. Increasingly, the ruling class acts in a way which shows that it cannot rule in the old way. At the same time, growing numbers among the exploited classes and the oppressed fully realise that revolution is necessary and are prepared to die for it." (Statement of the central committee of the SACP in *African Communist*, January 1985 No101).

Militants in the SACP must ask their leadership - when did this revolutionary understanding of the crisis become redundant? What has justified the SACP's dumping of such an important element of its own programme? What has changed? The nature of the South African regime, or the nature of the leadership of the Party?

The SACP desperately needs a Bolshevik wing, dedicated to defending, developing and giving real social content to many of the correct positions the SACP has advanced over the years of struggle.

To the many militants in South Africa looking for the correct forum to advance the struggle ideologically, we say that they should orientate themselves to a fight in the SACP. This organisation's roots in the working class, its nationwide influence, make it the correct vehicle for revolutionaries to fight for a strategically correct working class orientation for the movement in South Africa.

The SACP *Manifesto*, agreed by the December 1991 eighth congress, the first legal congress inside the country for 40 years, underlines the Menshevik orientation of the leadership of the Party. "Internationally", it states "the deep crisis, in fact, the virtual end of the world socialist system has had, and will continue to have a negative impact on our own struggle. The imperialist bloc is, as we have noted, now more powerful, confident and aggressive. On the other hand (partly linked to the end of the old, two bloc, Cold War system) there is now a worldwide tendency to make relatively peaceful transitions towards greater democracy in formerly anti-democratic countries".

The collapse of the world socialist system, the strengthening of the rapacious system of world imperialism, is somehow meant to have made peaceful 'transitions' more possible! The leadership of the SACP must be held to account for this monstrous assertion. There is certainly precious little evidence of peaceful transitions in South Africa today!

In classic Menshevik fashion, the leadership of the Party now limit their aims to the achievement of 'democracy' - nothing more. As SACP chairman Joe Slovo puts it, "we give notice that we, as an independent party of socialism, will exert every political effort to orientate this mixed economy [ie in a 'democratic' South Africa - IM] in a socialist direction" (*Morning Star* December 7 1991).

Like the Mensheviks that Lenin struggled against, the present-day leadership of the South African Communist Party envisages the role of the working class and their Party in any democratic capitalism as a 'party of extreme revolutionary opposition'. Having supported the bourgeoisie into power, the working

class would supposedly only then start thinking about socialism - for the SACP it has to be relegated to after the consolidation of 'normal' bourgeois rule.

Contrasting this with the 1985 quote below illustrates just how far the SACP has travelled: "in the struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution" [replaced of course with national democratic transformation in the leadership's new *Manifesto*, p8] "the working class cannot lose sight of its obligation as the midwife of the socialist revolution. The proletariat is interested not merely in the success of the democratic revolution, but also that this revolution is thoroughgoing and ... these workers must engage in struggle ... to make their imprint on the democratic revolution and to prepare the condition for an uninterrupted advance from popular democracy to proletarian rule" (*African Communist*, No101 1985).

The dream of a multi-racial, prosperous capitalist democracy that today animates the ANC and SACP is simply a utopia. The fact is that South Africa cannot afford democracy. As a *Financial Times* survey succinctly noted, "democracy cannot survive without growth" (June 5 1992). Or, put even more pithily by John Kane-Berman, director of the South African Institute of Race Relations, "we all, whites and blacks, think we are entitled to Swedish social security, but with Polish GDP. It won't work like that" (quoted in *Ibid*).

South Africa's economy will be in the red while the bourgeoisie runs it - whatever their pigmentation. The country's record of growth over the past decade could hardly be more "dismal", concludes the survey cited above. Real gross domestic product per capita has fallen by 1.1 per cent annually for the past ten years, leaving an estimated 5.5 million people - some 40 per cent of the potential workforce - unemployed.

Privately, senior Nationalist Party officials envisage a period of authoritarian rule until the end of the decade, imposed in the interests of "stability and economic growth", as the *Financial Times* coyly puts it: "the ANC, worried about its ability to control its own constituents, seems likely to agree."

'Us or the revolution', warn the ANC leaders, and allow themselves to be drawn into the process of disarming and policing their own supporters whose demands for freedom have become too embarrassingly 'bad for business':

"In a passage chillingly reminiscent of the bad old days of apartheid, a working document agreed to by all the Codesa parties notes that 'special measures are necessary to deal with the threat to public order during the transition period', including detention without trial ... and powers to declare a state of emergency on the advice of an unelected interim executive appointed by Codesa" (*Ibid*).

All the *Financial Times*, all the ruling class internationally are relying on is "luck ... Christian commitment ... and the desire for economic advancement". You could have said the same for Poland. ANC and SACP militants should look at the bourgeois 'democracy' allowed in that country and ask themselves is: that what the masses have fought and suffered so long to win?

## Fascism

A revolutionary situation is not a luxury. It is not something that revolutionaries choose as opposed to the parliamentary road because we are more bloody minded.

As we have shown above, it exists outside the will of human beings, independent of whether we want it or not. For the working classes in a society thrown into such a crisis, it becomes a matter of life and death to make the revolution. For the bourgeoisie to survive, on the other hand, they must crush it.

In these dire situations both classes look to violence; not as whim but as necessity, both look to smash the other side.

Yet this willingness to use violence on the part of the ruling class - in the 'legitimate' form of its security services, or its 'irregulars' like Inkatha or the AWB - does not mean that the regime as a whole is fascist, as some on the left in South Africa already claim.

The defining feature of fascism is not violence. No, the characteristic feature of fascist regimes is counterrevolutionary monolithicism. Of course, fascism will move to brutally crush the organisations and the fighting potential of the revolution through naked, barbaric terror.

But crucially, it also resolves through force the splits within the ranks of the ruling class and its popular base, the splits that allowed the revolutionary mass action to break out in the first place.

Once fascism has resolved the schisms within the ruling class which paralysed it in the face of the revolution, it can then move with unbridled ferocity against the working masses and do what is necessary to save the capitalist regime: that is, to smash the organisations of the popular masses and annihilate its leadership.

Obviously, we are not yet at this stage in South Africa, but the signs are ominous. To underline our point, the crisis in the country is organic, endemic to

the capitalist system itself there. It cannot be talked away.

At some point, a section of the ruling class will move to resolve this crisis negatively, through fascism, if the revolutionary forces do not act to break the impasse.

We cannot say with certainty yet what form fascism will take in South Africa. It could, ironically, have a black face. The counterrevolutionary Inkatha Freedom Party is being turned loose on the forces of revolution and their supporters informally at the moment. De Klerk's visit to Inkatha's HQ on June 16 was obviously timed to give the green light to "every war-lord, every death squad, every assassin and every impi in our country", as Chris Hani of the SACP put it.

If the South African bourgeoisie turned as a final resort to Inkatha, the movement would of course be turned, with the official backing of the state behind it, onto the black working class. If you want an example of what that looks like, examine the pogroms in the earlier years following the gutter thugs of the German Nazi Party's accession to power.

But at the same time, an Inkatha regime, or whatever form South African fascism took, would act to smash a section of the white establishment itself, to impose a counterrevolutionary unity on the ruling class - by the sword if necessary.

Who knows where this would come from? *The Independent* of December 28 last year reported a mood among the South Africa security police, special forces and military intelligence who see themselves as "the last line of defence against the godless anarchy of black African rule". In the past, we have pointed to "the encroachment of a military establishment [into South Africa political life - IM] whose areas of influence and concern are far wider than simply the 'technical' affairs of the military profession ... Will the South African military forces stage a fascist coup d'etat?" (*The Leninist*, December 27 1987).

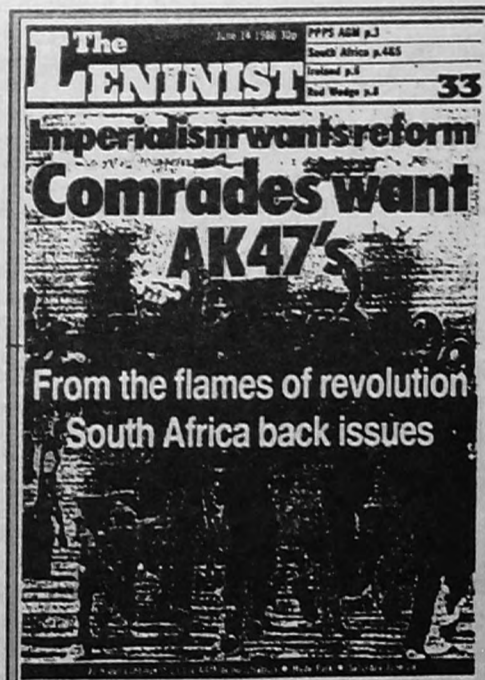
We could continue to speculate on the precise form of South African fascism. This would have limited value. The points that need to be emphasised with certainty are these:

● That unless the revolution situation is resolved positively through revolution, the bourgeoisie of South Africa will turn to fascism to resolve the threat of the black masses and their own internal contradictions.

● That the main danger, the source of reaction whether in the form of the SADF, the Inkatha Freedom Party or the AWB, is the South African state itself, currently headed by the murderer De Klerk. Any attempts to present the regime as the potential saviour of the black masses are betrayals of the revolution.

Communists in Britain are breathlessly watching events in South Africa unfold. The revolutionary forces in this country have a tremendous opportunity. Their revolutionary crisis is taking place in a peculiar world context of the general defeat and retreat of socialism. They have an opportunity to strike a mighty blow against this period of world reaction by making the revolution. We are confident that people in this country will find answers. The masses are still moving forward, but into a very complex, highly dangerous period. Their leaders themselves are unconsciously betraying the revolution and opening them up to the forces of counterrevolution. The moment of reckoning for the South African revolution is now approaching fast.

Ian Mahoney



The fire last time: the masses are demanding guns again, and the ANC leadership joins in the call for reform.

Read the communist position on the South African revolution in selected back issues of *The Leninist*, available from our box number, price £5



## OUR HISTORY

# 'Re-establishing' the Second International

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

The Communist Party of Britain is not an organisation to let events unduly upset it. Nearly a year after the Soviet counterrevolution, three years after the collapse of the socialist states of Eastern Europe, it is finally getting round to taking account of this in its programme, the British Road to Socialism. The current version bases its reformist strategy on the power of the socialist states, which could prevent capitalist repression of socialist forces. So is it back to the barricades for the CPB? Let's be serious. Only the first chapter, which deals with the international situation, will be amended. Perceptive observations like the Soviet Union no longer existing will no doubt be included. The rest of this redundant pamphlet will remain unchanged. With the flurry of discussion and polemic engendered by the BRS revision, an open meeting was convened on July 5. So excited was the CPB membership that almost 10 of them turned up.

One can only wonder at CPB secretary Mike Hicks telling the readership of the Morning Star that "Only the CPB can fill the Labour Party vacuum" (June 29). Given that Mike only does the job part time, he is obviously wise enough not to stake his livelihood on this. Or perhaps by "Labour Party vacuum" he means the appliance that is used to clean the carpets in Walworth Road. Fair point. If you pack the CPB's active membership up good and tight, they ought to fit snugly into one of those little disposable dust bags.

Eastern European anti-communist purges are going from rabid to just plain silly. In Czechoslovakia, the west's favourite woolly liberal, Vaclav Havel, has been accused of being an "unconscious collaborator". Arch anti-communist president Lech Walesa of Poland has had the finger pointed at him for informing on other Solidarity members in 1980. Is no one safe? Next they will be telling you that Boris Yeltsin was once a leading member of the Soviet Communist Party...

Chris Patton, the Tories' Hong Kong exile, seems to be discovering the virtues of democracy in that island of free-market capitalism. The St George of democracy against the Red Chinese dragon! There's just one puzzling thing: why did it take a century or more for Britain to discover the virtues of Hong Kong democracy. Answers on a postcard, please.

**T**HE FOUNDING of the Communist International in March 1919 provided a pole of attraction for class conscious workers inspired by the October Revolution. Large sections of parties allied to the discredited and defunct Second International rejected reformism and sought affiliation to the new revolutionary centre.

The Labour Party in Britain was at the forefront of attempts to resurrect the Second International, to halt this trend and organise opposition to the Comintern. As part of its efforts, the Labour Party wrote to the CPGB, providing an opportunity for this devastating reply, which was published in the Party paper and as a special pamphlet.

Your letter addressed to the Socialist and Communist Parties of the world states that the Congress of the Second International held in Geneva in July-August, 1920, instructed the British Labour Party to approach other socialist and Labour organisations with a view to re-establishing the Socialist International; and that the British Labour Party, on the understanding that it was to have a free hand, accepted the invitation.

In a concluding paragraph your signatories state "In accordance with the resolution passed at Geneva, we are addressing this to all Socialist sections and not to selected groups. We decline to take part in mere sectional movements and we feel convinced that the Socialist bodies of the world will agree with us that to act under the inspiration of petty exclusivism will never provide for Socialism the international organisation which it requires." As stated above, the letter is specifically addressed to "the Socialist and Communist Parties of the world."

The all-embracing spirit here manifested is in refreshing (and suspicious) contrast to the petty exclusivism which denied the Communist Party of Great Britain affiliation to the British Labour Party. Apparently the Labour Party changes its policy in accordance with its needs at the moment.

In its opening paragraphs the letter deals with the failure (we prefer to call it the apostasy of its leaders) of the Second International during the war. The apology advanced is that the collapse was part of a general breakdown affecting all sections of the international socialist movement; that it was due to the unavoidable splitting up of all sections of the population into national groups as a direct result of the passions engendered by war; that, in short, the Second International was the unwilling victim of a catastrophe that inevitably dissolved international relations of all kinds:

"When the war broke out the Second International was not strong enough to stem the currents created by militarist imperialism and capitalism. It tried at Basle in 1912, and again in Brussels only a few days before the outbreak of hostilities, but its attempts were in vain. Europe, socialist and non-socialist, broke up into national groups as fighting proceeded, and some of these groups which are now blaming the Second International most bitterly for its failure joined in the debacle."

To say that all sections of the socialist movement were swept away by national passion is no defence - it is an indictment.

It is not even true, for in every

country there was a fraction that fought steadfastly against the war-mongers, and although in most it was only a small fraction, in some, as in Italy, Serbia, and Russia, it was practically the whole Party.

At most, it touches only effects, whereas what is needed is an explanation of a cause.

Why then was the International Socialist movement swept away? Why did the Second International collapse? The answer lies in the second International itself; in its doctrines; its mentality; its whole ideology.

The Second International collapsed because of very definite and well-understood reasons. For a whole generation it had preached the doctrine of triumphant parliamentarism in the countries under its sway. The socialist movements affiliated to it had increased their voting power enormously, and in some cases had entirely squeezed out or rather absorbed, the old liberalism. Constitutionalism reigned supreme, and the revolutionary ideals that had dominated the First International had become dissipated in the quest for minor reforms, and in the day-by-day struggles for dialectical victories on the floors of the representative assemblies. Electoral success, instead of being a means for carrying on the revolutionary fight, had been elevated into an end in itself. And always the delusion grew that it was possible, given the requisite majority of representatives, to vote capitalism slowly out of existence...

In short, the Second International had lost its soul long before the outbreak of war, and the protests made at the Brussels Conference, on which stress is laid in your letter, were actuated more by ordinary pacifist motives than by any real desire to rally the workers of the world to a revolutionary fight against war, as a preliminary to the overthrow of capitalism.

The failure of the Second International in the time of trial was inevitable. Any other International organised on the same foundation of reformism must fail as tragically in the future. In the name of unity you call upon us to help re-establish such an International. In the name of the world revolution, we decline. We refuse to betray the workers of the world in such fashion. Instead, we call upon the workers in all countries to form up in the Communist Parties that follow the banner of the Third International.

Much credit is taken in your letter for the efforts which have been made since the Armistice of November, 1918, to consolidate international unity. At Berne, Amsterdam, Lucerne, and Geneva, we are told, the British representatives made repeated attempts to achieve this end, but without much success. Indeed, it was impossible. The national hatreds and jealousies aroused by the war, for the intensification of which the very persons who met at these congresses were themselves individually and collectively responsible, prevented such a consummation. At the last congress held (that at Geneva in August 1920, nearly two years after the Armistice), for example, the delegates felt compelled to preface their pious socialist resolutions by forcing a degrading acknowledgement of responsibility for the war from the German delegates. That acknowledgement would have come more appropriately from the whole body of delegates there assembled than from any section of it. By discussing war responsibilities at all the

delegates proved clearly their bourgeois nationalist outlook and their complete inability to understand the international socialist position. Moreover, during the period under review the one fact that dominated the international situation was the Russian Revolution; then, as now, fighting a glorious battle against a whole world of capitalist enemies. It is not enough to say, as do your signatories, that capitalist attacks upon Russia were protested against and opposed...

Mr J Ramsay MacDonald, at least, did not attempt to hide his sentiments towards Soviet Russia, as the following quotation will show: "The whole Second International is anti-Bolshevik. It is indeed the only real bulwark against Bolshevism short of military executions." (*Labour Leader* August 14th, 1919.) At the time this was written our Russian comrades were still fighting desperately against the counter-revolutionaries with the result still in the balance and victory not yet achieved.

The same congress, too, greeted the return of its Hungarian comrades to the democratic principles of the International, "as a prelude to a protest against the White Terror of Horthy. But that Terror had followed upon the suppression of the Soviet regime under Bela Kun. By the "return to democratic principles" the congress meant the return to the fold of the Second International of the social democrat traitors who by fraud and trickery had betrayed the Soviet government to the Entente, and brought about thereby the overthrow of that Hungarian revolutionary working class which had made a magnificent, and, for a time, victorious struggle against its exploiters only to fail in the end. So failed the Communards of Paris in 1871; but any so-called International which had dared to "greet" their overthrow in the Geneva manner would, by that act alone, have condemned itself to the oblivion it richly deserved.

That the International conferences mentioned have examined and passed decisions on the war problems (Peace Treaty, League of Nations, war responsibilities, and so on) is not convincing proof of the fitness of the Second International to lead the international working class in its struggle for the abolition of capitalism. All the capitalist governments, all the bourgeois political organisations, have done the same. Such academic discussions show clearly the difference between the two Internationals - the Second and the Communist.

The one is a bureau for bourgeois research and debate, the other a general staff for revolutionary action.

...[Y]ou remark: "Some social democratic governments, in the early days after the war, were suddenly faced by armed revolts of the left, and suppressed these revolts by similar means." Your comment that this was deplorable is far too mild. It was a crime against the international working class. Nevertheless, as you state you do not desire to shirk attack on the issue, it is well to notice how carefully the names of Herr Noske and the German Majority Socialist Party, of which he was a leading member, are kept out of your reference. And that omission is deliberate as well as wise. Rarely has a single individual been regarded with such world-wide detestation as the same Herr Noske; and the fact that the German Majority Socialist, together with the British Labour Party, constitute the backbone of the Second International is no recommendation to the latter body, though it explains much in

your letter. The foul murders of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg can be laid directly at the door of those upon whom you deem it necessary to bestow a special paragraph of apology. But more sinister than this reference to the past is your anticipation of the future:

"We cannot help feeling but that a full and honest discussion of a problem which may confront any country which is passing through revolutionary conditions, at any moment, is most essential if we are to re-establish some international understanding which will be the basis of socialist action in the future and clarify the problems of the transition period."

Point is given to this observation by the persecution of Communists in Georgia and Yugoslavia. In neither case have "armed risings of the left" taken place, but the persecution is there all the same. If, in any country passing through revolutionary conditions (and all countries are in that position) a Noske suppression is possible, the remedy lies, not in a rapprochement with those who so readily undertake to preserve the dying capitalist regime, but in such a strengthening of the left as will make suppression impossible. In the class war there can be neither impartiality nor neutrals.

Finally, on the plea of urgency you make an appeal for the re-establishing of the International. You fear that because of the lack of unity the old order will stabilise itself, and reform round itself interests that will be difficult to dispossess, and prejudices that will be hard to overcome. The danger is indeed great and calls for energetic action on the part of the workers of the world. There are two courses open. First, to continue along the old Second International lines of prewar days; to regard capitalist society as an organism whose ills must be cured by the cooperation of all its members...

That way lies futility, bloody disillusionment, and worse. Pursuing these ideals, the Second International landed into the hell of the great war. All the signs point to a second and greater catastrophe if the same policy be pursued in the future.

The world capitalists are already preparing for their next war. The reforms so glibly put forward serve but to buttress the collapsing structure of capitalism instead of destroying it. Unity of the international forces is indeed imperatively necessary; but on a definitely revolutionary basis, recognising the class war as a real war and not a mere matter of political polemics. The dictatorship of the proletariat to which you refer contemptuously as a "phrase of fluid and uncertain meaning," is no mere phrase but a living fact that is stirring the minds of millions of workers in all countries, and is actually in operation over a great part of Europe.

This basis of unity to which we have referred is already supplied by the Communist International to which the Communist Party of Great Britain is affiliated.

We, therefore, call on the militant class-conscious workers of this country, whether already organised or not, to give allegiance to the Communist International through its national section.

Those leaders of labour, among whom are included the signatories of your letter, who supported their capitalist Governments in time of war may well call for the re-establishment of the Second International which would perpetuate all capitalist Governments in time of peace. For ourselves, we aim at the immediate overthrow of the capitalist regime through the dictatorship of the workers, by means of its effective and increasingly powerful instrument, the Communist International.

On behalf of the Communist Party of Great Britain,  
Arthur MacManus (Chairman),  
Albert Inkpin (Secretary).  
*The Communist* January 1921

Compiled by Doug Hulme

# REVIEW

## Basic prejudice

Paul Verhoeven (Director), *Basic Instinct*.

HOLLYWOOD hasn't exactly been renowned for producing films which portray the lifestyles of lesbians and gays positively. *Basic Instinct* goes nowhere to break from this mould.

A modern day thriller set in San Francisco, the film deals with the brutal murder of a fictitious rock and roll star and the subsequent investigation and interrogation of the prime suspect, the dead man's former lover Catherine Trumell, played by Sharon Stone.

Claimed by many critics to have all the qualities associated with what is traditionally considered to be a good thriller - suspense, intrigue, mystery and erotic sex scenes designed to capture the attention of any viewer, *Basic Instinct* provides reasonable entertainment but, as with other Hollywood movies which use lesbian and gay characters as central to the plot, never fails to move away from the negative, stereotyped image many in society associate with the lifestyles of homosexuals. Indeed, it is this aspect of the film which has caused the most controversy with its many audiences.

Not that we should really expect anything else from the movie pioneers, however. If they were to produce films which dealt positively with homosexuality this would only threaten the much vaunted values of our society, causing great offence to the establishment and slashing billions of dollars out of the pockets of Hollywood's grandees. Lesbian and gay campaigners in the US, however, expect otherwise, and it is from this point of view that their actions leave a lot to be desired.

It is understandable why such activists held many pickets when the film was initially launched. Sleazy, base and squalid lesbian images backed up by cheap homophobic remarks throughout

the movie are enough to cause offence to any lesbian and gay person. Indeed, such images, when coupled with the dark, sinister and manipulative character of Trumell simply reinforce the negative view society has of a lesbian lifestyle and strengthens the commonly held idea that people with such a sexual orientation are, at best, social misfits or, at worst, sick and evil.

One particular spokesperson for the gay activists campaigning in New York demanded that Hollywood had a duty to take the lives of lesbians and gays seriously and to portray their lifestyles positively and without prejudice. Such expectations are not entirely dissimilar to views held by many lesbian and gay groups operating in Britain: that people in a position of power should use their status to positively influence others is not an uncommon belief. As a result, many of their efforts are channelled into persuading the establishment to see the error of its ways and to face its responsibility to homosexuals by behaving rationally and sensibly and encouraging positive images of lesbian and gays in order to overcome the prejudice they continually face.

Unfortunately, the establishment has no vested interest in behaving 'rationally' or 'sensibly'. Indeed, it has every reason to be hostile to the shameless pursuit of same-sex desire and will inevitably go out of its way to castigate people with such a sexual preference.

One of the key institutions within capitalist society is the nuclear family which upholds what we are told to be "traditional family values", ie the "natural" role of men and women to fall in love, marry, have children, etc. Given that same-sex relationships challenge the image and structure of the modern family, its ability to produce labour, as one of the basic resources necessary for the capitalist system to continue, is also challenged. Homosexuals and their lifestyles have, therefore, been branded by the establishment as unnatural, indecent and social deviants in order to protect its interests.

Lesbian and gay activists overlook this important factor when campaigning. While many correctly make de-

mands which would provide basic rights and individual freedoms for lesbians and gays, they incorrectly look to the state to grant them.

Institutions within capitalism are naturally homophobic since they operate in the interests of the capitalist system - to function otherwise would be like shooting and scoring an own goal. Ultimately, Hollywood, with all its wealth, power, prestige and influence can only be expected to perform in the same way. Any institution out to make money has to play by the rules of the system, and, in Hollywood's case, that means producing films which do not overtly challenge the values and morals of capitalist society.

Lesbian and gay people have, understandably, been angered by *Basic Instinct* as the film has perpetuated the negative ideas society has constructed about homosexuals. But having illusions in Hollywood, and ultimately the state, to champion the rights of lesbians and gays is naive and futile.

Activists must start linking the fight against such oppression with the struggles against the attacks on our communities in general, be they education cuts, the poll tax, unemployment, homelessness or racism. Only collective action against the common enemy can rid society of such problems and begin to allow lesbians and gays to achieve and experience permanent rights and freedoms.

Gareth Phillips

## Handbook

Central Committee, Socialist Unity Centre of India, *Life Struggles and Teachings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, SUCI (48 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta - 700013), March 1992, pp80

THE SOCIALIST Unity Centre of India, in reproducing in pamphlet form these two succinct but authoritative scholarly sketches on the lives and works of the founder leaders of scien-

tific communism, has done a great service to all those who, in these dark days of worldwide reaction, are determined to stand firm against the counter-revolutionary tide and are making it their business to reforge our world communist movement and finish the job started in 1917.

The Communist Party of India and CPI (Marxist) are scorned, as "revisionist social democratic parties" which are "hoodwinking the peasant masses by holding out the rosy picture of solving their problems through 'fundamental and thoroughgoing' land reform" - ie redistribution, a 'solution' which Engels dismissed 150 years ago in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, and again in the 1890s in his *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*. Quite rightly, for the SUCI, "the only solution lies in the uninterrupted process of industrialisation which in present conditions is possible only under socialism."

In similar vein the pamphlet provides a brief description of each period in the lives of Marx and Engels, together with an outline of the content of all of their major works, each placed in the context of the historical conditions in which they were written and related closely to the development of the international working class movement in which, together, they played such a central leading role. The combination of comprehensiveness and brevity makes the pamphlet an excellent introductory text for newcomers to the study of Marxism-Leninism, and ensures it a long future as an invaluable handbook to accompany indepth study.

First published in March and July 1991 in the SUCI's central organ, *Proletarian Era*, the pamphlet combines the quiet confidence of scientific certainty with an unbounded enthusiasm born of decades of revolutionary struggle by a disciplined organisation which, since its founding in 1948, has dug deep roots in the Indian working class. "True realisation of Marxism makes one a real man who is free and fearless, thorough and sure about the future".

We are Marxists "because Marx

alone showed the correct scientific path, not only to change the world for the better, but also to change ourselves in the process towards higher culture and ethics". But the SUCI has no gods: "Had anybody other than Marx accomplished this, we would have followed him". Marx was certainly a genius, but the SUCI emphasises that Marxism is not an individual, but a social product - in the words of their founder, and leader until his death in 1976, comrade Shibdas Gosh, Marx's *Capital* was "the best personification of the then social thinking through an individual".

The pamphlet gives the lie to the fashionable attempts of the 1970s to separate Engels from Marxism, portraying Marx as dealing with economics and social science, and Engels as crudely imposing dialectics on the natural sciences. It provides ample evidence of the lifetime of close friendship and joint work of Marx and Engels from their first meeting in Cologne in October 1842 until Marx's death on March 14 1883, maintaining daily correspondence over all theoretical matters and practical questions facing the working class movement.

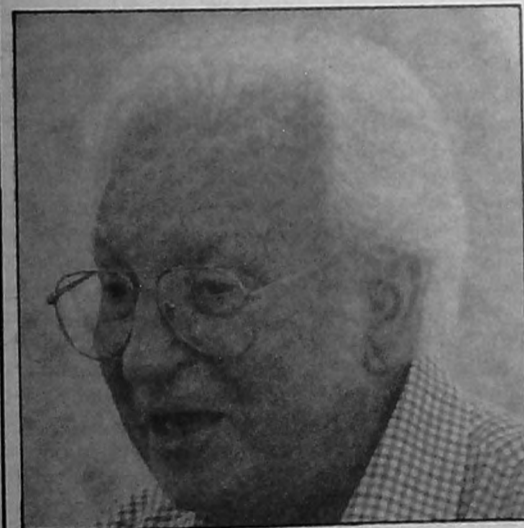
Abandoning Hegelian idealism under the influence of Feuerbach, Engels came to regard "practical criticism" - combining philosophy with action - as indispensable, and recognised "the economic factor as the decisive one in shaping human history". He was in fact a co-founder of Marxism and collaborated in a lifelong division of labour both by working in his father's factory in Manchester in order to provide for the Marx family in London, and by shouldering much theoretical and polemical work to leave Marx free to accomplish his major life's work, *Capital*.

Like Marx, "through actively participating in, organising and leading working class movements ... he became declassified and identified himself with the cause of the proletariat ... Like Marx ... he had no country when he died - he was a truly international proletarian."

Ian Farrell

# ACTION

## Jack Dash Commemoration, 1992



On Saturday June 13 the annual Jack Dash commemoration organised by the Unemployed Workers Charter took place. Jack, the militant dockers' leader and member of the National Unemployed Workers Movement, who died in June 1989, had an important influence on workers, particularly in the east end of London. The UWC was honoured to have him as its first honorary President up until his death.

The event started in King Edward Memorial Park, Wapping, where 35 invited guests gathered to pay tribute to Jack, including a number of dockers, ex London and Tilbury docks, including sacked men from the 1987 dispute, who had been greatly influenced by him over the years. The gathering was addressed

by a number of speakers, including Tony Benn.

Kevin Hussey, the Chair of the Tilbury Dockers Disputes Committee, spoke of Jack as "an inspiring man. A trade union leader that had the courage and commitment, he was a lovely, wonderful man".

Mark Fischer, for the UWC, concluded the speeches by declaring that, "there was only one problem with Jack Dash, he didn't live for ever. We in the working class movement need a thousand Jack

Dash's to fight for the rights of our class".

At the end of the speeches a wreath was laid on the Thames by Kathleen Gander, Jack's daughter.

Later, in the evening a memorial dinner was held in Mile End.

This commemoration will be continued annually to honour and celebrate the life of a truly great working class communist leader, comrade Jack Dash. For us, there is nothing morbid in this celebration: in fact it expresses our determination to honour Jack the way he really would have wanted - by fighting for revolution and working class power.

Nick Clarke (for the UWC)

## European conference

December 10-11 Edinburgh. PCC of the CPGB hosted gathering of workers' organisations from across Europe. For materials and booking form, contact Anne Murphy at our usual address.



### Irish Freedom Movement demonstration

Saturday August 8 - 12.30pm Islington town hall. Again this year, the Communist Party will be mobilising for one of the very few demonstrations organised on the slogans of Troops out now! and Self determination to the Irish people! Join our comrades distributing papers, leaflets and shouting themselves hoarse in our militant, disciplined contingent. Contact us for details.

## Seminars

London: 5pm every Sunday, central London. Current series on 'Historical Materialism'. Seminars are divided into two, with the theoretical opening in the first half and discussion on current questions in the second.

● Sunday July 19: *Feudalism*: - What was feudalism? Were the peasants always revolting?

● Sunday July 26: *Capitalism* - What is economic and non-economic coercion? What allowed capitalism to emerge as the dominant mode of production?

● Sunday August 2: Special meeting to

close Party Offensive 9.

● Sunday August 9: *Dynamism and stagnation* - Does capitalism still allow the forces of production to advance? Is it still progressive?

● Sunday August 16: *Other societies and roads* - What was the Asiatic mode of production? Do all societies have to follow the 'European' 'ladder of progress'?

Glasgow: Our series of seminars in Scotland are continuing. Coming up, seminars on a wide variety of topics including the women's question, imperialism and the miners' Great Strike of the mid 1980s.

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# SUBSCRIBE

# Labour, 'socialist alternatives' and communism

Revolutionary parties are not built by hanging on to reformists' coat tails. Yet the Socialist Workers Party is tightening its grip on Labour's coat

**I**F THERE is one thing that the Labour Party has made well clear, it is that it has, and wants, nothing to do with the interests of the working class. It wants nothing from workers other than our votes.

Sadly, many leftwingers are intent on helping out with this aim. The Socialist Workers Party is a prime example.

"Get the Tories out," screamed the *Socialist Worker* headline on March 21 in the lead-up to the general election. Inside, the call was for a Labour vote, albeit "without any illusions that a Kinnock government will be better".

So why a vote for Labour, when even according to themselves, successive Labour governments have, on election, turned on and attacked viciously the working class which helped to put them in office? The answer was that a Labour win "will make change seem a little more possible" (*Ibid*). Therefore, workers should vote Labour and 'be hopeful', even though they themselves admit that the only change experienced by hopeful working class voters in the past has been a change for the worse. In fact, the channelling of working class militancy into a Labour vote has only served to disarm the working class and allow the Labour Party to push through attacks that the Tories would never have got away with. *Socialist Worker* itself cites the ability of the Wilson government in the 1960s to impose severe wage restraints and spending cuts because it "had an enormous advantage over the Tory government" in that it enjoyed the support of some of the more militant sections of the working class (*Ibid*).

Instead of warning the working class of the dangers of believing that the Labour party would even be a lesser of two evils, the SWP in effect encouraged illusions in Kinnock and his cronies. They tailed what they saw as the wave of popular support for Labour prior to the general election, staging anti-Tory protests in an attempt to drum up even more support for Labour. Remember the prevalence of *Socialist Worker* 'Vote Labour' placards on John Major's walkabouts?

Almost as an afterthought to each 'kick the Tories out - vote Labour' tirade, we were told that what was really crucial was to build a 'socialist alternative'. What kind of a 'socialist alternative' this should be was never expanded on, and one could only assume that the slogan was a not very thinly veiled recommendation to join the SWP: join the SWP where you too can work to get Kinnock into power - surely it would have been more straightforward to join the Labour Party!

Now, the general response to opposing support for Labour, which Lenin called a bourgeois workers' party, is that it is sectarian to do so. This is a rather strange definition of sectarian. Sectarianism in the workers' movement means to put the interests of a narrow group before the interests of the whole class. Yet the only section of the working class that is served by Labour in power is the narrow and corrupt trade union bureaucracy, who long for a return to cosy chats, beer and cucumber sandwiches at No10. As such, Labour is the most sectarian of parties. Those who advocate support for it in these conditions strengthen the hold of that sectari-

anism over the whole working class. Today, opposing support for it, and putting the interests of the working class to the fore as an alternative, weakens that hold. So who are the sectarians?

In the aftermath of the general election the line of the SWP shifted even more to the right as we were told that the Labour defeat was a "disaster for everyone who wants a better society" (*Socialist Worker* April 18). Although it had been telling us prior to April 9 that the election of Kinnock would be in reality no different to the Tories, Labour's defeat had now become a massive strategic defeat for the working class. The SWP had not only actively encouraged workers to vote for an openly bourgeois party, now it was telling us that Kinnock's demise was also our defeat.

The reason for the Labour defeat was that, when it came to the crunch, it had not been able to defeat John Major in the bourgeois stakes. The Tories, always the preferred party of the bourgeoisie, had succeeded in holding their own. This was despite the pale pink Toryism of Neil Kinnock, who had relative success in actually presenting the Labour Party as a credible alternative party of power. Kinnock displayed an open, positive and unswerving commitment to British capitalism. In this he merely followed in the footsteps of MacDonald, Wilson and Callaghan. He had not, as the SWP and others would have us believe, betrayed the past. The history of the Labour Party was never one of socialism. Kinnock had simply carried on the grand old traditional policies of that grand old imperialist party. There was perhaps one difference, however; this time there was no need for him to attempt to dupe workers into believing he was for them. Any duping that needed to be done was faithfully carried out by his sycophants on the left.

According to the SWP, however, the reason for Labour's defeat was because it turned its back on the working class and ditched "the remains of the party's socialist principles" (*Socialist Worker*, April 18). Paul Foot in May's *Socialist Review* bemoans the fact that Labour had not made more of "the tide of hatred against the government". If only, he cries, they had made better use of their propaganda. If only they had made more of incidents such as 'Jennifer's ear', had not travelled around in limousines, had not been so blatantly bourgeois. Then, he is convinced, they would have been able to carry those "vital floaters" who at the last minute switched to the Tories.

Besides accrediting the Labour Party with socialist principles it has never had, and giving it advice on public relations exercises, what exactly is the SWP saying these days?

*Socialist Review* claims that the only way out of the "disaster" of the Labour defeat is to look to - wait for it - a

'socialist alternative'. Labour party activists who are disillusioned must now look to a "different sort of socialism". This recruitment from the right is of course nothing new for the SWP, but it is interesting to note that there is no criticism of the Labour Party as a bourgeois party, merely of the leadership

(*Ibid*).

Underpinning this is the kneejerk leftwing assumption that trade union affiliation to the Labour Party is a good thing. Ask yourself: why? What could be more confusing for rank and file workers than to see so called revolutionaries defending their unions' affiliation to a party that states that it will maintain the Tories' anti-union laws, sides with the government against striking workers, and promises to be no different from the Tories in power? Such a stance only discredits revolutionaries and eradicates their independence from the politics of the ruling class.

As the Labour Party itself has moved swiftly to the right, the SWP has followed in haste. The occasional revolutionary slogan and militant rhetoric has not hampered this development. The SWP in all but membership card has become the loyal left of the Labour Party.

Even more evidence of the SWP's Labour-leftism can be seen in the pages of July's *Socialist Review*. On the question of European unity it has enconced itself comfortably in the ranks of the Benn and Skinner 'little-Englanders' brigade. It applauds what was, in effect, no more than the narrow nationalism of the Danish electorate in voting 'no' to the Maastricht treaty.

Instead of taking a principled working class stance and calling for a proletarian Europe to counter the bosses' Europe, the SWP is agitating for a referendum, where all workers should of course vote 'no' (see the front page of this issue for a critique of this). In doing so they hope to "plunge this government into crisis" (*Ibid*). Support should be given to Benn et al and the Labour party should be put under "increasing pressure to come down against the treaty" (*Ibid*). Thus, in the wave of nationalism the SWP hopes to drum up, the Tories will fall, an election will be called, and (you have guessed it), a Labour government can be elected.

Even if we accept the unfounded illusion that the election of a Labour government would be any kind of move forward (with the anti-working class, anti-abortion bigot Smith in the driving seat) is this a realistic scenario? It is not the chauvinist clown Skinner that is leading the opposition to Maastricht. If it was, there is little to indicate that the character of opposition would be any more progressive: the stance he is taking is unambiguously nationalist; his speeches in parliament have been indistinguishable in content from the anti-Maastricht Tory back benchers. No, it is the likes of Thatcher that are leading the revolt, and whose particular brand of national bigotry is well placed to serve this. Any 'crisis' resulting from such a referendum will be of a national coloration and only serve the right. Or is the SWP thinking of dredging up theories of 'national bolshevism'?

At every twist and turn the SWP abstains from taking an independent

political lead. Even the Anti Nazi League had to be presented by Peter Hain, with the promises that there would be no street battles and confrontations like the 1970s.

'Socialist alternatives' are not built by talking a good revolution some time in the future, telling people how bad things are today, how good they will be under socialism, and then abdicating the responsibility of revolutionary leadership in favour of reformists in the Labour Party. 'Vote Labour but build the socialist alternative', 'Support Prescott but build the socialist alternative': the two halves of each of these two sentences exclude each other. Working class consciousness cannot be advanced by the passive process of voting, less still by voting for a party which promises nothing for the working class. When the left calls for a vote for Labour in Britain under today's conditions, it has the same effect as the left calling for a vote for the Democrats in the US: it reinforces the ties of the working class to the ideology of the ruling class.

Revolutionaries today, no matter how small in number, must fight to create an independent agenda for our class. This involves arguing with workers that they do not have to accept the false opposites that the bosses present us with: Labour or Tory, yes or no to Maastricht. Back in the 1920s, the Communist Party of Great Britain organised a million trade unionists through the openly revolutionary National Minority Movement. It organised hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers through the National Unemployed Workers Movement. It took the lead in the 1926 General Strike. It did this, and more, with a membership of only a few thousand. Yet the SWP claims 5,000 and tells its members and supporters it is too small to undertake a fraction of this work, too small to oppose Labour in practice, too small to do anything other than get dragged in behind Skinner over Europe. We ask SWP members: what is really the problem with your organisation, its numbers ... or its politics?

In the election, the organisation behind *The Leninist*, the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB, stood candidates on a revolutionary platform. In opposition to the capitalists' Europe, and their summit in Edinburgh in December 1992, we are coordinating a conference for a workers' Europe in the same city at the same time, with delegates from workers' organisations from all over Europe and beyond.

You will not be surprised at the news that in the election we won no seats. Our European conference will not stop the bosses dead. But both present a clear revolutionary pole of attraction, one which is linked with action today for a better world tomorrow. Building a real communist alternative is not conditional on reformists, with a 'socialist alternative' stuck on almost as an apology after the 'but'. The 'but...' approach means nothing in practice now, and it is only through practice now that such an alternative can be built.

Those who want a real socialist alternative will not find it in the SWP. They will find it in the practical struggle to reforge a Communist Party, a struggle to which *The Leninist* is dedicated.

Siobhan McLaughlin



No alternative