

# The LENINIST

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## South Africa: The revolution will be a blow against the bourgeoisie and Gorbachevite opportunism

**S**OUTHERN AFRICA is a region of wars and revolution at the hub of which lies the struggle against the apartheid state. A profound revolutionary situation has gripped South Africa now for over a decade. It has plunged the ruling class into crisis. Splits have constantly opened up in its ranks as the Nationalist Party has proved unable to rule in the old way. It constantly vacillates between the methods of compromise and the methods of oppression, but to no avail. The black masses refuse to abandon their struggle for the sake of Botha's trifling reforms, they also refuse to be cowed by the state's terrorism.

The ANC has, because of its history, found itself in the leadership of the masses, its authority is proven and its leaders – not least Nelson Mandela – enjoy unrivalled prestige. In spite of this and the fact that the black working class is now in the front ranks of the struggle it is clear that the revolutionary wave has dipped, there is a retreat on the side of the oppressed. Mass activity has declined in quantity and in quality, the comrades network has suffered a serious setback and many popular organisations no longer operate openly.

It is against this backdrop that we must assess the US sponsored Cairo meeting on Angola and Namibia between representatives of Cuba, Angola and South Africa last month. Let us be quite clear. We are not against these meetings as such. In the revolutionary struggle no tactic should be ruled out, let alone the tactic of diplomatic manoeuvre. However in the concrete situation as it appertains in southern Africa and between the US and the Soviet Union, we smell a rat.

This is the third of such meetings, the first of which was in London in early May. For the South Africans a deal on Namibia which sees the departure of Cuban troops from Angola, a new government in Luanda which includes Unita would be worth it.

It would take pressure off South Africa and – Botha hopes – leave Pretoria a free hand to crush the black masses. This would in our view be a defeat for the democratic aspirations of the whole of southern Africa, the apartheid regime would be given a new lease of life and the vulnerability and econ-

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omic dependence of the front line states would be reinforced and perpetuated. It is therefore vital to give the revolution in South Africa all the help and solidarity it requires. Deals with South Africa do not fall into this category.

South Africa has not been having everything its own way. Far from it. Against its better judgement it has been openly drawn into the Angolan civil war. Because Unita forces were in danger of being routed in southern Angola it has been forced to commit 6,000 of its own troops.

Things have not gone at all well for them. The myth of white superiority has suffered a body blow. Combined Cuban/Angolan/Swapo forces have given the apartheid army a bloody nose in the battle for the strategic centre of Cuito Cuanavale. Indeed the Cubans have shifted the whole balance in the region by its dramatic 125 mile drive south to the very border of Namibia itself. That the Cubans are equipped with advanced surface-to-air missiles and supported by sophisticated fighter aircraft has thrown the South Africans into a quandary.

It can no longer dominate the skies of southern Angola as it used to, its ageing Canberras, Mirages and Buccaneers are no match for Cuba's MiG fighters and Sam missiles. South African military hegemony has been challenged. So it is crystal clear why South Africa's foreign and defence ministers were in Cairo. But what about the Cubans and Angolans? Why were they there?

In our view it is because of the Gorbachev leadership in the Soviet Union. As *The Economist* put it: "the South Africans, the Ameri-

cans want the Cubans out of Africa altogether, and hope Mr Gorbachev will help." (July 2-8 1988) He has. The Soviet Union was not formally represented at the Cairo talks. Nevertheless through Valilén Vasev it made its influence felt.

It was because of his agreement that US covert supplies of arms to Unita from Zaire were not included on the agenda of the talks. The Cubans were also told by him to stop talking about ending apartheid to prevent a South African walk out.

This earned the praise of the South African Home Service. It approvingly reported that the intervention of Vasev "brought about a dramatic change from the confrontational tone at the outset." For the South Africans this "emphasised once again the key background played by the Soviet Union".

We say that this is not a principled position for the world's revolutionary centre. The leadership of the Soviet Union is pursuing a non-revolutionary line. Instead of backing the internationalist line of Cuba, supporting the struggle for revolution, it is attempting to come to some sort of modus vivendi with the US and South Africa on the whole region. In line with this it is reported that it might be considering ordering out Cuban troops – yes it can do that – with or without a fully worked out settlement. This would be fully in character with the politics of the Gorbachev leadership.

Mikhail Gorbachev has stated that Afghanistan should act as the model for other so-called 'hot spots', not least southern Africa. In his report to the 27th Congress of the CPSU he stated that: "We

are in favour of vitalising collective quests for ways of defusing conflict situations in the Middle East, Central Africa, Southern Africa, in all the planet's turbulent points. This is imperatively demanded by the interests of general security."

The pull out of Soviet troops from Afghanistan has left the revolutionary People's Democratic Party government in an extremely vulnerable position. Many now say that it is only a matter of time before the forces of black reaction triumph and install themselves in Kabul. In the face of this the Soviet Union advises the PDPA to enter a coalition government with the imperialist backed Mujahideen and the monarchists, the equivalent of Savimbi's Unita.

We have openly stated our opposition to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and now we openly warn against a Soviet inspired withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and for that matter a Soviet inspired withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. Such betrayals internationally flow from the non-socialist *perestroika* policy being pursued by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union (foreign policy is after all merely the continuation of domestic policy).

Selling revolutions is being done in the name of permanent peaceful co-existence and overcoming the vestiges of 'Stalinism'; in reality it is a final abandonment of proletarian internationalism. Gorbachev has completely deserted class politics. In true Eurocommunist style, for him "saving civilisation from war" is actually counterposed to the class struggle.

Gorbachev has earned the praise of imperialism. He is someone

they "can do business with". How different are his statements recognising the "legitimate interests" of the imperialist states to the clarion call for world revolution from Lenin's Communist (Third) International.

Those who still stand by the principled and scientific positions of Marx, Engels and Lenin as enshrined in the theses and resolutions of Lenin's Comintern understand full well that it is capitalism in general and apartheid in particular in South Africa that is the source of war. Unless capitalism is overthrown then it will plunge the world into war and the sort of barbarity we see resulting from apartheid throughout the whole southern African region.

Our task is to support the revolutionary struggle throughout the world, to learn from the revolutionary experience of the working class from Petrograd 1917 to Soweto 1988, to purge the workers' movement of the corroding admixture of Gorbachevite revisionism and reformist pro-imperialism, to unify the efforts of all genuinely revolutionary organisations of the world proletariat and thus in the words of the founding manifesto of the Comintern "hasten the victory of the communist revolution."

It is quite possible that the Gorbachev leadership is pressing the ANC and the South African Communist Party to temper their struggle, to come to some sort of deal. There is certainly some evidence pointing to this. Despite this we do not think a deal is likely. The very minimum the black masses would accept would be the right to vote which would mean an end to the present regime.

Because of the determination of the black masses, because of the emerging vanguard role of the working class, the revolutionary struggle in South Africa will continue – we are supremely confident of this. Under working class leadership its triumph will allow the whole of southern Africa to take the road to socialism. This will be a blow both against the bourgeoisie and the opportunists. Long Live the South African Revolution!

David Sherriff

Support the AAM's Freedom for Mandela Demonstration Sunday July 17, 10.30am Finsbury Park, London N4



## LETTERS

### Reply

You recall that I condemned *The Leninist* for its irresponsibility in calling for a political revolution in the USSR, specifically for pluralism of political parties which is really what this vague thing "political pluralism" must boil down to. I stand by that condemnation and believe that the 'Democratic Union' amply justifies it.

The first question Lenin taught us to ask about any individual or organisation engaged in political activity is who are they and whose class interest do they represent? Now by their own admission the instigators of the DU are a mixture of liberals, social democrats and others who for one reason or another are dissatisfied with the political system in the USSR. They openly call for the reintroduction of Western style political institutions and a mixed economy, ie bourgeois democracy and capitalism. The only foreign policy proposal from the DU is the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from Eastern Europe, ie the destruction of conventional parity of forces leaving Nato forces in place in a dangerously destabilised European theatre of operations. Need I go on?

Apart from virtually inviting the imperialists to launch a military adventure, such a move would deny essential support to the regimes in fraternal socialist countries, some of whom, particularly Poland are already suffering from imperialist inspired political subversion and sabotage, viz. the latest attempts in Poland to resurrect the anti-socialist movement *Solidarnosc*.

... We agree, I think, that the DU is counterrevolutionary. This being the case, it should be dealt with by reference to the Criminal Code and by means of the security organs. The last thing we should worry about is what the West will think or say about this. As a rule of thumb, I'd say that when they are criticising us most severely, that is a sign that our course is good for socialism.

In the present case, the DU has nothing whatsoever to contribute to the Soviet working class. Let us be clear that the DU (if we fantasize for a moment and imagine that it will some day amount to something), is a threat to the Soviet state - to the Party as well, of course, - but nevertheless to the Soviet state. There is no conflict here between the interests of state and party. Counterrevolutionaries are not just ideological opponents, participants in some kind of debate. They are the enemies of Soviet power and therefore of socialism itself. Don't waste any sympathy on them.

M G Malkin  
Surrey

### IRSP POWs

Since the foundation of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement in 1974, the movement has been engaged in the struggle for national liberation and socialism. As a revolutionary socialist organisation the IRSM is aware of the international implications of the struggle and regards it as part of the worldwide fight for the emancipation of working class people. An independent socialist state based on the history, traditions and cultural identity of our own working class would be an inspiration not only to the British and European working classes but to oppressed people everywhere.

Many members of the IRSM have been killed by the military forces of imperialism and many have been captured and incarcerated in both British and Irish jails. Since the British withdrew political status in 1976 Irish POWs have engaged in many forms of protest and actions, culminating in the Hunger Strike of 1981 (in which three Republican Socialist POWs lost their lives) which finally destroyed the criminalisation policy which the British tried to implement. Today our POWs are recognised internationally as political prisoners.

It may come as a surprise then to learn that 47 Irish POWs belonging to the IRSM are not supported by Green Cross and therefore do not receive the weekly parcel which they are entitled to. In addition to this they need new clothing, books and political literature. The responsibility of providing these requirements falls onto the Irish Republican Socialist Party. In October 1987 the IRSP issued an appeal to socialists and anti-imperialists in Britain to help the party discharge this duty. The response to this appeal was very heartening and prisoner support groups were established in Britain which have lightened the load the IRSP bears towards our prisoners. However, support is still needed and with this in mind we have decided to establish Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid.

The aims of the Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid are to establish a means of providing secure financial assistance to our prisoners and their dependents and to publicise the conditions which Irish prisoners of war are subject to in both British and Irish jails. We urge everyone who is opposed to the domination of Ireland by British imperialism to lend your support to this important initiative (contact us at IRSP, c/o James O'Brien, 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London N4).

James O'Brien

### IFM

On August 6 1988 the Irish Freedom Movement is planning to hold this year's anti-internment rally to commemorate the introduction of internment without trial in Northern Ireland.

This year's anti-internment demonstration has an added importance as it falls at the start of the twentieth anniversary of the latest phase of the Irish War. And in this anniversary year the reality of Britain's colonial war of oppression has been starkly revealed - from the Stalker cover-up to the Birmingham Six farce, from the Gibraltar executions to the introduction of forced genetic fingerprinting.

Although Margaret Thatcher may have rejected reintroducing internment in Ireland this should not blind us to the fact that more respectable forms of internment are already in existence - imprisonment on remand, the use of no-jury courts - all behind the smoke-screen of political initiatives like the Anglo-Irish agreement. And the Prevention of Terrorism Act will continue to criminalise and repress Irish people in Britain and keep public opinion on Britain's side in its dirty war across the water.

The demands of the demonstration will be 'Troops out of Ireland!', 'Free Irish Prisoners of War!'. The aim is to build a massive show of solidarity in support of the Irish people's right of self determination.

We need to build a mobilising

committee among all anti-imperialist groups who support the demands of the demonstration. Our efforts together to build solidarity for Irish freedom can make a significant step towards peace in Ireland. We hope you will join with us and with all groups committed to working to this end.

Charles Longford

### Evren's Visit

'President' Evren of Turkey will be visiting Britain as an official guest of the Queen and the British government starting on July 12.

This will be Evren's first state visit to a West European country. The invitation to Evren to visit Britain is a scandal and an insult to the democratic forces in Turkey and all who have been killed or tortured by the servants of this enemy of democracy.

Evren as Chief of Staff of the Turkish army overthrew the civilian government of Turkey on September 12 1980. Under the pretext of combatting 'anarchy' he established a junta composed of armed forces commanders and began a reign of terror aimed at crushing all democratic forces in society and establishing a monolithic fascist state in Turkey.

Under Evren's rule, parliament and all legal political parties were suppressed. Over 500,000 people were arrested and 50 people were officially executed. In addition, many people 'disappeared' or died 'while trying to escape'. Over 100,000 people were tortured and this practice is continuing. All state and educational institutions were purged of anyone suspected of even mildly liberal views.

Many publications were censored or destroyed and trade unions banned or curtailed. In 1983 Evren transformed himself into a civilian 'president' via a fraudulent referendum.

Today in Turkey there is a civilian government and some legal political parties but Evren is still the president and there are still daily violations of human rights. There are also still some 15,000-20,000 political prisoners. Mass trials are continuing, trade unions are having to fight for basic rights and the regime wages a bloody war against the Kurdish people.

Evren is still the fascist enemy of democracy he has always been. This was shown by his recent threat to stage another military coup if the peoples of Turkey do not 'behave themselves'.

To invite a man like Evren to Britain will be taken by the peoples of Turkey to mean that the British government approves of the criminal activities of this man.

During Evren's visit there will be protests and pickets both in London and when he visits Cambridge University. Further details can be obtained from the CDDRT office (84 Balls Pond Rd, London N4 4AL, (01) 254 0387).

Max Hiron

General Secretary of the CDDRT

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.

THE EETPU has now been suspended from the TUC and this may well lead to its expulsion in September. This raises vital questions for all trade unionists in Britain and demands a clear lead from communists.

There can be no doubt though that it is correct to demand the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC. It is an affront to every principle of workers' solidarity. It has a record of systematic, unparalleled, unashamed and arrogant scabbing. The EETPU sneeringly and cynically refused to aid the miners in their Great Strike; it also actively connived with Rupert Murdoch's union busting Wapping operation in 1985. But we must take with a pinch of salt the holier-than-thou platitudes coming from certain union leaders. Where the EETPU has gone, others have followed.

Many of Hammond's most outspoken critics, not least Ken Gill of MSF and John Edmonds of the GMB, have been offering EETPU-style deals to employers, only on the quiet. As Willis has been at pains to make clear - not least in the speech he would have made to the EETPU conference - the EETPU has been suspended not because of Wapping or its sweetheart deals but because its deals at Orion Electronic and Christian Salversen meant that it had broken the TUC's Bridlington Agreement, broken the rules by poaching T&G members.

It is, of course, correct for EETPU militants organised around the journal *Flashlight* to campaign within the union for a 'no' vote in the anti-TUC ballot, but it must be recognised now that Hammond is likely to get his majority for breaking from the TUC and a large majority at that.

Unless militants have a clear sighted strategy for the post split EETPU there is the danger of Hammond's version of class treachery maintaining its grip for decades. The next few months are pivotal.

Unfortunately leading *Flashlight* supporters seem to have already given up the struggle against Hammond, they are looking for some sort of rump EETPU in exile within the TUC or alternatively membership of another union. In all sincerity and with the most profound respect we say that such perspectives are mistaken, as are those union leaders - not least George Wright of the T&GWU in Wales and Arthur Scargill - who talk about large scale recruitment of EETPU members.

Splits from the EETPU, sectional raids on its membership, will still leave Hammond with the vast majority. This is something few seriously question. Such a situation is not in the interests of the working class as a whole. A powerful non-TUC EETPU will be a force for division in the workers' movement and it can only but encourage the new realist trend which is growing in the TUC itself.

So what is needed? We say to militants in the EETPU: stay in and fight, fight and fight until you win. Do not make a fetish about membership of the TUC, do not leave the union to Hammond, you are more dangerous in than out. Leaving the EETPU (in whatever form) will separate the militant minority in the EETPU from the backward majority by a Chinese Wall. Once outside the EETPU, militants will have no realistic chance of influencing the backward majority.

The EETPU's suspension must be the beginning of a sustained, unyielding campaign by militants to overturn the Hammond leadership. When Cohse was expelled from the TUC for compliance with Heath's anti-trade union legislation it led to the defeat of the 'moderate' right. The same thing can and must happen in the EETPU.

Militants must drop all ideas that belonging to a non-TUC union will taint them. They are made of sterner stuff! Instead they should see themselves for what they are - the guarantee that the EETPU will return to the TUC not via some merger with the AEU but as a militant class struggle union.

The Editor

# In full swing: Summer Offensive '88

**Our Fifth Summer Offensive, which is currently in full swing, is far broader in scope, more inventive and is displaying far more revolutionary enthusiasm than any of our previous campaigns**

**U**NDER Gorbachev, for whom the world communist movement is increasingly a relic of the past, the budgets of various Soviet ministries, and particularly those concerned with foreign relations, are evidently being quietly pruned.

This is bad news for not only the *Morning Star* and the New Communist Party but the CPGB itself. From what we know, all get large unofficial subsidies from either directly the Soviet Union or other socialist countries.

We should all enjoy the discomfort of the opportunists. But there are important lessons to be learned from their predicament. It underlines the necessity that the revolutionary party must be an independent organisation, both politically and financially. After all, he who pays the piper calls the tune. This means that revolutionaries must seek to raise the funds necessary for their tasks without hawking themselves to the highest bidder.

The annual fund raising drive of *The Leninist* — the Summer Offensive — therefore illustrates not simply our relative organisational 'hardness' in comparison with what remains of the communist movement in this country; it also shows that our organisation takes the task of revolution seriously.

The Fifth Summer Offensive of *The Leninist*, which is currently in full swing, is far broader in scope, more inventive and is displaying far more revolutionary enthusiasm than any of our previous campaigns.

We are on course to shatter all previous records and to quantitatively develop the levels of commitment of comrades around our organisation. We still have a long way to go, but simply looking at the relative statistics of our fund drive illustrates just how far we have come as a communist organisation.

The idea of the Summer Offensive, when it was suggested just over four years ago, was attacked by some around our organisation. They suggested that institutionalising such a high level of fund-raising would effectively make it impossible to recruit the young unemployed, low paid workers, or indeed, workers in general.

In fact, at just over half way through the 5th Campaign, we find that our unemployed comrades are doing a shade better than our employed ones. On average, our out of work comrades have raised just over £350 each, in comparison to a mean of just under £330 for our other comrades.

A particularly useful focus for the fund raising efforts of our comrades have been our weekly seminars. Since the campaign began on June 1, these meetings have seen an average of £789 raised every week. This has set a good tempo

for all comrades active in and around the Summer Offensive and helped create an atmosphere of socialist competition. This inspires comrades, shows them by example what can be done and strengthens collectivity.

The weekly achievements of these seminars in raising such large sums of money is highlighted when we set it against the fund-raising efforts of other organisations claiming the mantle of communism in Britain today. Take, for example, the Euro-rump Communist Party of Great Britain.

The 1988 Appeal of the CPGB ran from February 14 to March 31, and set a target for itself of £80,000. In fact, it only managed to raise £58,137. This represented a near 30% under-achievement of their (modest) target. In contrast, at the present rate of development of our fund push, *The Leninist* looks set to notch up at least a 16% over-achievement of our ambitious target.

The stark contrast between our organisational rigour and the sloppy mess that passes for a Communist Party in Britain today, is underlined when we look at a few more comparative statistics.

In the course of their 1988 Appeal, the CPGB's leadership set its 18 districts (19 including Party Centre), various financial targets to raise, taking into account differing strengths and concentrations of members. A staggering 14 out of the 19 failed to achieve their targets.

The full measure of this failure is put in context when one looks at the paltry figures involved. As we reported in the last issue of the paper, the first day of our Summer Offensive saw an impressive £1,255 raised.

Yet, five of the 19 party districts actually started out with a final target less than what we raised on our first day. And seven of the party districts ended their month and a half of Summer Appeal fund raising with less than what we raised in the first 24 hours. The Kent district for example, with around 200 members, was set a target of £1,700 to raise and at the end of the day managed to stump up just £1,208.70p (a near 30% shortfall).

Pathetic, frankly. And it is important to remember that the £80,000 target that the CPGB set in the first place represented a 20% retreat from the previous year's total. Clearly, 'official' communism is on a slippery slope.

We have totted up the figures and worked out that when we are the size of the Communist Party, we will be setting fund targets for millions. There is a qualitative difference between the way we set about raising funds for our organisation because there is a qualitative difference in the way we view our tasks as communists. We are fighting to build a fighting proletarian party: our finances are therefore

*sinews of war.*

Like any revolutionary organisation, *The Leninist* has a large number of sympathisers around it. These comrades contribute money to the organisation, often complete work for us and identify with varying degrees of closeness with the organisation's structures and political positions.

All well and good. However, some of these comrades hang back from committing themselves wholeheartedly to us. The ideological cohesiveness and strength of our theoretical positions attract them: but they are, frankly, quietly apprehensive about the levels of self sacrifice and discipline that our organisation requires. And about this time of year — the period of our Summer Offensive fund raising campaign — they find themselves even more appalled than usual.

Too many sympathisers thus excuse themselves from taking part in our exacting fund raising drive either with a dose of hypercritical 'self-deprecation' ('I can't be anything other than a sympathiser to the organisation — I'm just not good enough for you') or by seizing on relatively minor differences to excuse themselves from taking part in this particularly 'hard' aspect of Leninist work ('Well, given that I don't really agree with your evaluation of Stalin's 'two market theory', I'm sure you'll agree I really shouldn't take part in the Summer Offensive').

The central core of Leninism, the feature that gives it its distinct political physiognomy, is the unity of theory and practice. The project that this paper and the organisation around it has set itself, is to lay the ideological and organisation foundations of a genuinely revolutionary Communist Party.

Such an organisation is a *voluntary army*, a *combat organisation* of the proletariat designed to lead the struggle of millions of working people against the bourgeois state.

Many would formally agree with this. But of all the sections of the communist movement in Britain, only *The Leninist* has dared to unite theory with practice. Only we mean what we say.

If, like the 'living dead' of the CPGB or CPB, we thought socialism in Britain would be legislated through a sleepy House of Commons, on a wet Wednesday afternoon, by a left Labour government, then, quite frankly, why bother ...? The odd fiver occasionally would suffice to build an organisation with this perspective.

The Summer Offensive is therefore an expression of our understanding of the necessity of revolution. The Fifth Summer Offensive stands as a living challenge to the pretensions of opportunists. It points to the future of British communism: and you haven't seen anything yet!

Alec Long

In the light of the number of people brought out onto the streets by the anti-Clause demos this year — 50,000 at their peak — the size of the Lesbian Strength and Gay Pride demo this year was disappointing. The low political level of the demonstration was also very obvious, with it being more of a 'day out' affair than a political event. Hostility to left wing paper sellers (especially the SWP) was much in evidence. Within the political side of the lesbian and gay community, the left has been pushed into the Trades Unions Against the Clause campaign, with 'broader' organisations, like the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Action (Olga) gaining centre stage. In part this is an expression of the complacency in the lesbian and gay community at the announcements about the relative 'unworkability' of the Clause. This is a dangerous misconception. What the Clause, Aids scares and the like have done is to create a climate of reaction directed against lesbians and gay men, irrespective of the 'workability' of this or that piece of bigoted legislation. This needs to be defeated through a resolute ideological struggle in the working class. This the likes of Olga are unwilling and unable to do.

June 29 was the date set by P&O seamen and the Support Groups for a mass demonstration in London. Only about 150 were mobilised and sadly 'demonstration' was something of a misnomer. The organisers had defied the Public Order Act and refused to notify the police of the route. On the day there were neither the numbers nor the organisation to ignore the constraints of the Met and march. Instead banners were lowered and there was a walk to the P&O HQ, where a meeting was held. Despite the poor turnout and organisation the spirit was good; speakers denounced the treacherous leadership of McCluskie and emphasised the need to bring other NUS members out on strike in support of the sacked P&O men. And as John Wood of the Dover Port Committee has said, if the national leadership "can't make that call for action, then we'll do it ourselves." This is what is needed, not petitions urging the government to "intervene". Without other P&O workers joining the strike, indeed without drawing in other sections of workers in solidarity with the Dover P&O men and against the Tories' anti-union laws the NUS bureaucracy will strangle the strike, in much the same way as happened at Wapping.



•P&O strikes: against the Tories anti-trade union laws, against the scabs, against the NUS bureaucrats

Arthur Scargill's statement at the NUM conference on Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland, the two miners jailed for killing scab taxi driver Wilkie, unsurprisingly provoked outrage from Kinnock and Willis. The spirit of militancy showed by Hancock and Shankland is the very antithesis of the new realism espoused by the traitors who head the Labour Party and TUC. But neither should we be blind to the fact that Scargill expressed his sympathy not his support. He condemned their actions at the time during the strike, and at the meeting which caused such outrage, did not demand a militant working class campaign for their release: "People who serve sentences are entitled to a degree of sympathy for the plight they find themselves in. The court accepted there was no intention on the young men's part." Our class war prisoners deserve more than pity. What they — along with the prisoners from the Broadwater Farm uprising and Irish political prisoners — need is a militant campaign to secure their release. Free all class war prisoners! Smash the bosses' jails!

## Irish solidarity



In June our £600 fund was badly down, by over one third and thus far into July things are no better. This is because our readers have not supported our monthly fund or our Summer Offensive to anything like the degree that is necessary. This must be rectified. An exception to this has been one of the Irish POWs who regularly reads our paper. The comrade has produced a colourful 24x16 inch poster featuring portraits of Lenin, Marx, Engels and Connolly along with quotes from these formidable gentlemen (see illustration). He wants to raffle it (suitably framed) for our Summer Offensive. We send our warm thanks to the comrade concerned. Of all the many contributions to our fund raising drive, we attach particular importance to this and are proud that an Irish freedom fighter has given his time, effort and talent to help our campaign. Tickets for the raffle are £2 each and are available from BCM, Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

# Palestine: Solidarity and Communists in Britain

Our recent article by our comrade Alan Merrick on Palestine generated some hostility from certain circles, including from one of our supporters. In the interests of open ideological struggle we reprint his letter and subject it to a short reply and outline the Leninist approach to proletarian internationalism and international solidarity

From Phil Sanderson.

There are important criticisms to be made of the article 'Down With Israel's Apologists!' in issue 64 of *The Leninist*. The pro-Zionist *Socialist Organiser* fully deserves Alan Merrick's polemic. However, the article offers little that is constructive and some of its ideas are very damaging.

My criticisms are as follows:

1. The article supports what is referred to as "the PLO's programme for a democratic secular Palestine". This was the policy adopted in 1971, and referred to in Yasser Arafat's famous speech to the United Nations in 1974. It remains the 'dream' of many Palestinians and a few Israelis. However, it is no longer the PLO's political programme. In 1977 the Palestinian National Council (PNC, the 'parliament' of the PLO and its supreme constitutional authority) declared that it would accept a settlement leading to an independent Palestinian state. The 16th PNC in 1983 endorsed the plan of the 1982 Arab summit in Fez; for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (the 'Occupied Territories') plus East (Arab) Jerusalem as the state's capital. This demand is almost the same as that for Zionist Troops Out of the Occupied Territories, as these are under purely military administration.
2. There is no support given to this PLO policy for an independent Palestinian state. In fact the only concept offered of such a state is "a Bantustan", possibly "staffed by Palestinian collaborators". This is to do the Palestinians (and indeed the world revolution) a grave disservice.
3. No analysis is given of how a secular democratic state might be achieved. This is not surprising, as it is rather a Utopian policy as the situation stands. It either requires an unlikely agreement between Israeli and Palestinian bourgeoisies to get together in one state; or for the Palestinian national liberation to wait until the workers of the world abolish nation states (a rather topsy-turvy view). It might become an appropriate policy if some extreme elements in Israel get their way, and the Occupied Territories are annexed and Israel becomes a fully fledged formal apartheid state. But this is pure speculation at the moment, and no liberal minded person or revolutionary would actually support annexation to this end.
4. A rather strange view of the right of nations to self determination is given: "For Lenin ..." (this right) "... was a relative principle, subordinate to the world revolution". I'm sure all his principles were relative in this sense! Merrick instead suggests that only oppressed nations have the right to self determination. This is a moral, not a political argument; as if we should take pity on a bourgeoisie that lacks a state of its own. The point is that a purely national revolution by the Palestinians cannot impose itself on the Jewish nation.
5. The article states: "the question" (of the rights of the Jewish people) "does not arise; the existing Israeli state is able to take care of such rights ..." And Israel itself is described, correctly, as "the prime tool of imperialism in the Middle East". These statements ignore the tensions between Israel and the US; the fundamental contradiction between the Jewish national idea of 'Hebrew labour' and the capitalist exploitation of cheap Arab labour. Social divisions inside Israel and among her supporters are widening, and it is these divisions which make revolutionary change possible. Communists must analyse them, not skip over them.

So, what of the policy for an independent Palestinian state, and the relationship between Palestinian national liberation and social revolution in Israel and Palestine? It is clear that only this can provide genuine economic and social freedom for the workers and peasants of Palestine and Israel.

It is important to underline the positive aspects for the development of a future Palestinian state. These are in addition to the freedom from military occupation for 1.5 million Palestinians - no small matter in itself.

1. Twenty-one years of occupation have suppressed all organisations of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They would become free to openly organise and debate, to address the question of economic oppression. They are unlikely to be contented with a kind of self governing Bantustan, and likely to be as hungry for genuine social freedom as they are for national rights.
2. The Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and also within Israel itself are a vital reserve army of labour for the Israeli economy (This role is also taken to a lesser extent by Israeli Oriental Jews and working women). Thus Jews occupy better paid jobs and professions, are better paid for similar work to Arabs, and are well protected from recession and unemployment. Palestinian workers also 'free' Jewish workers for military service. Tensions arise in the relationship between Israeli capitalists and Jewish workers occasionally, where an employer would rather keep the more flexible Palestinian part of the workforce than a better paid Jewish one demanding job security and fringe benefits.

An independent state would certainly mean that the Israeli bosses would be faced with a better organised enemy. This, together with increased employment inside Palestine, may mean an increase in the exploitation of Jewish workers. This could be an important development in a divided Israeli society.

It is speculation to go into detail on how these contradictions may develop. The necessity for the Palestinian proletariat is the leadership of a communist party that can analyse and act

upon these developments, with the clear aim of social revolution. How this may take place in Israel and a Palestinian state cannot be clear at present, but of course a close relationship with Israeli communists is necessary. The ideology of separated stages of national and social liberation must be rejected.

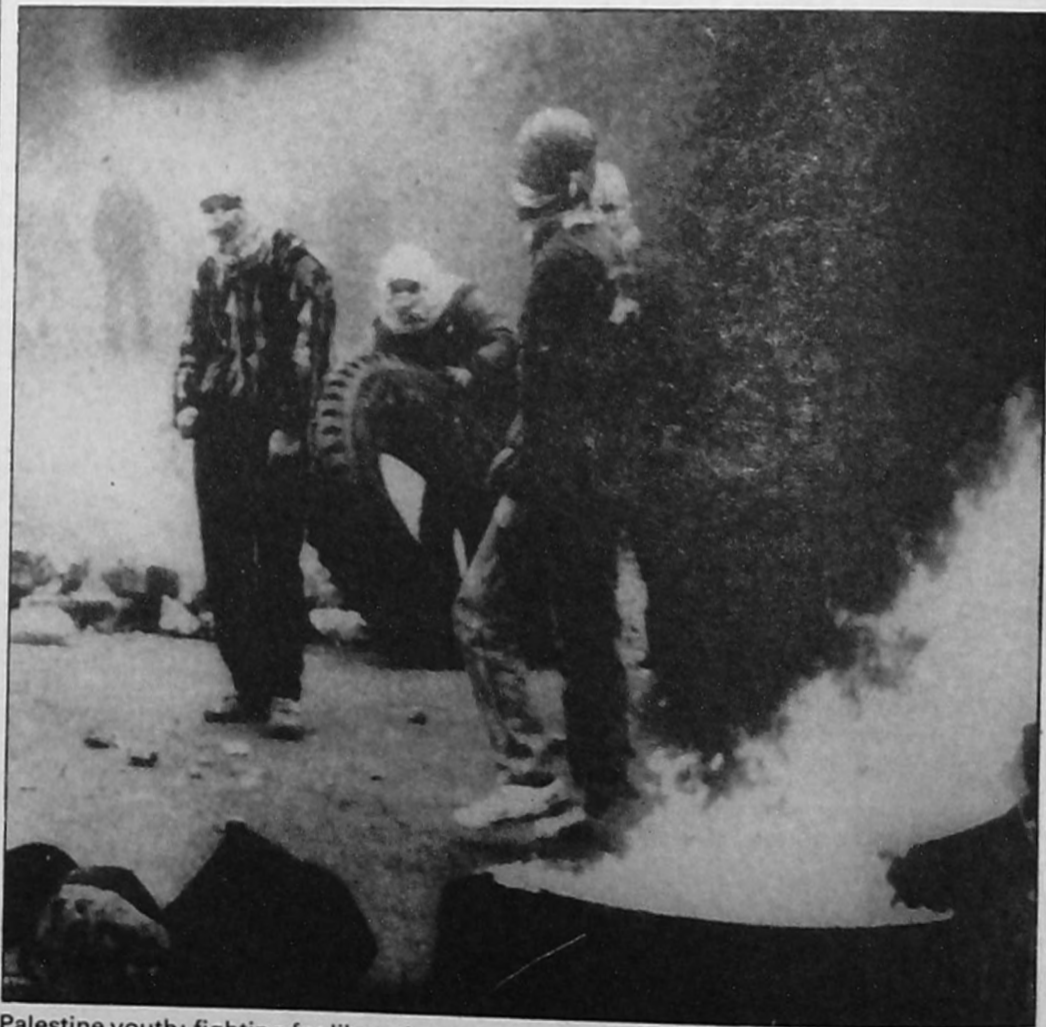
The programme of the Palestinian Communist Party (from its first congress in 1983) affirms its role as "the organised political vanguard of the working class, the most revolutionary and persistent class in all stages of struggle ..." (p5) and its right to "political, organisational and ideological independence" within the national movement (p22). And on page 16: "Defining the stage as one of Palestinian national liberation does not separate it by a Chinese wall from the tasks of the later stage ... But it means that ... forms of interconnection of tasks should not be outlined before accomplishing the primary goals of the national liberation stage."

The Palestinian CP played an important role in mediating the 1987 reunification of the PLO (as did the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). According to *Palestine Solidarity*, issue 27, "the admission of the Palestine Communist Party to the PNC was overwhelmingly welcomed, without the lengthy statutory procedures being observed". The PCP has been in the forefront of the underground organisation of the Uprising, a remarkable feat that has seen uninhibited distribution of leaflets in a small area of land (the Gaza Strip is only 29 miles by 6, of which area Palestinians have been evicted from one third).

Communists must salute the efforts of the PCP, and support them in every way possible. Of course mistakes will be made; but the harsh realities of Palestinian life and history will lead to fierce and widespread debate, and the likely rejection of theory that does not result in good practice.

Thus it is unrevolutionary to suggest that an independent Palestinian state will be too underdeveloped to be worth having. Some echoes here of what the Mensheviks said about taking state power in Russia in 1917 (as referred to on the front page of *The Leninist*, issue 64), though the Palestinian example is a national rather than a social revolution.

We must unequivocally support the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; their right to an independent Palestinian state; and the slogan "End the Occupation - Zionist Troops Out!". Alan Merrick rightly applauds the heroic Uprising, but in practice offers nothing but a long wait for even basic national rights, and confusion of PLO policy, of which they have had quite enough from Zionists. This would place them somewhere in the rearguard of world revolution; whereas their national and economic oppression and Israel's imperialism puts them firmly in the forefront. The Uprising shows that the Palestinian masses clearly have the stomach for this position.



Palestine youth: fighting for liberation not a bantustan

DESPITE comrade Sanderson's subjective intentions, he seems to share many fundamental assumptions with *Socialist Organiser* on the Palestine question.

For a start, let us look at the whole question of the viability of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. This is not only the preferred solution of SO and Sanderson, but also of sections of the international bourgeoisie, as a relatively stable compromise, a "demilitarised little country ... half-a-loaf Palestine" (*The Economist*, June 18).

Why, exactly, is to doubt the ability of a Palestinian state on such an area to be truly independent to do the world revolution a "grave disservice"? We have always believed

that honesty, no matter how unpalatable, is the starting point of any service to the world revolution. And this statement is little more than being honest.

How could an economically backward Palestine, divided into two, sandwiched between the regional superpower Israel and reactionary states like Jordan and Egypt be anything other than a bantustan? A Palestine with a population of less than 1.5 million (818,300 on the West Bank and 476,700 in Gaza) is hardly any more viable than Gazankulu, Bophuthatswana or Kwazulu.

If the revolutionary movement were to accept such a solution it would be at best a mistake, at worst treachery. Communists must say this openly. World history has some instructive examples of such 'independent'

states. In 1921, the majority of the revolutionary movement in Ireland under Michael Collins — one-time leader of the IRA — opted for a Twenty-six, rather than a Thirty-two County solution. How should communists have responded?

Logically, comrade Sanderson would have supported such a development. After all, did it not mean that Britain was "faced with a better organised enemy"? With, in theory, greater economic autonomy, should it not have created greater employment within the state, marginally increasing the rate of exploitation of workers in Britain, no longer able to rely on the cheap pool of labour from the Irish colony? Were not working class organisations in the Free State able to organise more openly, free from the yoke of military occupation and the terror of the Black and Tans?

Quite clearly, comrade Sanderson's arguments fit equally as well to Ireland in 1921 as to Palestine in 1988, if not better. The Free State contained the majority of the Irish population, a stronger economic base, twice as big a population and was one entity rather than being divided into two. What is more, the Free State had the St George's Channel between itself and the imperial power: Sanderson's Palestine has the imperial power dividing it (how are they to be linked comrade Sanderson, are they going to be allowed to build a very, very long flyover?).

Communists rightly rejected the Collins' Free State sell out, by Sanderson's logic doing a great disservice to the world revolution in the process. Why?

As Connolly warned, what partition did was to create a carnival of reaction both north and south. It divided the Irish working class, not just between nationalist and loyalist, but nationalist from nationalist. It did not create economic prosperity, it reestablished dependence on a new footing; British economic domination continued. Capital in the Twenty-six Counties, because of its disadvantageous position, must screw down on its own working class still harder. Because of this, emigration is still a major drain on Irish society. The only people who have been able to become better organised are the Irish bourgeoisie ... at the expense of the Irish working class.

Communists in Ireland were well aware of this, and followed the logic of their position, fighting gun in hand against the 'Free-Staters' with Liam Mellows' revolutionary nationalist forces in the heroic Battle of the Four Courts. Is Yasser Arafat a Palestinian Michael Collins or Liam Mellows, and should we "unequivocally support the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" in either manifestation? Certainly, support for the former meant betrayal.

Yes, practice will result in better practice; but better for who? Palestinian society, like every other, is divided into classes. The revolutionary movement there is dominated by the bourgeoisie — and what's good practice for the Palestinian bourgeoisie is not necessarily good for its working class. Look at Zimbabwe, Ireland; anywhere for that matter.

So, let us bring the Ireland analogy 'back home' to Palestine, so to speak. Not only does it have the threat of Israel hanging over its head, King Hussein of Jordan has his eye on the West Bank and, sadly, a Palestinian state is not in the most advantageous position to be integrated into the socialist bloc, even allowing for the revolution proceeding uninterrupted through to socialism.

If a Palestinian state on this basis is to be realisable, let alone viable, it will entail the Palestinian bourgeoisie clamping down hard on its own working class. Such a situation would still ensure a pool of cheap labour for the Israeli state, as well as a market for its goods.

This might be mitigated if the Palestinian state had a strong industrial/agricultural base and was needed to act as an arm of US imperialism, as, for example, is Israel. But this is hardly on the cards, is it? And, in the absence of this, given the level of economic development of a Gaza/West Bank Palestine, given the nature of the surrounding states, we are not so much looking at a potential Palestinian 'Free State', but at best a Middle Eastern Swaziland, at worst a Kwazulu. How could it be anything else?

How can communists applaud the strategy for the establishment of a glorified bantustan? This is not so much a development from the slogan of a democratic secular state, as a retreat provoked by the military defeats of the resistance, especially after 1967. With the absence of a genuine communist strategy, the predominant bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces responded to these defeats pragmatically. Military defeat caused political retreat.

It is shameful, then, that the communist

parties of Israel, Jordan and Palestine should be among the leaders of this retreat. This is the result of the opportunist approach advocated by the Soviet Union, that comrade Sanderson illustrates so well in his letter: for all the PCP's 'no Chinese walls', it goes on to say that "forms of interconnection of tasks should not be outlined before accomplishing the primary goals of the national liberation stage"! We call this Menshevism.

We cannot put forward a strategy for uninterrupted revolution, says the PCP, we can only begin to talk of how to proceed to social liberation after national liberation has been completed. Could there be a clearer exposition of revolution proceeding by *artificially separated* stages? The Palestinian bourgeoisie is left with the ball very definitely in its court, the working class is left to tail. Is *this* what we should be supporting "in every way possible"?

There can be no solution of any advantage to the oppressed within the confines of a West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinian state, any more than there is a solution to the Irish question within the Twenty-six Counties, or the question of Southern Africa within Swaziland and the bantustans. Communists of the region must fight to rouse the Israeli working class now, not until the mythical economic crisis within Israel envisaged by Sanderson after the establishment of an 'independent' Palestine takes place. You would be waiting a very, very long time otherwise. This Palestine could after all act as a political stabilising factor in Israel, rather than a radicalising one.

On the question of the rights of the Israeli Jews to self determination: yes, comrade, "a purely national revolution by the Palestinians cannot impose itself on the Jewish nation" —

this is exactly the point! As we argued in the article in question, there can be no solution within the region without the active participation of the Israeli working class. Excluding the involvement of the other Arab peoples outside of the 'Occupied Territories', one and a half million Palestinians could hardly hold three million Israelis in bondage in a democratic secular state.

The democratic rights of the Israelis are not under threat; they are an *oppressing* people and *oppressing* peoples' rights are not usually in the real world in need of defence. What is in question here is the right to pursue them through the oppression of the Palestinians. In general, the right of the Israeli people to secede is not being challenged: it is not in question at this stage of the struggle, any more than the right of the Irish Protestants or South African whites is.

Comrade Sanderson finds our assertion of the fact that Lenin never defended the right of an oppressor nation to self determination "a moral, not a political argument". This is to quite miss the point as to why Marxists defend the right of oppressed nations to self determination — to unfetter the class struggle, thereby illustrating to the working masses of the oppressed nation that the root of their oppression lies not in a denial of *democratic rights*, but with capital.

Israeli workers suffer no such oppression to cloud their perceptions, they are corrupted because they do not fight for the rights of the Palestinians. We fight for the right of nations to self determination to weaken capitalism. How, comrade Sanderson, does asserting the rights of Israeli Jews weaken capitalism?

This, we trust, answers Sanderson's query

as to how this demand was subordinate to social revolution — it was to be supported insofar as it aided this struggle, whereas national movements (ie, Pan Slavism) which cut against the grain here — even though they were still, from a liberal point of view, every bit as just as any other nation's demand for self determination — were opposed resolutely.

The question being posed *now* is the national rights of the Palestinians; rights which cannot be realised on the basis of a West Bank and Gaza under the shadow of Israeli imperialism. To advocate this is to transform the democratic demand for self determination for the Palestinians into the sop of 'national autonomy', which Lenin derided the Austrian social democrats for raising.

In practice, the existing Israeli state on one side in addition to Egypt and Jordan sandwiching Palestine, would mean a continued denial of self determination, there are after all the 530,500 Palestinians living in Israel as well as the 1,160,800 in Jordan, 600,000 in Lebanon as well as the million or so scattered in various Middle Eastern Arab states. Are they all expected to crowd into the West Bank and Gaza?

The basis for a communist position on Palestine cannot be founded on what the PLO does or does not say at any one time. We are not sycophants, we are communists. Our departure point, then, can only be the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Whether or not this is in direct contradiction to the statements of Yasser Arafat, the PCP or anybody else is, frankly, by the by.

Alan Merrick

## Proletarian internationalism and liberal sycophancy

**W**HAT is the function of international solidarity from the communist perspective? Do we engage in it to assuage our 'guilt' at being subjects of the world's oldest imperialist power? Are we duty-bound to follow the line of the liberation movement with which we are fighting to build solidarity with?

These questions are of very great importance within the anti-imperialist movement in Britain. Many people retreat from the rigors of fighting to build a revolutionary opposition in Britain to take refuge under the wing of liberation movements abroad, this gives one an easy ride to popularity and 'mass' politics (such as solidarity with the South African struggle) or a feeling of 'purity' or 'hardness' (ie, Ireland).

Both of these causes are of great worth; both necessitate serious and protracted work in Britain. But how, and to what end?

We cannot put ourselves at the uncritical service of bourgeois or petty bourgeois revolutionary liberation movements. This does not mean chauvinist attacks on the tactics of those movements when defence of them would be to the detriment of our 'popularity' at home, whether it be necklacing in South Africa, or the death of civilians as a result of the IRA's armed struggle.

No, we do not drop our proletarian principles to adapt to the shifting sands of a national liberation organisation when we are engaged in work of solidarity with that struggle.

Lenin makes this position abundantly clear: "There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line, in every country without exception." (CW, Vol 24, p75).

Elsewhere, Lenin made clear that, with regard to a liberation movement's programme, this meant unconditional support for the democratic elements of the programme, but only *conditional* support for the programme as a whole. Concretely, this means that while we support the PLO's struggle against Israel, we

cannot support the slogan of an 'independent' Palestine on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Indeed, we must warn against it.

Or in Ireland, while we unconditionally support the struggle of the republican movement against British imperialism, we cannot support the demand of 'troops out in the lifetime of one [British] Parliament'. This slogan has severe detrimental effects to the struggle in Britain, sowing illusions in bourgeois parliamentarianism and in the bourgeois Labour Party, to which the slogan is essentially directed.

Any compromise on the slogan 'Troops Out Now' is a concession to British imperialism, undermining the successful building of an anti-imperialist current within the British workers' movement. 'Time To Go' or 'Time to End the Irish War' is a liberal diversion, and we must say so.

World-wide, we must consistently fight for proletarian political independence. Our support for the struggle of revolutionary democratic movements must go hand in hand with advancing the need for genuine communist parties as the only road to full liberation for the working masses of the oppressed countries.

In the Comintern, Lenin stated the "need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois democratic liberation trends in the backward countries", and continued; "the Communist International should support the bourgeois democratic movements in the colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, ie, those of the struggle against bourgeois democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International must enter into temporary alliances with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most embryonic form" (Ibid, Vol 31, pp149-50).

This is the international framework that our solidarity with the oppressed nationalities must be firmly rooted in. We are not sycophants. We are out for world-wide social liberation and an end to all nations, supporting liberation struggles insofar as they oppose imperialism, the greatest fetter on world progress. To employ Lenin's dictum; march separately, strike together!

As anti-imperialists in Britain, we should bear in mind the above quote from Lenin that the prime characteristic of real internationalism is fighting for revolution in one's own country. We are not fighting in Belfast or Beirut, but in Brixton and Birmingham. Solidarity work should not be a haven for dispirited British leftists. Our greatest contribution to revolutionary struggles abroad can only be the direct development of the revolutionary struggle in 'our' country. No substitute has ever been found to the demand of Lenin — fight for a communist party!

We have seen many times masses of people come out onto the streets in solidarity with Vietnam, Chile and South Africa. This has remained on the level of sympathy and has been confined within the limits defined by that specific campaign. What better proof of this than the pitiful numbers mobilised around the issue of Irish freedom? Hundreds of thousands can be mobilised for a cause thousands of miles away. How many demonstrated in support of the ten freedom fighters who died for basic democratic rights in 1981, and the continuing struggle, just a few miles across the St George's Channel?

This will not happen spontaneously. For that matter, the much larger numbers that turn out in support of the struggle in South Africa cannot be insured, or their activity marshalled to the greatest effect, in the absence of a genuine communist party. The tasks of international solidarity and the struggle for revolution at home are dialectically linked. When, as in Marx's day, we see hundreds of thousands of workers on the streets of Britain, demonstrating for Irish freedom, then we will see the struggle for the British revolution take a giant stride forward.

But that requires communist politics, a communist approach to solidarity. And that means the fight for a genuine communist party now.

Alan Merrick



## LOBBY

# UWC Lobby: Gathering strength

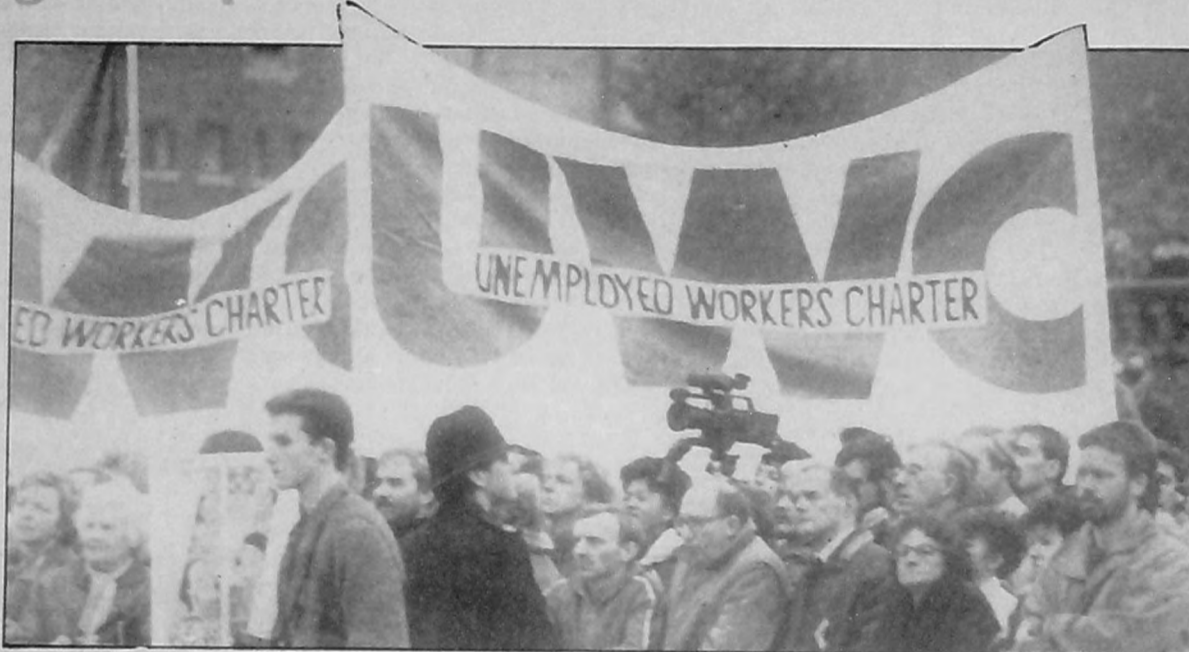
Readers of the Morning Star on July 1 revelled in the treat of a twelve page supplement on Bulgaria, written by Star Foreign Editor, Roger Trask, while on a "fact finding visit" (read 'expenses paid holiday'). With the Star's usual objectivity, page after page dripped syrup on such attention grabbers as 'Bulgarian space exploration' and 'Bulgarian sport and the Olympics'. One wonders who paid for it all and how much orders in a certain state in the socialist bloc increased as a result of this piece of crass political prostitution.

The editorial of the same edition of the Morning Star led off with the startling information that this August marks the "twentieth anniversary" of the appearance of British troops on the streets of the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. They must have done it with great stealth, as no one else but the Star noticed them for another twelve months. On the other hand, this statement might just be a result of the Star's profound chauvinist ignorance of the actual history of Ireland's struggle for liberation.

The Communist Party of Finland has long been regarded as a model Euro party. It certainly had a typical Euro approach to finance. Chairman 'Honest' Arvo Aalto and general secretary Esko Vainionpaa, along with the whole political committee offered their resignations on May 23 after most of the party's assets had been lost in an 'enterprising' investment policy which not only included stocks and shares but a string of race horses called the 'Hot Trotters'. Given that party losses now amount to over half a million £s, the 'HTs' must still be out there somewhere, running.

And speaking of 'Hot Trotters'. The right moving boys and (hair) gels of the Revolutionary Communist Party seem to be all at sixes and sevens on Iran. According to Daniel Nassim in tns of May 20, they support Khomeini because Islamic fundamentalism is the ideology of "the middle classes ... radicalised by developments in the Middle East". Yet the very next week, Frank Richards says the Khomeini regime is "notoriously reactionary" and should not be supported. Dialectics RCP style: the Khomeini regime apparently is composed of 'reactionary radicals'. Almost as wacky in our view as Workers Power's "counterrevolutionary revolutions" in Eastern Europe.

Momentum for the UWC's lobby of the TUC on September 5 is beginning to gather pace



The UWC: mass action is the key

**D**ESPITE the successes of the Unemployed Workers Charter in its campaign to organise the unemployed, it is clear that we have only just scratched the surface: there is a huge reservoir of anger against the Tories' latest round of attacks on the unemployed.

On June 15, that resentment boiled over on a demonstration against the Tories' new 'Workfare' Employment Training Programme in Sheffield. Over 1,500 Community Programme workers (CP schemes will be absorbed in ETP) and trade unionists, mostly from the North West and Yorkshire, marched to the Manpower Services Commission headquarters. Speakers from the organising committee and the TGWU slammed the ETP as a cheap labour scheme and pointed to the experience of the USA to prove their point.

After the speeches ended, however, a section of the crowd, mostly made up of Community Programme workers from Liverpool, broke through the police barriers and held a sit down protest in the forecourt of the MSC building itself. The police moved in and made a particularly brutal arrest. With this, these young workers just blew up.

A few police officers were given an object lesson in the fighting spirit of young workers — and probably still have the cuts and bruises to prove it. For a period it looked as though the situation could explode and Sheffield's scum in blue could have had a full scale riot on their hands.

The anger petered out, however, and the police were allowed to get away with their arrests and their attacks on the Liverpool CP workers.

The fighting spirit these brave young men and women showed on that day is wholeheartedly welcomed by the UWC. We want to channel that anger, that energy into a mass, national, organisation that can focus and concentrate it. The 'official' leaderships of the

trade union movement, on the other hand, are running scared of that type of spirit.

The Morning Star of June 17, reported the demonstration on its front page, but totally failed to mention the spontaneous militant action of the young CP 'trainees'. Militant of June 24 also covered the demo, but chose not to solidarise with the CP workers' fight: instead it simply bemoaned the fact that some of the young trainees shouted "scab" at the workers in the MSC headquarters, many of whom had heeded the call to strike. Militant also chose to ignore the violent confrontation with the police and made no call for action but offered the tired old platitude: we must "build a united campaign with workers who would be associated with the scheme and the rest of the labour movement".

The unemployed have had a gut full of the type of weary, bureaucratically managed and deeply demoralising campaigns run by the likes of Militant for Norman Willis and the TUC. For the UWC, the spirit these young Liverpoolians displayed is the bedrock on which we will build that fighting unity of employed and unemployed workers.

And this approach is proving popular. Wherever UWC supporters are active, they are getting support for our lobby of the TUC to demand an end to their scandalous collaboration with the Tories' ETP.

Supporters in Brent Nalگو are circularising other branches of their union with UWC literature and a covering letter from branch secretary Jim Roche urging that they "support this lobby". As he points out, "a large turnout of employed workers alongside the unemployed will strengthen the demand of the ... Nalگو conference (as well as Nupe and T&G) that the TUC should boycott the ETP."

This year's lobby is drawing on a far wider swathe of support from the organised workers movement than last year's. We have requests

for speakers and support from a large number of union branches, particularly Nalگو and CPSA organisations.

The campaign for the lobby has also been taken up and made their own by other unemployed organisations, in particular by the activists in Camden Unemployed Action Centre. Cuac is one of the most militant and active unemployed centres in the country.

Its activity in the past has stood in marked contrast to the lethargy of the TUC 'ping-pong and sympathy' centres around the country (most of which have died a quiet death). The willingness of Cuac to fight uncompromisingly for the interests of the unemployed has led them into trouble with the local Labour council and the TUC which, through the nasty Communist Party of Britain member, bureaucrat Terry Stevens, tried to have them closed down.

The UWC has consistently supported the fight of Cuac to stay open and stay fighting. Cuac coordinator, Mick Gavan, wrote to the UWC last November:

"We are fighting to stay open as a centre that fights for the right to work and campaigns for all the unemployed. It's because we are campaigning, not a tea and sympathy, centre that we have always been proud to support the campaigning initiatives of the Unemployed Workers Charter and will continue to do so in the future."

Cuac activists are working with us to build the lobby and lay the basis for a united unemployed fightback after September 5.

Since Unemployed Organiser came out on June 20, over 5,000 copies have been sold and distributed and we are actually having difficulty keeping pace with the demand. Also, taking June 20 as our starting date, we have collected around 6,000 signatures, or about 285 every day, on our petition to the TUC. To achieve our target of 20,000 by September 5, we need to maintain a pace of about 250 signa-

tures a day so we are well on target at the moment, but we still need comrades and friends around the country to take more petition sheets.

Plans for the day of the lobby itself are now well in hand. We are working with the local labour movement in Bournemouth itself who are helping us arrange accommodation for the lobbyists. Also, our fringe meeting after the lobby has Jeremy Corbyn MP, Jack Dash, our honorary president and veteran of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s, a P&O striker and of course a speaker from the UWC itself.

The campaign for the lobby is meeting a ready response precisely because there is a political vacuum in the field: the need for a militant movement of the unemployed has perhaps never been more apparent, especially given the continued retreat into collaboration and conciliation by the leadership of the workers' movement. And, it seems, we are not the only ones who have noticed this.

Jim Arnison, writing in the Morning Star of June 15, calls for "a class based campaign against the causes of unemployment in which the victims themselves play the necessary leading role." Jim quoted a TUC general council statement which admitted that "the TUC centres for the unemployed were established as an alternative to a national organisation of unemployed workers", an approach he branded as providing a "shakey sinecure for a few while the mass of the unemployed are fundamentally betrayed." In contrast, Arnison looks forward to the resurrection of the same type of movement as the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the '20s and '30s. "Somebody", he suggests, "has got to make a start on this".

And, of course, 'someone' has. The UWC's fight to organise the unemployed stands in marked contrast to the tired, bureaucratic jobs that the TUC has attempted to fob the unemployed off with. We await support from Jim Arnison and the Morning Star.

We still need to raise the campaign to new heights, however, and that is where you, our readers, come in:

- Take copies of our petition and help us achieve our 20,000 target.
- Get your union branch/organisation to sponsor the lobby and make a donation to cover the cost. Sponsorship letters are available on request.
- Take a bulk order of Unemployed Organiser for workmates, friends or unemployed contacts. UO is 5p each for orders over 10.
- Set up a branch of the UWC in your area. Contact us and we can put you in contact with other supporters in your area.
- Be there on September 5 itself. If you want to really build a fightback against the Tories and their attacks on our class, then be in Bournemouth with the UWC. Write or ring for details of arrangements for the day.

Paul Pierce

Contact the UWC on (01) 431 3135, or write to BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

# British Kerensky

A very British coup, Mike Jackson, (Director), Channel Four

LET US start by saying that watching the TV version of Chris Mullin's novel, *A very British coup*, was very enjoyable. It has provided me the subject of more than one interesting pub room conversation. It certainly makes a change to see something of this nature on TV - a political thriller - coming from a left direction, all be it from the reformist left. Usually we are offered only the tired anti-communist clichés of the right or the Kafkaesque paranoia of liberalism.

I confess that I never got round to reading the book when it was first published in 1982 so I cannot compare it to Mike Jackson's production. So it should be emphasised that it is possible that in criticising Mullins I am criticising Mullins as presented via Jackson.

Taken in itself the TV programme was excellent, its story line was gripping and the characterisation and touches of humour were a real treat. Certainly Alan Platter's screen play has rightly been praised as has the acting, particularly Ray McAnally as the left Labour PM, Harry Perkins.

My purpose though, in writing this review is not to comment on technical presentation or acting. What I am interested in is dealing with the politics which underlie *A very British coup* and to do a review of the reviews.

It must be said that the political assumptions on which Mullin's book is based simply do not stand up to serious scrutiny. Mullin is perfectly correct in showing that although having been elected that did not mean Perkins had real power. This is in point of fact Mullin's main point.

Neither do we doubt for more than one moment that the US would be far from happy with a Labour government that was serious about a non-nuclear strategy for British imperialism ... yes, Perkins is governing British imperialism - his rival and token winger in his cabinet, Wainright, is banished to Britain's oldest colony, Northern Ireland, where he will serve as secretary of state.

Again we do not disagree with his assumption that sections of the ruling class would gang up to do down a left Labour government, even to the point of staging a coup.

It is perfectly possible for a Harry Perkins type figure to become PM. Suggestions that he could be brought down using dirty tricks are far from fanciful. Left Labourites are just as tied to sexual hypocrisy of the British establishment as the Tories. As shown in *A very British coup* they are prone like the rest of us to sexual relations outside marriage; Perkins is presented with an ultimatum of resigning or being exposed for having had a love affair - this is the 'coup' attempt - and his foreign minister was forced out of office because he went to bed with a female member of Hampstead Labour Party! But and its a big but it is far more likely that such a left Labour politician would be placed in office by a worried ruling class, as a sop designed to passify the population, and not because of some financial scandal.

A left reformist government will never be elected by the House of Commons (it is after all an electoral college) without a deep accompanying socio/political crisis.

Capitalism is not only the dominant mode of production in Britain, so are capitalist ideas. Only the most profound crisis would shake this. Mullin's hanky panky in the city would hardly open the doors to a real life left Labour leader, there are always going to be some safe members of the establishment who could be presented as Mr or Mrs Clean.

Before continuing with this train of thought let us turn to the reviews, they can be divided into two broad categories.

On the right it has been dismissed as red propaganda, "too unbelievable to be taken seriously" said *The Guardian's* Hugo Young or as Roy Hattersley put it in *The Listener* "a fantasy as distinct from a contribution to political thought". Quite frankly this says nothing about *A very British coup* but everything about the British establishment, Hattersley included.

It is well aware of the dirty dealings and plots of its secret services. The more it rubbishes *A very British coup* the more it exposes its own oily duplicity.

After the revelations by Cathy Massiter about MI5 infiltration of CND, Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* and the fact that Lord Rothschild and Cecil King had tried to organise a coup - to be headed by Lord Mountbatten - against the Wilson government (which was hardly left wing) are merely the tip of a giant iceberg. Rightly we take with a pinch a salt denials that a Harry Perkins type government would be subject to plots. Having over the last few years been able to catch a fleeting glimpse of what goes on behind its veil of secrecy only a fool would think that the bourgeoisie plays politics according to Marquis of Queensbury rules.

Predicably the left has responded in different fashion. Its main criticism is that *A very British coup* leaves out real people or at least reduces them to passive TV viewers. This is a valid point. Workers are seen looking admiringly at Perkins on their livingroom TV screens and that is their limit. The only time we see the working class actually in action is when the CIA brings out power workers on strike. This and the end of the series where Perkins brings off his very own TV coup and springs an election on the establishment shows Mullin's limitations. He sees politics as a game of chess played by clever leaders using the population as pawns, we see things the other way round; the masses are the real makers of history.

Anyway it is not to make a sweeping generalisation to say that the left identifies with the character of Harry Perkins. From Paul Foot in *Socialist Worker* to Jeffrey James in the *Morning Star* he is their man. But he is not ours and this is the main point of our review.

As we have said if Harry Perkins became PM in the real world this would be the result of a profound social crisis. It would be because the ruling class could no longer rule in the old way and the masses found the existing situation intolerable; in other words there would be a revolutionary situation.

Against such a background the penultimate barricade the ruling class would use to prevent a revolution would be a radical government (the final barricade being counterrevolutionary fascism). It would be tactically correct to support such a government against the forces of counterrevolution ... but a Leninist party would do so in order to facilitate the organisation of the working class to make a revolution against a Perkins type government and the capitalist sys-

tem it objectively defends. Some leftists will be shocked at such a suggestion. To them the likes of Harry Perkins (ie a Ken Livingstone or a Tony Benn) are sincere socialists, albeit with left reformist illusions. The task for these leftists is to educate them as leaders, show them that they need the left and extra parliamentary action if they are to get into office and stay there.

For us the fact that Harry Perkins is sincere and indeed likable (he plays a demon game of darts, has a ready wit and is even more devious and clever than his ruling class opponents) is irrelevant. For us Harry Perkins is a British version of Chile's Salvador Allende, an Aleksandr Kerensky. They were no doubt sincere and likeable in their own ways even though they most likely did not play darts, but they - like Perkins and all reformists - objectively defended capitalism.

This being the case the task of the revolutionary proletariat is to make revolution, it is either that or fascism, a left reformist government is by its very nature unstable, a temporary, passing phenomenon. Such governments are governments of crisis and give way either to the direct rule of bourgeois society by the bourgeoisie or proletarian revolution.

For the left reviewers *A very British coup* would be perfect if only it had the masses out on the streets "in support of Labour" (*Morning Star* July 9 1988). This is what they would do in practice if a Harry Perkins were to get in at No.10. In other words in reviewing *A very British coup* unconsciously the vast majority of the left in Britain have declared themselves no different to the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries of 1917, how true.

Jack Conrad

## Gaza voices

Paul Cossali & Clive Robson, *Stateless in Gaza*, Zed, London 1986, pp159, pbk £5.95

IF THE Middle East is a storm centre of the world revolution, then Palestine is its epicentre. *Stateless in Gaza* describes first how the Palestinians were forcibly driven from their land by the British, who favoured the Zionist settlers, allowing them to wage a war to create Israel; then how this was followed by a continuous process of dispossession and herding of the refugees into the camps of the Gaza Strip and West Bank; how in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War the PLO was formed and finally how the PLO's armed struggle failed and how Palestinians are now looking to achieve their liberation.

The book's aim is to let the people speak and thus let truth speak for itself. A sort of Palestine as it is.

The historical and contemporary position of the Palestinians is given by quoting a range of carefully selected individuals involved and affected by the struggle. The problems of poverty, oppression, backwardness and exploitation come to life through the tongues of the speakers. What emerges is a picture of life as seen by the whole spectrum of the Palestinian people.

Comparisons between South Africa and Israel, vis a vis the treatment of blacks and Palestinians, are apt. What is clear is that since 1967 the Gaza Strip has become a reservoir of cheap labour which is available for Israeli capitalism. The area's own industry and re-

sources are deliberately retarded, thereby also providing a captive market.

Israel does not rule the Palestinians through consent. Gaza is a sort of internal colony. The dispossessed Palestinians live in prison-like shanty towns and suffer the most brutal treatment from the occupying Israeli army.

Understandably, the book fails to make clear that this oppression stems from Israel being a junior imperialist power which is supported economically and politically by the USA and could not exist without its support. This is an inevitable limitation of the book.

Nonetheless we are given an insight into the fighting determination as well as the deep divisions which exist among the Palestinian people. This is fascinating. We have the whole range of class and ideological positions presented through doctors, writers, workers as well as non-official spokespersons for the fundamentalists, the women's movement and Al Fatah, along with other groups within the PLO.

According to the authors: "**Gaza suffers from a political paralysis ... it emerged that the lack of unity and a workable strategy, both in Gaza itself and among the Palestinian leadership as a whole, were seen as a major cause of the current political impasse.**"

This is made clear in the last chapter titled 'Resistance'. It has various narrators criticising and pointing out the deficiencies of the PLO (called the "outside leadership"). But the alternatives are hazy, utopian or downright reactionary.

What comes out clearly is that in light of the failure of the PLO's 1967-71 campaign of armed struggle, confusion reigns. Some want a purely military struggle, others are intent on organising trade union work with a long term perspective of winning allies among the Israeli population. Then there are the fundamentalists who blame communists for all the problems of Palestine and want to drive out all Jews. They are the only ones who seem sure of themselves, the rest seem vague.

One speaker says that the resistance went wrong because of a lack of politics. "**The weakness of the military resistance in the '60s was the failure to do the political work before the armed struggle was launched.**" This is correct. Without politics an armed struggle will always fail.

With correct politics victory becomes a possibility, whether it is in the Six Counties, South Africa or Palestine. Put another way the struggle for correct politics and the organisation of a vanguard party are no luxury but a priority.

The authors show us, using the

words of the Palestinians themselves, the negative results of bourgeois and petty bourgeois leadership. There is a fierce pride when looking back to the military resistance of '67-71. Yet there is a feeling that against the power of the Zionist state and its huge military machine, the Palestinians could never have succeeded with such a strategy. Objective conditions did not and will not allow it.

This said, while there is confusion, Gaza is full of revolutionary anger. The book was written before the present *intifada* (uprising), and as such shows us what the raw materials were for the explosion that is rocking Gaza.

The PLO of Fatah had little to do with the *intifada*. It did not initiate it nor expect it. If there was a leadership it was from those who encouraged a grassroots movement in the form of trade union and women's committees in the camps.

They prioritised the mass movement as opposed to the diplomatic manoeuvring of Arafat and the PLO leadership. For them the masses are the key to the future.

This is correct. But it must also be said that without correct political leadership, the heroism and self sacrifice of the masses will be squandered. There is a dangerous tendency to bury or play down the political and class differences in the Palestinian camp. Not only is the PLO's role as the sole representative of the Palestinian people not challenged from the left, there is a determination to embrace the Palestinian Khomeinis, the Islamic Brotherhood.

This is dangerous. The struggle for national liberation should not mean the subordination of the class struggle. What is needed is working class leadership of the national liberation struggle. This can never be achieved unless working class political independence is secured: march separately, strike together.

The Islamic Brotherhood - what the likes of the RCP call radical Muslims - must be politically defeated. Because of their anti-imperialist rhetoric there are deep seated illusions in the nature of Islamic fundamentalism (and for those of us not wedded to the notion that the British working class consists entirely of white Christians, this is a task that is not unimportant in Britain).

The Muslim Brotherhood will drown the Palestinian revolution in its own blood if allowed. What is needed is the mobilisation of the masses united under a real revolutionary leadership. The Fatah PLO will not provide this because it is tied to the interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. They are soft on the fundamentalists (some say hand in glove) and mortgaged to the Arab states.

Madjda Singh

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Gorbachev is not introducing proletarian democracy into the USSR, he is merely offering a sop

## No to Gorbachevism

**T**HE DECISIONS of the 19th All Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has been greeted around the world as a major step forward for democracy for the Soviet people. From *The Sun*, *The Economist* and other apostles of Thatcherism, from the BBC to *Marxism Today*: all have lauded Gorbachev and the 19th CPSU Conference to the sky.

When our enemies praise us we must ask ourselves what is wrong. This is hardly something the 'official' world communist movement, let alone the CPSU, has done. Indeed it has revelled in Gorbachev's popularity with the bourgeois establishment and used it as their cue to take further steps to the right.

The 19th Conference came up with no real answers to the crisis that has come to grip socialism in the USSR, all it offers is 'market socialism' and a strengthening of the forces of capitalism. For communists there is nothing to celebrate in this ... but it comes as no surprise to us that our enemies are praising Gorbachev.

Genuine communists will not succumb to what the US media calls Gorbomania. Like Lenin when he stood out against the chauvinist tidal wave that swept over the workers' movement in 1914, we will swim against the Gorbachev stream and accept temporary isolation in order to stay true to the ideals of the revolution.

Gorbachevism is a passing phenomenon. There can be no question that Gorbachev is not a conscious agent of history. He is no proletarian revolutionary using the scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism in the struggle for communism. Gorbachev is a technocrat who will soon be left behind by the forward march of history. Of this we are sure.

As a man Gorbachev is most likely perfectly sincere in his belief that his reforms will regalanise Soviet society. But the fact is that the bureaucracy as a ruling caste - of which Gorbachev is the chief representative - can no longer play any sort of progressive role whatsoever.

The dialectic of history meant that Soviet socialism carried with it from its earliest days a bureaucratic parasitic growth. In point of fact socialism in the USSR developed in the form of bureaucratic socialism. In the 1920s and 30s bureaucratic rule produced all sorts of deformations, drawbacks and suffering but it did see the Soviet Union transform itself from rural backwardness and poverty into an industrialised world power.

This had nothing to do with the fact of bureaucratic rule being in itself progressive; rather the fact that at this stage of its evolution Soviet socialism could grow *in spite of* bureaucratic mismanagement, parasitism and philistinism. This could only be but temporary.

To paraphrase Marx's preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, by the 1960s the material productive forces of Soviet society came into conflict with the existing bureaucratic relations of production. Bureaucratic socialism had exhausted its possibilities.

In other words the bureaucracy has become a fetter on the further development of the productive forces and, as Gorbachev is quickly illustrating, this fetter is absolute; the Soviet economy is reported to have grown by less than 1% last year, compared with over 20% in the 'period of the personality cult' (ie under Stalin), and 4-5% in the 'period of stagnation' (ie under Brezhnev). So much for *perestroika* overcoming the "pre-crisis" situation.

The failure of *perestroika* is inevitable and will have profound political consequences. Again, as Marx pointed out, when the forms of development of the productive forces turn into a fetter, revolution becomes a necessity.

The further development of the economy demands that the whole bureaucratic superstructure of Soviet society be transformed through what communists call a political revolution; ie a revolution which forcibly transforms the bureaucracy from the master of society into its servant. This will create the conditions for the discarding of the worst lumber of the state, its eventual withering away and the emergence of a society of abundance.

There is no other way forward for Soviet society. Unless this road is taken, unless the bureaucratic fetter is removed disaster threatens: socialism in the USSR will either disintegrate from within or fall via some form of external intervention. The Soviet working class - now the biggest and most powerful in the world - will then have to begin again.

Of course, Gorbachev claims in his book *Perestroika* and in a number of other works and speeches to be leading a revolution; variously described as the USSR's second revolution, a revolution without guns, a revolution from above and yes, a political revolution. Those who have even the most elementary grasp of politics will recognise that Gorbachev is attempting to carry out a programme of reform, not a revolution. Yet the very fact that Gorbachev uses such language shows that Soviet society is confronted with revolutionary tasks, a political revolution is on the agenda in the USSR.

Naturally this is comprehended by Gorbachev in a typically technocratic, myopic fashion. His political revolution has just about as much in common with a genuine political revolution as Bismark's nationalisation of Germany's railways had in common with socialism or, to use another analogy, oil has with water.

The fact that Gorbachev - a representative of what is old, decaying and reactionary - has attempted to steal this slogan is of immense significance. Whether it is a result of cynicism or naivety, it is no mere accident, it points to the future of a genuine political revolution. Nevertheless while social progress demands a political revolution in the USSR in order to free the forces of production and facilitate the triumph of the forces of communism, as we have said above, the reactionary nature of the bureaucracy poses great dangers.

The bureaucracy, in whatever manifestation or guise, has never possessed a coherent ideology simply because it has a parasitic existence; it is not a ruling class but a ruling stratum. Because of this it has certainly never pursued in reality (as opposed to rhetoric) the goal of communism. To do that would mean to abolish itself and it is not interested nor capable of doing that.

Instead it has attempted to preserve the status quo. This is illusory and full of perils. In a world which by the very nature of matter is in a process of constant change, attempts to stay still are always doomed. Gorbachev's alternative to this is not to go forward but backwards. Given the contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy - the fact that it owes its existence to a socialist revolution but cannot carry out its programme - we see attempts to return to the past using the language of the future, such as the laws of dialectics.

As a consequence, as well as presiding over the USSR's transformation economically, in the name of communism many of the socio-political gains of the October Revolution have been undermined or simply abolished by the bureaucracy. Hence, now that the bureaucracy has become itself an absolute fetter on the further development of the productive forces, its technocratic wing puts forward solutions to society's crisis which transparently point in the direction of capitalism using the slogan of political revolution. The capitalist road is not necessarily pursued consciously, nevertheless this is the content we find in Gorbachevism.

However harshly history will judge Stalin, compared to him Gorbachev is an epigone, like Louis Bonaparte was compared to Napoleon Bonaparte. Where Stalin layed hold of Preobrazhensky's plan for industrialisation and used it for his own purposes, all Gorbachev is capable of doing is resurrecting Bukharin's version of NEP, which in today's world means following in the footsteps of proven failures like Hungary and Yugoslavia. This will not bring dynamic sustained growth. It will bring inflation, unemployment, growing class differences along with share ownership and "plans to establish a stock exchange" (see *Morning Star* July 2 1988).

This is not because of Gorbachev's personal failings but is a direct consequence of historical development transforming the bureaucracy from being a relative block on development to being absolutely reactionary. Today the social position and interests of the bureaucracy provide only capitalist answers to the USSR's problems; ie no answers at all.

For all Gorbachev's claims (and the claims of the bourgeois media) the 19th Conference of the CPSU was devoid of revolutionary ideas, it is now after all a bureaucratic party of the working class, not the revolutionary vanguard it was under Lenin. Certainly there has been no flowering of *Leninist* democracy in the CPSU. Differences were expressed openly for

the first time for many years yes, but the content of the differences were far from Leninist. In fact the 19th Conference was a travesty of Leninism, the essence of which is the fight for world revolution. Its capitalist solutions to the USSR's problems are hardly an example of Leninism.

Gorbachev is not introducing proletarian democracy into the USSR, he is merely offering a sop; the delineation of party and state responsibilities, the creation of a Duma-like parliament, two carefully chosen candidates instead of one and a two term presidential system have nothing to do with genuine socialist democracy.

What would a genuine socialist democracy be like? Briefly we can sum up a genuine socialist democracy under the following headings.

- Workers and collective farmers must have the right to form soviet parties. There must be free elections to the soviets, not two or three candidates chosen by the CPSU, but unlimited candidates. Electors have the right to recall their delegates at any time and no state official should be paid more than the average skilled worker.

- Workers must have the right to bear arms. The standing army must be balanced by a workers' militia equipped with the most advanced weaponry.

- Democracy must be extended to the workplace. Workers' control must be developed over every sphere of production, not only the election and replacement of managers.

The fact that the Gorbachev leadership is incapable of delivering such a package (outlined in Lenin's *State and Revolution*) does not mean we do not welcome the disintegration of bureaucratic monolithism. This process can only help reveal the class and sectional contradictions which exist in the USSR; this can but only benefit the transformation of the working class from a class in itself to a class for itself.

The crisis of bureaucratic socialism has not only created mass discontent but splits within the ruling stratum (not shown by the 200 dissenting votes at the 19th Conference but by the fudge of its six final resolutions). Through the splits in the bureaucracy mass activity can find expression. With this understanding it is essential neither to dismiss differences in the CPSU Central Committee (as certain leftists do) nor to see them as pivotal for the coming struggles.

Naturally a loosening of the bureaucratic straightjacket will lead to the emergence of political activity of all types. But the formation of the Democratic Union, the nationalist outburst in Nagorny-Karabakh and the emergence of sinister groups like Pamyat does not demand a state clampdown, the return to a supposed monolithic golden age; rather it demands the decisive entry of the working class onto centre stage.

The working class struggle for socialist democracy is the key to removing the fetter of bureaucratic rule and winning the battle for communism.

Firstly, democracy will create a wider, freer and more open form

of the class struggle. This is in the interests of the working class. Reactionary ideas are best fought in the open and a plurality of parties will allow the working class to clearly differentiate itself from other strata and classes.

Secondly, as democracy develops, not only will the bureaucracy be made into the servant of society (instead of its master), it will begin to wither away as socialism begins to look less like capitalism indirectly ruled by the working class and more like classless communism.

This will not happen spontaneously. What it requires is working class consciousness, working class class struggle and independent working class organisation. Such a development is a vital necessity. Without such a step it is impossible to accomplish the tasks with which Soviet society is confronted.

So far, as a class, the working class has remained passive in the face of *perestroika*. It will not remain so for long. Yet there can be little doubt that initially the working class will start to see its class interests in purely economic terms.

Gorbachev's economic reforms, his turn to capitalistic mechanisms will provoke strikes against wages cuts and speed ups. The genuine class struggle of the working class begins when its struggle goes beyond this point and develops into a political struggle. For this the first requirement is that the advanced representatives of the proletariat begin to wage a struggle against the *whole of the bureaucracy*, in other words it is necessary to go beyond the independent socialist clubs which are presently proliferating as the left wing of *perestroika*.

Undoubtedly the best school for the development of working class consciousness is the day-to-day struggle around immediate interests ... but it is essential that the ideas of Marxism-Leninism become the possession of the mass of workers. The myth that Gorbachev represents Marxism-Leninism must be broken, Gorbachev is a revisionist with a world outlook little different to Eduard Bernstein or Karl Kautsky.

The transformation of the working class in the USSR into a class for itself is obviously going to be a complex process but it and the victory of the working class over its own bureaucracy is inevitable (that does not mean preordained).

A USSR with an economy that has been released from the fetters of bureaucratic rule, a USSR with an active mass proletarian democracy and a profound commitment to proletarian internationalism will not - as is Gorbachev - be loved by the bourgeoisie and its hangers on. It will instead act as it did in October 1917 as a beacon for the partisans of the working class the world over. That is the only future worthy of the world's revolutionary centre.

Long live the mighty Soviet working class!

The future belongs to communism!

Jack Conrad



# National Chauvinism

or

# International Socialism?

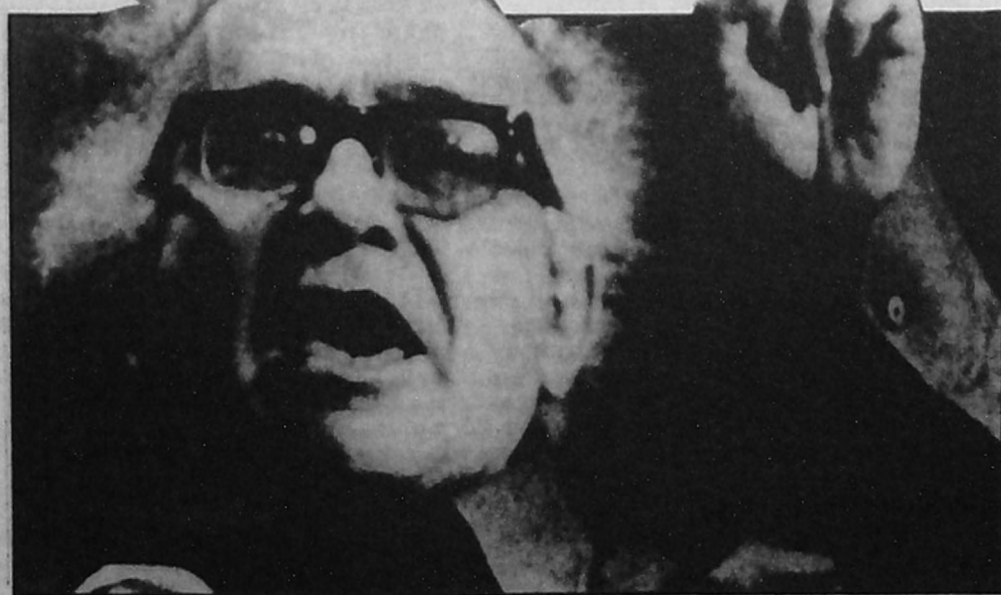
**T**HE Socialist Workers Party undoubtedly attracts militants looking for an alternative to the treacherous politics of the likes of Kinnock, Willis and the labour bureaucracy, who represent in the most open form the politics of the ruling class in the workers' movement. Unfortunately, those hoping that a revolutionary, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist alternative to Labourism can be built through the SWP will be sadly disappointed.

Throughout its history the SWP has tail ended British chauvinism and theoretical narrowness rather than stood in resolute opposition to it. In fact, it owes its origins to such capitulations.

SWP founder, Tony Cliff, mooted the idea that Eastern Europe, and consequently the Soviet Union, were 'state capitalist' societies while he was still within the 'Fourth International' in 1948. In essence, this was coping-out of the defence of socialism and national liberation struggles during the post war period of virulent anti-communism.

These conclusions were to lead him out of this body and deep into the Labour Party by 1950, to establish the Socialist Review Group (precursor to the SWP).

The SRG was the 'cold war warrior' of the British left, refusing to defend liberation struggles such as in Korea against imperia-



Tony Cliff

lism, on the grounds that they could not defend proxy struggles by 'Stalinist state capitalism'. This was soon to change with the evaporation of the cold war climate during the '60s when the Cliffites, now in the incarnation bandwagon.

This and similar opportunist manoeuvrings

were to transform the IS from a group of about 80 to being the biggest left organisation outside the Labour and Communist parties, adopting the previously spurned label of 'Leninist' along the way, to enable its leadership to keep its largely inexperienced membership in check.

Since then we have seen the SWP's dynamism of the '70s degenerate into something akin to the abstract propaganda of a 19th century British sect like the old Social Democratic Federation. But the poison of its original cold war genesis is still the *raison d'être* of the organisation.

The same logic that led the SRG to condemn Soviet aid to Democratic Korea in the early '50s, now compels it to cheerlead the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, an act that will precede the crushing of workers' and women's rights by the anti-democratic reactionaries of the Islamic Mojahedin. Afghanistan stands on the frontline of the world revolution, and the SWP applauds as the jackals of counterrevolution wait to take over and drown what remains of the Afghan revolution in the blood of Afghan workers and progressives. This is no communist stand.

The SWP remains, however, an organisation of significant influence within the left. The stagnant SWP of today necessitates confrontation by communists intent on forging a party equipped to smash British capitalism, as a component of the world revolution, to both ideologically 'clear the decks' and to avoid repeating its opportunist practice.

of the International Socialists, dropped this stand — though not its ideological underpinnings — and jumped on the pro-Viet Cong

## State capitalism

We have shown above the opportunist genesis of the theory of 'state capitalism'. This year it celebrates its fortieth anniversary in its 'Cliffite' manifestation, providing the basis of the SWP's world view. The influence of the theory therefore merits consideration of state capitalism; more so, perhaps, than it deserves.

There have been different articulations of the theory within the SWP over the years. Restricted by space and patience, we shall focus on the 'vintage' Tony Cliff version, as expressed in his *State Capitalism in Russia*, (1970). Cliff sets out to prove that 'Russia', as he chooses to call the Soviet Union, has been capitalist since the first Five Year Plan, on the basis that it accumulates capital, to which all else is subordinated: "Under capitalism the consumption of the masses is subordinated to accumulation ... until the advent of the Five Year Plan this subordination did not exist." (Cliff, pp34-5)

The fact that Cliff produces a set of figures on p35 showing that the relationship between means of consumption and means of production between 1913 and 1942 has developed strongly in the latter's favour only tells us that, irrespective of any change in the relations of production, the Russian/Soviet economy has industrialised from a peasant based economy (where productivity would have been so low as to ensure the predominance of consumption goods - not many peasant plots 'grow' electric turbines) to one greatly more industrialised. But Cliff turns this advance - with all its contradictions - into a retrogression.

All societies accumulate. It is far from impossible that a socialist state should accumulate to the detriment of the short term interests of the working class, to lay the foundations of a planned economy. This is precisely what the Bolshevik economist Preobrazhensky argued should be done, against Bukharin and initially Stalin. There is certainly no 'iron law of history', in any social formation, which dictates that means of production should develop less speedily than means of consumption. Cliff may delude himself that this was the case in the Soviet Union in the '20s, but the rigours of War Communism and NEP, reconstructing a shattered economy, dictated otherwise.

So, now the question; what is accumulated? A capitalist accumulates capital, as distinct from simply surplus product, which has been accumulated in all preceding class societies. Capitalism is a society of generalised commodity production, to the level of where labour power itself becomes a commodity.

The capitalist, who has a monopoly on the means of production, purchases the labour power of the worker. This is set to work, which, besides reproducing its value (the worker's wages) and other costs of production, yields surplus value to the capitalist.

Up to this point Cliff, Marx and ourselves are no doubt in perfect agreement. It is from here, though, that we and Marx part company with the former. Surplus value in its 'raw' form is embodied in the commodities produced by that capitalist's concern. He must convert this into profit, through the process of exchange on the market.

Yet, between the different branches of socialised industry in the Soviet Union, there is no market. How then is surplus value to be realised as profit, and thereby capital utilised for the continuation of 'capitalist' production?

Cliff himself does not deny the absence of exchange in this sector: "Formally, products are distributed among the different branches of the economy through the medium of exchange. But as the ownership of all the enterprises is vested in one body, the state, there is no real exchange of commodities." (p203). Therefore, of course, 'trade' within the dominant socialised sector of the Soviet economy is not the result of commodity production in the capitalist form, for commodities are use values produced precisely to be exchanged, ie production of exchange value.

Insofar as capitalist production is, by definition, generalised commodity production, how can the absence of commodity production still be considered capitalist? How can profits - the *raison d'être* of capitalist production - be realised in the absence of exchange on the market? This is the trap that Trotsky fell into in a passage from *Revolution Betrayed*, quoted approvingly by Cliff on pp155-6: "Under an integral 'state capitalism', this law of the equal rate of profit would be realised, not by devious routes - that is,

competition among different capitals - but immediately and directly through state book-keeping."

And here's the snag! Capitalist production can only occur through the "devious routes"; the very essence of capitalism is that people do not confront one another "immediately and directly", but through the exchange of things. Social labour is not *direct*, but mediated through the process of purchase and sale: "The labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers" (K Marx, *Capital I*, p73).

Private labour of the individual in capitalist society expresses itself only as social labour through the equalisation of its products with all other products of labour; ie, through the market. This exchange both presupposes and realises abstract labour as the substance of value 'crystallised' in the commodities it produces. Yet both Cliff and Trotsky (though he only hypothetically) are quite clear that exchange does not take place. "Immediate and direct" labour is not *abstract capitalist* labour, mediated through exchange; it is concrete, *directly social labour*, common to slave owning, feudal and communist societies. But certainly not to capitalist ones.

But, here, though Cliff doesn't seem to have noticed it, we have a paradox: though, within socialised industry, social production does not take place capitalistically (in the form of exchange value) but directly (as use values), labour power is still exchanged for wages. In this sense, people still relate capitalistically, through the exchange of things, even excluding the private sectors, such as the collectives, where value operates in a 'purer' way. Cliff actually pictures the Soviet working class as more of a slave class than a proletariat, denying the existence of the labour market, positing compulsion to work in a *particular* factory and no other, and arguing that they are paid "in kind" (p209), none of which stands up to analysis.

A Marxist analysis of this formation was advanced by Preobrazhensky in the 1920s: the transitional epoch, on the political level the dictatorship of the proletariat, is economically a struggle between the law of value and the socialist plan, with both the old capitalist forms (value) and the nascent communist forms, leaving their imprint on society as they conflict.

Cliff, it seems, is in a bit of a fix. 'State capitalism' as he sees it is a hypothetical possibility, if the products of this state trust were to be realised as profit on the world market, through inter-state competition. And, of course, the Soviet Union does compete like this, as must any social formation within the existing world market. But the striving for profits internationally is clearly not the dynamo powering it.

So, our hapless 'state capitalist' ideologue looks for another sphere where such competition might take place ... and finds it in "military competition": "competition through buying and selling is replaced by direct military competition. Use values have become the aim of capitalist production." (p212).

So production is stripped of anything which renders it specifically capitalist, leaving its essence, the production of use values, common to all forms of human society: "If we strip both wages and surplus value, both necessary and surplus labour of their specifically capitalist character, then certainly there remain not these forms, but merely their rudiments, which are common to all social modes of production." (*Capital III*, p876).

Just as Cliff strips capitalist labour of its essentially dual nature, both social-abstract and private-concrete, then the contradictory nature of the commodity, as value and use value, is stripped of its character specific to capitalism (value), and left in its underpants, so to speak, in its essence common to all forms of human society, use value.

Military competition of the type described by Cliff, not involving capitalistic exchange, could take place between any number of combinations of different modes of production. By his dehistoricisation of the categories of capitalism, Cliff has simply spent over 300 pages explaining to us that the Soviet Union produces use values - just like any human society at any time.

Having done this, Cliff argues that the bureaucracy's income is made up of surplus value (p81), because for him *all* surplus product is value.

The fact remains, though, that its relationship to means of production is not that of a ruling class, let alone a *capitalist* class: it does not 'own', collectively or individually, the means of production; its control over the productive forces is so limited that it cannot dispose of them as it sees fit, or even use the surplus product it gains through its privileged position as capital. Rather, it exists as a *caste*, whose position is maintained by the existence of scarcity and the division of labour; conditions which cannot be overcome on the national level, but only through the completion of the world revolution.

Yes, the Soviet working class must wage a struggle against the bureaucracy which sits astride its state, not against it as a class (because it isn't) but against it as a caste which threatens the real, tangible gains of the Soviet socialist state and acts as a fetter on further gains.

Communists world-wide are duty bound to defend these gains, and to guarantee them through fighting for the extension of the world revolution. Cliff and the SWP are as incapable of doing the latter as they are unwilling to do the former.

## SWP's 'anti-imperialism'

As we contended above, Cliff's exposition of the doctrine of state capitalism was a philistine retreat, couched in ideological terms, from defence of the Soviet Union and its socialist allies during the virulently anti-communist cold war climate that held sway in the British workers' movement at the time of the 'genesis' of the Socialist Review Group, precursor to the SWP. This took its most overt form in the SRG's refusal to support the revolutionary forces of North Korea against US imperialism and its South Korean stooge.

What motivated the SRG was not any ideological equation of the respective backers of North and South Korea - 'state capitalist' Soviet Union and China versus the capitalist United States. It was a simple capitulation to the prevalent anti-communism of the time in the west. The SRG took an identical view to the conflict in Vietnam, as its issue of *Socialist Review* February 1952 testifies: "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 agent of Stalin."

Yet the SWP's Chris Harman claimed at last year's SWP conference that they supported the revolutionary forces of Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnamese Army and National Liberation Front against US imperialism. As the above quote testifies, this is the most shallow of lies. What the SRG *did* do - though by this time it had become the International Socialists - was to jump on the pro-NLF bandwagon after the cold war thaw in the '60s. It did not feel in the least bit burdened by its old position as it joined in with the rest of the crowds in Grosvenor Square shouting "Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh!" After all, by this time there were recruits to be made by being *pro-communist*, rather than anti.

This says it all about the SWP. They are at best petty bourgeois populists, ready to leap on the nearest convenient bandwagon on its way to this or that ephemeral *cause celebre*. Any conception of the consistent anti-imperialist stand of Marxists is not to be found in the heads of Tony Cliff *et al*.

And no wonder: until recently - and then more for convenience's sake than any theoretical reassessment - the SWP/IS held that *there was no longer any such thing as imperialism!* Take this attempted demolition of Lenin's theory of imperialism by one-time leading IS economist, Michael Kidron: "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 is 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).

Now this is obviously no longer the SWP's position, but when did the line change and why? Given the polemical dishonesty and subterranean nature of debate within the SWP, we may never know.

The SWP's ostensible seventy year late conversion to anything remotely resembling a Leninist position on imperialism should not be taken as good coin. We must look to its prac-

tice to judge just how honest and genuine such a 'conversion' is.

One recent example of SWP 'anti-imperialism' has been its reaction to the conflict in the Gulf, resulting from international reaction to the Iran-Iraq war. Late last year the SWP was vacillating wildly, trying to be all things to all men in its approach to this knotty problem. In one issue of its paper one could read them recommending a line of defeat to all sides - in our view a correct position - and in another, tacit support for Khomeini would be pushed. The SWP was clearly 'caught between two stools'.

The question was finally settled with the SWP's 1987 conference. SWP ideologue, Alex Callinicos, argued that Iran should be supported because 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 nationalism against imperialism, had to be ruthlessly critical of bourgeois nationalism, maintaining their political independence." (*Socialist Worker*, November 11 1987).

So the SWP supports Iran because it is led by revolutionary nationalists? No, the Islamic Republic "is thoroughly reactionary" says Callinicos. He creates a justification for supporting Iran in one breath, destroying it in the next. Yet we are still supposed to support Iran.

In fact, states Tony Cliff in the same edition, "If you give no support to Iran it means that you support every strike ... If arms are going to the front, railwaymen should not go on strike to stop the arms." Given that Iran now runs on a war economy stretched to breaking point, this means *no strikes at all*. Anything less would threaten the regime's war effort. Our reaction to this is 'good'. In such a situation, communists must support the defeat of both sides. Obviously, for us in the imperialist countries, the emphasis must be placed on the defeat of imperialism. But to turn this round, and advocate that we - and workers in Iran - should give even conditional support to the Khomeini regime is to betray the working masses of Iran.

To Lenin, unlike the SWP, the question of anti-imperialism was inextricably linked to the question of democracy and of revolution. A regime could be supported only insofar as it actively fought for democracy, as, for instance does the ANC national liberation movement. But Khomeini is no Tambo, no Mandela.

Khomeini personifies black reaction. His regime internally is unequivocally reactionary. And, for communists, foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. Yet the SWP wants to convince us of progressive aspects in Khomeini's foreign policy, and in doing so defend elements of domestic policy (eg opposing 'certain' strikes). Marxists cannot swallow this nonsense. Fortunately the working masses in Iran are in increasing numbers and with increasing determination standing up and fighting Khomeini and his theocratic regime.

The SWP is at best 'confused' as to the role of revolutionaries in the anti-imperialist struggle. We shall now look at the most testing and vital facet of this struggle in Britain, to see if the SWP fares any better here.

As far as Marx and Lenin were concerned, the acid test for revolutionaries in Britain was their attitude to Ireland. As the Communist International proclaimed, "the British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland ... against the London plutocracy - such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet." (*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Communist International*, p163).

If this were to be taken literally, SWP Central Committee meetings would look like the climactic scene of 'Gunfight at the OK Corral'. Fortunately for them, this body of opportunists have merely been branded with the infamy and contempt, rather than the lead projectiles, of genuine anti-imperialists.

The SWP's record on Ireland is truly dreadful. Its contribution in terms of practical intervention within the workers movement in support of Irish liberation has been minimal. It has gone with the stream, taking the line of least resistance in the face of the chauvinism within the working class.

In the run up to the heroic Hunger Strike of 1981, Chris Harman attempted to justify the SWP's neglect of Irish solidarity work through the following piece of gross political cowardice: "Ireland is not a radicalising factor in

Britain which leads people to question other aspects of capitalist society: rather it is only when people have questioned these other things that they begin to understand the significance of what is happening in the Six Counties." (*Socialist Review*, January 1981).

The early CPGB – a much smaller organisation than the SWP of today – was criticised by the Communist International for its lack of activity on Ireland. Yet the CPGB's level of activity included pamphlets and numerous articles in its publications, as well as the campaign 'Hands Off Ireland!'. What then would Lenin's International have had to say about the SWP's approach to the question? It would have been booted out if it had ever been allowed in.

Given the SWP's theory on this question, we should be grateful that it has so little practice. Its misconceptions on the nature of imperialism, as indicated by Kidron above, bore the most bitter, pro-imperialist fruit when British troops occupied the streets of Derry in August 1969: "The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists." (*Socialist Worker*, September 11 1969); "To say that the immediate enemy in Ulster [sic!] is the British troops is incorrect," (*Socialist Worker*, September 18 1969).

For the SWP (IS at the time) imperialism was no longer the highest, moribund and last stage of capitalism. Indeed, it had a progressive role. When the revolutionary situation exploded in the Six Counties of the north of Ireland twenty years ago, the IS had rejected the Marxist method and its analysis of imperialist capitalism through which to understand the situation. They could only respond to the situation as naïve empiricists.

The overtly partisan anti-nationalist B Specials and RUC could be 'cooled off' by the British Army – the direct presence of British imperialism – allowing a 'breathing space' for the embattled nationalist community.

This method in effect reduces the Irish war to the level that the British ruling class would have us believe it exists on; that of an inter-communal religious conflict. Indeed, this is still the SWP's view. After the Enniskillen bomb, *Socialist Worker* commented, "the violence in the north ... is rooted in a society based on the hatred of people of one religion against another." (November 14 1987).

This is, of course, nonsense. British imperialism created and maintains the sectarian Six County statelet. It is British imperialism which directly and consciously maintains the so-called 'sectarian divide' through its creation of a loyalist labour aristocracy (see *The Leninist's* three supplements on Ireland for an analysis of this phenomenon).

British imperialism is the prime obstacle to Irish self determination. It is the main enemy.

Its direct control of the streets of Ireland through its army could be nothing but a retrogressive step for Irish emancipation. All genuine socialists, all genuine anti-imperialists should have opposed the direct intervention of the imperial power. By actually welcoming the use of British troops, the SWP revealed its true class character – that of the weak and anaemic petty bourgeois. The fact that it has since attempted to conceal its initial treacherous line on the Irish war changes nothing. As the SWP's present record proves, it is no more a friend of Irish freedom now than it was then.

The favourite phrase on every SWP's lips when commenting on the revolutionary war of the IRA is Lenin's dictum of "unconditional but critical support". The content that they give to the phrase, however, is very different to that which Lenin intended.

His attitude was that, while the "petty bourgeois utopias and reactionary views" of a national liberation movement should be exposed, communists should "take care to single out, defend and develop the revolutionary democratic core" of the movement's programme (*CW*, Vol.18, p169). The content of this revolutionary democracy included the right to take up arms against one's oppressors, and, with regard to this, the duty of communists to unequivocally defend them in the utilisation of whatever tactics they see fit towards this end. When, for instance, did Marx ever publicly criticise the armed campaign of the IRA of his day, the Fenians?

In contrast, the SWP cowardly blame the nationally oppressed Irish for their own oppression, as its reaction to the killing of the

Tory warmonger, Airey Neave, by the Inla proves; "It will be grist to the mill of the 'law and order' brigade's campaign for greater police powers." (*Socialist Worker*, April 7 1979). One presumes, then, that every strike, every uprising, every revolution adds even more grist to this mill. No wonder the the SWP is so passive these days!

The accusations of "individual terrorism" levelled at the IRA and Inla by the SWP are totally unjustified. Rather than the considered appraisal of a Marxist, they are instead the disorderly retreat of the frightened radical before a wave of reaction. Instead of resolutely opposing the anti-Irish republican chauvinism which followed the Enniskillen bomb, the SWP joined in with this venomous chorus: such events, they raged, "have nothing to do with socialism and workers have nothing to gain by them." (*Socialist Worker*, November 14 1987). But the SWP's position has still less to do with socialism.

The IRA are not "individual terrorists", as the SWP claim. Their actions are not isolated individual acts of terror, but merely a particular tactic employed in a protracted armed and political struggle – a struggle which the SWP has consistently refused to support.

The Irish republican movement's level of support alone should lay to rest the lie about this supposed "individual terrorism". The republican movement has a base of support among workers in their country which puts the SWP's inconsequential support to shame, not despite the armed struggle of the IRA, but because of it.

The SWP's position on this question is not dictated by any objective analysis, it is rather an accommodation to the pro-imperialism within the British working class. No genuine revolutionary party can be built in this way, only a parody of one. A consistent Leninist opposition to imperialism, essential to the construction of a party able to smash British imperialism and establish socialism, is not to be found within the SWP.

### On the backs of the oppressed

Communists must be the best and most consistent defenders of the oppressed. In doing so, we overcome divisions within the working class based on such oppression, show to the oppressed that the root of their oppression lies in the social relations of capitalism, and in doing so, win them to the banner of revolutionary communism. A consistent fight against oppression, both within and outside the ranks of the working class, is inextricably linked to its fight for socialist revolution.

Therefore, any organisation which claims to champion that class must prove this through its resolute defence of the oppressed. The SWP, like any section of the workers' movement, must be judged by its stance, both ideologically and practically, on such questions. Any organisation that calls itself revolutionary, but fails to advance a clear democratic proletarian line on such questions as women's oppression, racism and lesbian and gay rights, is of no use to the working class as a whole.

The SWP has a history of work in these three fields. As we shall see, it is a record that on every major occasion has failed to come up with the goods.

•Women: Overall, the tendency of the SWP is to economically reduce women's oppression to simply that of class exploitation. Cliff, in his book *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation*, distinctly fails to take up the specific nature of women's oppression under capitalism: "As workers too, the needs of men and women are identical. Because of these things any separatism between men and women workers will damage both, and will damage women more than men." (p102).

This is a "yes, but..." type argument. Of course, all communists are in favour of workers' unity, across gender and all other barriers, but Cliff does not put forward any programme through which divisions can be bridged. For Cliff and the SWP, such unity occurs spontaneously, through economic struggle.

So, SWP'er Norah Carlin argues in her pamphlet *Women and the Struggle for Socialism* that "events during the miners' strike of 1984-5 showed how unity can be achieved in struggle. Through the strength of the women in the mining communities, who stood beside the miners on picket lines and took part in strike committees, as well as organising soup kitchens and food parcels, the unity of men and women became a fundamental fact of the strike." (p5).

Working class women in the pit communi-

ties did make important strides forward in the strike. But this posed, rather than decisively answered, the opportunity of raising demands for women's liberation here.

Instead, Carlin and the SWP merely pipe up with a 'socialist' rendition of that old favourite 'Stand by Your Man'. This is an abdication of agitation and organisation around women's oppression from revolutionaries, from working class men, solely onto the shoulders of working class women themselves. 'We don't have to do anything', cries the SWP; 'look, they're already doing it for themselves'. Why, one wonders, do we need a party at all?

The experience of the Bolsheviks answers this for us. Cliff argues that the "Bolsheviks understood the difficulty of organising working class women ... The conclusions they drew from this were fundamentally different from those of the feminist separatists. The Bolsheviks argued that women and men workers face the same bosses, the same capitalist state." (Cliff, *op cit*, p109).

Again; 'yes, but...' What is significant about this is what Cliff ignores about the way the Bolsheviks organised women. Before the revolution the Bolsheviks faced considerable problems because of the reticence of many Party members to recognise the specific nature of women's oppression and, as a result, the specific needs of women workers.

Lenin was scathing about socialists who denied the necessity of special work among women for fear of being tainted by bourgeois feminism. This work included raising specific demands relating to women's oppression and the need for special forms of agitation, propaganda and organisation to draw women into struggle. One example of such an organisation in embryo may be said to have been Women Against Pit Closures. What it lacked was such a communist input as the Bolsheviks were able to provide in 1917.

The economic politics of the SWP are ill-suited to taking up the question of women's oppression. When they do get involved in this field, normally with the non-too altruistic interest of recruitment in mind, they take on the characteristics of the feminists with whom they work.

For instance, in the Fight Alton's Bill campaign, the SWP more or less restricted themselves to defence of the 1967 Act; an act which in itself places great restrictions on women's rights. The slogan of "free abortion on demand" was dropped for sunnier days. It also got itself embroiled in metaphysical and reactionary arguments as to when a foetus was 'alive' (see *Socialist Worker* of October 31 1987).

This campaign was ditched as the SWP moved on to pastures greener, as it had in the '70s, when it set up the *Women's Voice* paper, only to brusquely dump it when it became a vehicle for feminism in the 'party's' ranks. This is the SWP all over: vacuous phrases about 'unity', interspersed with accommodation to the "realistic" demands of bourgeois feminism.

The SWP is unable to advance any consistent, revolutionary and proletarian demands for women's emancipation. Salvation for women is to be found on the picket line or in the 1967 Act. Those who want to appropriate the lessons of the Bolsheviks on this question, and not just tug the forelock in deference to them, are wasted here.

•Anti-racism: This, again, is an issue that the SWP has a rather grimy record on. The 'jewel in the crown' for the SWP on this issue is their Anti-Nazi League of the '70s, which mobilised hundreds of thousands in its short existence. But it did so on the basis of politics which, while attacking fascism, did so on the basis that it was somehow 'foreign'; refusing to challenge the existence of British capitalism which gives birth and feeds it.

For instance, the ANL, with SWP support, refused to take up opposition to all immigration controls, by definition racist. Consequently, the ANL refused to confront head on NF propaganda that Britain was being 'swamped by immigrants'. Its defence of migrants was statistical not political. Implication: immigration controls were already strict enough.

The ANL was not founded on a proletarian basis. It was a classic, class collaborationist popular front. Objections to this accusation from the SWP on the grounds that the assorted vicars and celebrities grouped round the ANL's banners never actually controlled the organisation are red herrings: the petty bourgeoisie never controlled the Communist Party popular fronts of the '30s. They did not need to, the communist parties did it for

them. Ditto with the SWP during the '70s.

The popular frontist nature of the ANL was implicitly recognised by the SWP when it came to the real test of pitting it against the NF on the streets. In September of 1978 the NF staged a march through the Asian ghetto of Brick Lane, in East London. The ANL, instead of confronting this march and physically defending the Asian community, went ahead with its pre-planned 'Carnival 2' in South London. The Asian community was left to fend for itself.

*Socialist Worker* defended this cowardice because, it whined, had they gone to Brick Lane: "The result would have been 1) The disintegration of the ANL 2) The realisation that even such a movement on the empty streets of London facing 8,000 police might not have broken through and beaten the Nazi marchers." (September 30 1978). In other words, the SWP was prepared to sacrifice black people on the altar of its own cheap search for popularity. What bankruptcy!

Given this craven record, it seems unimaginable to claim that the ANL "crippled the National Front", but ex-ANL National Organiser and SWP member, Peter Alexander does in his *Racism, resistance and revolution*. What in effect destroyed the NF was the shift of the Tory party to the right, thus appropriating the Front's racist base of support.

Since then, the SWP has carried on just as it did in the good old days of the ANL. For instance, instead of defending the uprising of black youth in Handsworth, Brixton and Toxteth in 1985, it dissociated itself from them and complained that "the social policy recommendations of [Lord] Scarman have been completely ignored." (*Socialist Worker*, October 5 1985).

Like with the oppression of women, the SWP cry 'black and white – unite and fight', but fail completely to challenge the chauvinism within the working class which prevents its realisation. A good slogan to recruit on, bad for those who seriously want to challenge racism.

•Lesbian and Gay Rights: Here, again, the SWP raises the slogan of 'unity': "Lesbian, Gay and Straight, Unite and Fight!" As a slogan within the gay rights movement, this is fine, if somewhat limited and abstract. But, surely, the key question for revolutionaries, given the wave of homophobic bigotry which has enveloped the British workers' movement, is precisely to challenge this bigotry. Proclaiming 'unity', without actually challenging the chauvinism among workers which precludes this unity is just empty phrasemongering.

The SWP overcomes this little block to the realisation of unity through its tired old quack medicine, 'self-activity': "when class struggle reaches particularly high levels of activity it is possible to break down centuries of prejudice, as the struggle unites workers across 'normal' divisions in society." (Noel Halifax, *Out Proud and Fighting*, SWP pamphlet, p37).

Despite the spontaneist wet dreams of the SWP, 'unity' is no automatic occurrence which happens whenever 'Joe Prole' leaves the good ol' factory bench and sets foot on the good ol' picket line, somehow miraculously shedding all prejudice on the way. No, this prejudice must be overcome through the active intervention of communists.

The SWP has stood aside from this. Its activity on this question has been restricted to proclaiming the wonders of 'workers' unity' among lesbian and gay activists – many of whom have found themselves on the wrong end of a kicking from workers whom the SWP's calls for 'unity' seem to have passed over. This may seem a little pointless. Well, in a certain sense, yes. But the real designs behind the SWP's policy here is made clear a little further down the same page: "Of course, the change is not automatic ... That is why socialist organisation is necessary."

Or, if you prefer, from its leaflet on this years Lesbian Strength and Gay Pride march: "we need to build an organisation of principled socialists that makes no concession to bigotry and fights to unite the working class." The answer to lesbian and gay oppression is ... join the SWP! Though, quite why is a mystery. Apart from platitudes about workers' unity, which the SWP does not fight for among the majority, the SWP has no perspectives to fight round.

A common thread that runs through these three issues is the refusal of the SWP to fight the oppression of gays, women or blacks through with straight, male or white workers.

All that the SWP's forays into these three fields were and are attempts at short cuts to popularity and cynical attempts at recruitment from the ranks of the oppressed. All have been picked up and dropped around the sole criterion of whether or not the SWP leadership felt that it had exhausted all possibilities of recruitment and press-worthiness from them.

Lenin argued that communists should be the best, most resolute defenders of the oppressed. The SWP is neither. It just attempts to ride forward on their backs.

## From 'self activity' to the inactivity of 'the downturn'

Economism, as Lenin showed in *What is to be Done?*, does not deny political struggle, but holds "that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers from within, so to speak, from their economic struggle, ie by making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting point ... This view", he stressed, "is radically wrong." (CW, Vol 5, pp421-2).

This cap, fitted by Lenin for the economists of his day, is one which is well suited to today's SWP. Leading SWPer, Duncan Hallas, in 1973 wrote that, "political struggle can only be carried forward on the basis, in the first place, of economic struggles, of sectional struggles." (*International Socialism*, 56, first series).

For Hallas and the SWP, the difference between reform and revolution is not in their qualitatively different approaches: it is merely viewed in terms of the quantity of trade union activity. Hallas, in the same article, charts a blueprint for his organisation's 'revolutionary' activity: revolutionaries take the lead by "serious, active and persistent struggle on these issues that actually concern their fellow workers," by giving a "better, more successful lead on the concrete day to day, bread and butter issues, than their non-revolutionary fellows."

So the duty of revolutionaries is merely to be better trade unionists? The question is never asked as to why revolutionaries want to win this trust of their "fellows". The practice of the SWP would indicate that this is merely self justifying, or, in the words of the arch revisionist Eduard Bernstein, "the aim is irrelevant, the movement is everything".

This has indeed been the practice of SWP trade unionists, who have used their positions to restrict trade union activity to the level of "bread and butter issues", to the conscious exclusion of such questions as Irish liberation, and other non-"day to day issues". This is the complete antithesis to Lenin's statement that "the task of Social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy." (*op cit*, pp384-5).

Rather than confront the spontaneous activity of the working class, to initiate "a fierce struggle against spontaneity" (*Ibid*, p385), the SWP grew precisely because it plays to the existing, mainly trade unionist, consciousness of the working class. This may be an easy recipe for growth, but it is certainly no blueprint for revolution.

During the early seventies, the SWP, or IS as it was then, grew exponentially, carried forward by the wave of industrial militancy that had flourished since the late sixties. It had managed to worm itself into the cracks in the disintegrating post war 'class consensus'. Consequently, when workers were on the offensive, the SWP grew, channelling activists into its ranks. It did this, not by transforming them into revolutionaries, but by playing to their existing illusions, adding one or two of its own. This facilitated the transformation of the International Socialists into the "smallest mass party in history", the name the SWP liked to flatter itself with from the 1976 name change.

But this growth was self deluding and ephemeral; it could only continue as long as trade union politics - that is, essentially bourgeois politics - were able to win economic gains from the bosses. However, as capitalist profitability declined through the seventies, the reformist trade union politics of the past could no longer deliver the goods - and neither could the SWP's 'strategy' of merely 'pushing it further'. A qualitatively different approach

was required; an approach that the SWP had not prepared workers for and was itself unable to provide. As a consequence of this, the workers movement began to retreat in increasing disarray.

For communists, such a situation opens up possibilities to challenge the old accepted ideas, and to put forward a revolutionary alternative. Through such political crisis our ideas can win through. For the SWP, which is more of a product of the old politics than it is a harbinger of the new, all this new situation means is that you must retreat with the leadership of the workers movement until the working class somehow 'spontaneously' successfully resists these attacks, and we are back in the 'good old days' like the early seventies once more. The theoretical justification for this retreat is that travesty of Marxist tactics, 'the downturn'.

The SWP drew demoralising and pragmatic conclusions from the defensive nature of the economic struggles from the late seventies onwards. Its 1979 conference put forward the following analysis of what underlay the downturn: "it is a combination of the ideological effects of five years of Labour government, the Social Contract etc, combined with the general crisis of British capitalism - its inability to compete internationally, the shrinking of world markets etc - combined with the structural changes in the role of shop stewards" (*Socialist Worker*, November 17 1979).

The plan of action drawn from this rather threadbare 'analysis' was merely 'more of the same': "Stronger shop stewards organisation ... Keep negotiations as short as possible ... Against ballots [?] ... Fight to become shop stewards ... sell *Socialist Worker* every week", (*Ibid*).

What uninspired drive! From a level of analysis that would put an 'O' level sociology student to shame, the leading lights of this would-be leadership of the working class put forward a 'battle plan' which ordinary trade unionists with reformist consciousness were doing anyway. This is the result of the SWP's vulgar "self-activity" concept; to jump on the coat tails of existing workers' actions and cheerlead. Some leadership!

'Downturn-itis' was to have even more farcical results very quickly: the rank and file organisations fronted by the SWP were closed down, 'party' members were instructed to resign all trade union positions on the grounds that it would corrupt them - the SWP must have been very unsure of the strength and resilience of its politics. Anyone within its ranks who resisted this 'rationalisation' was swiftly and unceremoniously ousted. The downturn became a self-fulfilling prophecy: nothing can be done, therefore oppose all attempts by others to do anything, therefore nothing gets done, therefore you were right to start with! Magic!

This, like the SWP's activity of the seventies, is an indication of the organisation's total subordination to the dominant ideology within the left of the workers' movement: Labourism, albeit of a radical colouration. This is proven most sharply whenever workers enter struggle, and come into conflict not only with the state, bosses and trade union bureaucracy, but also with the doom-mongering SWP, armed with its downturn theory.

Marx stated that one strike was worth more than half a dozen utopian socialist programmes. This was brought home to us in the 1980s with the miners' Great Strike, which punctured once and for all, for those who have eyes to see, the implications of the downturn and the whole of its architect's economic approach.

The miners' strike provides a nodal point in British politics, both exposing the bankruptcy of the old, reformist ways of struggle and showing elements of the new, potentially revolutionary, forms. One of the most significant of the latter was the emergence of the Miners' Support Committees, which provided focal points of rank and file, cross sectional organisation in solidarity with the miners.

They had the potential, with the intervention of communists armed with revolutionary strategy, to circumvent the trade union bureaucracy, coordinating solidarity and strike action alongside the miners. They emerged in many different ways, dominated predominantly by Labourism. But, then, organs of workers' struggle never emerge 'squeaky clean'.

They emerge, marked both with the positive and negative elements of the struggle, whether they be the St Petersburg soviet in

1905, the British councils of action in 1920, or the street committees in South Africa during the mid-eighties. It is in this light that the MSGs should have been viewed by communists; as potential councils of action.

Yet what was the SWP's attitude towards them? For the first six months of the strike, it merely derided them as vehicles for collecting money and baked beans for the miners' families. Then, in September 1985, it did a U-turn, and dropped its people in the MSGs - to ensure that all the committees did was to collect money and baked beans!

Any attempt to broaden the scope of these committees was opposed by the SWP; for instance, on the Newham support committee, in London, the SWP was the only group on the committee to oppose sending transport from the committee to the Bloody Sunday demonstration in January 1985, on the grounds that it was a "diversion" from solidarity with the miners' strike.

The SWP acted as a block on developing working class politics. It is clear that the only way that the miners could win would be through solidarity strike action from other sections of the working class: in other words, as *The Leninist* put it at the time, "for a united workers offensive, up to, and including a general strike".

This was dismissed by the SWP as a wildly ultra-leftist slogan which would bring only demoralisation. Instead, it focused on the need for mass pickets. In other words, it was hopelessly trapped back in the early seventies, when, with the bourgeoisie fighting with the weapons of the previous period, miners could close down Saltley Gates and, in doing so, win. The bourgeoisie had learnt the lessons of the seventies, even if the SWP hadn't.

Faced by well organised police, fighting along the lines of the class war politics of the Thatcher government, the miners, unarmed, dominated by the reformist politics of Scargill and the NUM and lacking the active support of other sections of the working class, could not win.

Yet, this is precisely what the SWP advocated that rank and file miners and their supporters do. It was always why you could not do anything, not what was necessary. When miners organised their own defence, through hit squads, the SWP was always in the forefront of condemning such initiatives as "individual acts" (*Socialist Worker*, December 7 1984), such as with the killing of the scab taxi-driver, Wilkie, by two young militant miners, Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland.

So the SWP argued against defence squads because they "were not a substitute for mass picketing [which well organised hit squads, organised in the form of defence corps like in the 1926 strike could have defended - AM] ... they weren't a substitute for real solidarity." [which the SWP consistently opposed] (From Callinicos and Simons, *The Great Strike*, (p194).

A qualitatively different approach to that of the reformist leadership of the NUM was needed for the miners to win. The SWP only advocated more of the same; bigger pickets, meetings, demos etc. It never once challenged the nature of the politics which defeated the miners. And, when it was all over, Cliff and his doom-mongering entourage nodded their heads sagely and intoned "we told you so". This is akin to leaning on a lifebelt whilst lecturing a drowning man on the advantages of learning to swim young.

But the SWP did not even wait for the strike to 'die' before they buried it. Tony Cliff, in the midst of the strike, dubbed it "an extreme form of the downturn". A strange form of 'downturn' indeed, that witnesses the most protracted mass strike in European history, and the most significant strike in Britain for nearly 60 years! Likewise Duncan Hallas, towards the end of the strike with miners fighting a last ditch struggle, drew an analogy between the Great Strike and the General Strike of 1926: "Today its a damned sight closer to 1927 than it is to 1925 and we have to draw the appropriate conclusions." (*Socialist Worker*, February 2 1985).

Draw these conclusions for yourself. What all this amounts to, in this context, is treachery, nothing less. The SWP was quite prepared to act as a block on the development of the strike and of workers' consciousness to try to squeeze the real world into its anti-Marxist schema of the downturn, or, as one waggish critic of the SWP commented wryly, self activity makes you blind.

This line has played similar roles in other

disputes of less significance, such as at Wapping or in the NUT. In effect, it ensures that the SWP acts as little more than a left appendage of the bureaucracy - whose retreats it sees as justification for the downturn, not opportunities to put forward an alternative - and is therefore a block to the independent mobilisation of workers around an anti-capitalist programme of action.

That this is the case is proven every time general elections rear their heads, and the SWP calls each time for a vote for the Labour Party, even though this party's practice and programme contain not one iota of socialism. And saying "but build a socialist alternative" means absolutely nothing tacked in on the end, as it in no way relates to practical activity. It is merely self delusion or a 'get-out clause' on the SWP's part that it is somehow - god knows how! - that alternative. Frankly, given that this is all that the SWP can offer, its comrades would be better off all taking out Labour Party cards.

The policy of the SWP is decided in the first and last analysis by the immediate situation. It is an organisation which, as expressed by its repudiation of the development of a Marxist programme, merely responds empirically to developments, never understanding them and never leading them. This accounts for the erratic nature of its tactics throughout its history, what Lenin termed the "utter instability" of the economists' tactics (*op cit*, p317).

Cliff and Co. have attempted many times to convince militants that Lenin was to soon abandon the premise of *What is to be Done?*, though even a cursory reading of his writings invalidate this assertion. So Cliff played the role of a 'little Stalin' and did a bit of falsification himself: "Lenin had to protect his followers from allegiance to *What is to be Done?* His formulation there of the relationship between spontaneity and organisation still bedevils the movement. Yet in 1905 he clearly reversed his position: 'The working class is instinctively, spontaneously social democratic ...'" (Tony Cliff, *IS Journal*, May 1973). The dots, by the way, are Cliff's. If you take the care to refer to his source from Lenin, you find the quote continues; "and more than ten years of work put in by social democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness." (CW, Vol.10, p32).

The seminal *What is to be Done?* had a firm grounding in Marxist orthodoxy. Marx's method of historical materialism proves that the struggle between labour and capital takes place within the confines dictated by capitalism. This struggle is merely one of a fight for a different distribution of the results of social production under capitalism; it does not challenge the relations of production, for Marx, Engels and Lenin the only way which the otherwise insoluble contradiction between labour and capital could be resolved.

It was not Lenin who drew such conclusions, but codified them in his "party of a new type", and developed a programme for such a party. The task of this party was not to play to spontaneity - in SWP jargon "self-activity" - but to raise the spontaneous movement "to the level of its programme" (CW, Vol.5, p396).

In its slavish adherence to the spontaneist "self-activity" theory and repudiation of communist programme, the SWP can see no further than the day to day struggle. As Lenin argued, this can be nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. To justify its existence as a 'revolutionary party', the SWP must paint this struggle as somehow socialistic, or latently revolutionary. It is not; and if anything ever proved it, it is the transformation of "self-activity" to the crass inactivity of the downturn.

The defeatist, economic nostrums of the SWP can provide no answers for workers' today. Nationally, it now acts as a block on the development of the struggles of workers and the oppressed. The self fulfilling prophecy of the downturn has put a seal on this, which was always implicit in its politics. Internationally, it repudiates defence of the socialist states and liberation struggles, such as in Ireland. And, as someone once said, those who cannot defend the existing gains of the working class will never advance to conquer new ones.

The politics to arm the class with revolutionary theory and a communist party are not the politics of the SWP. They are the politics of Leninism. They are the politics of *The Leninist*.

Alan Merrick