

The LENINIST

CPGB Split p2

Iran and the SWP p4-5

NHS struggle p6

Turkey p8

As Early as Possible As Late as Necessary

THE FIGHT against Liberal MP David Alton's attempt to reduce the legal time limit on abortion has united a broad spectrum of political opinion. Unfortunately it has been able to do this precisely because it fudges the basic issue and confuses a 'women's right to choose' with an uncritical defence of the 1967 Abortion Act.

Yet this particular piece of legislation legalised abortion only under strictly controlled and humiliating conditions. According to its 'safeguards', a woman can only abort a foetus after she has satisfied two doctors that "the continuation of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman greater than if the pregnancy was terminated."

This 'greater than' stipulation means that thousands of working class women every year have to justify their painful decisions to have an abortion to often unsympathetic and insensitive middle class male doctors. This hardly be said to constitute a 'woman's right to choose'. At the end of the day, the right to police working class women's fertility is left in the hands of the upper middle class medical establishment and governmental bodies like the DHSS.

The report of a House of Lords select committee on the Infant Life (Preservation) Bill introduced in 1986 by the Bishop of Birmingham recommended re-

jection of the bill which attempted on rather dubious grounds to outlaw terminations after 24 weeks. Yet the noble Lords plumped for rejection precisely because the contingencies of the 1967 legislation were so restrictive already:

"Having regard to the restrictions already imposed administratively by the combined force of the health departments and the medical profession on abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy, the committee sees no purpose in retaining the 28 week restriction at all."

The anti-abortionists are keen to present a picture of thousands of 'irresponsible' women flippantly seeking and getting abortion more or less on demand. This is of course reactionary nonsense. Some women can have 'free abortion on demand' but this has been courtesy of a cash nexus, not the enlightened actions of the legislators in parliament.

Before limited access to abortion was legalised in 1967, there were hundreds of thousands of illegal abortions every year. While public concern at the horrifyingly large numbers of women who suffered septic abortions or even died after these back-street butcher jobs was one of the spurs behind the introduction of the '67 legislation, the real impetus was the need to bring abortion under the control of the state.

The ruling class felt it is necessary to directly regulate the fertility of working class women in a period

when an expansion in the economy necessitated their increased participation in the production process.

Since the onset of economic decline and stagnation, the establishment has launched a drive to force women to carry the can for capitalism's crisis and the consequent cuts in social services.

True, women's employment has gone up. But women have been left to do boring, no future jobs at pay levels most men would not accept. They are also still burdened with the double oppression of having to fulfil their domestic 'responsibilities'. The burden of bearing children and performing domestic labour gratis relegates women to second class status in capitalist society and this is why control over their fertility is a key demand for women's liberation.

It is vital that supporters of women's rights must not get themselves embroiled in obscurantist arguments about when life starts. Alton claims that advances in scientific technology have made fetuses capable of survival before 24 weeks. Some organisations have enmeshed themselves in Alton's reactionary logic in order to try to refute his claims.

For example, the Socialist Workers Party has claimed that "by 18 weeks a child is no different in size and weight from a child at 28 weeks." This, though, is not the point.

As far as we are concerned, time limits are more or less irrelevant.

Human life is after all, social life and our concept of life can have no meaning out of this context. Human life starts with birth, when a child enters society and it is nonsense to speak of its 'rights' before this event.

The dangers of becoming entangled in technical arguments about the viability of foetuses at different stages are not hard to imagine. Most late abortions are presently performed because of foetal deformities.

The most reliable test for this cannot be done until 20 weeks. But what, for example, should be our attitude if medical science were able to make a breakthrough in this field and such tests can be done much earlier? If we have based our defence of women's rights on technical grounds it will have been effectively undermined.

The capitalist state can never liberate women. The right of full and unconditional control over her own fertility is a democratic basic right for any woman; yet it is one that capitalist society has never been able to provide. Capital has an organic need to reinforce women's position as a reserve army of labour and as second class citizens. This does not mean that we have a leftist argument that particular attacks of this or that reactionary like Alton are 'irrelevant'.

But if we are mobilising against Alton, we should not only be mobilising in defence of the gain that the 1967 Act was but above all

for a woman's *unrestricted* right to free abortion on demand. We are not blasé about this demand.

Abortions are frequently painful, still dangerous and emotionally distressing. But while it remains a necessity if women are to have control over their own bodies, we will support it unconditionally.

The fight against the Alton Bill must not be left to the Parliamentary Labour Party, let alone to persuading back bench Tories to become champions of women's liberation. The Alton Bill is not just an attack on women, it is primarily an attack on working class women.

Working class women will be mistaken if they look to 'sisters' in the middle and ruling classes to fight Alton. Women only marches are not what is needed. A cross class front of all women will channel everything into stunts and parliamentary lobbying. What is needed is a concerted campaign in the working class movement - concentrating in the rank and file - to win male workers to see the fight against the Alton Bill as their direct concern.

Even if Alton is defeated by some parliamentary ploy the needs of capital will necessitate yet another attack on working class women. To remove this threat capitalism itself must be fought and defeated. That is the only way to liberate women.

Alec Long and Margaret Hickman

The Gibraltar 3: Statement

THE COLD blooded killings in the British colony of Gibraltar on March 6 of IRA members Mairead Farrell, Danny McCann and Sean Savage by the SAS proves, if proof were needed, that the British state has a shoot-to-kill policy.

Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe, now admits that the original claims about a 500lb car bomb being found and SAS men shooting to save themselves were lies. The three were unarmed and explosives were only found two days later and 40 miles away. Eye witnesses have also stated that no warning was given before the SAS opened fire. The SAS squad was clearly an execution squad. The British state is a terrorist state.

The British establishment is crowing that the IRA has suffered a "terrible blow". But let no one be in any doubt, the IRA might have problems with security, but the Irish people will never give up their legitimate struggle for national liberation.

For every freedom fighter the British kill there are according to a

worried Peter Barry - representative for Fine Gael in the Dail - "20 to 30 waiting to take their place". The youth of west Belfast testified to this in no uncertain terms. As soon as Howe's revolting justification for murder was broadcast from Westminster they took to the streets, hijacked lorries and built barricades in true revolutionary fashion.

The reason for Ireland's hydra headed revolutionary movement is simple: British rule in Ireland is in crisis, the nationalist masses in the Six Counties refuse to be ruled in the old way, the British cannot rule in the old way.

The only way this revolutionary situation can be resolved positively is through the defeat of British imperialism. And while the revolutionary masses in Ireland will mourn the loss of the Gibraltar 3 we know they will never stop organising for the liberation of their country.

This is a struggle genuine communists unconditionally support, just as Marx, Engels and Lenin did. Ireland is as they said the acid

test of internationalism for all in the British workers' movement.

The Labour Party has again thoroughly exposed itself as the bourgeois party of the working class. It drips with the blood of the oppressed from every pore. Labour's foreign affairs spokesman enthusiastically joined the Tory reptiles in welcoming the murder of the Gibraltar 3.

Even Eric Heffer, who according to Howe stood "alone in the House" said he "unequivocally opposed terrorism" - by which he means the Irish liberation struggle. He cast himself in the role of critical but faithful counsellor to the British ruling class: "How can this [the murder of the Gibraltar 3] help in the fight against terrorism?" he feebly asked.

Heffer's miserable attacks on those fighting for Irish freedom were echoed by the Communist Party of Ireland and the Morning Star in Britain. The CPI said that "even if those shot were actively engaged in an act of terrorism" they could have "easily been brought to justice."

We say there is no British "justice" - who can doubt this after the Birmingham 6 - only different methods of British rule. If the CPI believes in British "justice" is only exposes its own total prostration before British imperialism.

The Morning Star is no better: worse in that it operates in the oppressor not the oppressed country. This so-called 'communist' paper advised the British imperialists that "disregard for justice feeds Irish resentment and encourages nationalists to believe that armed action can effect changes in British government policies" (March 8 1988). There is no other description of this other than social imperialism.

The Morning Star, like Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, wants the revolutionary masses in the Six Counties of Ireland to abide by "due process of law", ie the laws of British imperialism, and look towards reformist methods, what the Morning Star moronically calls 'a political approach'. This has nothing to do with communism.

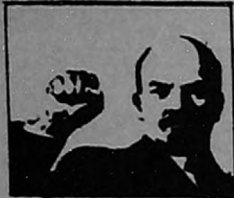
The Morning Star pleads to

"British parliamentarians and public" to "press for an enquiry" into the killings of the Gibraltar 3 in order to persuade the nationalist population to stop supporting the armed struggle. What renegades!

The truth is that British rule in Ireland remains in crisis precisely because the revolutionary masses continue to support the armed struggle of the liberation movement. Far from it being a diversion it is a direct product of the profound revolutionary situation that exists in the Six Counties. It is heroic and correct.

If the Gibraltar 3 had been successful in hitting the Royal Anglian Regiment we would not have mourned, we would have defended it as a legitimate tactic in the IRA's struggle to free their country from the yoke of British imperialism.

We salute the Gibraltar 3 and all heroes of Ireland's struggle for freedom and repledge our continued solidarity. Your sacrifices will not be in vain! Victory is certain! Jack Conrad for The Leninist Editorial Board



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists
of the Communist Party of Great Britain

HISTORY IT IS said repeats itself first time tragedy, second time farce. But where the New Communist Party split was a farce, the Communist Campaign Group split will be a tragedy. What we will see following its April 23-24 congress will be no 'reestablished' CPGB but a tragic repetition of the NCP.

The CCG tops have used the big lie technique to lead their followers into a split. The right Euros around *Marxism Today* now control the CPGB and the majority of communists support the CCG they have been cynically told.

In truth the last congress did not see a victory for the forces of *Marxism Today* as claimed. Quite the reverse. *Marxism Today* was forced into semi-opposition. As to the "majority of communists" supporting the CCG - stated in black and white by Tom Durkin in his *Morning Star* article pushing the latest edition of the *Communist Campaign Review* - we will not mince words. It is a downright lie! The majority of communists will not go with the CCG split!

All the evidence we have at our disposal indicates that the CCG split will have less members than the 700 the NCP managed to cobble together in 1977. And unlike the NCP it seems it will not even be able to get the backing of one district committee.

The West Middlesex DC has frozen its discussions with the CCG while the equally pro-*Morning Star* East Midlands DC has voted solidly against joining the split. Even in London - the cradle of the CCG - those actively supporting the CCG have more than halved within two years.

Outside London and Manchester the CCG 'party' has only isolated pockets of support. In Yorkshire the CCG consists of less than two dozen people. In Scotland - the CPGB's largest concentration of members - it is no better.

The CCG 'party' will at the end of the day be made up of a collection of politically heterogeneous groupings i.e. some support the chauvinistic Alternative Economic Strategy, others do not, some support the liberation movement in Ireland, others do not etc, etc. The CCG 'party' will in point of fact be a mirror image of the CPGB of the 1970s, only seen through the wrong end of a telescope - it will have all the divisions but at best only 5% of the membership.

Numbers are not everything. We are well aware of this. Correct politics are the vital prerequisite for correct political practice. And this is where the CCG 'party' is fundamentally flawed. The CCG 'party' will not be founded on the profound truths of Marxism-Leninism but on the banalities of left reformism enshrined in the thoroughly reformist *British Road to Socialism*.

And object as they undoubtedly will the CCG 'party' rank and file will find themselves politically enslaved to the *Morning Star* - the "daily living embodiment of the BRS." The CCG 'party' will have support for the *Morning Star* enshrined in its rules. Therefore its editor, Tony Chater - he is to give the political opening at the CCG's congress - will decide the political line of the CCG 'party', not the other way round.

Chater, who bureaucratically rebelled against the CPGB Executive Committee - of which he was a member - will hardly abide by the 'democratic centralism' of the CCG 'party'. It is his paper and he will do with it what he wants and not what the CCG 'party' might wish.

The CCG rank and file will have no choice, they will have to sell and defend the political line of the *Morning Star* - a paper which has supported not only vile scabs like Ramsay MacKinnock and Judas Willis but the counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc, the semi-fascist Progressive Unionist Party in Ireland and who knows what in the future. Those who join the CCG 'party' thinking they are helping to reestablish a revolutionary Communist Party will find themselves bitterly disappointed.

The Editor

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LETTERS

United Front

I would like to make some suggestions regarding our political position and activities under the circumstances of the present wave of class militancy.

Accepting that our agreed objectives are:

A. To unify the workers on a class basis;
B. To consolidate the class struggle in a concrete form, i.e. organisationally;

C. To establish the leadership of Leninists in the workers' organisations;

D. To build the party in the process of the class struggle as the vanguard of the working class movement;

I propose that we consider the following: 1. The formation of rank and file committees among car workers, seamen, nurses, teachers etc, to organisationally consolidate the militant struggles at grass roots level.

2. That the rank and file committees link up on a trade basis (all car factories, etc) and on a class basis through inter-trade coordinating committees.

3. That the objectives of the rank and file committee (among others) be, to control the strikes, demonstrations etc, and to bypass the compromising reformist trade union bureaucracy; to organise the exchange of pickets as a demonstration of class solidarity, and to actively break from the law against secondary and sympathetic action; to organise joint demonstrations, meetings etc, against the anti-trade union laws and in support of the NHS; to campaign for 100% trade unionism, including the right of unemployed workers to retain trade union membership; to extend the rank and file committees through picketing and factory gate meetings, particularly where workers are not so active, such as in power stations, electronics factories and docks.

On the basis of the above, *The Leninist* should write an open letter to the editors of all left wing papers and their party secretaries suggesting a united front on the above course of action, so that the present surge of militancy will not cease without leaving some tangible results behind it, such as a minimum of class organisation for future struggle maintained by the most militant and advanced members in each industry.

I doubt if anything will come of the united front suggestion, but if we give the lead in suggesting united class action on behalf of the striking workers, give the proposal the maximum publicity through the open letter and publicising our proposal among class militants and strikers, the other parties will be put on the spot and we will be recognised as the leaders of united class action. I feel that we would have a lot to gain, both in publicity and contacts, and so gain something concrete for *The Leninist* out of the present struggles.

I would be against calling for a 'general strike' as there is no organisation or preparation for such a grandiose action - rather a call for the 'extension and consolidation of the struggle on a class basis'. The call for the 'downfall of Thatcher's government' means support for a Labour government as the alternative. A call to 'fight the bosses' government's anti-working class measures; no faith in Labour leaders, build a fighting Leninist communist party' would be more correct. We can therefore give a demonstration of real com-

munist leadership and lay a fertile basis for future action.

P Conlon
South London

Moscow Trials

Recently I saw *The Leninist* for the first time. Having read the article on Bukharin I think you might be interested in the Moscow Trials Campaign.

This is a broad based campaign in support of the enclosed statement which, as you will see, demands the rehabilitation of all victims of the Moscow trials.

Besides continuing to circulate the petition, the committee is now planning a public meeting and preparing a pamphlet. The committee (chaired by Cyril Smith) is open to those committed to defence of the Soviet Union.

Sarah Francis
East London

Alan Merrik replies,

While the comrade argues that the committee is open to those committed to defence of the Soviet Union, it is evidently open to those who are not, too. I refer to the likes of Eric Heffer, a signatory of the campaign, not generally known for his spirited defence of the Soviet Union.

This cover of 'defence' seems more of an avoidance of domination of the campaign by the likes of the SWP, so that it should remain firmly under the control of 'orthodox' Trotskyists like Cyril Smith and the remnants of the WRP (*Workers Press*).

The past and present record of this group - who, it must be remembered, have the blood of Iraqi communists on their hands - and other Trotskyists who 'formally' claim to defend the Soviet Union, such as Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, speaks volumes about the campaign's willingness to undertake such a task, apart from the support it has attracted from Heffer and other overt anti-Soviets.

So, while we can formally agree with the demands of the campaign, it would not serve the cause of socialism in the USSR, or Britain to line up with such a sorry group of opportunists. Quite the reverse, in fact.

USSR

I would probably be regarded as a 'centrist toady' in so far as, notwithstanding some reservations, I give uncompromising support to the political line of the current CPSU leadership. Perhaps I am old fashioned, but I see this question as fundamental: I am not talking about slavish adherence to every utterance that comes from the mouth of M Gorbachev, but of recognition of the primacy of the USSR in the world communist movement, and of responsibilities that flow from this.

The Leninist appears to recognise this primacy, though quite correctly, it has never been afraid to criticise shortcomings in a fraternal spirit. In earlier years this criticism was expressed in terms not dissimilar from those used by Gorbachev himself, and had to do with concrete problems, such as the need for widening socialist democracy, for greater openness and so on.

Now, in issue 55 for example, we find something very different: an

open call for political revolution in the USSR, for pluralism of parties, and much else, including *The Leninist's* bathetic assurance that it will support the Soviet working class in such a revolution. People who offer (even conditional) support for perestroika are dismissed as sycophants. Attacks on the "bureaucracy" are a cover for an attack on the CPSU itself. The NEM is condemned (falsely and facetiously) for introducing certain (undefined) "capitalist elements" into the economy.

The Leninist prides itself on its "concreteness", so let us take a look at a few concrete problems:

Whose interests ('class', strata or otherwise) would be served by the introduction of political pluralism? The chauvinists and pan-Slav 'Black Hundred' nutcases of Pamyat would certainly like a political party. The bourgeois nationalists in the Ukraine and the Baltic republics would like a political party. And this is what *The Leninist* calls "the key to opening up the struggle for socialist democracy". Conrad talks of the danger of capitalist restoration - his irresponsible call for political pluralism in the vaguest terms is a recipe for exactly this.

Just what are the "capitalist elements" Conrad sees in the NEM? Is he talking about people, ideas or methods? So far as individual labour activity, cooperatives etc are concerned, the threat of capitalism (in a correct Marxist theoretical sense) is legislatively excluded. Even if the NEM were being enthusiastically implemented this fact would not change. There is nothing 'capitalist' about cooperatives as envisaged in the arrangements either in form or content.

MG Malkin
Surrey

Sectarian

I have been reading your publication for a few years as the only vaguely revolutionary current in a party which has been marching down the reformist (non)-road to socialism for more than 50 years.

However, I was appalled to read your article on the arrest and possible torture of the United Communist Party of Turkey leaders last year.

You half heartedly call for their release in a middle paragraph at the same time as calling it "a stage-managed stunt" and surmising there was a tacit agreement between them and the Turkish government. How could you possibly know of such a thing and think that they willingly went into the hands of the notoriously brutal Turkish police. Perhaps Ozal is a secret social democrat and arrest was organised by him to promote the UCPT?

You should have given an indication of what socialist in Britain can do in their support and help arrange pickets, demonstrations and other such things and cut away the crippling cancer of sectarianism.

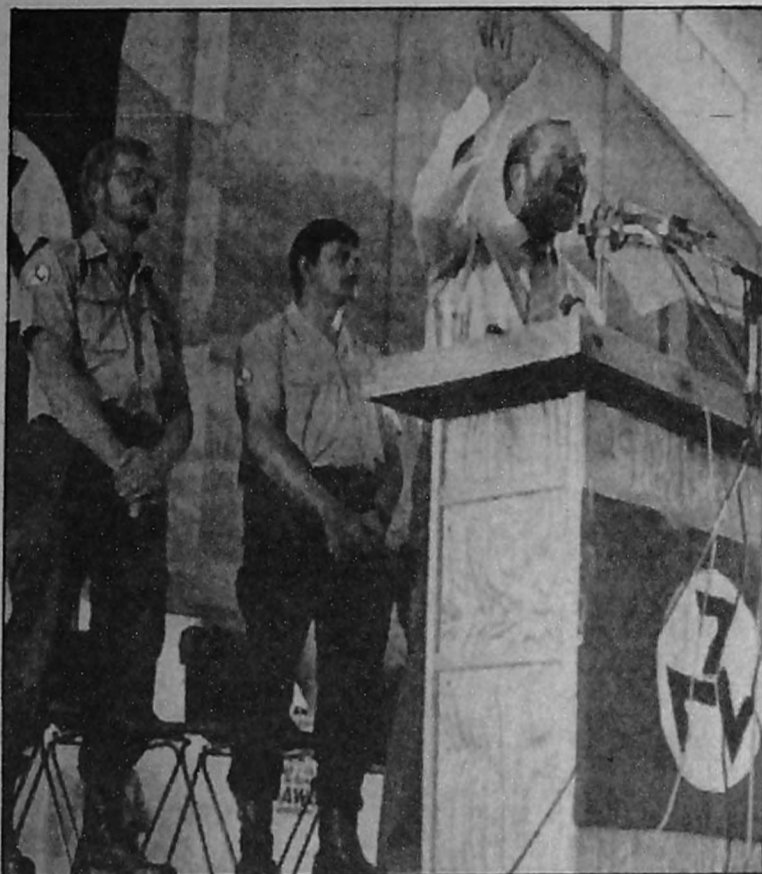
Phil Johnson
South London

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

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

Danger Signals



The fascist danger does not only come from the AWB. Fascism can be beaten

THERE ARE ominous storm clouds gathering in South Africa. In the lead up to the by-elections in two of the conservative Transvaal states, the ruling National Party government of PW Botha:

- Banned virtually the entire extra-parliamentary opposition, 17 groups in all including the huge United Democratic Front, in an effort to end the "climate of revolution".

- Moved to cut off overseas funds that many of these organisations receive, not least the UDF which receives roughly half of its funding from abroad.

- Bombed Angola.

- Arrested Bishop Tutu and other church leaders when they tried to lead a pacifistic protest march by clerics against the clampdown.

- Banned political activity by the trade union federation, Cosatu.

Botha's party was trounced in the Transvaal by-elections by the extreme right wing Conservative Party of Andries Treurnicht. The western media has used this to reinforce its claim that Botha's turn to the right is because of the Conservative Party threat. This is nonsense. Its by-election reverses are only a flea bite to his massive parliamentary majority.

The reason for Botha's turn to the right is because the revolutionary mass movement is no longer breathing down his neck. His reform programme in the first place was due the revolutionary explosion of the black masses not some change of heart.

Clearly, over recent weeks there has been a qualitative development in the process of fascistisation in South Africa. Yet, as real as this process is, it is vital to understand that the regime is *not yet fascist* and thus that the potential for the revolutionary masses to exert themselves still exists.

The characteristic, indeed the defining, feature of fascist regimes is *counterrevolutionary monolithicism* under the conditions of monopoly capitalism. Fascism moves to crush the organisations and the fighting potential of the revolution through naked, barbaric terror.

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

Once fascism has resolved the schisms within the ruling class that paralysed it in the face of the revolution, it moves with total, unbridled ferocity against workers and does what is necessary to save the capitalist regime: that is, to smash the organisations of the masses and annihilate its leadership.

Obviously that stage has not yet been reached in South Africa. For whites, the republic remains a bourgeois democracy. In spite of its eclipse by the ascendant extreme right, there remains a liberal opposition; divisions amongst the right are also widening as expressed by the rise of the Nazi-style AWB and also electorally through the ongoing 'broedertwis' (a brother's quarrel) between the CP, the NP and the Herstigte National Party. Clearly, monolithicism has not been imposed.

There is though no room for complacency. The fascist danger is there and getting stronger. And no one should fool themselves that the fascist danger comes only from the Nazi-style fanatics of the AWB. Since Botha became prime minister, he has systematically reorganised the executive branch of the state, drawing the military into planning and administrative organisation.

Indeed, since 1977 and the founding of the Strategic Planning Section of the South African Defence Force, the security establishment has encroached more and more into areas nominally outside its sphere. Fascism could potentially strike come from this direction also.

Since its high point marked by the emergence of the comrades and the formation of street committees, or embryonic organs of dual power, the revolutionary struggle has ebbed. This is partially accounted for by the ferocious attacks of the state on the movement and in particular, on the township-

based organisations.

The latest issue of *Umsebenzi* (first quarter, 1988), the illegal paper of the South African Communist Party, points out that the peoples' committees, particularly in the UDF stronghold of the Eastern Cape, were "badly mauled", as were the self-defence squads.

Since the state of emergency was declared in June 1986, over 30,000 leaders and activists have been detained and, importantly, the fifth column Inkatha movement of Buthezi has embroiled members of the UDF and Cosatu in damaging fratricidal warfare that has left 400 plus dead.

Yet the key problem that has affected the movement has been the failure of the vanguard of the South African working class, the SACP. What the revolutionary black workers need is *consciousness* which can only be provided by a vanguard party guided by Marxism-Leninism.

The activity of the masses, not least the powerful black proletariat has been characterised by *spontaneity*. This has long since outlived its useful aspects. It is the failure to overcome spontaneity that is the *main* factor behind the present downturn in the revolutionary wave. Although strike actions last year indicated the growing importance of the black working class in South Africa the proletariat has not achieved hegemony over those fighting to smash the apartheid system.

Yet all is far from being lost. The partial upturn in the South African economy, expressed most clearly in the country's transformed debt and balance of payments position, perhaps offers the black working class the opportunity to step forward into the front line and force the government back onto the defensive. Certainly, the continuing splits in the ruling class mean that there are yawning cracks through which mass discontent could burst through. The situation though is critical and unfortunately the South African revolution is threatened not only by fascism but by its natural ally.

Under the opportunist leadership of Gorbachev, the Soviet Union is treating living revolutions as pieces of real estate. Seizing on Gorbachev's offer to do deals on the world's "hot spots", the regime in Pretoria has offered an 'Afghanistan-type' solution to Angola.

This should set alarm bells ringing not only in Luanda, but also in the ranks of the ANC and SACP. There can be little doubt that as a *quid pro quo* of any sellout deal in Angola would be a selling off i.e. betrayal of the revolution in South Africa itself.

In his recent speech in Moscow, SACP general secretary Joe Slovo appeared to stand firm and reject such a project. As he correctly emphasised, "... the prospect of political settlement or real negotiation does not depend on diplomatic manoeuvre but rather on the building up of the strength of the liberation forces and escalating the blows against the apartheid regime".

This is correct. The SACP must assert its revolutionary independence and fight to bring the revolutionary masses consciousness. If this is done victory for the South Africans is certain.

Ian Mahoney

It looks as though Thorn EMI management in Manchester are going to back off from their threat to sue and discipline shop stewards for taking illegal solidarity strike action with the health workers on February 19, which was in defiance of court injunctions. The fact that the bosses have retreated has nothing to do with their reasonableness. It is a direct result of the unity and strength of the workers there that we should take heed of. The workforce there is united not only with its own militant stewards, but also has forged strong links with the health workers that they struck alongside. Far from complaining about the solidarity demonstration organised by health workers as being a "complicating factor", as does the *Morning Star* of March 8, we should be fighting for this as the way forward. This points the way for solidarity actions for the future. If the Thorn EMI workers were isolated within their own workplace their leaders could have been easily picked off and workers demoralised. In support of the health workers and in opposition to the Tories' anti-trade union laws, this approach should be generalised. Workers must organise for action on a cross union, rank and file basis, coordinating action, each defending the other as Manchester health and electronics workers have done.

The demonstration against cuts in the Inner London Education Authority on March 8 brought over 10,000 out onto the streets. Considering all the problems in building for this the numbers were exceptional. Sadly though amongst the speakers the marchers were expected to listen to was Neil Fletcher, the Ilea boss who had just issued a circular to schools instructing workers to scab on the March 8 strikers. In fact as Ilea leader he voted for job cutting cuts, justifying this on the grounds that the cuts were the fault of the Tories which he could do nothing about. Fortunately his speech was greeted by constant and militant opposition from the crowd. Possibly, though, the most disgraceful thing about the day was the presence of *Socialist Worker* sellers. The SWP had argued *against* strike action on the day, and had even overturned previous decisions to strike in some union branches, such as Camden Nalgo. In the NUT, their members had merely argued that teachers should not cross picket lines. The SWP argued that anything but building for the NHS strike on March 14 would be a failure. That it was not was despite the SWP which is trailing far behind advanced workers. Even when it comes to supporting the health workers in many union branches, like Brent Nalgo, their motions argued for undefined 'solidarity action' in opposition to 'strike action'. The SWP's downturn theory was always silly. Now its downright reactionary content is clear to see.

Workers at Land Rover's Solihull must not worry about what their bosses can afford but about what they need. Certainly they must not settle at below the going rate. Renault workers in Dunstable got a settlement similar to that which the Ford workers reluctantly accepted, after only 12 days on strike. It seems to have been a tradition within the car industry in Britain that Fords workers set the pace in industrial militancy. Land Rover workers must be wary of its talk of "profitability", which bosses, union bureaucrats and reformists take as their starting point when it comes to workers' wages. Fords in Britain is highly profitable. Land Rover on the other hand only made a tiny £7.9 million last year. We must not cut our cloth to suit the bosses' ledgers. Their profitability is not our concern - our living standards and working conditions are. The Rover Group has made losses which run into billions since 1978 - this is not the workers' fault but due to the vagaries of the capitalist market. Workers need to live whether their bosses are making a profit or loss.

Follow this lead



Our £600 monthly fund now stands at £285. This is good but there can be no room for complacency. We have over the last year or so only reached our total irregularly. This must not happen in 1988. The class struggle is on the rise. There has been a rash of strikes in the car industry and there is a powerful movement developing in the health industry. We are doing our utmost to get *The Leninist* into the hands of those in struggle, especially militant health workers. All this costs a great deal of money. And as our paper has no source of finance apart from you our readers we must call upon you to put your hands deeper into your pockets. Above all we want you to make a regular commitment through taking out a bankers order. Last month three more readers did this, most pleasingly including a militant health worker. Follow this lead.



● Taking on Ilea boss Neil Fletcher. Workers will fight the Tory government and those Labourite bosses who carry out their cuts

THE TURMOIL in the Middle East is not dissimilar to the situation in the Balkans prior to World War I, insofar as it is the focal point for the contradictions of world imperialism – a storm centre for wars and revolutions. Because of its international nature, the struggles in the region address themselves to revolutionaries the world over.

This can be seen in its most direct sense in the Gulf conflict, with the entanglement of western imperialism and the socialist countries in the war; sometimes siding with Iran, sometimes with Iraq, whenever possible with both. This applies to the socialist states equally as much as it does to the imperialist powers.

The renewal, by Iraq, of the 'war of the cities' has again raised the temperature of the war, together with threats by Iran to launch a series of all out land offensives in the near future. The crisis in the region is deepening, with less and less room for diplomatic manoeuvre for either the belligerent countries or imperialism.

The *Morning Star*, true to form, took the opportunity to call for "urgent action by the United Nations" (March 2). So the crisis in the region is to be resolved by all the imperialists and belligerent states getting around a table in the New York headquarters of the UN to sort things out like reasonable gents. Anything but revolution, the only sorting out which can resolve the crisis in favour of the Iranian and Iraqi masses.

But then, no one ever really seriously expects the *Star* to come out with anything but reactionary pacifistic platitudes and reliance on imperialism.

Of more interest at the moment is the approach of the petty bourgeois left. This is because debate has developed in the left in Britain on the attitude to be taken to the Iranian regime. This is embodied in its most overt, extreme and confused form in the zig-zags of the Socialist Workers Party.

After the amorphous and meandering waffle that one has come to expect as a substitute for analysis on the pages of *Socialist Worker* on whether or not to support the bloody Khomeini regime, the SWP came out with a very big 'yes', although with a background of dissenting voices from within its ranks. But a cursory re-read of its publications reveals that the SWP has never really known what to make of the Islamic Republic.

Socialist Review of May/June 1980 talks of "Muslim revolutionaries in Iran", meaning the forces of Khomeini. Of course, soon after we find the SWP writing of the repression of the working class and national minorities in Iran by these self same "Muslim revolutionaries".

But last year's intervention of the west into the Gulf threw these naives into new throes of confusion. *Socialist Worker Review* of September 1987 wrote that "we cannot be uncritical supporters of the Iranian regime ... the regime is the butcher of the revolution." So here it seems that – with the get-out clause of 'uncritical' – the SWP continued to oppose the Khomeini regime in the war.

Then, within a matter of two or three weeks, we read in *Socialist Worker* that it "is not acceptable for socialists simply to condemn Iran as 'reactionary'".

"The Khomeini regime is vile and oppressive. But every American attack prolongs its life, giving it renewed credibility among Iran's workers – the force we wish to see replace Khomeini, not some US puppet." (September 26 1987).

So it seems that, yes, the SWP does support the Islamic Republic against the US, by virtue of the fact that they pose the false choice of either Khomeini or a 'puppet'. Or does it? Because in the centre pages of *Socialist Worker* on September 12 we find the statement that "Just as during the First World War Lenin called for the defeat of his country, so should revolutionaries in Iran." Let confusion reign!

The SWP's position caused much scratching of heads as to what they really thought on the Gulf. What we were reading was less the outcome of a structured thought process, more of a stream of consciousness. But with the publication of their conference report in *Socialist Worker* of November 11 1987 all doubt was laid to rest.

SWP theoretician, Alex Callinicos, introduced the discussion with some abstract generalisations: that Lenin "argued that to combat nationalism and break its hold on the working class socialists should support the right of nations to self determination", and that "Lenin argued that the communist parties in the colonial countries, while fighting side by side with the revolutionary [my empha-

For workers in Britain and Iran ... The Main Enemy is at Home!



No defence of Khomeini. Pseudo anti-imperialism is not real anti-imperialism

sis – AM] nationalism against imperialism, had to be ruthlessly critical of bourgeois nationalism, maintaining their political independence."

So the justification for supporting Iran is that it is led by revolutionary nationalists? No, says Callinicos, the Islamic Republic "is thoroughly reactionary – it oppresses women and national minorities, butchers the left and exploits the workers." True. Then why were we treated to the postage stamp exposition of the Leninist position on revolutionary nationalism, heaven only knows.

And furthermore, is the right of Iran to self determination in question here? No. The US fleet that sits in the Gulf is no invasion fleet. The resources to land an invasion force are not there. Again, another diversion with little or no bearing on the concrete situation.

Concretely, then: why does the SWP support Khomeini? And not only against the west, but now against Iraq?

Firstly because "it is a regime which presents itself as anti-imperialist" (as does Iraq, but let's not be pedantic!).

Secondly, an analogy is drawn between the defence of the Islamic Republic and the defensive attitude that Trotsky urged his followers to take to the Spanish Republic – military but not political support. Apart from that they are/were both capitalist states with "republic" in the title, there is no similarity between the two situations.

Furthermore, if this were not bad enough, the way that the SWP poses this support is in the form of a popular front *par excellence*. SWP guru Tony Cliff argued at the conference that: "If you give no support to Iran it means that you should support every strike [exactly!] ... If arms are going to the front, railwaymen should not go on strike to stop the arms."

So workers in Iran should not oppose industries concerned with the war effort. Because Iranian industry has been stripped bare for the war, virtually any strike takes on a de facto anti-war character.

Does Cliff oppose the anti-conscription strikes which have been a mainstay of working class resistance to the barbarity of the theocracy and its war? Logically he must. Alongside the poisonous maggots of the *News Line* sect, Khomeini has found himself one more resolute ally in the British left.

Democracy and Revolution

To show the paucity of the two dimensional pseudo anti-imperialism of the SWP it is necessary to look at what Lenin actually

wrote, and in what context.

His analysis was totally counterposed to the abstract 'anti-imperialist' platitudes of Callinicos and Cliff. For him it was a concrete question of which outcome would most benefit the working class, to further extend democracy whether under bourgeois social relations or, where possible, through to socialism.

For instance, in his polemics specifically against the social chauvinists during World War I, Lenin uses examples of the nascent bourgeoisie in Europe in the 18th and early 19th century carrying out progressive wars against the feudal remnants. Even in 1847, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels could talk of communists supporting the radical wing of the bourgeoisie in Europe.

In the time that Lenin was writing the bourgeoisie of the imperialist nations of Europe had lost all progressive potential, but, as Lenin argued, the oppressed nations' bourgeoisies had a progressive role to play insofar as they struggled against imperialist oppression and for national democracy, and that therefore the working class could find common cause with them.

As Lenin argued against the national liberal Potresov; "Potresov drags present day democracy backwards, ... he drags it back to the slogans and ideology of the old bourgeois democracy, to the dependence of the masses on the bourgeoisie ... Marx's method consists, first of all, in taking due account of the objective content of a historical process at a given moment, in definite and concrete conditions; this in order to realise, in the first place, the movement of which class is the mainspring of the progress possible in those concrete conditions."

"Marx was guided ... by considerations as to whose success was more capable of contributing to the 'development' ... of national and, in general, popular democratic movements." (CW Vol 21, pp143 and 148)

Is Khomeini heading popular democratic movements in "a struggle against absolutism", as Lenin outlines? No! He is one of the most clear and resolute representatives of absolutism. The fact that he may give Reagan "a bloody nose" (one of the SWP's 'justifications' for support) is no argument at all.

Note also that the conditions that Lenin outlined above, in Europe and later in the colonies and neocolonies, were characterised by the absence of a sizeable or combative working class: "Marx and the Marxists confined themselves to determining which bourgeoisie's victory would be more harmless to (or more favourable to) the world prolet-

ariat, at a time when one could not speak of a general proletarian movement against the bourgeoisie of all the belligerent countries." (Lenin, *Ibid*, p186, my emphasis).

Can this be said of Iran today? Of course not; in 1979 the Iranian proletariat proved their strength – what failed was their leadership. Once more, it begins to slowly rise to its feet, asserting its strength through strikes: the same strikes that Cliff would like to see ended.

The SWP's quack 'Marxism' disintegrates under even the most cursory examination. For Lenin, wars were the continuation of politics by other, violent, means, and he based his view, concretely on the nature of those politics: "It is fundamentally wrong, un-Marxist and unscientific, to single out 'foreign policy' from policy in general, let alone counterpose foreign policy to home policy." (Lenin, CW Vol 23, p43).

Yet what does the SWP do? First, in isolation, it analyses Iran as reactionary – "thoroughly reactionary", no less – both in its home and foreign policy. Consequently, its war is reactionary.

Then, with the entry of the more reactionary US into the regional conflict the SWP dismisses this view and now finds the theocracy's war progressive, without any change in the nature of the class fighting it. As a consequence of this, they cannot but relate this to internal policy, and oppose strikes.

So the war of this little regional thug ceases to be the continuation of its reactionary politics when faced by the bigger world thug. Listen carefully and you may here a restless shuffle far, far off. It's Lenin turning in his grave.

Rogues and Cowards

Yet, for all its 'more anti-imperialist than thou' posturing, the record of the SWP stinks.

Chris Harman claimed at the SWP's conference discussion that he saw no problem in supporting Khomeini against the west, just as they saw no difficulty supporting "state capitalist" Vietnam against the US.

Aside from the fact that it is a complete travesty of Marxism to compare socialist Vietnam, for all its problems, with the clerical reaction of the Islamic Republic, Harman is an out and out liar.

In 1952 the Socialist Review Group (a previous name of the SWP) stated that: "In Vietnam ... the war continues and the people vomit with disgust at both Bao-Dai, the tool of the colonialists, and at Ho Chi Minh, the

gent of Stalin." (*Socialist Review*, February 1952). An odd form of 'support' for the revolutionary forces of the Viet Minh and the NLF in sure you will agree.

Only when support for revolutionary Vietnam caught the imagination of workers and students in Britain did the (by then) International Socialists jump on the NLF bandwagon. And then not out of any spirit of proletarian internationalism, but merely out of a dishonest and grasping search for recruits.

In fact, the proto-SWP was formed to a large extent because it, unlike its 'orthodox' Trotskyist parent group, was chauvinistically prepared to defend the revolutionary forces of Democratic Korea against imperialism.

It also refused to defend the Cuban revolution, instead mouthing pacifistic slogans about "all hands off Cuba" - including those of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and the aid from the USSR without which the revolution would have been drowned in the blood of Cuban communists.

The SWP has no qualms about abstaining from the real anti-imperialist struggle when it suits it, as its attitude to the Irish war proves.

In fact, this group justified its chauvinist line on the basis that imperialism no longer existed. Leading IS theoretician, Michael Kidman wrote in the '60s that: "It hardly seems necessary to sum up one's disagreement with Lenin on imperialism, as he defined it. It must be rejected on at least four counts: *finance capital is not nearly as important for and within the system as it was; the export of capital no longer of great importance to the system; political control in the direct sense meant by Lenin is rapidly becoming dated; and finally, resulting from these, we don't have imperialism but we still have capitalism.*" (*International Socialism*, 61, p16).

We must congratulate the SWP on defending Iran from a system which no longer exists. Why don't they defend it against feudalism, slavery and oriental despotism while they are at it?

Flippancy aside, every genuine socialist would be well aware of the lousy record of the SWP. Their anti-imperialist cloak with which they today cover their theoretical poverty is thin, tatty and ill-fitting. Their rank chauvinism shows through the holes.

To support the murderer Khomeini and oppose the anti-imperialist struggles of the Vietnamese, Koreans and Cubans is worse than stupid, it is criminal. And, whether or not the SWP are stubborn enough to cling to their present reactionary line on the Gulf conflict, it is a crime that these rogues and cowards should not be allowed to get away with.

Creatures from the swamp

Sadly, the SWP is not alone in playing the role of cheerleader for Khomeini in the workers' movement in Britain. It is joined on the chorus line by such as *News Line*, *Workers Press*, ex-members of the Socialist League and others.

'Others' include groups which emerged from the mire of the old International Socialists in the early seventies, such as the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Workers Power Group, both of which have raised the slogan of "victory to Iran".

In reality, all that differentiates them from the SWP on this question is that their state capitalist parent has the honesty - or maybe just the stupidity - to draw out the conclusions which this position has for revolutionaries in Iran.

The two prodigal offspring of this retrogressive political clot have retained the same shallow, two dimensional 'anti-imperialist' posturing, the only difference being that they refuse to look over the shores of their 'green and pleasant land' for the international connotations of this position.

Their positions bear no closer relationship to the Marxist method than do those of the SWP. For instance, at a time when workers in Iran are resisting conscription, war induced layoffs in some sectors of industry and the militarisation of work for the war effort in others, and so show the way for defeat of their own rulers through revolutionary action, it is absolute blind insanity to argue, as the RCP has done, that it is *victory* for Iran that will bring down the theocracy and not defeat.

Should the workers then hand back the concessions that they have won so as to aid the war effort, defeat imperialism and so make 'revolution'? For those, unlike the RCP, who know a revolution when they see one, it is obvious that such things are not made this way. When we dubbed this bunch of r-r-revolutionary students and 'redder than thou' pro-

fessors "the SWP with hair gel" we never spoke truer.

Workers Power, if possible, is worse. Its issue of July 4 1984 cretinously claimed that: "Iran's tenacious resistance, with revolutionary guards and volunteers mobilised in massive numbers, checked the Iraqi advance. By 1982 Iran had turned the tide against Iraq and the character of the war changed from being a legitimate one of defence by Iran, to being a thoroughly reactionary war on both sides."

Now, of course, *Workers Power* says Iran is fighting a progressive war once more. So the nature of the war is dependent, not on the nature and policies of the belligerent states, but on logistical shifts as the conflict proceeds and generalises.

Those with any familiarity with the debates in the socialist movement at the outbreak of World War I will be familiar with such phrases as "legitimate wars of defence". Yes, defence of the repression of women, oppression of the Kurdish people and harsh exploitation of the workers. Defence of a revolution drowned in its own blood and mocked by the vultures of the clergy.

They play the role of Kautskys or Bernsteins in this conflict. We, like Lenin, do not give a damn who attacked first. "For the philistine the important thing is *where the armies stand, who is winning at the moment. For the Marxist the important thing is what issues are at stake in this war, during which first one, then the other army may be on top.*" (Lenin, CW Vol 23, p33).

It is therefore clear, to any Marxist that is, that at no stage has Khomeini fought a progressive, let alone revolutionary war. But possibly when we are addressing ourselves to the former category Lenin deals with, such as the SWP, RCP or *Workers Power*, we should be a little more patient and tolerant.

Little Englanders

The central fault of these groups - apart from a total absence of political integrity on the part of the SWP - is any perspective of genuine proletarian internationalism. Instead of locating their positions as revolutionaries in Britain within the framework of the world revolutionary process, they start from their own national terrain and, furthermore, never venture beyond it in perspective.

So, with the SWP, this manifests itself in a chauvinist direction of Iranian workers to drop their struggle against their oppressors in Iran and instead join in with the war effort against Iraq in the interests of "giving Reagan a bloody nose"; hardly a prospect in the concrete situation.

With *Workers Power*, the situation of revolutionaries in Iran is ignored; instead we have to suffice with lectures on the to's a fro's of the war as an explanation for *Workers Power's* twists and turns.

The fact that they have their own mini-international only serves to exacerbate their own Little Englander anti-imperialism, as the fact that they defended the IRA after the Enniskillen bomb, and their Irish counterpart condemned it proves - a question of *principle*, not nationally dictated tactics. And lastly, the RCP, who justify their myopia on the basis that victory for Khomeini aids the Iranian working class! There are none so blind ...

For genuine communists, the world revolution is an integral whole. Contradictory, yes, but nevertheless a unity. So, therefore, the slogan "victory to Iran" has a meaning within Iran itself. The excuse of many leftists, that they talk to British, not Iranian, workers is an absolute cop out.

Concrete possibilities for the overthrow of the Islamic republic increase as the regime works itself deeper into crisis. To suggest that military defeat for Khomeini would do anything but weaken him is ridiculous.

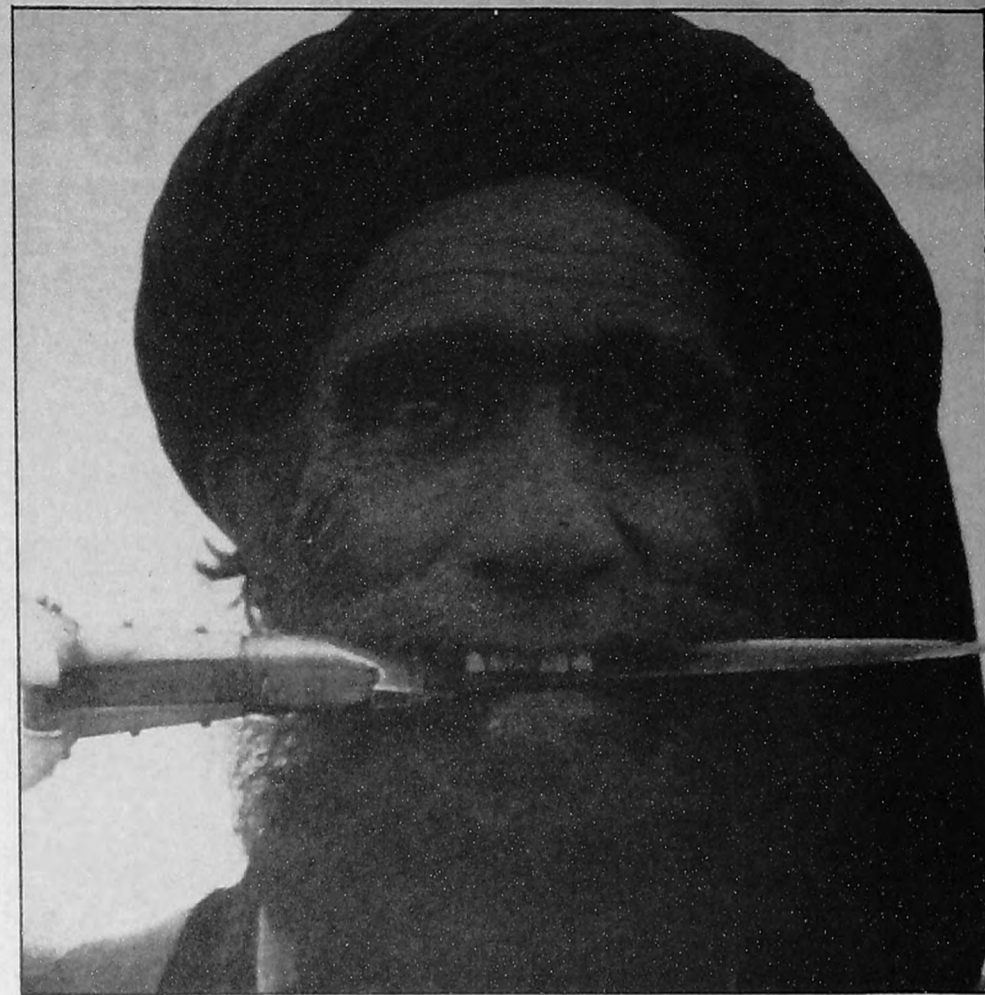
Furthermore, what they are defending in Iran is under no threat; ie the question of self determination. But all that Khomeini has to do is whip up a little anti-imperialist demagoguery and the left in Britain is well and truly swept up by it - even if workers in Iran are not.

We regard the national contradictions in the positions of communists as being that we in the west fight *primarily* for the defeat of imperialism, whereas revolutionaries in Iran, or for that matter Iraq, should fight *primarily* for the defeat of their own rulers in these concrete circumstances. In no way do we fight for the victory of either side.

Victory only comes to us through revolution! The main enemy is still at home!

Alan Merrick

Frontline Afghanistan



Freedom fighter or counterrevolutionary?

In *The Leninist* of February 10 we stated that a "Soviet withdrawal under present conditions can only be considered a sellout of the Afghan revolution and a betrayal of communism." We were unsurprised to find ourselves virtually alone in this.

True to form, the centrist sycophants of the New Communist Party hail every twist and turn of the official leadership (whoever or whatever it is). Just as they praise each new CPSU leader in his condemnations of his fore-runners, they hailed first Tarakki, then Amin, the Soviet intervention, the murder of Amin and 97 leaders of the revolution in the *Khalq* wing of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the opportunist coup which put Karmal and the *Parcham* wing into power, the replacement of Karmal (on 'health' grounds) by Najibullah and finally the announcement of Soviet withdrawal.

These brown nosers print uncritically *Novosti* statements justifying this treachery, one of which in *The New Worker* (February 26) claims that it is safe to withdraw because "Afghanistan has, with Soviet assistance, gained considerable strength." It goes on to argue that, because counterrevolution is entirely fomented by imperialism, if a deal can be cooked up with the US to leave 'all hands off' then everything will be okay. What dangerous rubbish!

Such nonsense bears no relationship to the facts. It is first and foremost the Soviet Army which keeps the barbaric Mujahadeen at bay. Everybody, but NCP-type blockheads, is aware of this.

For instance, the Eurocommunist *7 Days* farcically argues that after a Soviet withdrawal - which it wholeheartedly supports - "Rightwing forces may even gain a temporary ascendancy." The week after this, the same paper printed a picture of a Mujahadeen bandit smiling into the camera as he tortured a captive with a red hot brand. "Temporary" will mean this scene repeated ten thousand fold and the drowning of the Afghan revolution in blood.

The other get-out used by not only the Euros but also the petty bourgeois left is that the Afghan revolution in April 1978 was a "coup" (*7 Days*, February 20, *the next step*, February 26, *Workers Power*, (various) and so on *ad nauseum*). This is a straight desertion of the defence of a living revolution.

The revolutionary forces of the PDPA *Khalq* wing led an insurrection in April 1978 which was spearheaded by its cells in the army. That this was the case, and that a minority of the population took part in the insurrection makes it no more a coup and no less a revolution than October 1917 in Russia. A

coup is a struggle within the existing state, not against it as in the April revolution.

As comrade Emine Engin of the Communist Party of Turkey explained in *The Revolution in Afghanistan*: "To understand revolution as something in which an absolute majority of the people, organised in regular armies, strike as one, would be nothing but the other side of a parliamentarianist understanding replacing the number of votes by a head count." (p32).

Other groups recognise the reactionary nature of the 'rebels', yet openly support the handing of power to them through bloody counterrevolution. The SWP openly states that a Mujahadeen victory "would probably produce a reactionary fundamentalist government well to the right of Khomeini. And it would be an American client state. At the moment they are publically stoning adulteresses to death in refugee camps in Pakistan." (*Socialist Worker Review*, February). And yet they still call for a Soviet withdrawal.

This is a foul consequence of the reactionary 'state capitalist' theory. The democratic gains of the revolution, such as the freeing of women from chattel status, are to be sacrificed and revolutionaries slaughtered while the SWP looks on in neutral superiority.

The same article goes on to argue that the US doesn't really want a withdraw because its so called 'client state' would be too volatile. The RCP's *the next step* (February 26) has a variant of this, arguing that a Soviet presence in Afghanistan has enabled the US to use "the Afghanistan conflict to gain a foothold in Central Asia", thereby giving a radical anti-American flavour to their support for withdrawal. They then add the platitudinous cry that: "Only the independent struggles of the workers and peasants can liberate the Afghan people."

But these struggles already reached and passed the point of revolution in April 1978. Although the Soviet intervention helped behind the Afghan revolution of its communist leaders it is the main support for the remaining gains of the revolution - a crutch for a crippled revolution.

To remove that crutch is the utmost treachery. Virtually the entire spectrum of the left, along with Thatcher and Kinnock, is supporting just that. Now, more urgently than ever, it is vital that communists demand defence of the frontline of the world revolution. We say: the Soviet Army must defend the Afghan revolution - no sellout!

* *The Afghan Revolution*, £2.50 from BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Free to political prisoners on request.



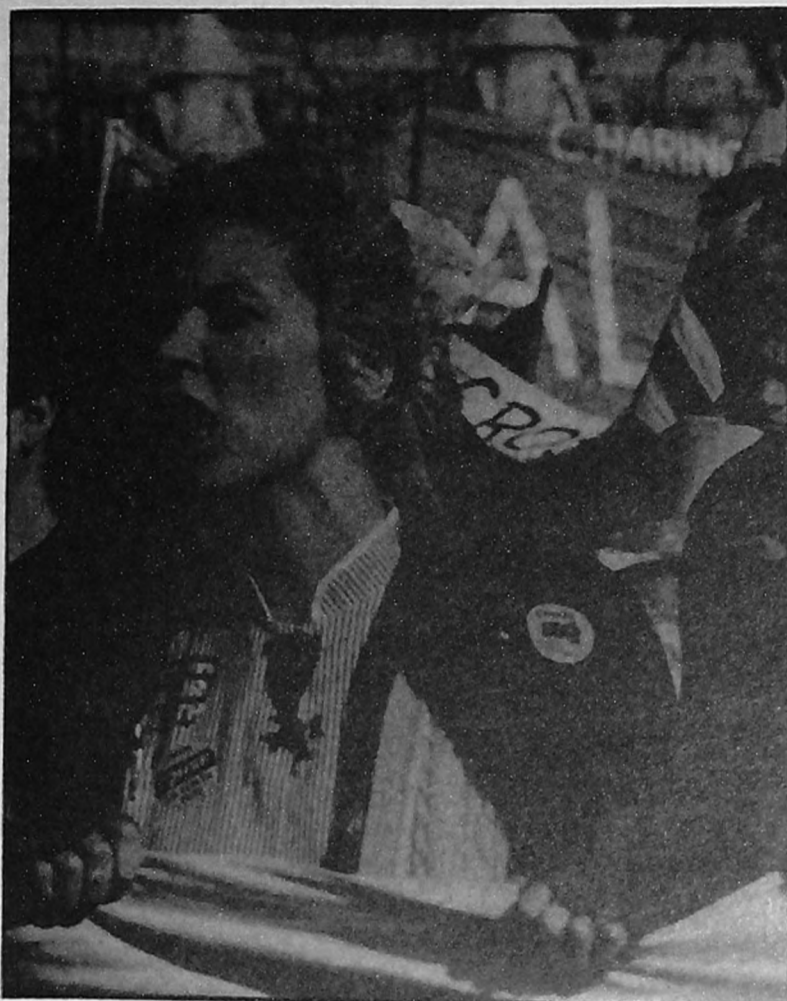
NHS Spread the militant spirit

The WRP (Workers Press) has given birth to another bouncing baby sectlet. There are now seven organisational fragments from the pre-split WRP, the latest led by ageing ex-WRP hack, Bill Hunter. The International Workers League – note: not to be confused with the Workers International League, which split from the WRP (News Line) – was formed after Hunter and Co. split in support of a group of Argentinian based Trots with whom the WRP was holding discussions with a view to unity in yet another reconstructed, reformed or reconstituted 'Fourth International'. As per normal in the decomposing Trotskyist milieu, which works according to its own laws, 'unity' clearly means split.

Many a hard bitten centrist has raised a contemptuous sneer at ageing 'hipster', Martin Jacques' Marxism Today's policy of interviewing such Tory dignitaries as 'Diamond Lil' Curry and 'Goldilocks' Heseltine. But now their Prague published bible, the World Marxist Review has an article by none other than Henry Kissinger who tried to bomb Vietnam "back to the stone age". We await the protests.

The Morning Star of March 7 announced that its editor, Tony Chater, had left for Czechoslovakia to "take part in a conference of communist newspaper editors". This may be of surprise to many, as whenever Chater is challenged on the lousy politics of his lousy rag, he always replies that it is not a communist paper (how true), but instead a "broad labour movement paper".

Another triumph for Militant's 'Marxism'! Terry Fields, MP and Militant supporter, has been lynched for a 'moral' campaign uniting 'Marxists' like Mr Fields with right wing Tories, that has succeeded in having 'Talk About', British Telecom's party-line service banned after complaints from parents that it was being used as an illicit dating service by teenagers, many of who were running up huge bills. Haven't these silly people got anything else fill their up time with? And those teenagers are just as bad ...



Militant health workers say no to Willis, yes to all out action

The National Health Workers' Shop Stewards' Conference must be used as a springboard for a National Militant Hospital Workers' Movement which has a clear political programme independent of the bosses and the bureaucrats

THE HEALTH workers protest actions around 'budget day' were like the TUC's 100,000 strong March 5 NHS demonstration in London, a success despite rather than because of the dead-head 'lead' of the trade union fat cats who say they are fighting for the rights and conditions of health workers. Time and time again, when the bureaucratic pot-bellies have put on totally useless token 'protests', the rank and file have rebelled against the conservative sabotage of their leaders and turned them into militant working class actions. The March 5 demo was no exception.

An important feature of the March 14 and the March 5 demonstration was the fact that it illustrated the differing levels consciousness amongst the health workers. For example on March 5 although there was a general spirit of militancy and fighting determination, there were contingents from some hospitals, in particular London's Charing Cross, that showed by their actions that they have learned some very important lessons and are in the forefront

the fightback. Health workers from Charing Cross have:

- Formed a joint union strike committee which cuts across the dangerous sectional divides which split nurses and health workers. The NHS is the biggest employer west of the Soviet Armed Forces with nurses alone making up some 500,000 employees. Yet this potentially huge army is split into a multiplicity of unions within the industry: Cohse, Nupe, GMB, the Royal Colleges (particularly the RCN and the RC Midwives), Health Visitors (affiliated to the TUC) as well as the EEPTU, AEU etc, etc ...

Clearly this is a mad situation which benefits no one but the parasitic hordes of trade union officials. In the strike committees like the one at Charing Cross, the basis of unity is being forged: not the type of bureaucratic 'marriage of convenience' from the top that brings unions like the AEU and EETPU and Astms and Tass together, but a real, fighting unity won by the rank and file.

- Organised a militant intervention on the March 5 demo that confronted the bureaucrats head on.

The Charing Cross workers marched with a banner demanding the TUC call a one day general strike, with their own slogans and as a distinct militant contingent of the demo.

- Along with others, mercilessly heckled Willis and harassed the smug buffoon until he was forced to leave the stage at the rally at the end of the march. (His troubles were far from over even then apparently: one of our comrades reports that a sacked Wapping printer chased his car as he hurriedly left the demonstration. Workers need no reminding how 'our Norm' of the TUC stabbed Wapping workers in the back just as he did the miners. With friends like Willis health workers ...

The task now is to generalise the organisational and political gains that hospitals like Charing Cross has made. Spread the Charing Cross spirit to every hospital in the country!

Obviously, without a link up of militants on an organisational level in the here and now, generalising the spirit of Charing Cross up and down the country will prove to be difficult. That is why we think initiatives like the forthcoming National Health Workers' Shop Stewards' Conference on March 26 are so useful.

But the point we have underlined is this: that organisational link-up must go hand in hand with the adoption of a working class political action programme which is clear and unambiguous. In other words, there is a need for a National Minority Movement-type organisation along the lines of the NMM of the 1920s and '30s in today's health unions – a National Militant Hospital Workers' Movement.

The NMM not only organised workers across sectional divides, it united them on a platform that was explicitly and militantly anti-capitalist and thus opposed to the trade union bureaucracy. This we believe is the key to winning the health dispute today.

The combative and dynamic spirit of the rank and file obviously contrasted starkly with the defeatist and pulpy moralising of the NHS unions' leaders. Now it needs to take organisational form.

The trade union bureaucracy must be challenged head on. Unless we do disaster is certain. The bureaucrats have no fighting programme, only platitudes. Tom Sawyer, deputy of Nupe for example recently told a public meeting in Llanelli that the health workers would win because "we have got the power of patient care, the power of love and the power of compassion. This power is bigger than the power of force ... The power of restraint is better than the power of force. With the power of restraint we will win."

Now Tom Sawyer might seriously imagine he is Jesus Christ: his personality disorders are his problem. However, it becomes the problem of health workers when he, as a workers' leader, presents such clap-trap as a serious strategy for victory. And it is clear what Sawyer and his ilk refer to when they talk of restraint: unfortunately it is not to the drivel that issues from the mouths of the health service leaders when they patronise the workers in the industry as 'carers': there is all too much of that swilling around.

No, clearly the union tops are anxious to 'restrain' the militant protests of the rank and file and to keep the health industry dispute safely within the boundaries of what the likes of Kinnoch and Willis will find acceptable. In other words, to make it a toothless publicity campaign to provide material for the front bench bluster of Her

Majesties' Loyal Opposition in parliament.

Rather than see a successful militant struggle succeed, these traitors would happily see their naff campaign fail – just as long as they kept their claws in it: as Marie McLoughlin, spokesperson for the Charing Cross Hospital joint strike committee told us, "Our leadership have tried from the beginning to thwart this action because they are not controlling it."

Clearly, health workers must reject unequivocally the treacherous and doomed political platform that their leaders are attempting to build the dispute on. They must look for other ideas and politics, winning ideas and politics.

Health workers, indeed all workers must have no illusions about the nature of health care provision for the working class. Those like John MacCreadie, Militant supporter and member of the TUC General Council, might well try to convince himself that "the health service is one of the treasured possessions of the working class". It is in fact an organ of the capitalist state. And women stuck at the end of queues for abortions, pensioners who have been waiting in agony for hip replacement operations for years, the thousands of workers and their children suffering ever worsening conditions might be able to disabuse him of this notion.

The modern health service was established in the aftermath of World War II at a time of unprecedented boom in the west. The ruling class had a need for a relatively cheap universal healthcare system as there was a growing demand for the labour power that only a reasonably fit working class could supply.

The NHS was only 'granted' to the working class when and to the extent that the capitalists needed and could afford it. To present it as a 'possession' of our class as Labour reformists like MacCreadie do is highly dangerous. With this approach workers will be embroiled in doomed arguments about whether or not the government can afford to increase financing for the service.

The attacks on the NHS are a result of the crisis of profitability of British capitalism, not the inability of the Tories to make a column of figures add up right. The last things workers need to do is tie their livelihoods and their needs for decent healthcare provision to a sinking capitalist ship.

That anti-capitalist understanding has to be the central component part of any successful fightback in the health industry. We are not fighting to defend the NHS as an institution – we are fighting for the pay and conditions of the workers in the industry and for the levels of financing necessary to abolish the waiting lists and provide the best possible levels of health care for our class. The profits of the bosses should not even come a poor third with us.

Our tactics should then flow from this perspective. We are not out to conduct a PR campaign in order to make the government 'see sense' – by starving the NHS of funds and attacking the pay and conditions of health workers they are seeing sense – capitalist sense.

We are out to beat the government, to force them to make concessions to our class. Days of Action must be used to open the way for all out action by all health workers around which a general solidarity strike wave can be built. Days of Action and one day general strikes that do not do that will only lead to demoralisation unless they are used to build up a direct attack on the Tory government.

Ian Mahoney



Soviet Truths

Ilya Dzhirkvelov, *Secret Servant*, Collins, London 1987, pp398, £15.00.

ILYA DZHIRKVELOV is an unusual defector. After spending a lifetime faithfully serving the state in the KGB and the Union of Journalists, he simply left for Geneva in 1980, in response to victimisation by his superiors. He says that "I have all my life been a loyal and relatively successful member of Soviet society and for many years an active propagandist for my country and the policies of the Kremlin."

Born in 1927, he began work as a volunteer in the state security service at the age of seventeen, and left after a chequered career in the KGB in 1957. He then worked in the Union of Journalists and for TASS before eventually becoming a 'UN Civil Servant' in Geneva in 1972.

The most interesting parts of Dzhirkvelov's book are those in which he gives his impressions of the Soviet system. Since part of his career was spent working in the archives of the KGB, he had access to much information on the way the security services work and their connection to the Soviet government.

While one cannot take every thing he says at face value, the fact that he does not seem politically motivated (as, for example, Solzhenitsyn was!) makes his book rather more objective.

His account of the pervasive nature of the KGB in Soviet society supplements other information on this question, and gives an interesting 'view from the inside'. The state security service in the USSR officially exists to protect the socialist system from hostile forces; in actual fact, it serves to preserve the status quo, the privileged position of the bureaucracy vis a vis the workers, and thus only indirectly defends the socialist property relations.

Since the success of the October revolution there has always been a Soviet 'secret service' to fight counterrevolutionary activities, from the Cheka of the twenties through the NKVD of Stalin's days to the modern KGB. From the beginning, there were abuses of the system, but it was with the consistent use of the secret police by the burgeoning bureaucracy in order to consolidate their position, both against the threat of capitalist restoration and the democratic yearnings of the proletariat, that it attained the extent and scope of power which it wields at the present time.

The infamous 'terror' of the thirties was a ferocious distortion of a process that continues in more subtle form today. As Stalin and the bureaucracy used the secret police to consolidate their position, so will the technocracy.

The KGB has vast powers for information gathering, surveillance and arrest (though all measures must first be cleared with senior

members of the government - the secret service always acts as the tool of the *apparatus*). The main structure of the KGB is as follows: directorate-intelligence, directorate-counterintelligence, directorate-military counterintelligence, directorate-suppression of ideological dissidence, directorate-provision of bodyguards for Soviet leaders, and the technical department-surveillance and telephone tapping. These arms of the KGB are in total staffed by some 500,000 case officers.

Every foreigner on a visit to the USSR is kept under surveillance, of varying degrees of intensity, and any contact with Soviet citizens is carefully noted. The watching of ordinary people in the USSR is of necessity less rigorous, but the KGB is still in a position, should the need arise, (following, for example, a passport application so as to take a trip abroad) to collate a considerable amount of information on any given individual.

This is not to say that a 'Big Brother' type scenario exists in the Soviet Union, but rather that only a naïve fool would believe either that such intensive police work does not go on, or that healthy socialism requires such efforts to protect it against its enemies.

The bureaucratic privileges which the secret police protect are twofold: the exclusive control that the *apparatchiks* (a Russian colloquialism referring to members of the ruling apparatus or *apparatus*) exercise over Soviet political life, and the considerable material advantages which members of this governing strata enjoy.

By means of the *nomenclatura* system - the system of self selection - the present incumbents of the apparatus have ensured that the bureaucracy perpetuates its position. This enables it to help itself to a much greater share of the surplus product than is available to the proletariat.

Indeed its privileges manifest themselves in every area: better quality housing, access to special shops stocking hard-to-get goods, greater educational opportunities for their children, and so on. This amounts to parasitism.

Other aspects of Soviet society that the book covers include the question of the minority nationalities of the Soviet Union. In Dzhirkvelov's opinion, there exists considerable chauvinism on an individual level. Given the undemocratic nature of the political system, however, bigoted individuals in a position of power can do a great deal of harm. Also, the level of chauvinism in the country as a whole, seventy years after the revolution, indicates how far the "bureaucratic twist" (Lenin) continues to distort Soviet society.

A vivid indication of how deep the national tensions still are in the Soviet Union is the rioting that recently occurred in Azerbaijan. The army had to be sent into several cities there after clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis had left scores dead. It is obvious that events of this scale are not fomented by 'CIA agents', but are the result of material forces in Soviet society. Tragically, the distortion of a revolution which promised to do away with national divisions between workers has perpetuated them.

An issue which comes out very clearly throughout the book is the practical abandonment of proletarian internationalism and its replacement by great power diplomacy. The interests of the Soviet state are assumed to take precedence over all else: the world communist movement is regarded simply as appendages of the Politbureau.

This, though, is but one aspect

of the general ideological decay which accompanied the rise of the bureaucracy in Soviet society. The intellectual unremarkableness of some of those highest up in the system, and the sheer cynicism of others, is a result of the turning of living Leninism into an ossified centrist dogma. This in turn has been brought about by a material basis, the existence of a state machine not under the control of the mass of Soviet workers.

The victory of communism will not be decided by the bureaucracy. To consummate the work of October the bureaucracy must be turned from master back into servant of Soviet ruling class - the proletarian masses.

Peter Clancy

Valuable Source

Isha Bulletin - fortnightly bulletin of news and information from Turkey, Arif Mardin (ed), pp.16.*

ON FEBRUARY 1 the first edition of a valuable and informative new source of information about and analysis of the working class movement in Turkey appeared: the fortnightly *Isha Bulletin*, founded and edited by Arif Mardin.

Mardin and his colleagues have done the international workers' movement a great service in bringing out a publication designed, as the editorial in number 1 states, to "communicate news and information" from the labour movement of Turkey to the English-speaking world.

As *The Leninist* has underlined time and time again - there are a great many lessons to be learned from the experience of struggle of workers in Turkey, lessons that are applicable the world over.

For example, the anti-trade union laws introduced by the Tories and boastfully dubbed by Sogat and CCG leading light, Mike Hicks, as "the most oppressive in the world", have been used by spineless leaders of the British trade union movement as a convenient cover for inaction and betrayal.

Yet despite the far more repressive nature of Turkish law governing the conduct of trade union affairs and disputes, last year was, as the president of the Turk-Is trade union federation states, the "year of action". Arif Mardin himself notes in the first issue of *Isha Bulletin*:

"The strike waged by the independent trade union Otomobil-Is against Netas, an affiliate of the

multinational company Northern Electric, the active strike and demonstration of the leather workers have indicated that the obstructive and intimidating nature of the anti-democratic labour laws can be overridden with determined action."

If only the likes of Sam McKluskie or Norman Willis could take that particular lesson to heart! You do not change repressive labour laws by conducting half hearted publicity campaigns a la GCHQ or by blustery protests from the General Council: you change them by determinedly going on strike and smashing them with the mass action of the working class.

The first two issues of *Isha Bulletin* contain a full analysis of the "year of action", 1987. Clearly, it is vital for the workers to draw up a balance sheet of successes and defeats in that year. It was in 1987 that the giant working class of Turkey struggled to its feet after massive blows inflicted on it after the September 1980 fascist coup, shook its head clear and began to assert its strength again.

The year saw an unprecedented number of actions by the proletariat: while a total of 4,595 workers in 17 factories went on strike in 1986, in 1987 the number of striking workers increased six times to near 30,000. Similarly, the number of working days lost to strikes in '87 reached 2.5 million. This is *nine times bigger* than the corresponding figure for the year before.

The working class in Turkey is beginning to recoup the losses in living standards and working conditions they have suffered since the coup of 1980. Yet it is plain from the interviews with trade union leaders as well as rank and file activists, the struggle is not perceived as a narrow, 'economic' fight.

Aynur Karaaslan, the militant rank and file leader of Tez Koop-Is, the shopworkers' union, spelt out in an interview in *Isha Bulletin* number 1 how she saw the recent bitter strike against the Migros supermarket (see the interview with comrade Karaaslan in the *The Leninist* no. 60): "It should be regarded as part of the struggle for democracy of the working class of Turkey, which is an element of the international labour movement."

In the same issue, the president of the largest union in the petroleum, chemical and rubber industries, Petrol-Is with 80,000 members, underlined:

"... the key to the solution of all our country's problems is in the hands of the working class of Turkey. We have a very heavy responsibility ... The fight for human rights and democracy will be carried out hand in hand."

In contrast to the studied 'apoli-

ticism' of trade union leaders in Britain, many of those of Turkey are openly partisan and declare themselves and their unions active partisans in the key political struggle that dominates Turkish social life: the struggle for genuine democracy. The more expressly 'political' consciousness of trade unionists in Turkey provides useful lessons for us here in Britain.

One of the major strike events in Turkey in the course of 1987 was the leather workers' strike, organised and won by the Leather Workers' Union (Deri-Is). In *Isha Bulletin* number 2, the president of the Kazlıcesme branch of Deri-Is, Huseyin Ates, emphatically makes this point that: "When we walked out to strike we knew that we were not just striking for our own interests, but that we were waging a struggle as part of the working class in Turkey against the threats of the Confederation of Turkish Employers' Unions. Every position we gained in this struggle is an achievement of the working class of Turkey."

The *Isha Bulletin*, as the only publication in English detailing developments in the combative and fighting working class movement in Turkey, is a precious new source of ideas and inspiration for militants in Britain. It is professionally produced and extremely well designed, although sometimes the English sentence construction is clumsy and 'text-bookish'.

Trade union, Labour Party and CP branches as well as any individuals eager to receive reliable, up to the minute news and analysis of the struggles of the workers of Turkey should make sure of their copy of *Isha Bulletin* by subscribing. The forthcoming period, as Arif Mardin states in the editorial of issue 2, will still be dominated by two interconnected features:

"•The process of 'democratisation' is taking place on a slippery surface which has crises, risks and the seeds of going back to the military dictatorship.

•The recent past has witnessed an unheard of worsening of the living and working conditions of the working class"

And it must be added, as time goes on, these two factors will be dialectically combined with the growing militant assertiveness of the proletariat of Turkey, and will make the *Isha Bulletin* exciting and absolutely indispensable reading.

Ian Mahoney

*Subscription rates: Individuals, 6 months - \$25; 1 year - \$40. Others, 6 months - \$30; 1 year - \$50. Send to Arif Mardin, Yapi ve Kredi Bankasi, 435 Kuculanga Subesi, Hesap No: 5664-8.

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The Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey has been in the forefront of solidarity work with the peoples of Turkey since it was formed in 1978, Max Hiron – its general secretary – told us

Solidarity: Turkey

DO YOU THINK last November's much heralded general elections will produce stability in Turkey? After all the western media called them democratic and it is true that more parties participated in them than at any time since the 1980 coup, including two social democratic parties.

In our view the elections have done nothing to bring stability. Because so many parties were not allowed to participate – not least all revolutionary working class organisations – we cannot say that the results do not represent the true voice of the peoples of Turkey.

There is much talk of Turkey's tourist boom. Will it become another Spain?

We don't think it can – unless it can achieve a dramatic economic leap. Barricades, mass strikes and riots don't go for a relaxing atmosphere. But on the question of tourism; occasionally people say to us that they don't go on holiday to Turkey because of its repressive politics. That is not our wish. The more people who go and talk to ordinary Turks the better. We are for the free flow of people and ideas.

We want people to see with their own eyes how the economic crisis has led to a tremendous upsurge in the class struggle. Last year, for example, saw the highest number of workplaces affected by strikes in Turkey's history; and that includes the revolutionary situation which spanned the 1970s. As a result trade union organisations like Turk-Is, which you could not have described as militant, are now calling for a general strike.

Could you tell us a bit more about Turk-Is – the equivalent of the TUC in Britain – and the trade union question in general?

Turk-Is and its affiliates represent about two million workers. That is only about 20% of all workers but

the overwhelming majority of organised workers. There are only about 600,000 organised workers in non-Turk-Is, independent, trade unions.

Before the 1980 coup there were, of course, two trade union centres. Turk-Is which was the largest and oldest and Disk – the Revolutionary Confederation of Trade Unions. Disk was closed down following the 1980 coup. Our view – a view which is born out by events – is that Turk-Is could change under the pressure of the workers. Indeed over the last two years the majority of former Disk members have joined Turk-Is and this has helped push Turk-Is to the left.

We defend the unity of the workers within one trade union centre, irrespective of their political allegiance. We believe there can be different working class political parties but there should only be one trade union centre. **Are you saying that the closing down of Disk has turned out to be a double edged sword?**

Yes, yes! Obviously we opposed the banning of Disk and fought hard for its members who were put in prison. But yes, it has turned out to be a double edged sword. Out of a tragedy has come a very positive development – the creation of a single trade union centre.

To what degree has Turk-Is changed over recent years?

Under the impact of pressure from below Turk-Is has changed dramatically. This was first really shown in 1986 when it organised a 100,000 strong demonstration against the government in Izmir – this was the first workers' mass demonstration since the coup.

Since then it has organised numerous workers' protests – in which, significantly, women have played a very prominent role – and now Turk-Is is launching a step

by step programme which has the declared aim of culminating in a general strike if the workers demands are not met. This marks a tremendous step forward.

We understand that the unions are advancing increasingly political demands. Does this come from above or below?

Officially political demands aren't put forward. But because of the level of the struggle the workers bring forward political demands. Every strike is seen by both the regime and the workers as a political strike.

Are strikes characterised by a struggle between the rank and file and the established trade union leaderships?

Some, yes. In the Migros and railway strikes this was certainly the case. But it isn't generally so. Most trade union leaders have to fight or face being kicked out. There is very little room not to respond to the rank and file. Whether this will be the same in a year's time is another thing.

Do you think then that things will get 'hotter' in 1988?

Undoubtedly! Firstly, several large sectors are set for a struggle over wages and conditions. Secondly, because of the speeding up of inflation there is the Turk-Is campaign which includes the threat of a general strike. We don't believe that the regime and the employers can meet the demands of the workers.

Despite having anti-trade union laws even more draconian than in Britain 1988 will be a year of strikes, in fact it will be a year of illegal strikes. The workers have found that the best way to combat Turkey's authoritarian anti-union laws is not to campaign for a change through parliament but to go out and break the law.

There's a useful lesson here for workers in Britain... But to move on, could you tell us what's behind

the recent spate of armed clashes between Kurdish guerillas and the forces of the regime?

As your readers will know Turkey's 10 million Kurds have been suppressed since the formation of the Turkish republic. Until recently it was a serious offence to use the word 'Kurd'.

The language is still forbidden in official buildings or open places. However the regime has been forced, in recent months particularly, to sort of acknowledge that the Kurds exist. This is due to armed struggle which has greatly accelerated since 1983, coinciding with the drive by the capitalist class to open up eastern Turkey – Turkish Kurdistan – to a far greater intensity of economic exploitation.

Obviously whatever the regime says Kurdistan is not a normal part of Turkey; it is a sort of internal colony.

Turkey is a very aggressive country. It not only violently suppresses a Kurdish internal colony, it has invaded northern Cyprus, claims areas of Syria and Iraq and has a long running dispute with Greece over the Aegean. Why?

We believe that Turkish monopoly capital has reached a stage where it has to expand. The only certain way that Turkish capitalism can do this is with an *old fashioned* military seizure of markets. In this it is, of course, restricted by the interests of the United States in particular. It has therefore tried to expand peacefully into Arab markets playing on its Islamic credentials. We think that with the recent talks between Ozal and Papan-dreaou there may be moves afoot for a cooperative effort to enter into the Arab market using joint companies.

What are your plans for the CDDRT?

Over the last year we've emphasised the importance of the trade

union struggle and we will develop this throughout 1988. The only guarantee for democracy in Turkey is the working class.

We have been relatively successful in winning solidarity for workers in struggle – particularly the Netas strike in the early part of 1987 and later with the leather workers' strike. Solidarity from a country like Britain gives a tremendous boost for those in struggle.

We aim to strengthen the CDDRT's work in this area. We also want to get out of London more and involve our trade union and individual affiliates to a greater extent. We will do this through setting up local branches, initiating grass roots campaigns and getting trade unionists to establish direct links with their counterparts in Turkey.

Your attitude towards direct links is very different to the one adopted by the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Our view is that links through the official structures have their place. But links between the workers at a rank and file level also have their place. In fact they complement each other. In general the leadership responds to the initiatives of the membership. If the question of Turkey is raised from below this encourages the official leadership to act and this in turn opens up new avenues for us. It would be extremely dangerous to turn the CDDRT into a diplomatic organisation, to behave like some sort of government in exile rather than a genuine solidarity organisation.

The CDDRT's Annual Congress starts at 11am on March 26 at 84, Balls Pond Road, London N1. It is open to all interested in the situation in Turkey. For more information phone (01) 254 0387

Solidarity: South Africa

ORGANISING working class solidarity with the black masses in South Africa is particularly difficult at the moment. Nonetheless it is absolutely essential. The forces of fascism are on the rise, the revolutionary forces are on the defensive (see page 3). Workers in Britain are as always willing to act if they have leaders who are prepared to lead. For example on March 1, Liverpool dockers refused to handle a shipment of uranium hexafluoride of Namibian origin on route to the USA.

This trade is worth something like £200 million every year and is vital to the cash-strapped port of Liverpool. But as Jimmy Symes, T&G union official told *The Leninist*, "When the dockers took this action, they were putting workers' solidarity before profits." The whole future of that trade is under question.

The Atlantic Container Line is

the ports biggest customer and according to Jimmy Symes if ACL had left the port of Liverpool, then the consequences would be "dire for the industry here." But though knowing that, "the lads still took the action they did." This is an outstanding example of proletarian internationalism.

Jimmy Symes was positive that the recent developments in South Africa had hardened the men's attitudes: "I'm sure the recent suppression in South Africa influenced the men in taking this action. It has made them more conscious of what's going on over there. There has not been much publicity over the recent period about what's happening in South Africa, but this recent clampdown raised it in many peoples' minds."

There were problems with the Liverpool action however, as Kenny Usher, spokesman for the local National Union of Seamen told us: "The unfortunate thing is

that despite the fact that it is our local branch policy not to handle Namibian or South African uranium, the NUS seamen aboard the ship were prepared to sail it."

It was the dockers who stopped the shipment. When the NUS officials went down to try to persuade the men not to handle the uranium, they made it clear that they fully sympathised with the people of Namibia and do support their cause. But at the same time, they were not prepared to put their jobs on the line in order to stop it.

As far as Kenny Usher was concerned, that was the "wrong attitude to take." Nonetheless he thinks that Liverpool branch policy will become official national NUS policy, then "I think the men's attitude will be different."

Kenny Usher says that if there had been more solid campaigning work done amongst the seamen they would probably have refused

to handle the shipment. There are difficulties here, Kenny Usher made the point that this activity is easier with the dockers than seamen. As the dockers are based on land, they are easier to reach with the message than NUS members who are away for long periods of time.

He is equally dismissive as Jimmy Symes of arguments that put forward the idea that workers in Britain are foolish to stick their necks out for South Africa blacks. As he put it: "As far as this argument goes that by disrupting trade, dockers or seamen are cutting off their noses to spite their face, I'm prepared to walk around with a big hole in my face for those people."

Laudable though this sentiment is, it is unlikely to have much appeal beyond the ranks of the politically committed. The point we have made is that if this type of

throughout the workers' movement, it is extremely unlikely that bosses would feel in a strong enough position to victimise workers for their solidarity actions. Both Jimmy Symes and Kenny Usher were clear on the need for spreading workers' direct action.

They are right. The apartheid scum in South Africa should not be allowed to suppress and attack the black masses without workers in Britain taking solidarity action. We must have no illusions that protest blacking by British workers will topple the regime in Pretoria; but it can provide a powerful morale boost to our class brothers and sisters as they face the growing danger of fascism.

For that reason alone, the Liverpool dockers must not just be patted on the back they must be emulated by a thousand such similar actions.

Ian Mahoney