

The LENINIST

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From Bosnia to Baghdad...

LOOKING AT the media commentary on the Yugoslav civil war, you would think that there is something peculiar in the Serbian character that makes them get a kick out of bombing bread queues, mortaring funerals and strafing school buses. In fact, this may possibly be related to that Iraqi predilection for evicting babies from incubators that we were being told about something over a year ago. And, of course, there is a shared trait, but not between Iraqis and Serbs. As in the Gulf war, the western propaganda machine is marshalling its forces to justify its new world order. To be the good cowboy in the white hat, you need someone in a black hat to growl "this town ain't big enough for the both of us" at.

Iraq's Saddam Hussein has provided an excellent western bogey, taken to such ridiculous lengths as portraying him as "the second Adolf Hitler" during the Gulf war. Whatever Kuwait was, it certainly was not the Sudetenland. The chances of Saddam overrunning Europe up to the Channel and the gates of Moscow were pretty slim. However silly, it gave imperialism an excuse to dish out lashings of Dunkirk spirit.

The fact that imperialism has to search out pathetically weak, dominated and crisis ridden figures like this and then inflate them to such a ridiculous degree shows the fragility of the 'new world order' it is attempting to build.

The Soviet and Eastern European 'evil empire' gave imperialism a tangible enemy to cohere itself against, with anti-communism as the ideological glue. The ills of the world were the result of the reds. But the demise of bureaucratic socialism has not ushered in an era of peace and prosperity, let alone "the end of history", with the triumph of liberal capitalism. Counter-revolution has, at once, turned the crisis ridden bureaucratic socialist states into critical centres of crisis for imperialism, and seriously weakened its weapon of anti-communist demonology. Imperialism is more vulnerable than ever, and with no substantial enemy to blame it on. It must therefore invent enemies. Saddam Hussein is one, conveniently dragged out again to revive George Bush's flagging election campaign.

The innocuous seeming ministry of agriculture in Baghdad was transformed into a hotbed of illegal nuclear research; Iraqi grain silos, presumably manned by an elite corps of sheep, ready to rain plutonium death down on men, women and children. Surprisingly, when United Nations inspectors did gain access to the ministry of agriculture building, the western press complained that "all evidence was long gone". Probably spirited away to a sub post office in downtown Basra.

However pathetic this may seem, imperialism needs to manufacture such excuses to rattle its sabre. As with the attack on Libya in 1987, punitive bombing raids on Iraq could well follow, just to show who's boss and to curry electoral favour at home.

The situation in ex-Yugoslavia has the same possibilities for the west. Now it is the Serbs that are the black hats, with Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic being forced into the ill fitting Hitler mould. The press has had a field day

Entrusting a 'peacekeeping' role to the UN or EC in the republics of what was Yugoslavia is like putting Denis Nilsen in charge of the YMCA

with reports of shot school children, 'ethnic cleansing' and concentration camps. Having fitted one side up for the part, imperialism's PR men would rather keep other little details out of the frame; Croatia's occupation of parts of Bosnia, for instance, or its penchant for the red chequered flag of the fascist Ustaci in the emblems of the new Croatian republic.

Why has Yugoslavia blown now? The establishment has wheeled out sage academics to tell us that these rivalries go back to the middle ages and, basically, on the basis of that such rivalry will last ad infinitum. This is rubbish. In reality, the differences between the regions stem from which empire they were annexed by in the past. Silly 'race' style arguments to explain the conflict cannot even be substantiated historically. The reasons for the civil war have much more to do with the events of the past few years than of the past millennium.

The communist scapegoat is not too convincing, either. Arguments that 'communist terror' repressed the healthy local pursuit of mutual genocide do not hold much water when the masses of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia are faced with the threat of military repression and death in the here and now.

Neither has the old regime created this situation, although it was obviously incapable of resolving the basis for it. This basis is the existence of scarcity in a world economy dominated by imperialism, which generates its own form of scarcity. As long as this exists, the conditions for national and other rivalries are themselves reproduced, alongside the reproduction of scarcity. Even a socialist country where the working class was able to exercise effective democratic control over its own state would not be immune from such problems. But where the working class consciously rules its state, it can consciously confront this. Under bureaucratic socialism, no such situation existed. The working class was not able to exercise itself as a class for itself. It existed in an atomised and alienated way. As such, like the working class elsewhere in Easter Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, it was especially prey to nationalism.

The development of private property also developed the basis for this, as the proto-bourgeoisies and bourgeoisies attempt to eke out their own 'national' markets. The collapse of any semblance of a central plan has given free reign to these tendencies.

This was exacerbated in Yugoslavia by the weak nature of its plan, it being the home of 'market socialism'. As the central plan fell apart, diverse economic interests pulled the republics apart. More developed northern regions, such as Slovenia and Croatia, gravitated towards a closer relationship with European imperialism. Trade wars between the regions escalated, resulting in

full blown war. The secession of Slovenia and Croatia last year was a turning point in this, as they attempted to secure greater room for manoeuvre from the less developed regions.

The existence of minorities within each of the new republics shows that there can be no national solution to the civil war. Paradoxically, it also gives each 'national' bourgeoisie justification for their own expansionist ambitions, to 'liberate' their kith and kin.

The complex intermingling of the many nationalities in these republics, however, could give imperialism indigestion. Germany has been successful in encouraging the secession of Croatia, Slovenia, etc. Further, it has managed to gain recognition for this from the other imperialist powers, despite the reluctance of the US. In doing so, it has opened up the Yugoslav market. But in doing so, it is also witnessing the destruction of that same market. There can be no stable national solution where the

nationalities are so intermingled. This is exacerbated by the fact that Germany and others have a vested interest in encouraging their own client republics to expand their territory as much as possible, to create a viable market. Hence the one sided media persecution of the Serbs, who lack a western backer.

This could well prise the differences between the imperialist powers wider. Germany and Austria have a strong economic interest in the region, and in this they are vying with France, which is trying to make the political running in the region. Intervention, therefore looms as a possibility for such countries, to secure their assets and stamp the 'new world order' as their own.

But Yugoslavia is not Iraq. Greece, and Bulgaria have felt the shock waves from the war, and feel compelled to respond on their own terms. Trouble with Yugoslav Macedonians, for instance, could create problems with Greek Macedonians. As

such, the civil war has immediate national implications directly outside Yugoslavia, within the European Community.

Intervention would prove very messy for the west. United Nations general secretary, Boutros Boutros-Ghali warned against a UN Vietnam in Yugoslavia, and has 'encouraged' the EC to take a direct role in containing the war. Yet the EC members are themselves wary of this. Britain shows its willingness to involve itself in providing full well that the stipulations it makes cannot be met. Yugoslavia creates far more of a basis for inter-imperialist conflict than the Gulf war did. The new world order, it is clear, is just another bloody mess.

The only real basis for stability in the region is class - the fight of the working class for its own interests, a fight which has been swallowed by nationalist war. Imperialism helped create this, through encouraging the break up of Yugoslavia. Liberal calls for 'humanitarian intervention' by the EC or UN can only strengthen nationalism in the region and weaken the working class. The working class needs its own solution - its own state - against the nationalist schemes of the capitalists, east and west.

Sean Quinn

South Africa: reform or revolution?

Mass action must be directed towards smashing the apartheid regime, not reforming it. The ANC is leading workers to a potential catastrophe

THE WEEK of protest called by the African National Congress was highly positive in that at last the South African masses were given the chance to move into action. They did, and on a scale unprecedented in the history of South Africa. In spite of the pundits, they showed that their anger and determination remains undiminished, along with their willingness to fight and, if needs be, die. However, the leadership of the ANC has no intention of using the masses' refusal to be ruled in the old way to make revolution.

The ANC called the action - beginning with the 48-hour general strike - for three reasons: firstly, in the hope of forcing further concessions from the government, thus allowing it to resume negotiations broken off after the Boipatong massacre; secondly, as a protest against the regime's inability or unwillingness to prevent such violence; and thirdly, because it was the very least the leadership could do to avoid losing complete control of its own supporters. According to Nelson Mandela himself,

"The reason why the youth have got completely out of hand is that they are being attacked and there is no visible sign that we are defending them" (*The Guardian* August 3 1992).

Mandela's remarks follow the interview given to the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* by Chris Hani, general secretary of the South African Communist Party, in which he denounced the counter-violence of the movement's militant supporters. Meanwhile, Cyril Ramaphosa, secretary general of the ANC, expressed the hope that peaceful mass action would result in the tensions between 'moderates' and 'hardliners' in the state apparatus giving way to cracks. But there is not a chance that such action could remain peaceful in the present climate, whereas the 'cracks' he correctly envisages could well result in an attempt to impose fascist counter-revolution at the very moment the working class is being disarmed by its own leadership.

As we warned in *The Leninist* No121, "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 counter-revolution" (July 13 1992).

Even more ominously, actions by some groups seem calculated to further weaken and divide the revolutionary forces. For example, the Pan-Africanist Congress, while correctly criticising the 'mass action' as being designed merely to strengthen the hand of the ANC at the negotiating table, has called on its supporters to actively sabotage it by scabbing on the strike.

While there is still time, all genuine revolutionary forces, particularly opposition elements within the SACP, must now not only ensure the effectiveness of the ANC's action, but organise to arm the working class militarily and politically under genuine communist leadership to extend that action to what is now required - the smashing of the apartheid state. The more the delay, the more the door is opened to disaster.

Jim Blackstock



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

TO STATE the obvious, the overwhelming majority secured by John Smith in Labour's leadership contest had nothing to do with his fiery platform rhetoric nor his imaginative vision of the future. Indeed, throughout his career, and certainly during the brief election campaign before his predictable victory, Smith kept both a low profile and low on politics and proposals. The reason for the massive gulf in support between himself and Bryan Gould (who stupidly ran for deputy leader as well) was because Labour's MPs, committee room rulers and the wielders of trade union bloc votes were looking for someone who personified safety, someone who possessed not the merest hint of a radical past nor political passion - John Smith fits the bill, even leaving aside his seaside-postcard name, almost to the point of caricature.

Of course, that does not mean Bryan Gould was the candidate of the left and danger. A few years ago he was one of the main movers of 'new realism', ie the politics of old fashioned class collaboration and open pro-capitalism. Not surprisingly then, the 'battle' between Smith and Gould was a non-event, with a complete absence of political debate. As the 'natural' heir apparent, Smith could afford to keep his mouth shut and await the forgone conclusion, while as the unwanted challenger, Gould's support diminished every time he spoke (to those who dominate the Labour Party nowadays, forcing an election when they wanted a crowning was regarded almost as an act of treason).

Does that mean the Labour leadership contest was without political significance? Well, it had political significance, but only in a negative sense. The whole tussle for leader and deputy leader showed that, at least for the moment, the Labour left has been completely marginalised. Red baiter Ken Livingstone was, revealingly, candidate of the left. But even this piece of political slime could not even get himself on the ballot paper. In point of fact a number of his fellow Campaign Group refused to vote for him, and not because of his rightist record and utterances but because he was considered too leftist!

In the broader context the reason for this state of affairs is the continued weakness of the working class movement. It is still suffering from the effects of the defeat of the miners back in 1985. Moreover, it feels shackled hand and foot by the Tories' anti-trade union laws, lacks any sense of ideological direction and is reeling under the impact of spiralling unemployment.

These conditions, plus the fact that with the collapse of the USSR we are in the midst of an unprecedented period of reaction, inevitably mean the balance in the Labour Party tilts decisively to the right. As a bourgeois workers' party it emphasises not the working class aspect of its physiognomy, but the bourgeois.

Dismissing the *non-choice* between John Smith and Bryan Gould, the ever witty Dennis Skinner quipped that all that separated them was the "thickness of a credit card". True, but if we raise our sights slightly from the internal politics of the Labour Party to the internal politics of the capitalist two party system, it is also true that all that separates John Smith from John Major is the "thickness of a credit card". After the wobble of the early 1980s we really do seem to have arrived again at the Tweedledee-ization of bourgeois politics.

However, it must be emphasised, this is not a return to the social democratic consensus of the 1950s and 60s. Those days are gone forever. Given the growing contradictions of capitalism, its inability to grant meaningful reforms and need to take away those of yesterday, neither Labour nor the Tories have any room for promises to manage the system in the interests of the working class. That is why all John Smith can promise now is to remodel British capitalism along the lines of a Japan, which is renowned for its exceptionally long working hours, poor living conditions and merciless rates of exploitation.

Despite this appalling prospect, we are sure that the Trotskyites, parliamentary roadists and other varieties of opportunism will find the 'lesser of two evils' excuse they need to call for a Labour vote come the next general election (these hypocrites have a nerve to lecture the left in the US for its support for the Democratic Party). Surely it has never been clearer that the task of revolutionaries is not to rescue the Labour Party. Nor is it our task to provide the working class with a "real" Labour Party, as seems to be the aim of both Militant and the SWP.

It may be a long and difficult road, but our task is to equip the working class with a real alternative, an organisation which is dedicated to the destruction of capitalism, not the once every five years non-choice of who administers capitalism. What the working class needs is its reformed Communist Party. That is what we remain dedicated to achieving. As we can see, without it our class is nothing. With it though, our class will be everything.

The Editor

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LETTERS Yugoslavia

So down the plughole goes any talk of revolutionary internationalism. Enthusiastically quoting Engels (*The Leninist* No120) you describe the peoples of this area as non-historic and counter-revolutionary. So, by implication, the working class component of these peoples must be the same. Engels and Marx were, first and foremost, in the period of 1848-9, revolutionary democrats who saw the consolidation and hegemony of the German state over Central and Eastern Europe as progressive. In a series of articles between January and February 1849 in their paper *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* they described the Czechs, "To which number we add the Moravians and Slovaks", as having "never had any history". They went on to say that "It is inadmissible to give independence to the Czechs, because then eastern Germany would have the appearance of a loaf of bread gnawed by rats", and "It is a vital necessity that the Germans and Hungarians not be cut off from the Adriatic".

Similarly, in 1855 Marx enthusiastically backed the Turkish Empire: "The great peninsula between the Save and the Danube ... has the great misfortune to be inhabited by a conglomerate of races and nationalities so disparate that one cannot say who is the least apt for progress and civilisation ... And up to the present, one was right to ask, if, of all these different races, the Turks were not the best qualified to have hegemony, which evidently cannot be exercised in this mixed population, other than by a single nationality".

And so you subscribe to this sickening racist crap about some peoples being more progressive than others, indeed of some peoples being "counterrevolutionary". Wise up, ditch this 19th century mystification, this furtherance of a militarist German state, not right then and certainly not right now!

Ron Allen
Anarchist Communist Federation

Rule or dictate?

I am thankful to comrade Alan Merrick for his concern over the possibility that the dropping of the term dictatorship of the proletariat may presage some 'softening' of our revolutionary credentials (*The Leninist* No119). While reassuring our comrade that his concerns are unfounded, I would like to take issue with some of the points he raises.

I agree with comrade Merrick that the dictatorship of the proletariat is not "just a phrase" but is indeed "the very essence of Marx's doctrine", but then when Marx wanted to give an example of what this meant in real life he pointed to the Paris Commune. When *Rahe Kargar* wanted to make clear to the Iranian working class the type of state for which it is asking that class to struggle, it too points to the Paris Commune as its model in order to make clear precisely what type of 'rule of the working class' it has in mind (see *Fundamentals of Programme*).

The Commune was a state by the proletariat as a class and this is precisely what Marx meant by the term dictatorship of the proletariat. But why drop the latter term now? It is important precisely now to draw a clear demarcation line with that travesty of the term in the shape of the 'party-state' and the view which mouths 'dictatorship of the proletariat' while meaning the dictatorship of the party.

Despite the assertion by comrade Merrick that the term "rule of the working class" is less precise, there was no ambiguity when we sat down in unity talks with the Iranian organisations closer to us. They had no doubt as to what it meant, and it meant more than

they were prepared to accept.

But also now for another very good reason: we are fighting for socialism in a society that has seen over half a century of total despotism. It is vital to stress now the essentially democratic nature of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', a democratism far deeper and far broader than that of bourgeois democracy.

We too are aware that, particularly in the period after the revolution, where the working people have not yet established their deep seated democratic institutions and under pressure from the internal and external bourgeoisie, it may not be possible to completely implement proletarian democracy (Marx's criticism of the Commune was from this and no other angle). But to eternalise essentially temporary restrictions and to use the phrase dictatorship of the proletariat to justify the dictatorship of the party is precisely what we intend to distance ourselves from.

Our comrade is also mistaken to think that a time of retreat is a time for sabre rattling. At a time when the pseudo-democrats, the liberals and those running away from the revolutionary path are presenting themselves as democrats to our people reeling under 35 years of monarchical despotism followed by 13 years of the most violent and harsh religious dictatorship, it is vital to show the people, and in particular the true guardians of democracy, the working class of Iran, who the real friends of democracy are. Any concern which does not address this central issue is at best misguided and at worse plays into the hands of yet another demagogue, and prepares the road to yet another bloody dictatorship.

Could we add that we do not see the proletarian state as denying the bourgeoisie the right to vote. What was in essence a temporary measure related to an emergency situation in post-revolutionary Russia was turned into a creed, notwithstanding Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's assertions. The workers' state disenfranchised the exploiters economically. Provided they do not plot, they are not disenfranchised politically. After all, the working class does form the majority of the population.

As to the phrase Marxism-Leninism (hyphenated), let us be clear that we are Marxists and Leninists (unhyphenated) but we are definitely not Marxist-Leninists. By this term we understand all that has come to stand for the failure of the first attempt at socialist construction: the party-state, the limitations imposed on socialist democracy, and the turning of a living science into a religious creed. It is precisely to draw a line between ourselves and this distortion of Marxism and Leninism that we have dropped the label M-L from our programme.

The state we fight for will not be an apparatus of repression (in the sense it became institutionalised in Eastern Europe), though we will not flinch from using "revolutionary violence" to safeguard the fledgling workers' state. Our state, however, like any other state, will be an apparatus of repression- for assuring the domination of the dominant class - in our case the working class. Lenin's *State and Revolution* makes clear how infinitely more democratic such a state is compared to anything that went before, while remaining (like all states) an "instrument of repression".

M Kia
Organisation of Revolutionary
Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*)

Aids

Gareth Phillips rightly criticises the bourgeois media for having whipped Aids up to hysteria pitch: "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" (*The*

Leninist No121).

This is okay as far as it goes, but you don't often see so many unsupported assertions in one sentence. Is there a Leninist principle of organising against a disease on a statewide basis? Between parenthetical commas "in Britain anyway" is the kind of gerrymandering distortion commonly used by imperialism in dodgy arguments such as: "The unification of Ireland is, in the Six Counties anyway, overwhelmingly regarded as undesirable".

Worldwide, Aids has predominantly been transmitted by heterosexual sex, whereas citywide, in the example of, say, Edinburgh, Aids has been transmitted predominantly by intravenous drug use. Clearly the identity of a high risk group is a characteristic of geographical accident rather than scientific necessity. Of course imperialism will exploit this in every case to further divide the working class and, in this way, to promote increasing violence towards gay men.

The likelihood of sexually transmitted Aids increases in proportion to the number of sexual partners with whom you have penetrative sex. The risk increases if you have anal sex. The risk decreases if you use a condom. These characteristics apply universally by necessity. In Britain the virus has been most prevalent among gay men. This characteristic applies, locally by accident. Note that when gay men in Britain have been made aware of the risk, they began consciously to take precautions, and the statistical evidence of HIV among gay men changed accordingly. On Hampstead Heath and in the tranquil cottages of Hyde Park can be found the detritus of the condom culture. It is generally okay to be spontaneous, furtive and unplanned so long as you take along a condom with you and lashings of water based lubricant.

But Gareth Phillips claims that these conditions "restrict information on how not to catch the virus". This despite the bourgeoisie throwing our money away on a leaflet campaign through every letterbox in the land, and despite granite blocks being extensively remodelled and the likes of Patty Caldwell, Maggie Philbin, and Esther Rantzen cosily slipping bananas into condoms every time you turn on the telly. Where does GP imagine this non 'out' section lives?

Of course there should be a lot of red faces among the Aids professionals who founded their lucrative careers upon prophesies of an Aids holocaust among Britain's heterosexual population, but it is with undue haste that the left joins the tabloid press in crowing that as yet only 300 women in Britain have Aids. As with the 'so far so good' school of thought regarding DDT, nuclear testing, thalidomide, etc, we may yet find this latter position to be premature. Why stake workers' lives on it?

Gareth Phillips concludes that "the complete decriminalisation of all anti-lesbian and gay legislation [sic]" will serve as a starting point to remove anti-homosexual prejudice and "stop the spread of the deadly virus". Regardless of the fact that lesbians as a group have a relatively lower risk of catching Aids sexually than heterosexual women, and also a relatively lower profile in the statute book, this would seem to be an oddly parliamentary road to the defeat of Aids in Britain. But until such time as the state "decriminalises" its "legislation", giving GP his starting point, the working class had better carry on using safer sex and refrain from sharing needles.

Mike Fielding
London

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

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Polemic: real and false

The debate on capitalist crisis and *Which Road?* continues from the last issue. Jack Conrad replies to Alan Merrick's accusation that the *British Road to Socialism's* theory of crisis is not "okay as far as it goes"

IF MY DEAR comrade Alan Merrick insists on beginning and then continuing a polemic about nothing, so be it (see letters *The Leninist* Nos 119, 121). For the benefit of readers the comrade takes me to task because in the book *Which Road?* I say: "This ['official communist'] theory" of capitalist crisis "is okay as far as it goes". It is this short, nine word sentence that the comrade takes objection to, and builds his entire polemical assault around.

Again for the benefit of readers it would be useful to present the 'official communist' argument 'complete'. Here is what their 1978 programme says (and from which I quoted): "at the heart of the capitalist system there are deep contradictions. In modern society production is a social process, but ownership and control are predominantly private. Within the enterprise production is planned; but in society as a whole it is not planned. The capitalists always try and increase their profits, not just for their own personal consumption, but to enlarge their capital so as to get greater productive power and make still more profit. In general, the more they can cut costs and limit increases in wages and salaries, the more profit they can make, and the more capital they can accumulate."

"But to get the profit, the goods produced have to be sold. And since a major factor in the demand for goods is the level of wages and salaries, restricting them also restricts the market in each capitalist country."

"These contradictions of capitalism are the basic cause of capitalist crisis and the political and social problems it creates" (*British Road to Socialism* p7).

Comrade Merrick wants us to simply say "wrong", and that is supposed to be that. Sure - as I explain - in the cynical hands of 'official communism' the passage I quoted (given above in italics) has been used for reformist purposes. Nevertheless it contains a real truth about capitalist society which deserves a place in the genuine communist programme (as it did in that of the Russian, etc, communists - see N Bukharin and E Preobrazhensky *The ABC of Communism* p430). Capitalism does have a problem of realisation (valorization) precisely because it produces for profit, ends the *direct* relationship between production and consumption and *restricts* what has been called society's consumption fund (broadly wages plus that part of surplus value used by the capitalists to satisfy their personal needs).

Of course, crises are not caused by lack of effective consumption or effective consumers. Capitalism knows no consumption other than paying consumption (see K Marx *Capital* Vol III p475). But that is not the end of the story.

The conditions of direct exploita-

tion and those of the realisation of surplus value are not identical. They are separated logically and in time and space. The first is limited by the productive power of society, the second by the "proportional relations of the various lines of production and by the consuming power of society" (my emphasis K Marx *Capital* Vol III p286). This *consuming power* is not determined by what can be consumed nor by what can be produced. It is determined by "the consuming power based on antagonistic conditions of distribution which reduce the consumption of the great mass of the population to a variable minimum within more or less narrow limits" (my emphasis *Ibid* p286).

Thus as Marx said: "Over-production arises precisely from the fact that the mass of the people can never consume more than the average quantity of necessities, that their consumption therefore does not grow correspondingly with the productivity of labour" (*Theories of surplus value* Vol 2 p468). So, although capitalist accumulation expands the purchasing power of society, it also increases the relative pauperisation of the masses. Evidently if in the last analysis, all means of production serve the production of means of consumption, there is a contradiction here.

True, capitalism seeks to offset the resulting problems by expanding outwards. That does not mean the contradiction between production and realisation is resolved however, no, it intensifies.

That is why Marx insisted: "The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit" (*Capital* Vol III p484).

Even bearing in mind all this, if I had ended my comments on the *BRS's* description of capitalism's contradictions with "okay as far as it goes", I would indeed be guilty by association and deserve comrade Merrick's double-barrelled pedagogical rendition of Marx's theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and yes, his accusation that I "concede ground to the reformist interpretation of capitalist crisis". But I decidedly did not leave it there. As I pointed out in my supposedly "wildly overdefensive" reply to comrade Merrick (letters *The Leninist* No119) I do not leave the 'underconsumptionist' *BRS* with a: "This theory is okay as far as it goes" conclusion. Having 'given', I 'took'. I immediately went on to criticise it, in the course making exactly the same elementary points and later (in section 1.1.3.1.) using many of the same well known quotes from Marx as our comrade does. To remove any doubts, at

least about the former, let *Which Road?* speak for itself. What it will tell us, as well, is that comrade Merrick is, for his own reasons, blinkeredly focusing on one sentence and then subjecting it, not the actual argument of the book, to criticism. Here is the offending (to comrade Merrick that is) sentence in context:

"This theory is okay as far as it goes. But it ignores the crucial role of the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall - which Marx called 'in every respect the most important law of modern political economy'. Behind the saturation of markets and the general law of capitalist accumulation - the relative pauperisation of the masses - lies the tendency for the rate of profit to fall (we deal with capitalist crisis in 1.1.3.1. and 2.1.)."

"Not recognising this could lead one to the simplistic conclusion that if wages were increased at a stroke capitalism's crisis would be overcome. This cloud-cuckoo-land scheme has certainly been proposed by reformists and is the main proposition contained in the Alternative Economic Strategy, abandoned as too 'leftist' by the Euros, but still dear to the heart of the CPB."

"The AES is a programme which essentially argues that if wages were increased everyone would be happy: increased wages will increase demand and in turn will increase profits. This is the flip side of the capitalists' promises to their employees over the ages that if they work harder everyone will benefit: improved productivity will lead to cheaper prices, more demand, secure jobs and eventually higher wages. Of course things don't work out quite like that. Either way, though, on the basis of such utopian confusion class collaboration is fostered" (*Which Road?* p11).

Could comrade Merrick tell us how this concedes "ground to the reformist interpretation of capitalist crisis" and spoils the "barrelful of honey"?

As indicated above, as *Which Road?* unfolds we concretise our critique of 'revolutionary' reformism - both of the 'official communist' and Militant varieties - by applying Marx's theory of crisis to the epoch of imperialism and the contemporary situation (sections, 1.1.3.1. and 2.1. - with which comrade Merrick thankfully says he "fully" agrees). It should go without saying, and this is the point, we do *not* go about it by seizing hold of passing remarks, let alone targeting single sentences torn out of context and turned on their heads. The art of communist polemics consists, on the contrary, in subjecting our opponents *real* arguments, their *main* points, their *substantive* theory to interrogation and criticism. That is what I mean by "serious debate", comrade Merrick.

Jack Conrad

At a time when we are being cajoled into parting with ever greater amounts of cash by the likes of Esther Rantzen for kidney machines, leukemia research, etc, the government is telling us that many hospitals and hospital staff are surplus to requirements. Workers in the health industry, like elsewhere, are finding themselves victims of the 'streamlining' of new management techniques, designed to introduce a Victorian factory-style regime to go with the Tories' 'Victorian values'. At a time when strike figures are lower than for decade, health workers are responding tenaciously to defend their jobs, conditions and service. In late July, healthworkers at the Royal London Hospital came out on protest strike. On August 4, MSF members in two of London's main hospitals, Westminster and Charing Cross, also came out, voting for action by a two to one majority. Other unions are balloting their members for action. The lessons of the healthworkers' strike in 1988 are still pertinent today: then workers nationally overcame sectional and regional barriers by combining into joint committees to rebuff the government's attacks. Then, the workers won a victory in stalling the government's attacks. Now things have gone further down the road, and workers will have to stand on the shoulders of that experience and hit back harder if they are to win. Spread the strike action through rank and file, cross-union organisation. *AM*

The government's response to growing youth unemployment was predictable: attacks on the victims of it. The threat to axe benefit for 'trainees' on Youth Training shows that the Tories have followed the thin end of the wedge of removing benefit for 16-18 year old unemployed workers *not* on benefit has been followed by the thick end with rude haste. The fact that this 'training' is

no training has been exposed by the recent figures showing that the percentage of those on YT leaving with any kind of qualification has fallen from 38% to 35% between March and July 1991. Unemployment rose from 20% to 23% during the same period. The government's boast of providing a place on YT for all those who 'want' (read 'are forced into') one is a joke, which would be a blessing, were it not for the fact that if you are in that age group and unemployed, you get nothing. As things stand, this is contributing to the growing



Traditional summer wear for the British police

anger and alienation of youth, a resentment for a society that treats them with contempt. This has produced a climate where riots are as much a part of the English summer as getting stuffed at cricket; a process (riots, not cricket) which *The Telegraph* says "has yet to reach its peak" (July 25). The explosion of resentment against the state is good, but is unfocused. As such, it is not in itself anti-capitalist and cannot lead anywhere. The challenge for communists is to intervene at the sharp end of attacks on youth: on the rip off 'training' schemes, against the plastic sweat shops like MacDonalds, and give some political direction to the young streetfighter behind the half brick. *SQ*

Workers in Newham Nalگو, East London, have bucked the trend of buckling under to management threats by voting for strike action on August 3. Action kicked off to a spirited start with a demonstration by Nalگو members through Stratford on Thursday August 6, joined by CPGB supporters in East Ham Anti Nazi League. The branch of 2,500 members mobilised in defence of the poll tax section, sacked by management. Housing benefit workers joined in solidarity, and this has culminated in the whole branch coming out. This strong sense of solidarity shows that it is possible to swim against the stream in this period of reaction. But militancy is not enough. Council workers need an effective strategy to fight around, if they are not to be eventually faced down by the council, as happened in Camden. Newham's Labour council is quite capable of decimating the labour force and bringing in private contractors. If the strike is to win through, Nalگو members need to pre-empt the bureaucratic unification of council workers by the union tops, and pull in workers in other unions, and where possible in other areas that are similarly threatened. *DR*

Summertime blues?



As usual, we are into August and the fund has trailed off. Our closer comrades are busy recovering from the Party Offensive, while those who did not contribute so heavily are off sunning themselves. This paper, however, cannot afford to take it easy. There are still publication dates to hit, events to report and intervene on and bills to pay. Lucre, filthy or otherwise, is needed for all of these. Special thanks to all those comrades who, throughout the past months, have kept money coming into the paper, as well as participating in the PO.

Vernon Douglas
Fund organiser

Revolution on trial



The new ruling class wants to put Gorbachev in the dock. Now there's gratitude for you

If the crisis of bureaucratic socialism had been resolved positively, the likes of Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Honecker would have been forcibly overthrown, the new proletarian courts no doubt sentencing them to a brief period of re-education and then retirement on a modest state pension. The counterrevolutionary trials now beginning have an altogether different agenda

THE TRIAL of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is far more than the exposure of the crimes and misdemeanours of various ex-Soviet bureaucrats. The heads of the new Russian bourgeois state are putting the entire history of the Russian revolution in the dock.

By robbing not just the CPSU, but the revolution, of legitimacy through this farcical court case, the neo-bourgeoisie in Russia hopes to bolster its own position and legitimacy. Yeltsin wants to show the Soviet Union as being a 74 year long aberration, headed by a mafia going under the name of the CPSU. Not only Gorbachev, Brezhnev and Stalin, but Lenin too, are being branded as 'godfathers' in this 'criminal conspiracy'. If anything, Lenin must be the biggest gangster of the lot; the villain who hatched the whole fiendish plot.

This is the stuff of the worst 1950s cold war propaganda: Yeltsin has his own Whitehouse, now he has his own 'Un-Russian Activities Committee' as well.

German kangaroos

The ex-leaders of the ex-German Democratic Republic are, like the Russians, being hauled up before kangaroo courts. Erich Honecker, after being expelled from the Chilean embassy in Moscow and deported to Germany, faces charges of manslaughter for the shoot to kill policy of GDR border guards. It is bitterly ironic that Honecker is being held in Moabit prison, where he was jailed in the 1930s for his resistance to the Nazi regime. We always criticised the repressive policies of the leaders of the bureaucratic socialist states, but this trial has nothing to do with justice. The German state has more than a little blood on its own hands, after all. It is no stranger to political repression.

This is a show trial directed against communism. In the dock with Honecker will be the right of the GDR to have ever existed. No prizes for guessing the outcome Helmut Kohl and the German ruling class are looking for.

The criminalisation of communism goes beyond declaring the GDR an historical aberration. The right of the working class to fight for its own interests is being challenged. This can be seen by the trial of the last head of the Stasi, Mielke. The main charge against Mielke, now in his 80s, relates not to any misdemeanours of the East German secret police, real or otherwise, but to the charge that, when a young militant in the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in the early 1930s, he shot and killed two policemen. We say, if Mielke *did* do it, it was a basic act in defence of his class in a situation where it was under constant attack from armed police and fascist gangs. Those who put their necks on the line and fought back should be admired by the working class for doing so. The bourgeoisie are hardly likely to see it this way, and have seized on this 60 year old event - at a time when they say too much time has elapsed to try Nazi war criminals - to assert their supremacy.

It is impossible for Mielke and Honecker to get a fair trial by the German bourgeoisie. After having won the battle, the latter want to see the vanquished kneel before them in chains. We must realise that, whatever the real crimes against our class that Honecker, Mielke and the ex-GDR bureaucracy have committed, their trial is an out and out attack on the right of the working class to organise, resist and gain victories. Because, with whatever distortions, the GDR was a victory for our class.

"Shoot the mad dogs"?

The situation is more unstable in the ex-Soviet Union than Germany. In Germany it is a distinct, long-standing capitalist class that is attacking the remnants of the old workers' state. In Russia, these remnants are being confronted by a new bourgeoisie, largely produced from the ranks of the old 'communist' apparatchiks.

There are, of course, obvious parallels between today's trial of the CPSU and the showtrials of the

old Bolsheviks in the 1930s. This time round, though, the ideological justification for the trial is reversed. Back in the 1930s, the bureaucracy was in the situation of having to legitimise its domination over the workers' state established through the revolution of October 1917. It was not well rooted enough in that society to come out in opposition to that revolution, transforming its caste privileges into class rule. It did not have the social roots to carry out such a transformation. This stratum could only guard its position by masquerading as the defender of the revolution against other political trends, thus creating a climate of terror to disperse any possible centres of opposition. In this way, a generation of Bolsheviks were eliminated, as Stalin's state prosecutor Vyshinsky entreated the judges to "shoot the mad dogs".

Now, the new Russian ruling class is establishing its legitimacy by attempting to criminalise not only the CPSU of the recent period, but the whole revolution. Its own shallow roots in society are all too obvious. The new Russian bourgeois state has not developed structures with which it can feel secure. Economically, the rule of the market is still warped by hangers on from bureaucratic socialism. In particular, there is the fact that the working class is unwilling to make the sacrifices that capital requires of it.

What is needed is a strong ideology to cohere the fragmented Russian society around the banners of the new ruling class. Anti-communism will be a necessarily important facet of this. Armed in such a fashion, the regime will then be in a much stronger position to confront resistance, in the form of the reorganising socialist and communist groups, and the trade unions.

Unfortunately for Yeltsin and Co, they are not in the best position to carry out this assault. Not only are they a product of the same stratum within society that they have put in the dock (how many skeletons does Yeltsin have in his CPSU closet?), the majority of the *real* crimes of the CPSU from Stalin onwards are as great an ideological challenge to the new ruling class as they are to the old ruling caste that spawned them.

What about all the back door deals between the Soviet Union and imperialism down the years? A regime that wants to get back to 'business as usual' in an imperialist world, where such deals are the norm, is hardly likely to pull that before the courts. Behind the scenes deals to defeat revolutions are hardly likely to tantalise a prosecutor who is only in that position because of the defeat of a revolution. Likewise with the mass terror *against* the majority of the CPSU back in the 1930s, the assassination abroad of numerous dissident revolutionaries such as Trotsky, Andres Nin and many others. Who would the exposure of these crimes strengthen? Who would be strengthened by an open investigation into the way in which the working class was deprived of effective control in its own state? The demagogue Yeltsin, or the working class that must organise to fight him? The answer is obvious, and explains why much of the prosecution case is tame stuff indeed.

Yeltsin has one disadvantage that the likes of Kohl do not: he is a product of the *ancien regime* that he wants to consign to the dustbin of history. Many similar figures to Yeltsin in Eastern Europe found themselves quickly discarded by the forces that they had released. There is a desperate battle among the Russian ruling class not to get enveloped in the chaos that made them so. The dangers of crisis and fascism loom in such situations. But, then, so does the possibility of the solution of revolution.

In defence of October

Yeltsin, like his German counterparts, wants to show that the revolution was one big mistake. Normal service is now being resumed.

A few years ago, what is now the Democratic Left, then the 'official' CPGB, played a similar game. Chris Myant, the editor of its paper *7 Days* (now defunct) argued that the October Revolution had in its turn triggered World War II, the horrors of Belsen and Auschwitz and Pol Pot. This vicious anti-communism, from a nominal member of a 'Communist Party', showed the direction of the Russian ruling class today. Ex-'official communists', they are trying to prove themselves the best defenders of the free market by being the strongest anti-communists. They argue that

the whole experience was a horrific mistake.

The idea that a Russia without the October Revolution, a Russia of the Tsars, the Cadets or even the Social Revolutionaries, would have yielded a Russia and a world of peace and plenty is a reactionary fairy story. The slaughter of World War I was the midwife for the revolution, a slaughter brought about by the contradictions of imperialism, and this alone. World War II was produced by the failure of imperialism to resolve these contradictions. Death on a massive scale would have ensued whatever the result of the Bolshevik insurrection. Indeed, it was the Red Army, as Churchill said, that ripped the guts out of the Nazi war machine.

Whatever the distortions of the Soviet workers' state, and those which followed the same path, from China to Vietnam, the blood of millions this century has been on the hands of imperialism. Erich Honecker will be tried for the manslaughter of 200 people. Who will be tried for the slaughter of 200,000 Iraqi people in the Gulf war? The crimes of the leaders of the socialist states were an offshoot of the inability of these states to break the dominance of imperialism. Soviet Russia in 1920 is estimated to have had the level of productivity of Cromwellian England. By itself it could never have been a land of milk and honey. To accuse it of not being so just shows the poverty and intellectual dishonesty of the bourgeoisie.

What October offered was the possibility of breaking the imperialist chain right the way along the line: not just in backward Russia or China, but in imperialist Germany, Britain and the US.

Opposition

As said above, a necessary facet of the trials for the new ruling class is to criminalise its new opposition; the faltering and uncertain resistance of the working class and the development of new organisations identifying themselves as communist. In a crisis situation where blaming the old regime no longer holds water, such resistance can become a united mass, such organisations could become pivotal.

The bourgeoisie points to this movement and shrieks 'conservative'. Is a turkey with no enthusiasm for christmas conservative? It is nonsense to similarly describe workers who are equally unenthusiastic about market reforms as such.

Yet reluctance to pay the price for the bourgeoisie's plans is not enough. This class needs to become fully conscious of itself as a class for itself. It needs to ruthlessly expose the failures of the old USSR in order to build the new one.

Some on the left look to a tradition alien to Bolshevism. Boris Kagarlitsky, a leader of the Party of Labour, looks towards the Menshevik line to provide the answer. Others who call themselves communist use it as a cover for great Russian chauvinism and anti-semitism.

Many are still restricted in their outlook and their critique of the collapse of the bureaucratic socialist state. Nina Andreeva, secretary of the All Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), in a speech from November of last year, while correctly identifying the nature of the counterrevolution they had just undergone, links the crisis in the Soviet Union to the policies followed by the *post* Stalin leadership. With whatever merits her analysis has, it still sees the crisis of 'official communism' from within the straightjacket of the 'official communist' ideology which engendered it.

These comrades must go beyond these restrictions if they are to successfully organise the working class for its own revolution. Today's opportunism cannot be defeated using the opportunism of yesterday. In reality, Stalin is the political grandfather of Yeltsin. His theory of 'communism in one country' resulted in its destruction in that country.

We have every confidence that the communists and workers of the ex-Soviet Union can confront these questions, and learn these vital lessons.

When they do, then they will be in a strong position to reconquer their power. Then, maybe, they can find a dock somewhere to put Yeltsin and Gorbachev in.

Alan Merrick

'From October to August' Warts and all!

A communist answer to the 'collapse of communism'

Jack Conrad, *From October to August*, November Publications 1992, pp279, £6.95

THE COLLAPSE of the Soviet Union generated a wide range of responses from left to right. None, however, seem to have been so well founded that the authors' have the confidence to reprint their thoughts of a year ago, let alone a decade past. In this, *From October to August* seems to be unique.

This second of four titles in the PCC of the Communist Party's *Communism Lives!* series represents a devastating and effective response to the unprecedented barrage of bourgeois triumphalism unleashed by the August 1991 counterrevolution.

While the bourgeoisie would have us believe that the collapse of 'official communism' is the final and irrefutable proof of capitalism's immortality, that there is no alternative to their own moribund system and that Marxism is finally dead, Jack Conrad's book demonstrates through its incisive clarity that life itself will provide the bourgeoisie with their answer -

catching up with the USA enshrined programmatically, and why has the date for this catching up, 1971, come and gone with no debate on the question? And why, if the Soviet communists are so experienced, was the aim of *communism in one country*, by 1980, laid down programmatically, without one open objection to it from the ranks of the millions of CPSU members?" (p57)

The comrade also questioned the economic formulations of Soviet theoreticians, originating with Joseph Stalin's blatantly false assertion that the Soviet Union had entered the stage of communist construction. Jack was able to demonstrate that Stalin's idealisation of the many capitalist features of socialism (especially and of necessity prevalent in backward Russia) were resulting, not in the strengthening of the plan and the march to communism, but to a revisionist outlook and revisionist policies in the socialist countries: "there are those who, taking their cue from his ideas, look towards the market, entrepreneurs, individual food production, loan capital and profit, and a lessening of economic

role which threatens the development of socialism, and pose a restorationist danger. In Russia in the 1920s these forces included the neo-bourgeoisie, the Nepmen, as well as the kulaks.

"Such elements have the possibility of emerging from *within socialist society*, spontaneously springing up from those areas not dominated by socialist production and the law of planning. Their existence, or possibility, is a reflection of the lack of development of socialism, containing as it does capitalist and communist elements" (p62).

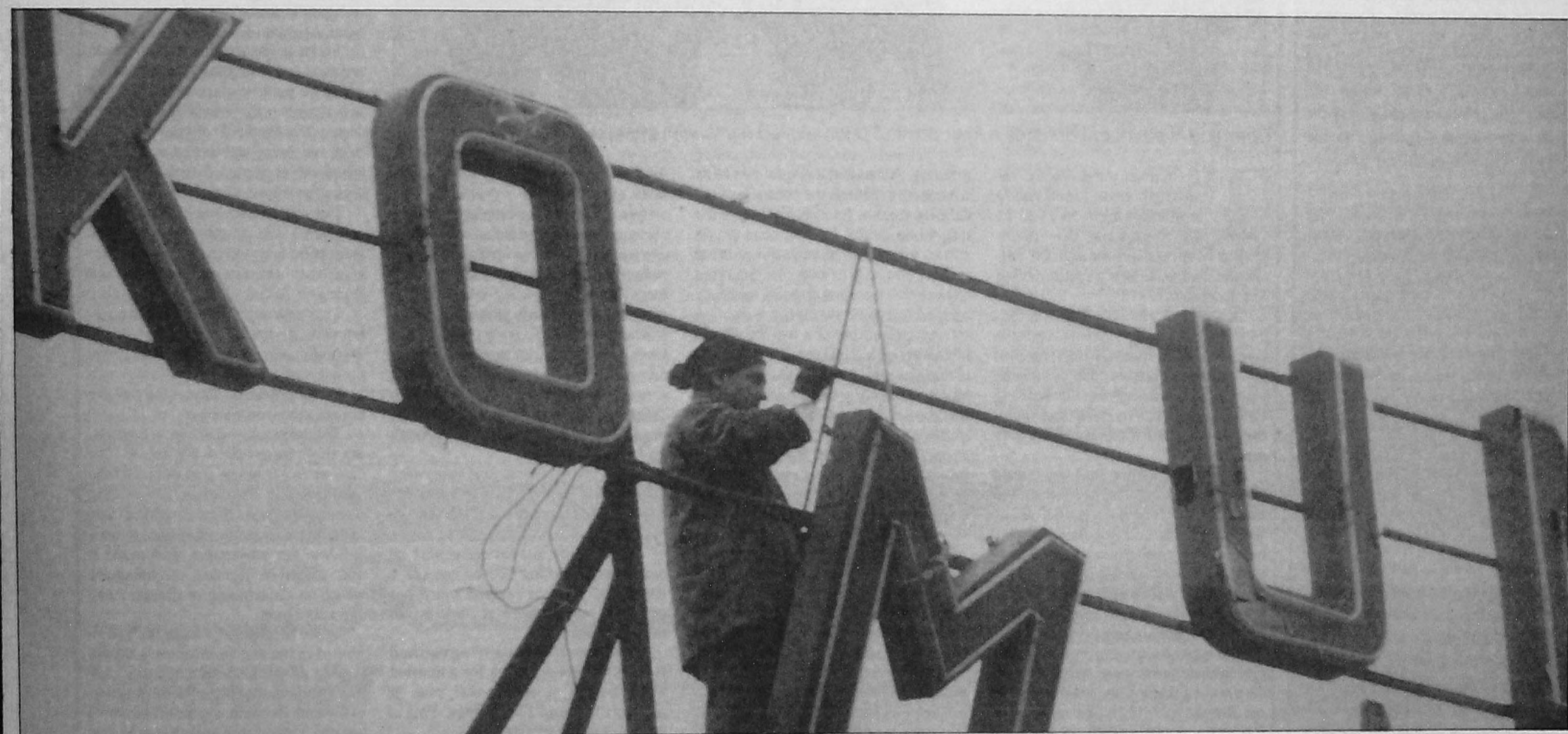
From there, the logic of the analysis enabled Jack (in passing, it is true) to pinpoint the location of the counterrevolutionary danger in the Soviet Union. Continuing the Leninist argument for the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, not only in the initial stage of consolidating socialism against both internal and external enemies, but also throughout the whole period of the struggle to achieve communism, he pointed out that only the working class can consistently lead this struggle: it is the historic mission of the proletariat to establish communism, to achieve

undermined by the forcefulness of the counterrevolutionary momentum, aided by the lack of any genuinely communist leadership.

What can be said though is that we soon recognized these errors and corrected them, as subsequent speeches and articles repeated in the book demonstrate. The same can hardly be said of the opportunist left, which fell broadly into three categories:

Firstly those who more or less uncritically welcomed Gorbachev - 'official communists' of all shades, as well as the Revolutionary Communist Group and some Trotskyists, such as Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary and Marxist Parties.

Then there was the trend of classic Trotskyism, which could only see the possibility of Trotsky's long awaited political revolution and refused to contemplate counterrevolution - a "chimera", according to *Militant*. Some groups in this category remained blind to reality, even after the counterrevolution had occurred! None have since expressed regret for their wilful blindness. Reassessment from this trend, years on, has failed to occur as it has blundered from



The construction or destruction of communism?

perhaps very much sooner than they suspect.

It is, of course, very easy to be wise after the event, which is why a whole range of left and revolutionary groups have produced new theoretical formulations which distort or even omit all mention of their previous positions regarding the USSR. But the strength of Jack's book, consisting as it does of speeches and articles from 1983 to 1991, lies in its clear demonstration that the Marxist *method* will point us along the right track, and that we have no need of dishonesty. Thus we are able to repeat what we said over those years - not just to boast, "we told you so", but to indicate that we have no interest in attempting to cover up past errors and inaccuracies.

Comrade Conrad's previously unpublished speech from April 1983 makes very interesting reading almost a decade later. An analysis of the Soviet Communist Party's decline into centrism, it countered the then prevalent attitude of British 'official communists' that "the Soviet comrades know best" and warned that this sycophancy would have tragic consequences: "if the Soviet communists are in possession of all the 'facts', so fully conversant with Marxism-Leninism, why was the aim of

planning, as the way forward. Not only do advocates of such views exist in the socialist countries, there are indications that their voices are becoming ever more influential" (p59).

It is less than ten years since this speech was made. Yet it seemed to almost everybody at that time - from 'official communists' to mainstream bourgeois commentators, from Trotskyites to Thatcherites - that there was no possibility of capitalist restoration in the socialist countries, despite all the economic problems which were widely recognised. Soviet society was, it seemed, a totalitarian monolith. So what was it that enabled us not only to outline the trends, as in the example quoted, but also to actually foresee the restorationist possibilities? It was precisely our class analysis, using the Marxist method mentioned above. Forcefully advocating the continued necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat, in opposition to Khrushchev's programmatic expression of Stalin's idea - the *state of the entire people*, Jack was able first of all to underpin theoretically the possibility of capitalist restoration: "as well as the big capitalists and landlords, other strata exist which, if allowed to develop, can come to play a

role which threatens the development of socialism, and pose a restorationist danger. In Russia in the 1920s these forces included the neo-bourgeoisie, the Nepmen, as well as the kulaks.

"Certainly those who administer the state will resist moves which increase popular control, will consider it against their interests for the parasitic state to wither away. Because of the existence of different interests it is incorrect, even treacherous, to make declarations about the complete unity of interests of all strata in the Soviet Union, let alone proclaim the CPSU as Party of the entire people" (p65, my emphasis - JB).

It is certainly a fair criticism that we were a little slow to recognize the explicit counterrevolutionary nature of perestroika and glasnost, even going so far as to welcome certain aspects of 'comrade' Gorbachev's programme, while fiercely criticising its overall character. We were also overly optimistic in our initial view that the Soviet working class would successfully resist counterrevolution, indeed would fight tooth and nail to defend and advance socialism. No doubt this was because we underestimated the speed with which working class resistance was

counterrevolution to counterrevolution, welcoming each as *the* political revolution (Workers Power's asinine jubilation on the overthrow of Ceausescu is an excellent example of this).

Finally, there was the trend which was even more blind than the other two. The Revolutionary Communist Party declared that the 'Soviet mode of production' would not be changed and the market would not be restored, while the Socialist Workers Party was in difficulty because it believed that capitalism already existed in the Soviet Union. As the RCP's *The Next Step* wondered after the sweeping Hungarian constitutional changes in 1989, what's all the fuss about? Three years later on, maybe the penny has dropped. But, then again, maybe not.

All of this is extensively discussed in Jack Conrad's book - not, as I have already stated, by retrospectively reexamining and rewriting our previous positions, but by laying before the reader what we actually said - warts and all - as events unfolded. As such it is an important contribution to the fight to build a Party capable of leading new Octobers, of turning the world upside down once again.

Jim Blackstock



Organising the unemployed

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

The Communist Party of Britain is making a desperate bid for the youth. First it relaunched the Young Communist League. We looked around for some youth to fill it. Alas, not even enough to give it as many members as initials. Then the CPB launched a journal, Young Communist. It wouldn't fire my blood, but you never know. Then some bright spark had the idea of going out and selling it. So out swarm the CPB's young recruiting sergeants. Well, one anyway: Monty Goldman, seen selling Young Communist outside of a Cuban solidarity meeting recently. There's just one snag: young Monty is 60 if he's a day.

At the recent Anti Racist Alliance bash in London, Arafest, some of our comrades thought they would make a few bob for the Party through a little free enterprise, namely selling badges. One badge, however, caused some difficulty with the local plod: "Racist police off our streets". Eventually they let us carry on, because the badge only referred to the racist ones, not the nice fluffy ones that you and I are familiar with. Not them, of course. Indeed, as we explained to one bemused copper, even Peter Imbert could agree with that, couldn't he?

The Labour Party paper, Tribune has an interesting little snippet in its July 31 edition (hard to believe, but yes). A letter notes "the superseding of the Communist Party of Great Britain by the Democratic Left" but warns that the former's banners "are part of our cultural history", and could we donate them to the National Museum of Labour History. One of the signatories to the letter is DL secretary Nina Temple who, after trying to consign communism in Britain to the museum, seems intent to have its banners join it. Wrong on both counts. If you do have any CPGB banners, give them to the Provisional Central Committee, which promises to put them to their original use by forging the Party that can hoist them high on the road to revolution. In the meantime, we'd be only too pleased to let the NMLH keep Temple in return for any banners it may already have.

A new problem on the British left. You may know that there are two 'Communist Leagues'. Previously you could tell them apart because one (the ex-Socialist Action lot) were very pro-Cuban. But now the others (ex-Marxist Party) have confused things by coming along to Cuban solidarity meetings. Confused? You will be.



Comrade Hannington debates a finer point of unemployed rights with the London police

The Communist Party responded to the rapid rise in unemployment in 1920-21 by organising the unemployed in direct action against employers and poor law guardians (see *The Leninist* No115).

In October 1920 the London District Council of the Unemployed was formed to coordinate the activities of 30 local committees. Its organiser was Wal Hannington, a leading CPGB member. The chair and secretary were also Communist Party members.

They were aware that the united action of all workers, employed and unemployed, was the key to fighting the wage cuts and job losses being imposed by capitalism. Accordingly they mobilised thousands to lobby the Labour Party and TUC, to urge them to back protests and industrial action against unemployment.

In response to this pressure, a special labour movement delegate conference on unemployment was held on January 27 1921. The reformist leaders on the platform refused speaking rights to the LDCU, and avoided commitment to action by securing an adjournment "to allow the membership to be consulted".

At the reconvened conference a month later these leaders, by limiting discussion to their own resolutions, made sure that the only fight they were committed to was inside the House of Commons.

This article by Wal Hannington begins with his assessment of the conference.

Advice to the unemployed

The much talked of Labour Conference on Unemployment came and went, and the hopes of the great army of workers were once again frustrated by the yellow trade unionists, led by Thomas and Clynes.

When I picked up my paper in the

morning, and read the resolutions to be submitted, I realised the outcome of the Conference, but I still had a little hope left, thinking that the delegates would at least put up a fight in favour of direct action. Not a bit of it; Thomas and Clynes told them what to do, and they obeyed like good disciples.

The Labour members of the House of Commons are instructed to point out to the government the inadequacy of merely extending the Unemployment Insurance Act (how statesmanlike) as if the government does not already know how inadequate it is. Mr Clynes protested against the statement in the King's speech that the problem of unemployment cannot be solved by legislation. Evidently the King is more versed in Marxian economics than Clynes.

And then, once again the elected representatives of the London District Council of the Unemployed Organisations were refused a hearing, but at least I succeeded in turning the Conference into a bear garden for 20 minutes.

The Conference finished at 12.30, leaving the problem precisely as before. In the afternoon 10,000 of the unemployed demonstrated throughout the west end of London, realising with heavy hearts that the trade union leaders, with their somewhat comfortable environment, are betraying the poor wretches who are on the streets, selling their homes up weekly in order to sustain their half starved wives and children.

I definitely accuse the Labour leaders of cowardice. What have they done since the Conference on January 27 to test the feelings of their members on ways and means of turning their resolutions into acts? They have refused to carry out their own resolutions.

At the time of writing we have in London a very effective unemployed organisation. Each borough sends two delegates to sit on the London District Council. Our demands are:

- Work, or full maintenance at trade union rates of wages.
- With a view to absorbing some of the unemployed in useful industry, the immediate establishment of trade between Great Britain and Russia, and the

full and complete recognition of the Soviet government.

We know that unemployment is a necessary part of capitalism. A continual supply of cheap labour power is indispensable to capitalist production. But we say that, when capitalism is responsible for nearly two million men and women being cast upon the scrap heap, at the mercy of the landlord and the profiteer, then capitalism must shoulder the responsibility of its own shortcomings, and maintain our families whilst we are on the streets through no fault of our own.

Today the government is expending thousands of pounds daily in suppressing the independence of Ireland by force.

Where does the excessiveness of our claim come in? We do not ask a Black and Tan's one pound a day, but only just maintenance at trade union rates of wages.

The Labour Party's trifling demand is for 40 shillings a week for a married man. Basing it at pre-war rate, it amounts to about 17 shillings. This is an insult to the unemployed.

If the British government paid to every man and woman unemployed today one sixteenth of its weekly expenditure on the war, it would work out at very nearly £4 per week. If it is worth spending £56,000,000 a week on destroying human life, it is worth one sixteenth of that for the preservation of life.

Now let us have a look at the second claim - trade with Russia. Why is the government so reluctant over this? The one main reason is that Russia is now in the hands of the workers; they own and control the means of production and distribution. In other words, they are striving to build up communism, wherein the masses shall enjoy the highest standard of living possible.

And the capitalist governments know that by trading with Russia they will consequently be aiding a system of society that will one day stand out as a shining example to be copied by the rest of the workers throughout the world.

Now we arrive at the question of making our voice heard and putting our

demands into effect. The mere passing of resolutions with nothing to back them up will accomplish nothing. But by the use of the industrial weapon - the strike - the unemployed workers can put the fear of god into the hearts of the capitalist class.

The man inside the workshop has got to realise that our fight is also his fight. He has got to realise that he is not immune from unemployment, any day he may be cast upon the scrapheap.

Can he not see that we are being used as a weapon to beat down the standard of living of our class. The mouthpieces of big finance and capital, chairmen of huge trusts and combines, are openly declaring war against the standard rates of wages.

I want to ask the unemployed trade unionist: Are you going to stand idly by while the parasite class openly declare war against you, your wives and children, while the funds of your organisations are being exhausted weekly by the payment of out of work pay to the unemployed members?

Do you realise that the workshop conditions and all the things that you were once so proud to say you fight for as a trade unionist are being filched from you daily?

I say to you, with all sincerity and honesty, if you are going down at all, for god's sake go down fighting. If you do not you will brand yourselves as a body of cowards, deserving of the humiliation you receive.

The unemployed are now organising their forces for a big move. The clarion call is being sent out to all the unemployed organisations, right throughout Great Britain, with a view to calling a national conference to consolidate the movement, and make it an effective fighting organisation which no government or Labour Party can subjugate.

In the meantime, I want the unemployed to interest themselves in the literature of the Communist Party, and learn the great principles of communism and become a potent factor in society, instead of a human machine to be sed or discarded according to the whims and fancies of the employing class. Understand that 'knowledge must precede all intelligent action'.

Surely you are not content to drift on in hopelessness and despair without asking yourself the question: Why am I at the bottom of the social abyss, while another class that have never soiled their hands with one day's hard work enjoy all the beauties and luxuries of life? Realise, comrade, that no leader can lead you out of bondage, it has to be the work of the masses themselves. *The Communist* March 12 1921

The call for a national conference to consolidate the movement was answered just one month later, when representatives from 70 local committees set up the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement, and appointed Hannington as its national organiser.

Compiled by Doug Hulme

REVIEW

Iskra or NLR?

Analysis No2, summer 1992, £1.90. Annual subscription £9.50 (four issues) from 27 Old Gloucester Street, WC1N 3XX

"ANALYSIS is an independent quarterly publication which is not affiliated to any party or organisation. The publication hopes to provide a Marxist analysis of politics and world events. Its long term aim is to contribute to a revival of revolutionary Marxism".

This is how Analysis summarises itself; to boldly go where quite a few journals have gone before ... or, at least, claimed to have. And indeed the first issue was very much a 'so what?' affair, with interesting but unexceptional articles, and with no editorial to give the journal an overall focus. The latter caused much speculation on the petty bourgeois left: the WRP, characteristically, called it "Stalinist"; the SWP said it was an RCP front (ie: "do not read"), and Socialist Organiser speculated that it was associated with the Democratic Left because it carried adverts from Collets and Lawrence and Wishart.

Thankfully, No2 rectifies this with an editorial which lays the journal's cards on the table. In addition, the articles hang together better, with some good, if too brief, discussions of the world economy, and a review of Henryk Grossman's newly translated *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown*. This is done with a concern for accuracy which is rare on the left at the moment.

The editorial, unlike the somewhat less rigorous 'independent' journal *Open Polemic*, states that "the regeneration of the left is neither possible nor desirable. The left is the product of the liberal, petty bourgeois radicalism of the 1960s and early 1970s and is therefore a spent force" (p4).

While, when considering the majority of groups on the British left, this is true, by abstracting themselves from this milieu, the editorial staff of Analysis has by no means been cleansed of it. This can be seen from its view of the Marxist movement in Britain and internationally. When the editorial states that "there has never been a Marxist tradition in Britain" (*Ibid*), this departure point precludes a serious analysis of the

Communist Party of Great Britain which, despite being numerically (and, with the degeneration of the Communist International, politically) weak, was of pivotal importance within the workers' movement for decades. Ironically, this perspective repeats the ground covered by the products of "petty bourgeois radicalism" such as the RCP, RCG and SWP, that Analysis scorns.

This distorted view is reproduced on an international level. While rightly castigating Trotskyism for having "done Marxism a great disservice in putting Stalinism at the centre of all its problems", Analysis counters with the assertion that "Marxism [as an effective movement] played out its last act in August 1914 when one European socialist party after another voted support for imperialism and war. Marxism has never recovered from that fatal flaw" (*Ibid*).

Where Analysis castigates Trotskyism's errors, it puts something even more erroneous in its stead. August 1914 was a massive defeat for the working class. But not for Marxism. It shattered the official 'Marxism' of the likes of Kautsky and Plekhanov, and threw the revolutionary minority into one of the most intense and productive battles of the workers' movement. This produced vital theoretical clarification on imperialism, the national question, the role of the party, and laid the basis for the practical achievement of the October Revolution.

Marxism, formally decimated numerically, was greatly advanced politically and organisationally. The creation of the Third International developed Marxism as a truly world wide movement, unlike the essentially European Second.

But even if we could agree with Analysis' assessment - or it with ours - this would not bring Analysis one step closer to its aim of contributing to the aim, long-term or otherwise, of reviving revolutionary Marxism. This cannot be a product of debate alone, no matter how stimulating and innovative that debate. Nor can the theoretical section of the movement exist independently from those activists who presumably wait for good ideas to drop from the likes of Analysis like manna from heaven. Such a distinction is itself a fundamental distortion of Marxism.

Organisation, as Lukasc said, is the mediation between theory and practice. The organisation that is appropriate to both the theory and practice of Marxism is the Communist Party. The forging of

such an organisation is therefore the key task before Marxists. When journals and self proclaimed Marxists call themselves 'independent', we can only ask, independent of what? Obligations?

In dating the crisis of Marxism from 1914, Analysis finds itself in the convenient position whereby it can marginalise the tradition of the early Third International; of Marxists such as Lukasc, Gramsci and especially Lenin, who brought the organisational tasks of the revolution forward as central theoretical tasks for communists.

That still remains a central task. The debates and polemics within Analysis' pages - Andrew Chitty's critique of Frank Furedi's *Mythical Past, Elusive Future*, for instance - while well directed, if not given an organisational focus will yield little. *Capital and Class, Economy and Society, New Left Review*; the list runs on. All very interesting stuff. But, at the end of the day, what bloody good did they do, except provide space for left wing intellectuals whose organisations would not let them theorise in their own publications?

We welcome the publication of Analysis. Any intelligent debate on the left has to be a good thing, and the journal certainly provides that. But, in the last analysis, what is really going to "contribute to a revival of revolutionary Marxism": another *New Left Review* or a new *Iskra*?

Alan Merrick

Gypsy Rose Grant

Ted Grant, *Scotland: socialism or nationalism?*, Socialist Appeal

In this pamphlet, Grant, leader of Militant until his expulsion in January, makes a number of valid criticisms of his wayward offspring in Scottish Militant Labour. But while he is correct to condemn the nationalist turn of SML, he also fully exposes the hopelessness of his continuation of the entrism strategy toward the Labour Party.

The understandable frustration felt by many in Militant at the increasing futility of the organisations orientation to the Labour Party, especially after their work against the poll tax has not, so far, produced a fundamental political

reorientation. Organisationally, they have broken from the Labour Party but, in Scotland in particular, they have politically shifted to the right and succumbed to Scottish nationalism.

Grant shows that far from SML gaining recruits among Scottish youth by painting nationalism as progressive, they are in fact handing them on a plate to the Scottish National Party who have been playing a left card among this section of our class. All SML can do, despite Tommy Sheridan's heavily publicised jailing and the election of himself and two others as Glasgow District councillors, is tail the likes of Scotland United and further confuse the working class with nationalist poison.

Grant shows how his accusation that the Militant split was neither fish nor fowl with regard to a political reorientation sticks particularly well on SML: "They argue that it was the association with Labour which was alienating the youth in Scotland from Militant and preventing them from halting the movement of a layer of the youth towards nationalism. But then they decide not only to put the word 'Labour' in the title of the new organisation, but also to announce with a flourish of trumpets that the aim of the SML is - to transform the Labour Party!" (p13).

He also quite rightly attacks SML for glorifying the mistakes of John Maclean. Far from learning from his fatal error in refusing to join the newly formed CPGB in 1920, SML seek to emulate his abortive attempt at a separate Scottish organisation and a Scottish road to socialism. Of course, even this is mere rhetoric, because there is no way that SML are going to break from the reformism of their forebears in Militant.

Interestingly, Grant admits, albeit implicitly, that the only place for a revolutionary like Maclean, was in the ranks of the CPGB. How this fits with Militant's tradition of myth-making about the socialist origins of the Labour Party we can only wonder.

Indeed, Grant peddles another myth in this pamphlet that the strategy of entrism which he still clings to is a Leninist position. Where in the past there was only conspiratorial silence, Grant now makes unsubstantiated claims that the position of Lenin was that of entering the Labour Party in order to transform it. This is, of course, a complete distortion of Lenin, who fought for the independence of the working class and its party. Jack

Conrad's book *Which Road* fully exposes Militant's entrism strategy and shows how it contrasts utterly with the affiliation tactic which Lenin proposed for the early CPGB: "For Lenin it was a principle that communists should always, no matter what the circumstances or difficulties, organise themselves independently and, if need be, against other trends and forces within the workers movement ... Only with a Communist Party, not a 'radical' Labour Party, can we hope to see socialism" (*Which Road* p228).

Grant's orientation towards Trotskyist dogma rather than Leninism is shown when he pompously quotes Trotsky to show their shared ability to make "scientifically based predictions" and proceeds to pronounce that the most likely result of the general election is a Labour government!

He also tries to substantiate that the collapse of the socialist countries and the rise of nationalism was something that he predicted twenty years ago. This contrasts rather sharply with the editorial in *Militant* when he was still leader that the restoration of capitalism was a "chimera" (*Militant* July 21 1989). All of which shows that Gypsy Rose Grant had substituted crystal balls for any Marxism he may have once had.

Grant's attempts to reform a viable entrism grouping within the Labour Party are doomed to failure not least by the crisis of social democracy itself who can longer even offer crumbs to the working class. The Labour Party will continue on its rightward trajectory, making life for entrists increasingly more difficult, until the time comes when the class struggle has shifted decisively in our favour and the bourgeoisie needs to stem the tide of militancy by presenting a 'left' solution within the capitalist state. This is a role that Militant was preparing itself for, but the period of reaction has shattered that project.

While we need not concern ourselves too much with Ted Grant and his followers for the moment, SML are a force which must be confronted because their collapse into nationalism may take a layer of working class youth in Scotland down with them. The extremely shaky ground which they have placed themselves on makes opportunities for communists to win the working class base which they have been developing by defraud.

Gavin Kyle

ACTION



Summer Offensive ends

THE CELEBRATORY meal to mark the end of the Communist Party's fundraising Offensive was held this year on August 1 in an East London restaurant.

John Bridge congratulated all participants in the campaign. He pointed out that the total pledged by the evening of August 1 - nearly £48,000 - fell short of our original target of £70,000. It is totally wrong to present this shortfall as a 'defeat', however.

First, it was far more than we had ever raised before.

Second, it was achieved not on the basis of significantly more comrades than last year, but on our comrades raising their levels of communist discipline and self sacrifice.

Third, our Party continues to take small but important steps forward during this period of profound world reaction, an impressive achievement.

Our 'curve' continues to arch upwards. Awards were made for those comrades who particularly excelled in the fields of best newcomer, best effort and most raised.

Just how far our organisation has come is shown by comparing the minimum targets we set for our first Offensive back in 1983 - just two weeks of comrades' income - with those comrades who came second and third in this year's 'most raised' category - £3,500 and £3,200 respectively.

Our organisation will never be rich financially - the Party Offensive total is always spent before it is raised. The Party's wealth is measured by its development of cadre and the fund-raising Offensive of our Party enriches us every year without exception.

Mark Fischer

Workers' Europe

December 10-12 (note change of date) Edinburgh. PCC hosted conference of workers' organisations from across Europe. Registration for three nights accommodation, including breakfast - £45 waged, £25 unwaged. For brochure with details of provisional timetable and booking form, contact Anne Murphy at our usual address.

Future seminars

The new series of Communist Party seminars in London - on 'Class Struggle' - starts on Sunday August 23 with 'What is a Class?' For details, send to our usual address.

Seminars

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

●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 seminars are continuing 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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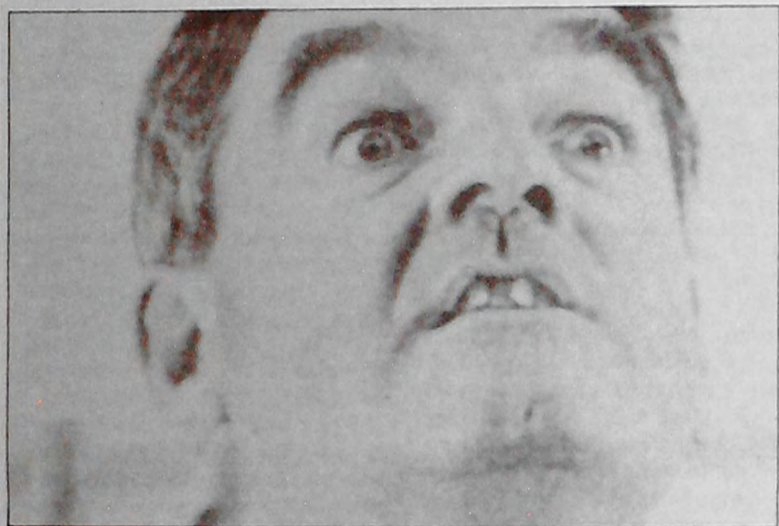
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Some 'details' of history

The left employing the anti-fascist myth of World War II against David Irving or the British National Party is far more dangerous than the fascists themselves



Who is the greatest threat: the above 'mild fascist' and Bugs Bunny impersonator, or the British state? You choose

DAVID IRVING'S description of himself as a "mild fascist" is rather a good one. He is definitely an Albert Speer type, rather than a Rosenberg or Streicher. He is no less a scumbag for that, however, and one that needs dealing with by the working class and anti-fascist movement.

The question is, how? The response of much of the left to the publication of the Irving translated Goebbels' diaries in the *Sunday Times* has exposed its soft liberal underbelly. In effect, they have handed 'rationality' to the right, while they have tried to ban certain views as 'unacceptable' or 'beyond the pale'.

No one denies the views of Irving are repulsive. But how should we fight them? The whole *Sunday Times*/Irving affair has been a storm in teacup that has made the left look rather foolish. "How dare Neil employ Irving?" headlined *Socialist Worker* of July 18. The evidence cited in this truly stupid article to illustrate his supposed unemployment by this beacon of light and truth, Andrew Neil's *Sunday Times*, includes: the fact that he has no degree; he has had libel damages awarded against him; he has manipulated historical evidence to suit his point of view; he has addressed some unsavoury rightwing outfits around the world; and the fact that he is banned from Germany and Austria (for questioning the authenticity of the Holocaust, an illegal action in these two countries).

Frankly, this type of criteria applied to most of the hacks not simply on Neil's publication, but on most bourgeois papers, would lead to mass sackings and newsrooms that resemble the *Mari Celeste*. The fact that Irving tells lies, manipulates evidence and has rightwing friends would make him ideal employment material for most papers. Neil clearly calculated quite cynically the effects of using a living Nazi

to sell the memoirs of a dead one. As he told *Jewish Chronicle* of July 14, "it's my job to get scoops and if that means upsetting people, I'm sorry."

Many on the left have responded on cue to provide even more publicity to Neil's stunt. And they have responded as reactionary liberals. The Socialist Workers Party's tone of moral outrage has been fairly typical. On the same page that it advises Andrew Neil to sack Irving, it demands that someone (who? how?) "shutdown the BNP headquarters".

Communists say that the working class should shut down the BNP lair in its own fashion, a fashion that could ensure that it can be used for little else apart from a carpark afterwards.

But we are 100% against state bans on the fascists. We are against calls to ban the books of David Irving or other 'revisionist' historians.

When the likes of the Anti Nazi League leadership or Anti Racist Alliance say the views of these people are 'undebatable', they actually surrender the field of 'rational' argument to the fascists, a dangerous precedent to set. The controversy around the comments of French reactionary Le Pen on the Holocaust in the lead up to the 1989 elections is good example.

The left has reacted to Le Pen's observation that the extermination of the Jews was "a detail" of World War II with practical apoplexy. At every chance it gets, the SWP repeats this comment and waits for the gasp of horror from its audience.

Le Pen is an anti-semitic and an apologist for reaction. He says the Holocaust was "a detail" because he is trying to belittle the suffering of the Jewish people, along with the millions of communists, Slavs, homosexuals and others that the Nazis murdered in the horror camps.

Nevertheless, he has a point:

Auschwitz, Belsen and Buchenwald were "details" of World War II.

This in no way excuses the bestial crimes of the German fascists. But is anyone seriously trying to say that the allies went to war to protect the Jews? Is anyone seriously suggesting that the West embroiled itself in this carnage for six years to defend democracy in an "anti-fascist crusade"?

If that were the case, why did they protect and defend the fascist Franco? Why did they refuse to bomb the train routes in and out of the death camps? Why did they set up the notorious 'rat lines' after the war ended to spirit Nazis away from the scene of their crimes and use them in the Cold War?

World War II was an inter-imperialist bloodbath, with the exception of the war fought by the socialist USSR. It was led in this country by a vicious anti-working class politician responsible for gunning down striking miners, who believed in the racial superiority of the British over "inferior" races like the Indians, who was a confirmed anti-semitic himself and who advocated euthanasia and castration for whole sections of the population - Winston Churchill.

It had nothing to do with democracy - it was about which imperialist butchers were going to dominate the world. In this sense (and this sense alone), there is an element of truth in Le Pen's statement that the Holocaust was a "detail" of the conflict.

The response of the left to comments like Le Pen's - outrage and demands for these views to be censored - actually bolsters the myth which the western 'anti-Nazi' establishment has

created about its role in World War II. It suggests that for the ruling classes of countries like Britain and the US, the murder of the Jews, the horror of death camps, the human suffering the Nazis inflicted on millions of working people was something other than a "detail".

The liberal approach to these questions - an approach that organisations like the SWP replicate - hands rationality to our enemies. It says that certain views simply cannot be debated, cannot be expressed. This is very dangerous for organisations of the working class.

Irving publishes history books. Should we demand they should not be published because of their outrageous nature? Should we burn the ones that are in print already because they outrage public decency?

The attempt to present these views as beyond the pale because of their "Nazi" nature dovetails the myths of the establishments of the victorious countries in World War II. Implicitly for the SWP, explicitly for some of their allies in the ANL, the state itself should move to ban the expression of the views of people like Irving.

Typically, however, the SWP fudges the question. In its tough talking pamphlet, *Killing the Nazi menace*, it appears to reject such an approach. Bambery, its author, tells us that "we cannot rely on formal bans by government" to fight the fascists (p43). But then in the mass circulation *Socialist Worker*, "will they [the state, we presume] prosecute" war criminal Anton Gecas, as it is "plain there is sufficient evidence to take him to court for atrocities he committed in Byelorussia" during World War II (July 25).

Urging the British imperialist state to dispense its 'justice' to ex-Nazis is a dangerous course for revolutionaries to advocate. The powers that it takes on to deal with the right will inevitably be turned on us, the working class.

Our Communist Party made this fundamental error in the past. In the 1930s, when we were the main opposition to Mosley and his British Union of Fascists, our Party called on the state to ban Mosley's marches and rallies.

The state did respond eventually, but turned this self same weapon on the Communist Party. The Public Order Act was introduced, it was claimed, to deal with the British Union of Fascists. It has been used in the overwhelming majority of cases against the Communist Party and the left.

The BNP has recently been prosecuted by Tower Hamlets council for flyposting. This will mean that left organisations will increasingly be prosecuted for exercising this basic democratic right. If we start asking the state to ban "offensive" views, we are giving them the green light to start banning us - they hardly find the message of communism 'palatable', after all.

The BNP and other fascist organisations must be dealt with by the working class itself. It is a bad idea, to say the least, to give our main enemy more powers in the hope that they will 'do' our lesser enemy. The results are predictable. The bourgeoisie finds us far more "offensive" than their clown Nazi employee, the pathetic loser David Irving.

Ian Mahoney

Fighting the 'Nazis'?

Focusing on the 'fascist menace' today has more to do with a reluctance to challenge the ruling class than an eagerness to take on their far right boneheads

"THE PERIL of Nazism once more stalks the streets of Europe, within living memory of Hitler's Holocaust", the opening line of the latest Socialist Worker Party pamphlet by Chris Bambery, *Killing the Nazi Menace* tells us.

The 'Nazis' are identified as, amongst others, Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front and the similar "Nazi parties" that have made "breakthroughs" in Austria, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland and Scandinavia. *Socialist Worker* (July 25) even exposes the "Nazi" president of the International Olympic Committee, one Juan Antonio Samaranch, on the basis that he was Franco's sport's minister.

In fact, Nazism is only a particular form of fascism that grew in the soil of Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. The approach of the SWP - to label every rightwing or fascist movement as "Nazi" - is a very disreputable and potentially dangerous tactic.

Their analysis is full of contradiction. On the one hand, they reject the idea that somehow fascism is "unBritish" (p24). Then on the other, they use

the terms "fascism" and "Nazism" interchangeably throughout their literature on the subject.

Why? They are right that fascism is certainly not 'unBritish' - but then 'Nazism' certainly is. Similarly, it is in that sense 'unFrench', 'unAustrian' or 'unSpanish'.

British fascism for example - when it arrives in a rather more dangerous form than the oddball Hitler fans of today's British National Party - will not goose step around the streets of Basingstoke and give stiff arm salutes in shopping centres in Penge. Neither will its leaders have embarrassing old photos of themselves in Forest of Dean jaunts conveniently resplendent in swastika armbands.

Hardly. In fact, they will incorporate the World War II anti-Nazi myth - 'Britain's finest hour' - into their chauvinist, pro-imperialist propaganda. Serious British fascism will also be 'anti-Nazi'.

It will have its own distinctive British form, tapping into centuries of British ruling class chauvinism (including against the Germans) and even earlier indigenous traditions.

King Arthur would look silly in a

swastika armband. Put a union jack standard in his hand - however historically inaccurate - and you have a closer approximation of the form that a really dangerous British fascist movement will take.

The narrow focus on "the Nazis" attempts to present the ideas of extreme chauvinism and racism associated with German fascism as implicitly 'alien', or distinctly 'unBritish', not matter what Chris Bambery says. This allows the SWP to stretch their ANL constituency to what they euphemistically call "far wider layers of people" (p43), "anyone", latter-day Bomber Harris's included presumably, "who wants to fight the the Nazis", who thought it was "banished forever in 1945" (pp45-46).

With this narrow 'anti-Nazi' focus, the SWP led ANL is able to mobilise people who are enthusiastic supporters of the British capitalist state. Sowing illusions in the ability of this institution - our main enemy - to 'fight fascism' is criminal. As we point out in the main article - dangerous.

Mark Fischer