

THE LENINIST



HANDS OFF IRELAND!

**Troops out!
demonstration**

**March with *The Leninist*
contingent. Assemble
Grange Park, Kilburn,
London NW6 Saturday
January 28, 12 noon
(nearest tube Kilburn)**



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

LETTERS

In Labour

Having read *The Leninist* for a few months I am very impressed by the high standard of its analysis, though we disagree on the most vital of points – the Labour Party.

You would be quite wrong to say that the working class did not exist in the constituencies at all or marginally. The change that occurred – reselection – was of major importance. Yet without a revolutionary ideology its implementation became accepted but little used by a Labour left who feared that they might go too far. You are correct to say that the Labour left needs the right.

What the period of 1978-81 saw was the height of left reformism's challenge to Labourism and as things appear clear in so many instances – it was their swansong.

The Benn/Heffer leadership race was no such thing – deliberately so. These two apologists did not announce their candidature until they knew that some unions could not seriously debate the issue for the left – time was needed yet was not given. It was a hasty campaign to absolve these two and the Campaign Group from the accusation that they could not lead and had done nothing.

So why indeed bother with the Labour Party? ('Indeed!' I hear you say). The weakness of the left and the dominance of pro-capitalist elements in the labour movement are indicative of how weak are the ideas of revolutionary socialism in Britain today ... there is no question that that the Labour Party and Labourism in the trade union movement must be smashed in their present form in order for a vanguard to be able to lead.

You cannot destroy and rebuild without being inside the Labour Party, thus it seems futile to union activists and spend so much energy without making this link. Unions must be subordinate and are totally secondary to party work. Yet the Labour Party is barely political at all and it is this that must be changed.

Branch and CLPs are nearly dead, they debate tiny matters, accept the state of the party and are demoralised. There are no socialist MPs. All of this is reflected by the working class as a whole who have little confidence and feel betrayed. Their level of expectation has deliberately been lowered and thus capitalist ideology is still very dominant. There is no alternative party that is going to gain influence and eclipse the Labour Party and the decline of the Labour left has also seen the decline of the 'revolutionary' left; both have suffered.

I can only see change occurring when a small section/area of the Labour Party is won to revolutionary ideas, begins to fundamentally question the role of the Labour Party and starts to turn it inside out.

Clive Ross
Scotland

Ian Mahoney replies:

Comrade Ross is an honest revolutionary. That is why his defence of his membership of the Labour Party as a principle is so unconvincing. The task of communists is not to wait for some "small section/area of the Labour Party to be won to revolutionary ideas" but to support the paper that is actually developing those ideas and putting them into practice now, i.e. *The Leninist*. Marxist ideas do not emerge spontaneously in sections of the Labour Party. They will come to grip a section of the Labour Party, indeed the hearts and minds of the mass of workers, as a product of the growing influence and hegemony

of the Communist Party we will reforge.

For communists the question of a Communist Party is the "most vital of points", the central question to which everything else must be subordinated.

Progressive nationalism

Irish nationalism is 'progressive' according to David Sherriff, in his reply to Roy West's letter (*The Leninist*, No73). I beg to differ.

Communists do not politically support nationalism. They support bourgeois democratic demands, where these do not conflict with proletarian socialist demands. Thus communists support the right of nations to self determination in general, and actually advocate self determination in particular instances.

In an instance where communists advocate self determination, it does not follow that the nationalist movement in the nation in question is 'progressive'. Nationalism is a reactionary ideology, the ultimate logic of which is genocide. This is why the IRA on occasion engages in sectarian attacks. Likewise the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

A genuine communist party in Ireland would combat the ideology of Irish nationalism. It would inevitably incur the wrath of the IRA in working class Catholic ghettos in the Six Counties, which is one reason why such a party would have to organise for self defence (the other reason being the activities of the British state and the loyalists).

With communist greetings
John Cable
Essex

David Sherriff replies:

Unlike our friend, Marxists have long recognised that nationalism could be progressive, we only need recall the nationalism of the Americans in 1776, the French in 1789 and the Irish in 1916. Today we say that communists in Ireland should politically march separately from Sinn Fein/IRA but strike together against imperialism. We do not advocate that communists arm themselves against the IRA – which is a revolutionary organisation, but against the British Army – which is a reactionary organisation. In order to cover his miserable failure to take sides with a living revolution Cable homes in on its petty bourgeois leadership and limitations. This is not communism but Trotskyism.

Stupid

Roy West's letter (*The Leninist* No73) was perhaps a very stupid piece of writing. It was certainly deeply insulting to all our members who were active pickets in the strike. West is clearly oblivious to the fact that thousands of incidents like the one Shankland and Hancock were engaged in took place.

A thousand lumps of concrete were dropped on scab vehicles and I might add iron railings, paving stones and barrels of all descriptions. We were in a fight for our industrial lives, and incidentally in fierce hand to hand fighting in villages all over Britain we were fighting for our physical lives.

Some of our comrades didn't win on occasions and on others only held onto life by the slightest margin. Perhaps West doesn't know, but the police were trying to kill us,

and this was obvious to anyone who dared go on a picket line. The scabs and the cops who came to protect them, or use them as an excuse to repress the mining communities were not "civilians or should one say the general public" as West suggests.

What they were was the bodies of armed men and their dupes, reserved by the state to physically beat the working class down. Not to support either our resistance or offensive, is simply to say we must accept the existence of the capitalist system without serious complaint. This Shankland and Hancock would never do, nor would any who took to the streets in defence of our union and the rights of all unions.

Dave Douglass
NUM Branch delegate, Hatfield
Main pit, Doncaster.

Dockers

The employers' attack in the dockers covered in *The Leninist* No73 is centrally a desperate attempt to increase exploitation.

The dockers' fight can become central in a class fightback. Not support groups – but action groups: that is what are needed. The dockers can strike against the bosses, but their supporters can also show their militant muscle.

In 1988, dockers struck in support of the nurses; in 1984 in support of the miners. The boot is now on the other foot. Which hospital has militants who say 'touch the dockers and you touch us!'? Which pit will demonstrate rock bottom class solidarity? The time to organise for this is now. Not just inter-port dockers' action committees (they can help lead the struggle), but action committees drawing in the class. This is a fight against exploitation, and for the right to work.

Alan Newman
Kent

Small correction

It has been brought to my attention that there was a small editorial error in my article on the Dock Labour Scheme (*The Leninist* No73). We said: "The scheme is not about defending dockers' jobs ...". This is obviously in contradiction to comments I make elsewhere in this article, in particular the call to extend the scheme to non-registered ports.

In fact, the sentence should read "If the scheme is about defending dockers' jobs ..." and is related to the need we pinpoint for dockers to break from the collaborative National Dock Labour Board.

I am indebted to TGWU stewards from Tilbury docks who very quickly brought our attention to the error.

Ian Mahoney
London

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

WRITE OR RING

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

IN THE immediate aftermath of Japan's defeat in World War II there were suggestions that Emperor Michinomiya Hirohito should be tried for war crimes. The United States had other ideas. It was not fighting fascism, German, Japanese or any other, it wanted to redivide and refashion the world in its own interests. This it did.

In order to serve US imperialism, Hirohito, a former 'man-god', became a constitutional monarch and was absolved by the Americans of any responsibility for Japan's role in World War II.

However, controversy dogged Hirohito. He is blamed by sections of the establishment in Britain for the horrors perpetrated against captured allied servicemen (few mention the millions of natives butchered by the Japanese armed forces in China, Korea and South East Asia). The British bourgeoisie is a pack of unmitigated hypocrites.

Singling out Hirohito as a war criminal diverts from their responsibility for the World War II slaughter. Hirohito was not alone, the ruling classes of all imperialist countries – not least the British – have blood on their hands. Collectively they are all war criminals.

This 'plague on all imperialist houses' position should be axiomatic for any communist or working class partisan. Unfortunately, the degeneration of the world communist movement has seen 'official communism' become thoroughly opportunist. "It is remarkable" said the *Morning Star's* editorial of January 10 1989 "that the Duke of Edinburgh can find time for war criminal Hirohito's funeral, when, like the rest of the royal family, he did not attend the Lockerbie air crash victim's memorial service."

Except for chauvinistic references to 'nips' this is exactly the same line as the *Sun*. This apart there are a number of points to be made here.

First, we would be very surprised indeed if the Soviet Union does not send a representative to Hirohito's funeral.

Second, why on earth is it "remarkable" for Philip Battenburg to attend the funeral of a 'war criminal'? After all, he married into a family with one of the bloodiest histories of war crimes in the world. Comparing Japanese to British imperialism is like comparing Arthur Daley to Al Capone.

Third, Tony Chater's *Morning Star* contrasts Lord Mountbatten's refusal to meet Hirohito on his state visit in 1971 to Prince Philip's going to his funeral. Quite apart from imagining that Prince Philip's visit is the result of a personal wish to mourn, rather than a state decision, the editor of this 'communist' paper seems to think that both these bemeddled royal imperialists are somehow morally superior to the bemeddled royal imperialist Hirohito.

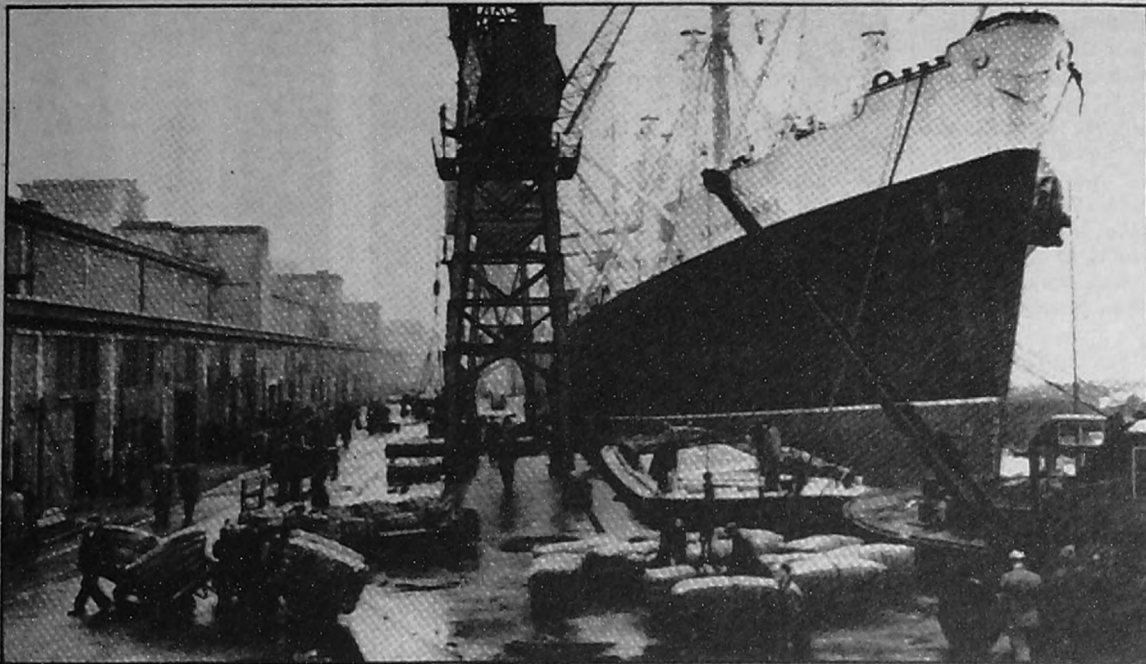
Fourth, the editorial reveals the typically bourgeois reflexes of opportunism. Clearly, the *Morning Star's* editor regards the 'royal family' in much the same way as his colleagues in the mainstream bourgeois press: as the representatives of the 'nation'. Therefore, in his scheme of things, it is 'right and proper' that the royals should be on the scene at the Lockerbie disaster to express the 'nation's' grief.

The *Morning Star* has clearly set itself up as a left advisor not simply to the bourgeoisie, but royalty as well (perhaps its editor dreams of the day when he is known as Lord Chater of EC2). Real communists have a different aim and approach. We say British, Japanese, all imperialists are war criminals: in two wars alone they have been responsible for sacrificing well over 75 million human lives. Unless we stop them they threaten to exterminate our entire species. We must and will settle accounts with them, their 'royal families' and their opportunist apologists.

The Editor

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Lines drawn



Dockers must not rely on past victories

BATTLE lines have been drawn between the Tories and the dockers. The government has come under increasing pressure from the National Association of Port Employers and some rightwing Tory MPs over the recent period to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme, the system that guarantees dockers' jobs. For this Tory government the scheme is a crime. Workers have no right to work and certainly not if it has been secured by militant trade union action as it has in the docks.

The government is coming under increasing pressure to 'rationalise' the docks' workforce, even at the risk of provoking a national strike. Interestingly, Nick Finney, director of the National Association of Port Employers is campaigning energetically to repeal the Dock Board Act. He mutters darkly that even if the government is not prepared to tackle the problem, there will, in any case, be an "industrial relations explosion" as employers turn to the Tories' anti-union laws to do a Wapping on the dockers.

Clearly, that is what is now starting to happen. Many companies covered by the scheme have become increasingly angry that they have not been able to cash in on the Tories' attacks on the union rights and working practices in order to hike up profits like Rupert Murdoch did. Thus, unsurprisingly, the crisis has now been brought to a head by the provocations of two port employers in Glasgow who refused to use dockers registered with the scheme to load ships last month. As John Connolly, docks secretary of the TGWU, said in late December last year: "What happens there today will happen in London and other scheme ports next week. There is a conspiracy on and we have to act to smash it."

On past performance dockers would be ill advised to place any trust whatsoever in the leadership of the TGWU. In a head on fight it is unlikely to behave any differently to the NGA and Sogat against Murdoch's News International or Sam McCluskie against Sealink.

The dockers' fight is for work. Obviously, in Thatcherite Britain they have a real fight on their hands. They can expect all manner of filthy propaganda hurled at them by the bosses' media. The despicable dirt these forces will use to try to smear the "greedy" dockers will be sickening. Scab Neil Kinnock has already fingered

"£400 a week dockers" at last year's Labour Party conference.

We must not respond to such muck defensively. It must be countered with class arguments. Nothing is too good for the working class. We produce all the wealth in society, and it is we alone who should enjoy it. Dockers, miners, teachers, nurses — all workers — should be entitled to expect £400 a week and more in order to live a full and dignified human life. If their system cannot afford that it should go.

The Tories want to see registered dockers replaced by cheap casuals employed by the shift or day. This would lead to a massive increase in the rate of exploitation. In effect, it would turn the clock back a hundred years in the docks.

Under pressure from the rank and file the TGWU has announced plans to ballot dockers on an indefinite strike. Militants tell us they are confident that the vote can be won but there is no room for complacency. A ballot majority is not the end, it is only the beginning. It must also be borne in mind that the last two strikes in defence of the scheme took place against the background of the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 and hardly ended in glory. This time the government will not be avoiding a fight.

It has to be remembered that the Dock Labour Scheme only covers around 9,500 men out of a workforce of about 40,000. While it is true that the registered dockers handle some 80% of Britain's seaborne trade, it would be foolish to underestimate the ability of the bosses to shift operations or withstand a siege in order to smash a national strike. As the miners' Great Strike showed, no group of workers, no matter how powerful, can be complacent in today's Britain. Just waving the stick of industrial action will not force the government to back down. Dockers must work out a winning strategy for victory, slogans are not enough, nor is resting on past strength.

The Tories have been careful not to allow themselves to be drawn into a fight before they are ready to take on the dockers and win. Though the government's hand may be forced to a certain extent by the precipitate actions of some companies anxious to get the scheme off their backs, dockers should not underestimate the extent that they have prepared already.

The Tories consider that a national docks' strike would be

ineffectual because under their legislation ports not covered by the scheme would be legally debarred from joining the action. What this poses for dockers is the necessity of breaking the law. That means spreading the action to other workers, both in the docks and outside it, whether that complies with the bosses' laws or not.

They also expect it to fail because after the miners and the seafarers a national docks' strike would be poorly supported from within the dockers' own ranks, unpopular outside the movement and likely to "crumble" very quickly. But there are hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions who itch to have a go at Thatcher and her anti-working class administration. With bold and effective leadership this militant section of the working class could be inspired into action just as they were in defence of the Pentonville 5. The Tories also consider that any physical 'stranglehold' policy of the TGWU transport union cutting off imports can be tackled by stockpiling, diversion to non-scheme ports and to some extent by use of non-registered workers in the ports. The dockers should counter this by immediately demanding that the scheme be extended to those ports not covered by it already. This would help undermine Tory strategy by giving all dock workers an interest in solidarity.

To facilitate this we need: Rank and file docks' committees. These could form links with similar bodies or isolated militants in non-scheme ports. The point with such bodies is not to bypass the national shop stewards framework that already exists and which is very much the product of the militant struggles of the past. But in any strike, a key problem is always how to draw the bulk of the membership into activity, to ensure they are not left at home, prey to the pressures of personal life and the bosses' media.

Dockers should break from the collaborative National Dock Labour Board and the joint administration of the scheme that exists now. We are preparing for a class battle, with our class enemies. Joint union/employer collaboration only produces illusions and causes confusion.

If dockers arm themselves with the correct politics they will win for themselves the active solidarity of all militant workers and a famous victory. The time to prepare is now.

Ian Mahoney

On January 16, staff walked out of most London Social Security offices in protest at the latest proposed Tory attacks on them. Government minister John Moore says that over 1,000 jobs in London are to be 'relocated' to regional centres in Belfast, Wigan and Glasgow. Information on claimants will be collated in these centres and the whole system is linked with a new £37 million computer network. So far this scheme is limited to London, but these regional centres have the capacity to handle claimant information from other areas. The system is in a hopeless mess as it is: processing London claims in Belfast is unlikely to make it anymore efficient. Therefore, this is just the beginning of a national attack on Social Security workers. Clearly, the Tories are attempting to fragment the cohesion of DHSS workers. They will present any attempt to fight back as union 'meanness' and insensitivity in relation to unemployment black spots. But in reality they are juggling with already existing jobs, not creating new ones. This must be seen as a national battle for Social Security workers, not a London-based one. We must combat sectionalism in our ranks and seek to draw others into the battle. In particular the potential exists to forge concrete links with the unemployed. The UWC will be organising joint actions with DHSS workers to turn that potential into reality. For details of actions, contact the UWC at BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX or telephone 01 431 3135.

The attack on the unemployed takes another significant step forward with the government's latest legislation. In the past a claimant had to be 'available for work' to claim benefit. Over the last few years this was stiffened up to make it harder to claim benefit and to intimidate many unemployed workers out of even trying. It was obvious that this was only the thin end of the wedge. Now the unemployed must be 'actively seeking work'. The harassment that the unemployed were confronted with in the past made it clear that this was already the case — and if you could not satisfy them that you were, you lost your benefit or were thrown onto a slave labour scheme. The new formulation makes things much worse. Although it will doubtless be a bureaucratic leviathan, its effects will hit the unemployed hard, enabling the government to more easily exclude people from benefit and dragoon them onto 'training schemes'. This is not the end of it. It is a further step towards a comprehensive work-for-dole scheme, of which ET is only the start. This is an attack on the rights and living standards of both unemployed and employed workers. In the 1920s and 30s the Communist Party organised the unemployed in the National Unemployed Workers Movement to block capitalism's attacks. Today, *The Leninist* is fighting to reforge this revolutionary tradition through the Unemployed Workers Charter. Join it and fight back!

Workers at Jaguar's four plants in the West Midlands have rejected the company's two year pay offer of 4% over two years. 5,604 out of a workforce of 7,977 voted against the pay offer, which would have meant, in effect, a significant reduction in living standards when judged against rising inflation and mortgage rates. Shop stewards in the plant will now meet to discuss strike action, which looks very likely. Inflation will erode the real wages of all workers. Jaguar workers are the first major group of workers to be forced into challenging this, though we can be sure many others will follow. This shows that the motor industry has been far from pacified since the strikes of last year. Indeed, the threatened job losses in Ford's Dagenham will force other sections into action. There are important lessons to be learnt from last year. Militants must shun the collaborationist strategy of the union bureaucracy, which last year spent the bulk of the time trying to get the workers and bosses around the table to reach an amicable agreement. Union activists must organise cross-union rank and file committees to ensure that they take the initiative and control any action. Such bodies must coordinate action between the Jaguar plants and, wherever possible, seek to extend these bodies to other sections of the car industry.

Words into action



In December we broke through our £600 monthly fund target by £155. A splendid achievement. But so far this month we have only received £204 and that includes a £50 donation from one reader in Surrey. We must at least break even every month this year if we are going to avoid again accumulating a crippling debt with printers, typesetters etc. Certainly there is no room for complacency. A number of comrades have promised to make substantial donations towards the paper in 1989 — but it must be admitted that only a few have actually put words into action.



• The Tories attack the unemployed with the arrogance of a bully. The UWC aims to change all that by organising the unemployed

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'.

There are many on the left today who, while claiming to be communists, would dismiss this statement out of hand as extremist. Not *The Leninist*. We fully stand by it. Not simply because it comes from the manifesto of the second congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in 1920. But because it remains one of the finest encapsulations of the *duty* which workers, especially communists, in Britain have towards the fight for national unity and freedom in Ireland.

The Comintern demanded of its British section a wholehearted commitment to this. Karl Radek, for the Comintern Executive, hammered home this point at the same congress when he emphasised that, at that moment, the communists in Britain would not be judged just on whether they spoke out against intervention in Soviet Russia. Even the bourgeois left was against this, he said. The acid test would be whether they resolutely took up the cause of Irish independence, a much more difficult task. This work, Radek emphasised, was demanded from the comrades in Britain.

Isn't the situation that Radek was confronting very similar to the situation that we face today? Substitute South Africa or Nicaragua for Russia and it is clear that precious little has changed. For instance, the Anti-Apartheid Movement can pull out tens of thousands — and not so long ago, hundreds of thousands — onto the streets. Last year it filled Wembley Stadium.

Compare this with the tiny numbers which can be mobilised in solidarity with the struggle in Ireland, a large proportion of whom are Irish youth. Among the left the attitude to the two revolutions is different. Hardly anyone raises a murmur in opposition to the armed struggle of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC. When a collaborator is necklaced — not the easiest of deaths by any standards — virtually across the board, left papers will defend it. But what do we see when a similar thing happens in Ireland? When the IRA kneecaps an informer it is met with silence or condemnation.

If the likes of Tony Benn or Ken Livingstone speak on the question of Ireland, they are always careful to make the point that they do not support the IRA. Why the caution? After all, the same people make no such statements with regard to the ANC. The scent of blood and cordite dissipates over a distance.

Of course, in a certain way, this is understandable. Taking up the question of Irish freedom means that you are confronting your own ruling class, and you get faced with the whole gamut of repressive laws, police harassment and chauvinist attacks as a consequence. To say the very least, it is not a popular issue in Britain. At worst it is downright dangerous. But to say that it is understandable does not mean that it is justifiable. Quite the reverse.

Because supporting the liberation struggle in Ireland challenges British imperialism directly, because it challenges the chauvinism prevalent among British workers — indeed among British socialists and communists, so-called — these are all powerful arguments as to why genuine anti-imperialists and communists should place this struggle at the top of the agenda. That this has not been done, to any great effect at least, has had a massively retrogressive effect on the whole of the British workers' movement. By not helping the Irish beat off the imperialist wolves, British workers themselves eventually fall victim to the jaws of these beasts.

It is fortunate indeed, then, that Irish republicans have fought like tigers for the past twenty years. In 1968 the Irish people in the Six Counties took to the streets for civil rights. Under attack from the RUC and B-Specials, the national question came to the fore; the masses resorted to stones and petrol bombs to defend themselves and from there to guns and the IRA. Within a very brief period of time the demand for even the most basic democratic rights had impelled the Six Counties into a revolutionary war for national liberation.

Far from being a retreat to individual terrorism, in the manner of the Russian Narodniks, the armed struggle was an organic development from the struggle. It drew the most advanced sections of revolutionary republican youth into its ranks and took the struggle onto a level that the previous amateurish forms of struggle had been unable to

attain. Revolutionary resistance to imperialism was now an omnipresent fact of life in the Six Counties.

All Britain's attempts to win this war of its own making have failed. Even during periods of the harshest repression the IRA has been able to hit back at British imperialism and even to go on the offensive. When imperialists and social chauvinists alike call the IRA isolated, individual terrorists and cowards, we should laugh. If this was the case, then god help the imperialists and the chauvinists when brave Irish men and women with a mass base of support come out to fight.

Of course this fight is already taking place. The courage of men and women like Bobby Sands and Mairead Farrell and the electoral support which Gerry Adams and about sixty Sinn Fein councillors command testifies to this, as does the IRA's ability to conduct an armed struggle for nearly two decades against one of the world's most experienced, skilled and best equipped armies.

But, as we have made clear in *Hands Off Ireland!* statements already, solidarity with the struggle in Ireland lags far behind the level of the struggle itself. In fact, what has happened is that there has been a decline in the numbers mobilised on Irish issues since the mid-1970s. The reason for this is quite straightforward; around this time the British state really came down hard on both the Irish solidarity movement and the Irish community in Britain.

The British left has always been rather timorous in its approach to 'hard' issues like Ireland, and when the shit began to hit the fan, you couldn't see many of them for dust. For instance, when the Special Branch said 'be missing' to the International Socialists (today's SWP), it couldn't have been more willing to comply. It vanished from Irish solidarity work, something it has only rectified in a very piecemeal and liberalistic fashion of late.

The other main group involved in this field, the International Marxist Group, hung on, to its credit. However, it did so in a way which compromised on the two central demands of 'Troops Out Now' and 'Self determination for the Irish people'. It also made a concerted effort to distance itself from association with the armed struggle. Irish work, in quantity and quality, was downplayed.

Here we should introduce a postscript on the Communist Party's performance in the same period. It just stood on the sidelines waving its pacifistic 'Bill of Rights' like a flag of surrender, whinging to any that would listen about how terrible it all was and that British imperialism should slowly help clean up the mess it had made. This reduced official communism to being a contemptible irrelevancy both within the solidarity movement and in the Irish community. And of course it goes without saying that nothing could be built in the wider workers' movement with these reactionary perspectives.

Time To Go?

From time to time, though, the British middle class left remembers Ireland. It usually limply drags its obligations out of mothballs for the occasional anniversary, normally the Bloody Sunday demonstration, which this year is being organised as if it were a conspiracy. Has anybody seen a poster for this? I haven't even seen a leaflet for it, though one comrade claims to have had one pass through his hands. Maybe its the only one the organisers printed.

But this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the direct occupation of the Six Counties by British troops. This has given a group of Labour MPs and middle class radicals the opportunity to dust off their consciences on the Irish question under the guise of the 'Time To Go' campaign.

Well, there's nothing new under the sun, as the cliché goes. Sure enough, 'Time To Go', marking the twentieth anniversary of the war (though this term is avoided) is just a resurrection of a campaign of the same name ten years previously. One of the main forces in the original were the Young Liberals. Indeed, if they still had enough people to form up a contingent, they would not be out of place in 'Time To Go' today. Because 'liberal' is about the kindest way that you can describe the politics of the present campaign.

The campaign has been organised on the basis of 'save taxpayers' money and bring our boys back home' type politics, which our CPGB fought back in the Tan War of 1921. 'Time To Go' has opposed any attempt to raise the demands for troops out now and support for the fight of the Irish people for the

IF NOT WE BULL



The Labourite and pro-imperialist represented by 'Time To Go' won't be actively and openly confronted. As comrade David ...
Hands Off Ireland!

THA ET

freedom and unity of their country. In fact, many of the foremost dignitaries of the campaign are on record on not a few occasions condemning this struggle.

Think of it – it's a bloody cheek when those who are representatives of the party which sent the troops in to start with, and who as individuals have repeatedly denounced the struggle against the imperialist war that their party started twenty years ago, are attempting to monopolise the so-called solidarity movement today.

But the British left has not been so taken aback by the nerve of these people that they have declined the invitation to immerse themselves in this chauvinist and reformist mire. If you look at the sponsor list you will find the names of CPB general secretary Mike Hicks, NCP general secretary Eric Trevett and the pet-hate of them both, *Marxism Today* editor Martin Jacques. Since all three representatives of 'official communism' and their organisations have a record on the Irish question which falls somewhere in between the foul and the non-existent, this should not surprise us at all.

Then you have the representatives of the petty-bourgeois left, more important in many ways because this is more influential and more active in the campaign. In particular, the Socialist League, which publishes the less and less frequent *Socialist Action*, is doing much of the donkey work for the campaign. In fact, one of its leading cadre, Martin Collins, is the 'Time To Go' coordinator.

But ten years back the IMG – of which the Socialist League is the biggest surviving fragment – distanced itself from 'Time To Go' and helped organise an independent contingent on the march around anti-imperialist slogans. Likewise with that Johnny-come-lately, the SWP. Ten years ago it did much the same as the IMG, though less enthusiastically. Now it has grasped hold of 'Time To Go' in the search for easy recruits.

A very significant section of the 'Time To Go' activists' conference in November was constituted by the SWP. Yet they were completely passive and uncritical. You can see this in *Socialist Worker*. Only in its monthly journal, *Socialist Worker Review*, can you find any criticism, and then of a most mild form. When you ask individual SWPers why they are submerged in 'Time To Go', they tell you that they are fighting within it to raise anti-imperialist demands. If this is the case, then they have a slight communication problem. They are inaudible. Even if this was true, then what alternative do they pose?

They are not organising distinctly and have no chance or even perspective of overturning the campaign leaders who have made sure they have a tight grip on the reins. But of course they are not doing anything like this. They are just fishing for recruits, as we've seen them do cynically so many times. Like everyone else the SWP is after the soft option. There's a law of dialectics that the only constant is change. Just so with the petty bourgeois left; the only principle is to maintain a complete absence of principle.

It's ironic that all these organisations of the revolutionary left have put themselves to the right of the Irish community and single issue campaigns of a fairly low political level, such as the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the United Campaign Against Strip Searching; just two of quite a number of organisations which have pulled out of 'Time To Go' because of its patronising and unprincipled stand.

Some will argue that we are being totally sectarian in our approach. After all, isn't 'Time To Go' at least raising a question which far too often is completely ignored by the left, leaving the field open to imperialist lies and propaganda. Now, there's a certain truth to this, which we wouldn't deny. However, we must add a very important 'but' here. This is because of the way in which 'Time To Go' raises the question. By treating the British state as neutral, by viewing the occupation of the Six Counties as merely a mistaken and outdated policy and by abstaining from taking sides in the war, this campaign puts the fight for Irish freedom in Britain on entirely the wrong footing.

We need only look at the practice of 'Time To Go' to date to see this. It has a very strong orientation to 'big names', in politics, entertainment or whatever. Those of us not fortunate enough to bear the initials MP after our name, or not to direct our own show on Channel 4 fall into the category of the cannon fodder for the campaign, a mere pressure group. Now, this isn't just Peter Hain and Clare Short being nasty, cynical people, it is the natural outcome of their politics, which I'm sure they believe in implicitly.

Their integrity, though, is not what's in question. It is the practice which flows from this. Because, for Britain, the occupation of the Six Counties is not a matter of choice or a policy. It is necessity.

Ireland is Britain's oldest colony. The Six Counties is part of the British state. For Britain to up sticks and make for Liverpool and Stranraugh would send massive shock waves through the rest of the 'United Kingdom'. It would be for British imperialism to admit defeat, not in its own back yard, but in its own home. The Englishman's castle would be torn down from the inside. Astute mainstream bourgeois politicians have said that a withdrawal from Ireland would create a Cuba off British shores – something, of course, they will in no way countenance.

The naive appeals of Short, Hain and the 'Time To Go' crew are therefore falling on deaf ears. Their campaign will therefore very quickly hit a brick wall which, given their strategy, they cannot surmount. They are trying to persuade the unpersuadable. This of course will lead to disillusionment and, unless an alternative is posed, further retreat and inactivity. Don't take my word for it, though. Look back at the identical campaign ten years ago. What's left of that today? Nothing. Why? For precisely the same reasons that I've just outlined.

Besides, for anyone who calls themselves a socialist to try and convince imperialism that it doesn't want and won't get a Cuba off its shores is perverse. They are quite openly playing the role of the left wing of the bourgeoisie.

We have no goodwill for British imperialism, and we would certainly welcome a Cuba off Britain's shores, as the first step to a British revolution. And we make no bones that part of the role of Irish solidarity work in Britain is to arrive at such a situation. It is in the interests of both Irish and British workers to see a Cuban-type solution to the war.

Or like Vietnam we want to see British imperialism's forces leave Ireland clinging to the skids of their helicopters. We are not even handed liberals who stand aside condemning the violence of both sides, just to be 'fair' you understand. No; we take sides with the oppressed and against the oppressors. And we would like to see the victory of the oppressed to be as complete as possible. That is our platform. In doing so we must expose those who are sidetracking this work by not breaking workers from imperialism, but by binding them to it by different ideological chains.

When you look at the statements from some of the leading intellectuals in 'Time To Go', this is glaringly obvious. Take Naomi Wayne and Bob Rowthorn, for instance, who we have quoted a number of times in *The Leninist*. These people, who call the demand for troops out now 'ultra-leftist' and say that it would create a bloodbath, call for a graduated withdrawal with Britain insuring 'stability' in the Six Counties, keeping the RUC and arming the Twenty-six County forces to effectively maintain the status quo.

In other words, on a different level and with reaction having a stronger hand, a repetition of the events of 1922 – partition and bloody counterrevolution. This is the logical conclusion of any argument which does not demand troops out now. If you do not then by implication imperialism must have some form of progressive role in Ireland. Instead of being the enemy 'Time To Go' looks on imperialism to provide the solution, albeit with a little coaxing. With 'friends' like Wayne and Rowthorn, those struggling for Irish freedom hardly need their Margaret Thatchers, Ian Paisleys and Charlie-Haugheys as enemies.

Hands Off Ireland!

That, then, is an overview of the broad opportunist alliance that goes under the name 'Time To Go'. Our attitude to it on principle is that it stinks. But that does not mean that we ignore it. The sham of parliamentary democracy stinks but communists still participate in parliamentary elections. You do not expose something, and in doing so build a revolutionary alternative, by ignoring it. 'Time To Go', although you can bet it will disappear soon enough after August, will get a fair bit of attention from not just British leftists, the Irish community and various big names, but also many others. An effective challenge to this could create a bigger impact than the campaign itself, and certainly a more enduring one.

To take a boycottist attitude to 'Time To Go' would be to gain nothing. This is a mistake of the Revolutionary Communist Party/IFM which, having convinced its rank and

file that it is the party, feels it can safely ignore such 'trivialities'. We, on the other hand, believe that by counterposing the politics of Hands Off Ireland! to those of 'Time To Go' on the demonstration in August and in the run up to it we can attract those genuine anti-imperialists who want to fight, who want to build a genuine solidarity movement, to the banners of Hands Off Ireland!

The Labourite and pro-imperialist politics represented by 'Time To Go' won't wither and die by themselves. They must be actively and openly confronted in as open a way as possible. The best way to do so is to turn its major event, its march, on its head. That will be a major step to developing a genuine mass solidarity movement.

On what political ground can this be built? We have put forward the two slogans 'troops out now' and 'self determination for the Irish people'. Now, that's hardly very original. In formal terms the Troops Out Movement bases itself on these demands. And TOM can hardly be held up as a successful example of an Irish solidarity organisation. Quite the opposite. It comes over as more of a radical social club. For instance, look at the way that this year's Bloody Sunday march has been organised. This is something that TOM traditionally takes the lead in. And doesn't it show.

As a reaction to this, when we were in the process of establishing Hands Off Ireland!, a number of groups in discussion objected that the practice of TOM showed that the two demands were inadequate. They argued that the demands were neutralist, that they did not take sides in the struggle. It's true that the content of TOM's work doesn't. It tends to consist of bleeding heart liberal stuff about plastic bullets, 'write to your MP' style agitation and precious little else. Now how does this relate to the two demands? Put baldly, it doesn't.

We make clear when we demand troops out now that Britain can have no progressive role to play whatsoever. It's not going to make things easier for the Irish by playing the benevolent uncle, but produce a Zimbabwe type situation at best. That's not what we want. We are fighting for complete freedom for those oppressed by British imperialism – no strings. That is the implication of troops out now.

The demand for self determination demands of us that we support by every means possible the fight for this by the Irish people, whatever tactics they choose in this fight. Hands Off Ireland! has been quite explicit about this fact. Is this avoiding the question of taking sides? Is this neutralist? No, of course not.

What we do not do, though, is to link our support for the struggle to a particular organisation or tactic, however prominent a part they may play at any one time. The struggle for Irish freedom is by no means synonymous with either the republican movement or the guerilla struggle in the Six Counties, however central a role both play in the struggle today. If anyone wants to try and argue that this stand is neutralist and is bold enough to put it down on paper, instead of the nebulous and repetitive objections we heard with the establishment of Hands Off Ireland!, I'd like to see it.

The point for us must be, not to dump these two slogans because of those who have dragged them through the mud, but to raise them from this and to put them into practice. A more 'left' platform to try and define oneself independently of TOM on paper to my mind here just means that those who try this have no confidence of differentiating themselves in practice. The solidarity movement needs left talkers with opportunist or no practice as much as it needs the right opportunists it has at the moment.

Armed with this platform, we aim to move into effective action. We will relate these anti-imperialist demands to anti-imperialist practice. The immediate aim of Hands Off Ireland! is to build a mass anti-imperialist contingent on the 'Time To Go' march in August. This demands that we take the campaign for this onto the streets and into the organisations of the workers' movement, to raise these politics and to build on them in practice.

Fighting in this way, confronting the politics of the existing opportunist organisations in theory and in practice, we feel sure that we can move towards the establishment of a genuine, principled and effective mass movement in solidarity with the struggle for Irish freedom. It won't be built by itself. It demands the implementation of the only thoroughgoing anti-imperialist ideology – communism. The building of such a movement is a duty for communists in Britain, a duty we aim to fulfil. It's down to us.

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BRENT

Brent council — a capitalist council

This is an edited version of the opening speech to the first public meeting of Brent Nalگو Leninist Supporters

The Eurocommunist party executive committee has decided that its candidates would be prepared to stand down in favour of other 'anti-Tory' candidates who are more likely to win in order to help construct an anti-Tory pact. "Oh, hurrah!", shout the Labour Party et al, "that's a relief!". The electorally irrelevant Euros are kidding themselves if they seriously think firstly, that anyone would care and secondly, that any bourgeois party would seriously be swayed by their offer and take up this anti-Tory crusade. What it has succeeded in doing, however, is opening up even more cracks in the Euro ranks. Poor old Monty Johnstone, the grandfather of this chaos, writes in 7 Days of January 14 of the "will-o'-the-wisp" of an electoral pact and advocates the traditional CP orientation — support for the Labour Party.

There is a long article in the current issue of *Kommunist*, the CPSU's theoretical journal, on the Italian Communist Party. Read and squirm, centrists everywhere ... the piece says the PCI's criticism of the intervention in Afghanistan and the military takeover in Poland were well founded. Its author, Vladimir Naumov, an Academy of Sciences historian, even goes as far as to congratulate the PCI for its power to generate ideas which "contribute without doubt to the development of social thought." This mea culpa cannot be taken as the official Moscow line ... yet. But its only a matter of time before there is a full rapprochement between the Gorbachevites and the arch revisionists, the Italian Euros.

"German Party Heads for Unity" reads a recent headline in the Morning Star. Yet it went on to report that the Party's chairman (equivalent to general secretary), Herbert Mies, was re-elected with just 71.8% of the 700 delegates' votes. His deputy Ellen Webber fared even worse, with only 67.7% of the votes cast going her way. In the stage-managed and painstakingly gerrymandered congresses that 'official communism' put on, such figures are truly remarkable: they indicate the fact that under the impact of Gorbachevism the West German DKP has suffered a deep split. In spite of this Tony Chater's Morning Star insists on putting a brave face on it: everytime centrists start talking 'unity' nowadays, you can be practically guaranteed of another split.



SWP won't defeat racism by defending Brent council

MILITANT workers in Brent have demonstrated a willingness to stand and fight which shows the potential for a general fightback against the council's cuts in jobs and services. Workers in Area 2 Social Services office won their strike and so did Education Grants and Awards workers. At this very moment the Housing Needs Unit workers are striking for full screening in the reception/interviewing areas to protect them from physical attack by irate homeless families. The council has shown itself prepared to sacrifice workers' safety to the pursuit of its self image as a friendly, caring council. At the same time it has used court injunctions against seven named individuals and bailiffs to end the occupation of Winnie Mandela House and recruited scab labour. When a mass picket was quickly mobilised in response to this provocation, police were used to fight their way up the front steps to get the scabs into the building.

Towards the end of November, Carlton (Kilburn) branch of the Labour Party, which includes 'anti-cuts' councillors Mick Woods (*Socialist Outlook* supporter) and Helga Gladbaum, voted unanimously to dissociate itself from the "anti-socialist antics" of Brent Council in union-busting and, in particular, using the police to break up the Housing Needs workers' mass picket. A spokesperson said: "We believe the council's actions put the councillors involved outside the Labour movement." (*Willesden and Brent Chronicle* November 24 1988)

Labour councillors have always suffered from "anti-socialist antics", they are after all running part of the capitalist state. One Trotskyite/Labourite suggested to me that if the majority of Brent councillors could be persuaded to refuse to implement the cuts, then Brent Council would have become, "in effect, a soviet"! This nonsense is typical of left reformism.

The function of Brent Council,

like all local authorities, is to manage the system for the ruling class and to dupe workers by maintaining the facade of 'local democracy'. Whenever it becomes a nuisance it can easily be liquidated, as with the GLC, or dissident councillors can be bankrupted and outlawed as in Clay Cross or Liverpool.

The media is attacking Brent Council for 'mismanagement', which is undoubtedly true. But good management only means efficient cuts in jobs and services and offers no answer for workers. Brent is at the sharp end of Tory government strategy to cut local government jobs and services throughout the country. Nor is this just the result of Thatcher's whim or wickedness, which could be changed by a different government with a different policy. Thatcher's singleminded ruthlessness is not the cause of the difficulties of British capitalism, but the ruling class response to those difficulties. The world economy is approaching another general crisis. Under these conditions things will get worse, not better. Brent workers' problems will not be solved by 'good management', but only by fighting the state and ultimately by ending capitalism itself.

In May 1986 the Labour Party came into office in Brent on an explicit election manifesto of "no cuts in jobs and services". Since the summer of 1988, when £17m had to be 'saved', "well over 1,000 staff [about 10% of all council employees] left our services ... through a very painful exercise of reducing our expenditure." (Chief Executive's letter to all employees, December 9 1988) The pain, however, is suffered by Brent workers, not the well heeled Chief Executive or the council.

On December 6 Brent's Director of Finance became the first in the country to exercise new powers under Section 114(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to impose immediate severe restrictions on spending by council em-

ployees, on pain of becoming personally responsible for any improper spending. The object of the exercise, apart from balancing the books, is to protect councillors from surcharge by staying within the law.

So the slogan 'Save Our Services' has given way to 'Save Our Skins' as Labour councillors have substituted 'caring cuts' for the 'no cuts' platform on which they were elected. Of course, the council still poses as anti-racist, but this is used to sow division. The bosses and their state thrive on every kind of division between workers, and can never be the cure for racism. Not surprisingly therefore the council blames workers for racism, and uses an individual worker as a scapegoat, as in the famous Maureen McGoldrick case. The effect is to set black workers against white workers and to feed racism.

Its 'equal opportunities' in the selection and appointment of new employees portrays a fairyland picture of fairness and perfection. However, the procedures have been used to produce inordinate delays in filling posts, while temporary staff with very restricted rights — frequently black youth — have been appointed hand over fist to solve management's immediate problems. A considerable number have moved on from one temporary job to another, becoming itinerant 'permanent temps'. As was to be expected, with the cuts this autumn lots of temps have been unceremoniously ejected. No pay-off for them, of course. Instead of advertising as an 'equal opportunities employer' the council should own up and advertise for 'workers without rights'.

It must be admitted that the local Nalگو leadership has swallowed the council's PR patter hook line and sinker, and as far as the workers are concerned its credibility has gone out of the window together with that of the council bosses. Its lauding of the council's so-called anti-racism policy, its collaboration with the appointment of hundreds of temporary staff with severely restricted rights, its collaboration (in contravention of branch policy determined by a Branch meeting) with the slave labour YTS scheme, have all left it discredited and incapable of mobilising members.

The local Nalگو leadership's response to the cuts has been to attempt to persuade or pressurise the council to change its mind, pinning its hopes on anti-cuts councillors. Lobbying of council committee meetings is the favoured form of action. 'Fight the Tories, not the workers' is the theme, demanding that the council itself lead the anti-cuts fight! At the same time the establishment of a Joint Stewards Committee to organise action across union divides has been consistently opposed by the branch leadership and the Socialist Workers Party.

The SWP has sought to blame its own defeatism on the workers,

arguing that the Nalگو national bureaucracy must lead the anti-cuts fight — a sure recipe for defeat — or that local government workers must support the health workers struggle instead of fighting on their own behalf, as defeat would demoralise them! The clearest sign of the SWP's cowardice is the desertion of the branch secretary's post by Jim Roche, just as the cuts begin to bite, because of his recruitment to the SWP, to comply with their policy of not accepting union office. What are we to make of a 'revolutionary party' which is afraid to run a union branch?

The SWP is so besotted with the council's anti-racism that its delegates at the December 11 Brent Fightback conference were arguing that whoever attacks the council is fuelling racism, because the black council leadership is under media attack for incompetence. The main enemy is the Tory government, they said. So this 'revolutionary party' banks on the capitalist state, rather than workers, to defeat racism. This "non-electoral alternative to the Labour Party" is, in reality, no alternative.

The appropriate answer, however, was given a long time ago. One of Aesop's fables tells how the farmer took some bullocks to the butcher for slaughter. When the butcher raised his knife for the kill, one bullock said to the others, "If we stick together, we can get him before he gets us." But the next bullock replied, "No, that's not right. He's only doing his job. The farmer is the main enemy!"

The contrast between the demoralisation of these 'leaders' and the fighting spirit shown by militant workers in the recent strikes exposes the bankruptcy of their politics, which offer no winning strategy for the working class and is incapable of harnessing workers' anger and wielding it to inflict defeat on the council bosses and their masters in Westminster.

To view the council, or individual 'anti-cuts' councillors, as the key factor in fighting cuts in jobs and services — as does the Labourite Brent Fightback group — is not only wrong in principle but patently ridiculous in practice. Those few councillors who keep their 'socialist' credentials clean at present by voting against cuts while they are in a minority would probably, in most cases, sing a different tune if they won the argument within the Labour Group. And if they did stand their ground, the state could easily sweep them out of the way.

The struggle to defend and advance workers' rights and living standards must not be subordinated to the fortunes of this local wing of the capitalist state. Instead of reformist Labourism, which sees the state as the solution, Brent workers need revolutionary working class politics — communist politics — which sees the capitalist state, including Brent Council, as something to be fought and ultimately destroyed and replaced by workers' power. Brent workers must be won to fight for what they need, not what the system permits or can afford. We must fight against the state, not in support of it.

Stan Sumner

RCP front

Keith Thompson, *Under Siege: Racial violence in Britain today*, Penguin Books, London 1988, pp204, pbk, £3.99

KEITH Thompson is a founder member of the Revolutionary Communist Party and since 1985 secretary of its front, Workers Against Racism. His book, like *Roots of Racism* (1985) which it closely resembles, is well argued, comprehensive, and although flawed by the rather ludicrous 'mass party' strutting that characterises Thompson's organisation, well worth while.

Thompson pin points November 1987 and the Tories new bill on immigration as an important development in the state's onslaught against blacks: "The round-up of foreigners - for that, unfortunately, is indeed what we are witnessing today - has finally arrived." (Preface).

The dangers of 'municipal anti-racism' is devastatingly documented under the chapter heading 'The official opponents of racism'. As Thompson reveals the tension between running a local organ of the bourgeois state in a 'responsible' way and the fight against racism has popped the bubble of local Labourite 'radicalism' in many instances.

Camden council's refusal to house Asian and Irish families under the catch all provision of 'intentionally homeless', their decision to initiate a policy to send these people back to their country of origin and Brent's persecution of the non-racist Maureen McGoldrick are only the tip of the municipal Labourite iceberg.

Undoubtedly Thompson is correct to savage the race relations industry and raise the demand for a mass anti-racist movement organised on the basis of independent working class politics. The absence of such a movement has ensured that black protest, apart from a few exceptions, has been easily absorbed by ruling class and its collaborative framework.

For instance, in the aftermath of Lord Chief Justice Scarman's report on the inner-city uprisings of 1981, Sir George Young, Conservative minister responsible for race relations, explicitly spelled out the rationale of this process: "We've got to back the good guys, the sensible, moderate, responsible leaders of ethnic groups. If they are seen to deliver, to get financial support from central government for urban projects, then that reinforces their standing and credibility in the community. If they don't deliver, people will turn to the militants."

Scarman's famous report suggested that black people should be given a stake in the system, and thus in social stability, through the promotion of black businesses. The government accepted his recommendations and its policy has been guided by them ever since.

This attempt to create a black middle class that could behead and divert the protests of the broader black working class community is obviously an attempt to emulate the experience of the US ruling class in the 1960s. The problem for the British bourgeoisie is simply the fact that it does not have the money to create a sufficiently large and visible black middle class stratum in order to fill this role. The US successfully bought off many black radicals after the violence of the heady 1960s. Britain will simply have to resort to more police and more prisons.

Despite the impossibility of cre-

ating a large black middle class in Britain, government grants and the erection of the race relations machinery molded the outlook of practically a whole generation of black activists in the aftermath of the defeat of the '81 uprisings.

Thompson illustrates the consequences of this policy of containment when he quotes, amongst others, Stafford Scott, one of the leaders of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association: "A few months ago I would have said that all politicians were rubbish. Now I understand how the political process works and the problems they have. The Labour Party has given us workers and money and supported our call for an independent inquiry. What more can they do?"

This poisonous attitude of 'what is possible' is an inescapable consequence of looking to the bourgeois state - locally or nationally - as the answer to the problems of blacks or any other oppressed section of society. When the inevitable economic problems start to bite, such reformist politics actually produces tragic divisive effects. Hackney councillor, John Bloom in 1984 outlined what reformists ultimately offer the working class, black and white, male and female: "We're trying to find a way of ensuring that the misery is shared out equally and fairly." (p128)

Instead of fighting for what we need as workers, Labour reformism ties the interests of our class to an institution that can only offer us misery and oppression. Under these circumstances, far from workers nobly agreeing to suffer equally, such politics will increase the sectionalist prejudices in our ranks as everybody scrambles for a slice of a rapidly diminishing cake.

So there is clearly a need to build a principled and independent anti-racist movement. But then, how do we set about building one? Thompson, in truly silly yet characteristic RCP style, sets out to give the impression that nothing has been done to fight racism until he and his comrades decided to launch WAR. Thus, for example, there is only one reference to the Communist Party in the book: a particularly chauvinist quote from Harry Pollitt's *Looking Ahead*, the forerunner of the *British Road to Socialism*. Apart from that, nothing.

This is a serious omission. After all, the RCP/WAR claims to want to build a mass, working class centred anti-racist movement. Despite important political criticisms, the experience of the Communist Party's mass East London mobilisations against the fascists in the 1930s contain important lessons - certainly for us the building of a mass movement against racism and fascism must be linked to the building of a genuine Communist Party to give the movement cohesion and direction. This omission is unfortunately typical of the RCP.

Given the increasing level of state attacks and the hopeless and counter-productive response of left Labourism, there is a pressing need to build a mass based anti-racist movement, independent of officialdom and uncompromising in its defence of black people. On this we do not disagree. But whether or not WAR, which is not in any sense democratic, which is turned off and on like a tap by the RCP leadership, which refuses to take the threat of fascist movements seriously and which has a contempt for the history of the working class, can lay the basis for it is another matter. Having said that though Thompson's book is still a must for all anti-racists.

Alec Long

People power

Declan Donnellan (director) and Nick Ormerod (designer), *Fuente Ovejuna*, National Theatre, London

CHEEK by Jowl's director Declan Donnellan and designer Nick Ormerod have had a tremendous success with their debut at the National's Cottesloe Theatre. Almost across the board it has been greeted with acclaim and rightly so. Their *Fuente Ovejuna* is a splendid production of a splendid play. That does not mean that there are no criticisms to be made but that any criticism should be taken in the context of an outstanding achievement by them and their cast.

For a British audience Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna* is an cultural eye opener. His true life drama of this small Spanish country town and its heroic rebellion stands politically head and shoulders above English contemporaries like Shakespeare and the Jacobean playwrights, indeed it is in certain respects way ahead of its time.

This is lost on the 'serious press'. In typical philistine fashion the bourgeois critics have presented this 17th century play as a simple story of love and honest Spanish peasant folk forced into rebellion. In reality it is much more complex and rich than that.

Yes, *Fuente Ovejuna* is a story of sexual passion and rebellion. But Vega wove these two themes together and projected them against the background of a feudal society ready for transition. What we have therefore is not the uprising of peasant against landlord but the people (the Third Estate) led by the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy. In other words a vision of 1789, rather than a look back to 1381.

Spain is in the process of becoming a nation, the feudal aristocracy is moribund yet still rules. Against the sadistic sexuality and strutting arbitrary brutality of the military/feudalistic caste Vega pits the ideal of romantic love and the rightness of revolution.

The rape of Laurencia, the mayor's daughter, on her wedding day, by Commander Gomez de Guzman - a warlord who considers the entire population of Fuente Ovejuna mere yokels and all its young women sexually available to him - is the spark that ignites the uprising.

Interestingly - especially for the time - Vega's women are not simply victims. Nor are they mere adjuncts of their men. Rachel Joyce, playing Laurencia, shames us all as she lifts her skirts before the assembled town council and presents them with the bloody evidence of her rape. After much goading they are fired into action. Led by the women the whole population marches on the commander's stronghold, pitchforks, staves and sythes in hand. The leading role of the women does not stop here.

They make sure that Gomez and his subordinates have a slow death. They want revenge and they get it. After getting his just desserts the commander's head is paraded around on a pole in an orgy of joy. Revolution is sweet.

Donnellan's staging of this is excellent. The massacre of the oppressors is done in symbolic, dance like form. Far from this being an arty diversion it reveals all

the more fully the bottled up hatred and the savagery of retribution.

Thankfully, unlike so many theatricals Donnellan does not flinch from the realities of revolutionary violence. He understands that it can be an explosive release, even hysterical, and that women because they are the oppressed sex will, when they rise, do so with even greater force, greater determination than the men. This is portrayed without falling prey for one moment to anti-male feminism or violence for its own sake.

What we have in Vega's uprising scene is a brilliant portent of the anarchism which remained the dominant revolutionary ideology in Spain until the 1930s. The violence of the oppressed is inspiring, but it is not organised - they dismiss any suggestion of marching formations and leaders. Their revolution relies on the heart not the head. The town pays the price for this.

Fuente Ovejuna is not Paris. The people have a small town mentality. Having overthrown their oppressors they have no thought of keeping power. The town councillors quickly get cold feet. Like naughty children they feel afraid of what they have done and decide to throw their lot in with the commanders enemies, Queen Isabella of Castille and King Ferdinand of Aragon.

The royals show their parental gratitude by having the entire town tortured in order to find those responsible for the death of the commander. In another piece of great theatre, the people, in spite of their horrendous suffering, remain solid. No one will be singled out. They will only reply that Fuente Ovejuna killed him - which is true.

Vega's king and queen side with their own - even though they are on opposing sides in war. Popular rebellion is the greatest of crimes - even when directed against an enemy. Nonetheless within the play the whole story of Fuenete Ovejuna is staged for their edification, or so it seems.

This does not come over clearly enough in Donnellan's production. We are not quite sure of their role. One would have thought that while respecting Vega's script, it would have been possible to bring home the fate of Fuenete Ovejuna. Far from looking out for a new, suitable commander, as they 'promised' at the end of the play, the royal couple gave orders that the whole town, church included, be dismantled stone by stone - so that no trace of its revolution would remain. It's a pity that this had to be left to the programme.

That said I thoroughly recommend this production.

Jack Conrad

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In memory of Dr Bedir Aydemir (comrade Mevlut)

BESIDES the founders of scientific communism Britain has been host to some of the finest revolutionaries the world proletariat has produced. One of these exiles was Dr Bedir Aydemir (comrade Mevlut) who died in London at the age of 41 on December 31 1988 after a long battle with cancer. Bedir Aydemir was a great man, a great communist, a great teacher, a great fraternal comrade of *The Leninist* and a great friend.

Like many of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party – including Lenin himself – Bedir was not born into the working class. His father was a bourgeois, an engineer working mainly in sugar refineries and his mother came from a prominent political family – her father was an MP for 20 years.

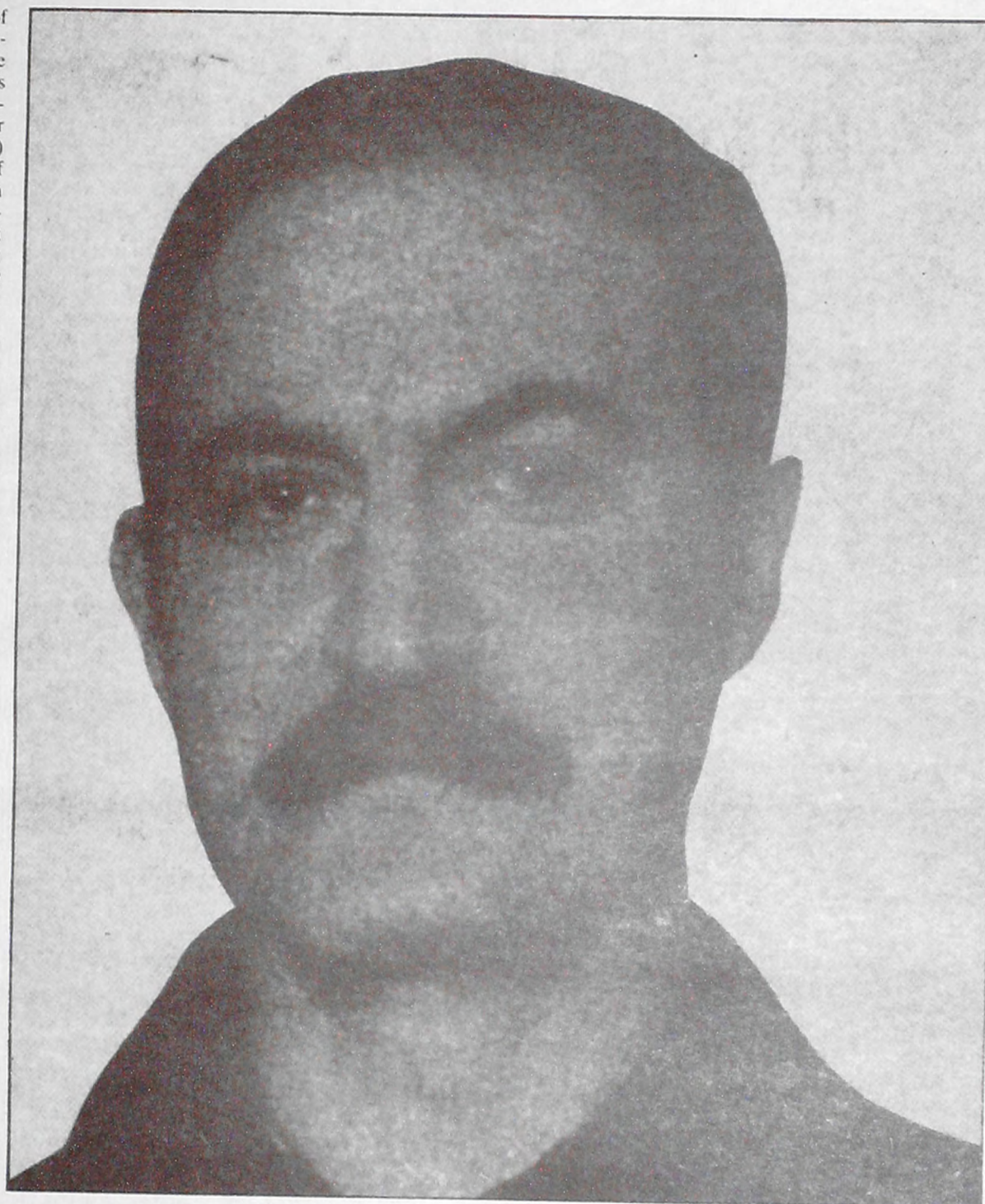
Because of his family's political background and his father's avid interest in politics, Bedir was from a child surrounded by political debate and ideas. During his spare time he explored the sugar refineries where his father worked. This is where he first became conscious of the sort of life workers in Turkey had to endure; conditions in the industry were notoriously bad.

When he was 14, in his last year at Talas American College, he declared himself an atheist – in Turkey an act of immense political significance. It was the first step in Bedir Aydemir's path to communism and class treachery.

From Talas he went to the prestigious Robert College in Istanbul in 1961. Here he was influenced by the heady political atmosphere that was rapidly turning the country's universities into revolutionary powder kegs. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Bedir did not join any of the then mushrooming legal socialist or revolutionary groups. As he said later: **"Being close to government circles I did not trust in the success either of parliamentary socialism or youth movement adventurism. Therefore until I finished university those years became for me years of study and learning with minimum participation as a sympathiser to this or that political activity, rather than political involvement."**

It was at university that Bedir developed a passion for Turkish folk music and dance, then undergoing a renaissance. He formed a folk choir at his college. The director was Ruhi Su, Turkey's leading modern folksinger and musician. Bedir learnt a great deal from Ruhi Su and throughout his life retained a deep respect for him and his firm commitment to democracy and revolution. As president of Robert College Folklore Club Bedir Aydemir played a not inconsiderable role in breaking down the barriers between the aloof Robert College and the universities in Istanbul which were seething with new ideas and revolutionary politics.

In 1968 Bedir Aydemir graduated as an electrical engineer and came to Queen Mary College in London where he studied for three years to gain an MSc in Control Engineering and then a PhD. Between 1971 and 1973 he worked



for the British Steel Corporation at Newport in South Wales.

From the late 1960s Turkey was gripped by a profound revolutionary situation. The ruling class could no longer rule in the old way and the masses were clamouring for fundamental change. In light of the failure of the legal socialists and petty bourgeois revolutionaries alike, the question of reorganising Turkey's Communist Party – which because of liquidationist opportunism existed only in name – came to the top of the agenda.

It was characteristic of the man that, although he sometimes took time before deciding to act, when he did, he did so with all the energy he could command. For Bedir Aydemir the time for action had come and he threw himself into fighting for the cause of communism body and soul.

After helping to found the Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain in 1971 he went on in 1974 to take up full time political work. It was then that he was admitted into the reestablished Communist Party of Turkey, and it was as a Party member that he returned to Turkey in 1976 to do his military service.

Following military service he lectured at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara and part time in Istanbul. During this period the comrade carried out important assignments for the TKP of a technical nature, he was also involved in the printing of an influential legal publication of the time called *Politika*. Another aspect of Bedir Aydemir's work was in the peace movement. He became secretary of the Turkish Peace Association. In this capacity he travelled the world widely and gained an insider's view of the upper echelons of the world communist movement.

In 1980, following the September 12 fascist coup, comrade Bedir Aydemir had to flee from Turkey. He was already involved in the ideological debates which split the TKP, openly breaking with the 'officials' when in 1981 he wrote an article under his own name on the peace question in *Iscinin Sesi (Worker's Voice)*, the paper of the Leninist wing of the TKP. Against the 'officials' he maintained that peace was not 'above class'. Peace, he said, could only be secured and guaranteed through bringing the working class to power.

Bedir Aydemir came to London where he became a member of the Central Committee of the TKP. As a leading member of the TKP he played an important role in organising the party's work in Turkey and was at the same time very active in developing the work of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey.

Comrade Bedir Aydemir personified all that a communist should be. He was a revolutionary organiser, in the mould of Yakov Sverdlov, who gave everything to the cause of the working class, at the same time he was cultured and in no sense narrow. The work load he took on would have laid a lesser man low, but he was always good natured and urging others on with a joke. He was also the living embodiment of proletarian internationalism.

During 1981 the comrades who went on to publish *The Leninist* worked closely with Bedir Aydemir and were profoundly influenced by him and his politics. In a real way what *The Leninist* is today, is in no small measure due to comrade Bedir Aydemir. What impressed us was his deep knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and

how he combined this with single-minded hard work. Unity of theory and practice was no mere slogan for him.

After *The Leninist* was first published in November 1981 Bedir Aydemir paid close attention to its development. When we met him he was always full of searching questions and valuable advice. In July 1985 this took the form of taking part in our Third Conference. He was part of a four strong fraternal delegation chosen by the TKP's Central Committee. Our conference granted this delegation full speaking rights. It was Bedir Aydemir who was responsible for the main intervention by the TKP comrades.

"We attach great importance to the work of *The Leninist*", he said. "Throughout our stay in Great Britain in its various stages and between various comrades, relations between our two organisations have been extremely valuable, extremely exemplary. This has the seeds of what proletarian internationalism should be like."

Comrade Bedir's speech, as befitting a genuine communist and true proletarian internationalist, was completely different to the sort of tired diplomatic 'fraternal' greetings we are so used to from 'official communism'.

At our conference a sharp difference had developed over the question of dedication. Comrade Bedir Aydemir did not mince his words. He told the conference that the class struggle in Britain demanded that "those who put themselves forward to meet these developments must increase their preparedness, their means and their abilities, if they are to meet the tasks life is demanding There can be no ground given, not even a millimetre, on the question of hard work – whatever you give it will not be enough, life will demand more."

Our organisation has done its best to follow this advice. What we have achieved and what life demands off us proves that what comrade Bedir said was correct. Where those turncoats who urged upon us a Menshevik style of work have ended up also proves him correct.

Shortly before he died I visited comrade Bedir in hospital to say a final goodbye and tell him what an inspiration he had been to us. He told me of the respect and love he had for the comrades of *The Leninist* and how he was certain that communism will win. Although he was eaten away by cancer the spirit of revolution still burned inside him as fiercely as ever.

The death of Bedir Aydemir is a great loss to the revolutionary struggle in Turkey, it is also a great loss for us in Britain. He will not easily be replaced, but replaced he will be because communism will win.

His memory will not only inspire those comrades who personally knew and worked with him. It will also inspire the millions who will make the revolution in Turkey and the billions who will build the future world communist order.

Jack Conrad

In memory of Bedir Aydemir, former secretary of Turkish Peace Association, a great man, a great communist and a great teacher

War, revolution and the revisionist Gorbachev

PEACE seemed to be breaking out all over in 1988. The Iran/Iraq war ended, Vietnamese troops began leaving Kampuchea, Yasser Arafat denounced 'terror' and recognised Israel, South Africa agreed to Namibian independence in return for a Cuban pull out from Angola and, of course, there was a remarkable seachange in US/Soviet relations.

Cold War talk has – for the moment – gone. The Soviet Union is no longer the 'evil empire' nor is it out to 'bury the west'. It has done its utmost to be helpful in 'easing the tensions in the world's trouble spots', its troops will be out of Afghanistan by February and the leaders of the PDPA will no doubt be evacuated. What is more it has signed the unequal INF agreement with the US and at the UN unilaterally announced its intention of reducing the Soviet army by 500,000 (Shevardnadze has now added all the Soviet Union's chemical weapons to this unilateral disarmament drive).

If these were the olive branches, many see the roots of peace in the 'new thinking' of Gorbachev. Because of Gorbachevism, we are assured, the spectre of a World War III, which has haunted humanity since 1945, was exorcised in 1988. This comforting notion is peddled by politicians right across the spectrum from Margaret Thatcher to Martin Jacques.

Looking at TV pictures of Reagan and Gorbachev embracing each other in Red Square, very different sorts of people feel entitled to bask in the warm glow of self justification. For instance hard line Tories say that Nato's insistence on deploying Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe to 'counter' Soviet SS20s has paid off: Gorbachev has agreed to zero-zero conditions Brezhnev dismissed out of hand. Even the pacifists, whose mass movement has had the wind taken from its sails by Gorbachev/Reagan summitry, are full of optimism.

Genuine communists urge caution. More, we say in the light of Gorbachev's UN speech and Soviet disarmament the danger of a World War III, far from receding, has become greater. It does not surprise us that millions now think the future is rosy, so tranquillising has the superpower PR been.

There has been talk of everlasting peace many times before. We remember that a mere two decades after the 'war to end wars' Neville Chamberlain was waving a piece of paper saying that there would be peace in our time, and that in the following six years some 50 million people were slaughtered in a war that towered over World War I in destruction, barbarity and sheer hypocrisy. With this in mind unlike Gorbachev we refuse to junk the scientific truths about war and peace revealed by Marxism-Leninism and embrace pacifism.

A few years ago the perceived danger of a World War III galvanised millions into action. The streets and squares of almost every city rang to pacifist cries for peace and disarmament. Where banning CFC aerosol sprays is now the in thing, peace was all the rage. With the active assistance of the 'official communists' CND – which was all but dead, if not buried – rose like the proverbial phoenix. Fed-

eral Germany, the United States and the Netherlands all saw their equivalents attract huge numbers.

Gorbachev's diplomacy has returned these movements to the ashes. His old pals act with Reagan seems to be bringing peace where mass demonstrations and peace camps failed. With the apparent rapprochement between the superpowers the peace movements have lost members hand over fist ... And yet for all the Soviet Union's concessions the Nato arms build up continues with spinechilling speed. There is no room for complacency.

Almost immediately after Gorbachev promised in New York to decommission thousands of tanks, artillery pieces and 500,000 men, Nato general secretary, Manfred Wörner, flatly insisted that Gorbachev's cuts would not be reciprocated. They have not been.

Within days of his UN speech the Thatcher government announced its intention of spending £1 billion on the new Challenger II battle tank. Not to be outdone, the US publicly unveiled its B2 Stealth bomber – the most expensive aircraft ever built – which because of its ultra high tech design and special component materials can fly undetected by radar into Soviet airspace in order to deliver its deadly nuclear payload.

While Gorbachev disarms the Soviet Union the US has put the final touches to its three pronged first strike capability: the B1 and B2 bombers, the ground based MX ICBM and the submarine launched Trident missile. And nothing Gorbachev has said or done has stopped the US relentlessly pressing ahead with its militarisation of outer space with the multi billion dollar Strategic Defence Initiative, the so-called 'Star Wars' programme – the vital final 'shield' component in the US plan to be able to destroy the Soviet Union in a World War III and survive.

It would be a complete abrogation of our responsibilities to keep quiet on all this, to pretend that imperialism has changed its spots and jump on the Gorbachevite 'universal human interests' charabanc. To fall in line with this revisionism would be easy. But it is not for us. We will devote ourselves to making revolution.

The reason we are dedicated to something that appears to a philistine like Gorbachev as a "destructive" project full of dangers for international relations is straightforward (*Perestroika* p172). Unless we succeed in getting rid of imperialism/capitalism – sooner rather than later – it will plunge the world into a nuclear holocaust. Without revolution this is inevitable. Peace summits, unilateral disarmament and nonsense about nuclear weapons fundamentally changing the nature of war only help to foster pacifistic illusions in the working class – the one class that can save humanity. They do not bring peace.

1. What is war?

Before we can deal with the growing danger of a World War III we must touch upon some fundamental theoretical questions about war and where the drive for it comes from. The

seminal scientific definition of war was given to us by Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian soldier-philosopher of the Napoleonic era. In his magnum opus, *On War*, Clausewitz defined war as: "an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will a duel on an extensive scale" and centrally a "continuation of policy by other means".

This definition was fully accepted by the founders of scientific socialism. They deepened Clausewitz's ideas on war by linking them to the existence and role of the state, classes and the class struggle. Thus Lenin declared: "All wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within a state, pursued for a long time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone being changed" (VI Lenin CW Vol 24 p400).

Marxists showed how war was a product of class society and would only be ended with the ending of class society. As Engels explained in his *Origin of the family, private property and the state*, primitive communist society experienced no war. Of course, individual acts of violence occurred, even the occasional tribal clash, but no organised, prolonged, extensive bloodbaths – society simply could not afford it.

But as productive forces advanced with settled agriculture and a surplus in production became a permanent feature, primitive communist society disintegrated and the private ownership of the means of production appeared. This brought with it a split in society and the emergence of a class of oppressed producers and a class of oppressing owners. To protect and advance their position and interests the owners created armed bodies of men – a state apparatus. Hand in hand with that went war. Through war the ruling class could not only suppress the dispossessed masses of its own country but extend its domination over other peoples.

War was endemic in ancient, slave and feudal society. But with the triumph of capitalism as the dominant mode of production wars expanded tremendously in scale and loss of life. In comparison the campaigns of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Julius Caesar were skirmishes. With its huge productive potential capitalism could mobilise armies of tens of millions to fight in wars in which tens of millions died. And now with the development of nuclear weaponry capitalist wars represent a threat to the very survival of our species.

For Gorbachev this is reason enough for humanity to see sense and renounce nuclear weapons. "Nuclear war" he says "cannot be a means of achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals." (*Perestroika* p140) This is now the declared position of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and is the "fundamental principle of the new political outlook".

Gorbachev's pacifism is not confined to nuclear war but all war. He insists that: "Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of policy only by other means, which was classical in his time, has grown hopelessly out of date. It now belongs to the libraries."

(*Ibid* p141)

In truth Gorbachev wants to consign not only Clausewitz to the "libraries" but Marx, Engels and Lenin too. Claiming the proud mantle of communism, this revisionist dares not say so openly. Like all revisionists Gorbachev dishonestly covers his attacks on Marxism-Leninism with attacks on vague, undefined "old concepts" and "out of date thinking".

Yet, as we shall see, far from being outdated Marxism-Leninism remains the key to understanding the world we live in today, not least the source and danger of war. War – both nuclear and conventional – can only be understood as a continuation of policy by other (ie violent) means. Maintaining this is not to stand by some ancient dogma. Defending Clausewitz's definition of war is important because it is true. Abandoning it for Gorbachevism which says that war is caused by "reckless and irresponsible power politics" is akin to casting aside the theory of relativity, evolution and quantum mechanics for the anti-scientific idealism of religion.

We hardly slander Gorbachev. In his own words, "basing international policies on moral and ethical norms that are common to all humankind" which were "a utopian dream" are now "a vital requirement" (*Ibid* p141 and p146). As Marxism has shown, so-called universal "moral and ethical norms" about peace have to be seen in the context of class society. Such ideas are developed by the ruling class to fool the oppressed classes, to persuade them to accept their lot and not fight for their freedom. Gorbachev's "new political thinking" is hardly new. It is a rehashed version of reactionary utopianism. Gorbachevism is the real "out of date thinking", not Marxism-Leninism.

2. Just and unjust wars

Gorbachev claims that the world can achieve peace and plenty through permanent cooperation between the socialist and capitalist countries. This is effectively the formal abandonment by the leadership of the CPSU of the theory that foreign policy is a product of domestic policy and that the class struggle is the locomotive of history.

Gorbachev says that: "Ideological differences should not be transferred to the sphere of interstate relations, nor should foreign policy be subordinate to them, for ideologies may be poles apart, whereas the interest of survival and prevention of war stand universal and supreme." (*Ibid* p143) For Marxists it is ABC that the foreign policy of a state – any state – is subordinate to the policy of the dominant class and its ideology domestically. Denying this is like denying that light travels at 186,282,395.9 miles per second.

The reactionary implications of Gorbachev's reasoning is clear. For him, pursuing the scientific ideology of the working class at an international level, ie encouraging revolutions, threatens the survival of humanity. Consequently working class interests must be subordinated to international class collaboration. Gorbachev thinks that the capitalist class has legitimate interests which, if respected,

can through reasoned argument be won to join in the finding of a solution to "global problems ... of economic development and ecology, as an indispensable condition for a lasting peace." This is the anti-revolutionary logic of Gorbachevism.

For us class politics are the key to the future. To achieve a world of peace and plenty requires fierce class struggle (up to and including armed struggle) against the capitalists who on all past experience are quite prepared to resort to the most bloody methods in order to hang on to their obscene privileges and their supposedly god given right to rule. Hence, unlike Gorbachev, we consider it essential to prepare workers for a civil war of liberation.

What is more, given that the liberation of the working class in one country can only be fully realised with the liberation of workers in all countries and the triumph of communism, the class struggle of the proletariat has always been, at the end of the day, international. So with the partial victories represented by the emergence of socialist states, this means that the class struggle can also take the form of revolutionary war. A couple of examples from the history of the Soviet Union itself will suffice to illustrate this point.

In 1920 the Red Army pursued the invading Polish forces across the Soviet border into Poland itself. The hope of Lenin and other leaders of the Soviet state was to reach Warsaw. Smashing the army of the semi-fascist dictator and renowned social chauvinist Pilsudski would merge the forces of the Red Army with the Polish workers into one mighty river. This would drown reaction in Poland and would greatly enhance the chances of success of the German Revolution.

The Soviet Union's war against Poland, though on a smaller scale, was no different in essence from its war against Nazi Germany, except that the war against Poland failed and that against Nazi Germany succeeded. They were both revolutionary wars which from being defensive became offensive. Being an international continuation of the Soviet state's policy by violent means the victories of the Red Army of 1944 and 1945 created extremely favourable conditions for the creation of socialist states in Eastern Europe. This is as clear an example as one could want of the class struggle conducted on an international scale by the Soviet Union.

In contrast to Gorbachev's pacifism Marxists recognise just and unjust wars. We are not opposed to all war. In broad terms we differentiate between wars fought by the oppressed and those fought by oppressors. For us the violence of the oppressed is justified while the violence of the oppressor is not. We understand that wars by progressive classes, oppressed nations and socialist states have their origins in the desire to clear away the stifling old order, the desire for freedom and the drive for the new. There wars are just and revolutionary. They must be supported.

This is, of course, not the end of the matter. We also consider some wars conducted by oppressors just if they objectively advance the forces of production. This is the communist method to determine whether one of their wars is just or unjust.

Naturally a class can start off being progressive and thus fight just wars and then in time become a fetter on production and thus reactionary and fight unjust wars. By their very nature many wars are not progressive. In fact, they are decidedly reactionary, and therefore unjust. This was the case with decadent slave and feudal society and it is most certainly the case with decaying, moribund and parasitic capitalism, ie capitalism at its imperialist stage.

Imperialism allowed capitalism to avoid revolution and enjoy a new lease of life in the metropolitan countries. On a world scale, however, through the subjugation of backward countries and parasitism it undoubtedly placed crippling fetters on the development of production. Production advanced, but to nowhere near the level which world socialism would have made possible. That is why imperialist capitalism is inherently reactionary.

Imperialism also held back the productive potential of the world because it greatly increased the number and scale of wars. Many of these resulted from conquest of backward peoples; the scramble for Africa, the turning of China into a semi-colony and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. But the most bloody and damaging were those between the great powers resulting from capitalism's law of uneven development. This law was greatly enhanced by the turn to imperialism which immensely aggravated the contra-

dictions inside capitalism. Imperialism ushered in an epoch of wars.

3. Imperialism and war

As we have said, for Lenin wars were inseparable from the "political systems that engender them" and war can only be understood in relationship to the policies pursued by classes. This is most definitely true of our epoch which is the epoch of imperialism. With Gorbachev's utopian vision of a lambs-and-lions world of cooperation between socialism, imperialism and the so-called Third World in mind, it is worth while spending a little time looking at this.

In the late nineteenth century newly emergent imperialist powers such as Germany found themselves in the position of not being able to obtain "a place in the sun" (Kaiser Wilhelm II); the world had already been divided by the likes of France, Belgium, the Netherlands and, above all, Britain.

The fact that from the 1880s Germany had outstripped Britain in heavy industry and technical efficiency meant that the existing division of the world became a barrier to further capital accumulation by German capitalists. As a result there arose an ever sharpening contradiction between the imperialist 'have nots' and the 'haves'; a contradiction epitomised by the rivalry between Germany and Great Britain.

Smaller powers organised themselves around the bigger ones and sought advantage. There resulted a web of secret treaties linking one power to another in contracts of joint robbery and plunder. From 1900 the world was visibly sliding towards the abyss. Peaceful solutions were considered but all attempts to stave off the inevitable failed. Negotiations broke down and world war, which looked close in 1905 and in 1911, finally broke out in August 1914.

Although Germany was defeated by the combined might of Britain and the United States, the 'war to end wars' could not bring peace. The millions who had been butchered on the battlefields of Flanders, the Dardanelles, Tannenberg, Ypres, and Verdun died for profit not for peace. Imperialism's wars could only lay the basis for an imperialist peace and eventually a new imperialist war. The uneven rate of development characteristic of capitalism and the onerous nature of the peace of Versailles could only pave the way for another bloodbath between Germany and Britain.

As Lenin taught us, imperialist war is the continuation of the policies of imperialist peace; peace merely registers the changed relation of forces brought about as a result of military operations. Germany may have found itself militarily defeated in 1918 but its industries and technique remained superior to the other European imperialist powers, including Britain. As soon as Germany embarked on the road to recovery it again found its path blocked by the same obstacle that it had experienced before: the division of the world by the great colonial powers, especially the undynamic but very amply endowed British Empire.

The possession of an empire enabled British capitalists to top up their domestic rates of profits and amass huge fortunes. It also provided a market from which its rivals could be excluded: where Britain found itself squeezed out of European markets it could always fall back on India, Africa and the dominions.

This cushion, plus the 'offloading' of the full effect of the general crisis of capitalism, which necessitated the destruction of capital, onto dynamic Germany - as a consequence of its military defeat in 1918 - meant that sluggish Britain was able to ride the precipitous 1929 crash and the economic dislocation and devastation of the early 1930s without plunging into turmoil. German imperialism in contrast, having brutally suppressed the proletariat's revolutionary attempts of 1918-1919 and 1923, found itself again gripped by crisis in the wake of the 1929 crash, which saw its capital destroyed as opposed to Britain's. The system in desperate self defence spawned the grotesque monster of Nazism as its agent of counterrevolution and redivisionism.

World War II started as simply inter-imperialist and hence unjust. Yet with the German attempt to violently reintroduce capitalism into the Soviet Union through its invasion in 1941 the war assumed a dual character. On the one hand it was still an imperialist war but on the other it was a revolutionary war.

The Soviet Union fought a just, revolutionary war. Stalin's bureaucratic methods tended to cloud this, as did his talk of Mother Russia and encouragement of frankly chauvinist anti-German propaganda. Nevertheless the fact that the Red Army successfully defended the Soviet Union and went on to victory after victory had tremendously progressive consequences. As much as we may criticise Stalin's mistakes these victories owed not a little to his singleminded leadership. Nothing Gorbachev says today will make us forget this.

In contrast to the USSR its imperialist allies, in spite of all their rhetoric, pursued purely imperialist aims. They could do nothing else. To suggest, as Gorbachev does, that they fought an "anti-fascist war" in the "common interests of all peoples" is to turn one's back on objective reality. (*Perestroika* p147)

Naturally, anti-fascist propaganda was the order of the day. But no class conscious worker would take that at face value. Behind the veneer of an 'anti-fascist' war Britain was determined to preserve its empire, likewise France, while the US had grander ambitions - world domination. The entry of the USSR into the war could do nothing to change that. For Gorbachev to claim otherwise is not only wrong but revolting; he is flattering the blood stained imperialists with the lies they used to get worker to kill worker.

4. Imperialism post-1945

As Gorbachev points out, with 1945 the world entered the nuclear era. For him this meant that there "appeared an objective limit for class confrontation in the international arena" and the emergence of "real, not speculative and remote, common human interest - to save humanity." (*Ibid* pp146-7) So let us examine the post-1945 world and see if it is fundamentally different to the pre-1945 world.

The aftermath of World War II was very different from that of World War I. Although on the winning side, Britain along with France and the other 'haves' failed to prevent redivision. This was in part due to the struggle by the colonial peoples for national independence and the greatly enhanced power of the Soviet Union. But more important was the power of the 'Johnny come lately' ally of Britain, the United States. It did everything to encourage a safe, ie non-revolutionary, decolonisation. Obviously the US had no concern whatsoever for the interests of the colonial peoples. What it wanted was the opening up of markets previously closed or at least partially closed through empire protectionism.

The dissolution of the great colonial empires hardly meant the ending of imperialism. Virtually the whole world had in effect fallen under the domination of the US because it was a 'super' imperialist power with by far the most dynamic capital. Imperialism might find colonial domination "convenient" (Lenin) but imperialism and colonies do not in the least mean the same thing. Imperialism is in essence monopoly capital, not colonialism, let alone the "psychology and notions of colonial times" as Gorbachev implies (*Ibid* p177).

Writing in his *Imperialism* Lenin outlined three forms characteristic of the imperialism of his day: the British sort, which was colonialist; the French, which although it had an extensive empire was based on the usury of its banking monopolies; and the German sort, which had no empire to speak of. This German sort of imperialism has, after 1945, become the norm. It rested on giant finance capitalist monopolies possessing the power - through syndicates, deals and sheer size - to divide up the world market and suppress free competition.

In a real way this 'German' form is the most appropriate for capitalist imperialism. After all, unlike other types of class society, capitalist exploitation is veiled, not obvious to common sense and difficult to analyse. Colonial exploitation undeniably does not fall into this category. It is naked, there for all to see, and is subject to cross class nationalistic resentment and hatred. Neo-colonialism is a different matter altogether.

Under it there is formal political independence. The unequal exchange between the imperialist powers and the backward and medium developed countries seems to be as equal as the worker getting a fair day's pay for a fair day's work; the extraction of surplus value is hidden. Whatever Gorbachev may

believe there can be no equality between nations while imperialism, ie monopoly capitalism, exists. Likewise there can be no equality between worker and capitalist. Gorbachev calls for non-exploitative relations but this is pure utopianism. Surely he does not expect the USA to return to competitive capitalism and abolish Fords, IBM and the Chase Manhattan Bank. That is like calling upon a baby to return to the womb - it is impossible. The only way to abolish the inequality between nations is to go forward to the world revolution.

Having established that ending colonialism did not mean the end of imperialism, let us deal with US imperialism. It, like Germany, has long possessed very dynamic capital. Unlike Germany though, the US found no constricting fetters to accumulation in the latter part of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries. Due to its big population, huge tracts of free land in the west and a massive internal market, US expansion proceeded relatively smoothly. Only in the twentieth century did barriers to capital accumulation begin to make themselves felt.

The US did not force through a genuine redivision of the world following 1918. The old European empires remained, indeed they grew through gobbling up the few German possessions. The US was already the most powerful nation but it did not possess sufficiently greater strength compared to other powers (especially Britain) to refashion the world. It paid dearly for this inability. When the 1929 crash occurred the US, like Germany, suffered far more acutely than empire cushioned Britain. Where Britain lost something approaching 14% of its industrial output, the figures for the US and Germany were nearer 50%.

1945 was very different to 1918. The US emerged from the carnage with such overwhelming strength relative to its imperialist 'friends' that it could now safely call the tune.

The US became a sort of 'super' imperialist power, its capital penetrating every corner of the capitalist world; all imperialist rivals bending to its will. The beginning of the twenty year 'American century' meant that the general crisis of capitalism, which had gripped the world since 1914, was resolved. A new bout of capital accumulation began, the rate of profit soared and the world economy expanded at an unprecedented rate for an unprecedented period.

This was used as a cover for all sorts of silly ideas (with a slight variation they are being reworked today by *Marxism Today* under very different conditions which make them even more stupid). Yet in spite of cocksure predictions by the intellectual whores of capital that the system would enjoy uninterrupted growth and prosperity, and the echo this found in leftist circles, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and crisis eventually reasserted itself. From around 1968 boom gave way to pre-crisis.

Economic upturns became ever more fleeting, speculative and founded on credit. The dominant picture became one of stagnation and depression. Under capitalism it is a law that boom and crisis operate in inverse proportion. It is clear therefore that the height and length of the post-World War II boom and the fantastic stretching of the credit system in order to keep things going, means capitalism promises to produce a stupendous new general crisis that will dwarf that of 1914-48.

5. The slide to a World War III

As we have shown, the nature of imperialism has not changed. The same laws operated after 1945 as did before. Understanding this we can see that the danger of a World War III comes from capitalism's law of uneven development.

In 1955 the US 'super' imperialist power accounted for a staggering 50% of the entire capitalist world's total industrial production. Uneven development meant this could only be temporary. Japan and Germany rose again. There has been a slow but remorseless erosion of US hegemony. By 1970 the US share of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - the great imperialist powers' club) industrial production had declined to 43.3%. In 1975 this was down to 34.9%. And what was the world's biggest creditor is now the biggest debtor.

Today Japan has a per capita production

equivalent to the US. And even if this is more a reflection of the slide of the dollar and the strong yen than actual purchasing power there can be no denying Japan's or Federal Germany's economic strength. Japan is now the capitalist world's second most powerful economy (it might already have overtaken the Soviet Union in terms of industrial production) while Federal Germany is the world's largest trading nation.

The fact that the US had created an open world market meant that its old adversaries in World War II also found expansion relatively easy. This did not create any real problems in the boom years. But in a pre-crisis period rivalries become more and more intense. The tendency for the rate of profit to fall asserts itself and contradictions are exacerbated and begin to fester.

A new general crisis can be put off but it cannot be avoided. The day of reckoning will come; and the longer it is put off the deeper it will be and the more inter-imperialist contradictions will fuel the drive towards protectionism and war.

Naturally all the imperialists want peace. Not only Takeshita who is prime minister of a country with a pacifist constitution, Kohl whose country refuses to arm itself with nuclear weapons and the 'socialist' Mitterand, but also Star Wars Bush and the Iron Lady Thatcher. The trouble is that every one of them wants the peace which suits their imperialism, their nation, as opposed to someone else's. As a result of this their imperialist peace is in reality nothing more than the preparation for their imperialist war.

Hence at the present stage it is hardly surprising that we find those in possession of the most dynamic capital lie at the heart of embryonic trading/military blocs in the form of a new co-prosperity sphere in East Asia with Japan and its 'little dragons' and a Federal German led European Community. These crystallising blocs slowly but inexorably find themselves diverging from the US, which terrifies the East Asian powers with its talk of protectionism, and is in turn terrified by what it sees as the 'fortress Europe' dangers that go along with the creation of a single EC market in 1992.

We are not about to witness a return to colonialism but the cracking up of the open world economy created by the US for itself in the post-1945 period. This, the end of the boom, the emergence of a pre-crisis situation and the divergence of interests between the major imperialist powers carry the seeds of a World War III - not, as Gorbachev would have us imagine, the "irrationality" of the military industrial complex. This or that section of the monopoly capitalist class might be more or less warlike; nevertheless, in the event of war it is fought in the interests of capital as a whole. Gorbachev refuses to see this. For his own opportunist reasons he wants to put the blame for the potential horrors of a World War III onto the smallest possible section of the capitalist class. This won't wash. It is capitalism as a whole which carries responsibility for World Wars I and II, not the arms manufacturers in isolation. The same goes for the danger of a World War III.

In spite of the greater aggressiveness of the established imperialist powers compared with the relatively pacifistic Japan and Federal Germany, it is vital for the proletariat to maintain an independent position and to avoid the trap of supporting one category against another. To stop war we must kill all imperialist powers. Because they are imperialist, today's 'pacifistic' powers are ultimately just as warlike as the armed to the eye balls USA. This must be emphasised.

Obviously at the present time there can be no serious prospect of a full blown inter-imperialist world war (those, like the RCP, who suggest otherwise only expose their tenuous grasp of reality). Although US hegemony has been eroded, it still exists. In spite of its decline the US's 29% share of world GNP is ahead of all of East Asia with its 20% (even with Australia thrown in for good measure) and the 12 members of the European Community's 28% (figures for 1987 - source: *The Economist* December 24, 1988).

Certainly, in terms of military power, US superiority is overwhelming. In 1982-83 it spent \$215.9 billion on its military machine compared with a combined total for all other Nato powers of \$105.9 billion, and Japan's miniscule \$10.45 billion. If we take a look at the mighty US nuclear arsenal and the military integration and subordination of other imperialist powers to it, it is clear that although the drive for world war has its source

in the crisis of capitalism and the growing rivalries and contradictions between the major imperialist powers, the US can control and direct all the major imperialist powers against the Soviet Union.

So while there are the first signs of the emergence of distinctive imperialist poles: the USA/Canada, Japanese dominated East Asia, and the EC; and while protectionism in various forms becomes more pervasive; the fact remains that the US still wields hegemony over the capitalist world. It was the conditions of growing contradictions between the major imperialist powers and the declining but sustained US hegemony which gave a new turn to the Cold War against the Soviet Union and the socialist community in the 1980s.

A Cold War is in essence a period when the imperialists attempt to achieve their ends by sabre rattling rather than open war or the more subtle economic penetration and subversion. As war has not been feasible we have tended to see a zig zagging between the Cold War and economic penetration, ie detente.

As World War II cooperation gave way to tension over the shape of the post-war world, US policy towards the Soviet Union became bellicose. Even in the closing months of World War II the US ruling class was openly threatening Stalin with a World War III. Fortunately, because the Soviet Union was able to quickly follow the US in developing an atomic bomb, the top secret American Joint Chiefs of Staff 'Pincher' and other atomic battle plans, which envisaged the destruction of 20 or more Soviet cities and conquest of the socialist countries between the summers of 1946 and '47, were kept in Cold War storage.

This Cold War lasted till the late 1960s. It was conducted under the rubric of 'rolling back communism' which, due to the Red Army and the revolutionary turmoil following World War II, was no longer isolated in one country (and, yes, Mongolia) but now stretched from central Europe to the Pacific Ocean. The socialist world was the only thorn in the side of total US world domination.

These societies represented an area of the world in which the US could not operate freely (and at this time had no pressing need to do so). Perhaps more importantly they were products of revolution - yes, in some cases from above - which presented an ideological alternative for the neo-colonial peoples just as the Americans were doing their best to consolidate their domination over them.

Initially when capitalist boom gave way to stagnation this Cold War tended to thaw and western policy zagged towards economic methods. Broadly this coincided with the USSR achieving something near strategic nuclear parity with the US and the certainty that it was only a matter of time before the liberation movement in Vietnam secured victory. With active Soviet encouragement western capital turned east.

For the imperialists this was motivated by the search for new markets in order to counteract their declining domestic rates of profit. But as trade with the socialist world took place under the control of the socialist states, profit rates were squeezed and possibilities limited.

This and the need to shore up US hegemony was what lay behind Reagan's B-movie rhetoric about the 'evil empire'. He was determined to force the Soviet Union to open up. In the military field the US outspent and technically left behind the Soviet Union with ultra accurate first strike missiles, Stealth aircraft and Star Wars. As proved by his unilateral cuts, selling out Afghanistan, capitulation over Angola and turn to market socialism, Gorbachev has given in where even Khrushchev and Brezhnev stood firm.

It is this miserable treachery which has produced a new detente. Reagan officially buried his 'evil empire' talk in Moscow last year and even Thatcher says the Cold War is over. For them Gorbachev's UN speech in December 1988 promising arms cuts and cooperation in solving 'regional conflicts' was a remarkable Christmas present. It was, but far from it consolidating peace, as we were told by sharp suited Soviet officials and bourgeois propagandists alike, his unilateral concessions to imperialism can only but weaken socialism and bring the danger of war nearer.

It is no exaggeration to say that all that has stopped a World War III has been the armed strength of socialism. This can be seen in the non use of the countless strategic battle plans developed by the Pentagon (which have now been made available for public inspection through the Freedom of Information Act - see Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To win*

a nuclear war: the Pentagon's secret war plans, Zed 1987). Launching an attack on the Soviet Union would have been too costly in terms of the inevitable retaliation. This has been the constant bugbear in all war plan feasibility studies carried out by US imperialism. If the US could have got away with 'only' 10 or 20 million dead, a war against the USSR would already have happened.

Of course, for the Soviet Union to develop a nuclear arsenal and to achieve something like parity in nuclear warheads with the US in the 1970s was a tremendous achievement. It was also tremendously costly. Not only in absolute rouble terms but also in relative gross national product terms. The Soviet Union is a much less wealthy country than the US (something like 50% less). As can be imagined, to come anywhere near matching the US in military hardware imposed a massive burden on the Soviet economy.

This is something the US strategists have long recognised (Gorbachev pathetically calls this "immoral", *Perestroika* p219). As a result they have constantly sought to up the stakes in the arms race. Not only in the never ending struggle for superiority between offensive and defensive weapons but to break the Soviet economy through deploying extremely expensive weaponry incorporating the latest exotic technology. To be sure of keeping itself safe the Soviet Union had to follow every US move. With Reagan's almost war time levels of 'defence' spending the US at last outbid the Soviet leadership. Gorbachev's arms cuts are not only designed to appease US imperialism, they are he says "needed if the Soviet economy is to be put on a firm footing". (*Morning Star* January 9, 1989)

Under the mismanagement of the bureaucracy Soviet economic growth - which was in double figures throughout the 1950s and much of the 1960s - ground to a halt in the late 1970s. Gorbachev's perestroika has done nothing to alter this bleak picture (no wonder the Soviet working class has few illusions in Gorbachevism - according to recent reports only 17% of the Soviet population supports perestroika, see *Financial Times* January 3, 1989). Only the intelligentsia and technocracy support his programme. (*Ibid* January 9, 1989)

A Soviet economy frozen by bureaucratic inertia and further endangered by Gorbachevite 'market socialism' is in no position to match the US in the arms race. Khrushchev, the last Soviet leader before Gorbachev to speak at the UN back in 1960, told the west that "we will bury you". Gorbachev has no such confidence.

Having taken the decision not to keep up with the US in the arms race, Gorbachev has gone all out to placate imperialism. He wants to persuade it that he can be trusted. Hence, along with sweeping unilateral cuts in the Soviet armed forces we see all vestigial rhetoric about the class struggle, the struggle of the oppressed and revolution being discarded by Gorbachev, to be replaced by the completely idealist concept of "the common interests of mankind". (This puts right centrists who write *Morning Star* editorials, which occasionally throw in references to the class struggle, well to the left of the Soviet president).

What Gorbachev means by "common interests of mankind" is class collaboration on an international scale between the Soviet leadership and the imperialist powers. Together, apparently, they can remove the threat of "environmental catastrophe" and "regional conflicts". This is nonsense worthy of the worst petty bourgeois utopians in the CND and Friends of the Earth.

Gorbachev's programme is diametrically opposed to Marxist-Leninist truth and the struggle for it. As we have seen, what he means in practice by resolving "regional conflicts" is selling out living revolutions. Yet already imperialism is moving the goal posts.

Gorbachev's retreat, his fawning, his social democratic language and programme, can only encourage the aggressiveness of the imperialists. Now they are asking for Kampuchea and Afghanistan, tomorrow it will be Nicaragua, the next day it could be Poland; eventually it is bound to be the Soviet Union - the world's revolutionary centre - itself. The new detente can only be a passing phenomenon.

6. Have nuclear weapons changed the nature of war?

According to Gorbachev imperialism is no longer what it was, because of nuclear weapons.

To launch a new world war is considered to be tantamount to committing suicide. The task in these new conditions, we are told, is to get rid of "ideological intolerance" in international relations (*Perestroika* p143). If this is done the warmongers can be isolated and the world can step forth on the path of peace and cooperation.

The development of nuclear weapons did, of course, bring about important changes in military tactics and strategy. But this has not led to a fundamental change in the nature of imperialism. No matter how costly the result, they are there to be used. They are not there for show and neither can they be deinvited.

Nuclear weapons have already been used against Japan and the US has threatened (sometimes openly, sometimes covertly) to use them against the Soviet Union. Those who suggest that their use would throw the world into a new barbarity are not wrong. But the way to avoid this fate is not to inveigh against inanimate weapons but to organise against those who are driven to use them.

People, not weapons, make history and change society. Nuclear weapons, however powerful, have not replaced class society and the class struggle. They must be seen as nothing more than a tool within class society in the same way as other major military developments, from the longbow to the tank. Weapons are tools of classes which create them and wield them. Thus, whether two sides in a war fight with the same weapons is for us a technical question, irrelevant in determining whom we support. What matters is the policies of each side; who is progressive and who is reactionary. Thus US nuclear weapons are reactionary because they are a tool of a reactionary social system, while Soviet nuclear weapons, because they defend the gains of the Great October Revolution, are a necessary evil; as were the swords of the Red Cavalry in the civil war and the T-34s which smashed the German war machine at the battle of Kursk in 1943.

As we have shown, imperialism represents the domination of finance capital. It is no policy pursued by this or that government but a definite stage of capitalism - its last. If we base ourselves firmly on this analysis we can see that the warlike nature of imperialism cannot change, simply because of nuclear weapons. Its drive to war is embedded in and determined by the capitalist economy itself.

Expecting capitalism to actually renounce war is not akin to expecting human beings to renounce food - that is possible. No, it is more like calling upon the earth to stop orbiting the sun. Its a matter of objective laws, not subjective intentions, that drive capitalism to war. Its laws, especially those of accumulation, necessitate the export of capital, necessitate the offloading of crisis onto rivals, necessitate expansionism, and where this cannot be done by peaceful methods it necessitates war as the only alternative.

7. The world balance of forces

When writing on the question of war and peace back in 1984 I was obliged to devote a considerable amount of space to dealing with the world balance of forces (see our supplement: World War III - the danger of it and how to stop it, *The Leninist* August 1984). The reason I had to do that was simple. The main 'orthodox' excuse the 'official communist' movement used to get round the Leninist analysis of imperialism and its inherent warlike nature was the claim that the world balance of forces had decisively shifted in favour of socialism (nuclear weapons and the military industrial complex came to the fore later).

Because of the new world balance, we were told, it was possible to avert world war without the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism. With the strength of the socialist camp, pressure from the international working class and all who want peace, imperialism could be forced to renounce war. This was the theoretical basis for the first and subsequent versions of the *British Road to Socialism* programme, adopted by the CPGB in 1950. It also maintained that socialism could come without revolution and through the bourgeois parliament; because of the supposed strength of the socialist camp imperialism could not resort to civil war.

To counter this I put forward two main arguments.

1. It is dangerous to believe that the bourgeoisie will not use violence to maintain its power:

better be safe than sorry. War cannot be banished while imperialism survives, it is of necessity warlike. The drive to war is as much a law of imperialism as the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and the need for capital accumulation etc.

2. The claim that the world balance of forces has *decisively* shifted in favour of socialism is in reality a myth.

To prove this second argument I reeled out a lot of figures which indicated that Soviet claims that the socialist world accounted for 43% of world industrial production and that the Comecon countries alone produced 33% were untrue and that the Soviet Union was only about half as rich as the USA.

We hardly need to repeat this exercise. Life has proved us right. We will therefore confine ourselves instead to one quote this time; it is from *Perestroika*, where Gorbachev at last admits that: "In the last fifteen years the national income growth rates had declined by more than a half and by the beginning of the eighties had fallen close to economic stagnation. A country that was once quickly closing on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another. Moreover, the gap in the efficiency of production, quality of products, scientific and technological development techniques began to widen and not to our advantage." (our emphasis, p.19) This is hardly a description of a decisive shift in the world balance of forces in favour of socialism. Indeed since we touched upon this question in 1984 it is clear that the world balance of forces has shifted further *against* socialism.

Even if we use the widest possible definition of the balance of world forces this can be seen to be true.

1. The socialist countries are still way behind the advanced capitalist countries in terms of gross product and technology. This gap has got wider in recent years. This has aided the erosion of socialism at its edges and the corrosion we have seen emerge from within.

2. Related to this decline in the relative power of the socialist world the so-called 'socialist orientated countries' are more and more orientated towards the imperialist countries.

3. The 'official world communist movement' is disintegrating. It has moved further to the right and overwhelmingly where it retains any real influence in the workers' movement it plays a typically reformist role.

All this does not lay us low, it merely confirms the profound truths of the doctrine of Marx, Engels and Lenin. There are no short cuts to communism, world revolution is the only road.

Even if imperialist encirclement and superiority was *in fact* replaced by socialist encirclement and superiority this would not lead us to the conclusion that our programme should commit us to a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism. The question of violence must always be faced. The capitalists are unlikely to have an aberration and decide not to resist us.

Those who inflated the power of living socialism placed all responsibility for defending the gains of the world revolution on a conservative bureaucracy which has now spawned Gorbachevism - hardly safe hands. If they were honest communists they would now admit their mistake. They would say that *The Leninist* was right all along and that talk of a peaceful road to socialism and getting imperialism to abandon war were wrong. We would gladly welcome such comrades into our ranks and let bygones be bygones.

Unfortunately we do not know of one prominent 'official communist' who has even asked questions about Gorbachev's effective admission that past claims of a *decisive* shift were bunk. This is very significant. What it shows is that we are not dealing with intellectual mistakes by honest communists. As we have argued, the 'official communist' movement is now deeply imbued with opportunism. It is committed to the parliamentary road because it is committed to reformism and, in the last analysis, to bourgeois society.

8. The question of peaceful coexistence

Although recognising the inevitability of war while imperialism existed, soon after the October Revolution Lenin became aware that Soviet Russia would have to attempt to survive for a considerable time in a world dominated by capitalism. It was therefore vital to take advantage of the antagonisms and contradictions between the major imperialist

powers to facilitate this.

Soviet Russia found itself a besieged detachment of the world revolution. The defeat of the revolutions in Europe, and especially the German revolution, meant that the days when Trotsky, the first People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, could refer to his job as merely being one of issuing "a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples of the world and then shut up shop" soon gave way to careful diplomacy and the tactics of peaceful coexistence as personified by G Chicherin.

To facilitate survival Lenin recognised that there had to be a division of labour between the diplomacy of the Soviet state in its dealings with capitalist countries and the principled position of communists in both socialist and capitalist countries. Communist parties should always adhere to a firm revolutionary line and never deviate from the struggle for world revolution but the Soviet state, while making calls for revolution, could wheel and deal.

Thus, when speculating about the possibility of an inter-imperialist war between Japan and the United States, Lenin said that advocating "propaganda for communism in these countries" is "correct, but it is not everything." The US and Japan "want to fight and will fight for world supremacy, for the right to loot ... Of course, defence of our country in such a war would be a heinous crime, a betrayal of socialism. Of course, to support one of these countries against another would be a crime against communism". But then he added "we communists have to play one off against another. Are we not committing a crime against communism? No, because we are doing that as a socialist state which is carrying on communist propaganda and is obliged to take advantage of every hour granted it by circumstances in order to gain strength as rapidly as possible." (VI Lenin, CW Vol 31 p443)

These tactics of peaceful coexistence were employed to strengthen the Soviet state, not in the patriotic sense but in order to create the most advantageous conditions for world revolution. Peaceful coexistence was living with capitalism, but only for as long as it took the workers in the capitalist countries to make revolution. The Soviet state had every interest in this and all Soviet communists had the duty to actively aid it.

It is crystal clear that the Leninist policy of peaceful coexistence was in no sense, shape or form class collaborationism or the renunciation of world revolution, as the Trotskyites blockheadedly claim. No, peaceful coexistence is a continuation of the class struggle using other (diplomatic) means.

Recognising that peaceful coexistence between capitalist and socialist states can be a principled tactic does not blind us to the fact that the *long term* interests of the Soviet Union and world peace cannot be secured through peaceful coexistence but only through world revolution. The victory of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, the emergence of a community of socialist states are only partial victories. For socialism to be made irreversible requires the establishment of the World Union of Socialist Republics.

Socialism has not eliminated wars in general or the threat of a new world war. Nor could it. While the strength of the socialist countries, above all the Soviet Union, can restrain the imperialist war drive, it cannot stop it. As Lenin declared in a speech to Party activists in Moscow in late 1920, "While capitalism and socialism exist side by side, they cannot live in peace; one or the other will ultimately triumph - the last obsequies will be observed either for the Soviet Republic or for world capitalism." (CW Vol 31, p457)

It almost goes without saying that Gorbachev's present line has nothing to do with the Leninist tactic of peaceful coexistence. The opportunism which has long existed in the CPSU elevated peaceful coexistence to a major strategic goal to which everything else was subordinate. This logically gave birth, at the April 1985 meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, to the declaration that peaceful coexistence should no longer be seen as a "specific form of the class struggle". This has gone hand in hand with denying the link between war and revolution.

Marxists have long recognised that because wars coincided with socio-economic crises they often detonated revolutions. The Franco-Prussian war provoked the Paris Commune, the Russo-Japanese war set off the 1905 revolution in Russia and the October Revolution itself was in part the product of World War I. Gorbachev claims that war and

the struggle for revolution must be "divorced". It does not "correspond to the realities of the nuclear era," he says (*Perestroika* p148).

What Gorbachev puts in place of revolution is international class collaboration. To excuse this Gorbachev comes out with the most idealist nonsense about letting every nation decide which "system and ideology is better," as if socialism was about shopping in a supermarket rather than the highest form of the class struggle.

Worse, so that the imperialists need not worry, he actually states in black and white that the existence of capitalist countries is a good thing! It is hard to believe but it's true: "The states and the peoples of the earth" he writes "are very different, and it is actually good that they are so." Apparently this "incentive for competition" fits into the concept of peaceful coexistence and the "dialectical unity of opposites." (*Ibid* p148)

Gorbachev's sleight of hand is another way of saying that the existence of capitalism with its unity of opposites in the form of exploited and exploiters is a good thing. Living in Thatcherite Britain we can tell Gorbachev that it is not. Capitalism is a system of pauperisation, greed and war. We do not want to hear excuses for it, we want to do away with it before it does away with us all.

If this philistine knew anything about dialectics he would understand that socialism and capitalism are opposites, which makes it inescapable and necessary that there will be *struggle* between the two which, because we are dealing with an *antagonistic* contradiction, must be resolved through the forcible suppression of the capitalist class. The unity of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The *struggle* of opposites absolute.

9. Leninists and the struggle for peace

What distinguishes genuine communists from others who recognise the danger of war is that we see the need to retaliate against it not with pacifistic calls for disarmament but with preparations and propaganda for the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism itself. For us it is only by completing the job started by our Russian comrades in October 1917 that war can be banished and peace guaranteed.

Fighting for revolution is the best possible service we can do for humanity. Putting peace first and subordinating the struggle for revolution to it is akin to saying you'll only have sexual intercourse after you've had two children. A working class in Britain that has no illusions in imperialism, that is determined to go out and make revolution, is in the best possible position to defend living socialism and, in due course, add to the number of socialist countries, thus weakening the forces of war and hastening the dawn of permanent peace.

We must resolutely oppose those, like Gorbachev, claiming to be "guided by the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism" who paint a picture of a transformed world: prosperous, democratic, and of course peaceful but still dominated by capitalism. Not surprisingly this dream has been praised by all the factions of 'official communism' in Britain (as well as the bourgeoisie).

The opportunists comfort themselves by laughing at our insistence that socialism will only come through working class violence and the smashing of the existing state machine. They think this is utopian and imagine that we are wide eyed romantics who spend our time waiting around for the day when we can reenact the storming of the Winter Palace in London. As an alternative the opportunists offer up one or another edition or version of the *BRS* programme.

It charts a course to communism through the Labour Party transforming the bourgeois military/bureaucratic state. In reality this is the utopian dream. Not that parliament and the bourgeois state are a mirage - far from it - but this very concrete reality which will always serve the class that created it. Those who say it can be so transformed might start off as sincere socialists but the logic of their position means they are tied to the camp of the class enemy. Because they identify with the bourgeois state, they will end up defending it.

Unlike the opportunists, our politics are based on historical experience and are rigorously realistic. We do not expend our ener-

gies pleading to capitalism to disinvest nuclear war and to only spend the "minimum required for defence" (Tony Chater). We say not a penny, not a person, to the bourgeois armed forces. Instead we call for the arming of the working class. Obviously this is not something that the bourgeoisie will benignly consent to. But it must be done and, step by painful step, in the face of intransigent and determined opposition, it will be done.

The arming of the workers cannot be achieved by sloganeering. The armed working class emerges from the class struggle; in the fight against the police on the picket lines, in the protection of our meetings and demonstrations against fascist attack and in the fight for revolution, ie from life itself. Calling for an armed working class does not mean importing AK47s from Libya and dishing them out to the first strikers we come across. Arming the working class is an organic result of the class struggle. The higher the level of class struggle the more sophisticated the arms and organisation. It starts with fists and boots and goes to drilling and martial arts, goes from crash helmets and baseball bats to shot guns and home made bombs, goes from Workers' Defence Corps to Red Guards.

When asked what socialism in Britain will look like and how it will come about, we Leninists say look at the miners' Great Strike, look at Ireland, that is what the dictatorship of the proletariat will be like. Far from being dreamers we understand that the future proletarian state and the revolution are to be seen in embryonic form in the here and now.

Great struggles give us a glimpse of what is to come. The struggle in the Six Counties, the miners' Great Strike, are worth a million editions of the *BRS* with its pathetic abstract scheme for peaceably *transforming* the bourgeois state into its opposite. Marxism tells us that the bourgeois state will be *destroyed* by its opposite. The 1984-5 strike and the 20 year struggle for national liberation in Ireland are life's confirmation of this.

These struggles prove that the masses make history, not would be reformist legislators. In Ireland the republican population has armed itself and created the basis of an alternative state machine. In its own way so did the miners' Great Strike, with its nationwide network of Support Committees, the Women Against Pit Closures Movement and the hit squads. These were the seeds of workers' soviets, a proletarian women's movement and a British Red Army.

Faced with the interrelated militarisation of capitalism, its war drive against the Soviet Union, its growing economic difficulties and attacks on the most basic rights and conditions of the working class we say we must fight to arm ourselves. Only then can we disarm the bourgeoisie and create a world without weapons of mass destruction. This is the only realistic course for our class to take. In the words of Lenin:

"Our slogan must be arming the proletariat to defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie. These are the only tactics possible for a revolutionary class, tactics that follow logically from, and are dictated by the whole objective development of capitalist militarism. Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie will it be able, without betraying its world historic mission, to consign all armaments to the scrap heap. And the proletariat will undoubtedly do this, but only when this condition has been fulfilled, and certainly not before." (VI Lenin CW Vol 23 p80 - original emphasis)

Peace can never be guaranteed through taking the road of 'official communism'. Peace will not come through the feminist women-only stunts at Greenham Common which *Marxism Today's* Bea Campbell used to offer as the universal elixir; nor the puerile Labourite parliamentary hot air so dear to the heart and close to the spirit of the *Morning Star*; nor the pious prayers of Bruce Kent applauded so enthusiastically by the NCP; and certainly not the Gorbachevism which unites them all.

No, world peace and the saving of mankind from nuclear holocaust can only come through the elimination of capitalism from the planet. War, the exploitation of man by man, the subjugation of small nations, and the oppression of women will be ended with the triumph of communism. This will be the era of real freedom when peace will not merely be a pause between wars but the permanent state of things - as a result not only will the word 'war' gradually disappear from the vocabulary but eventually so will its opposite, the word 'peace'.

Jack Conrad