

James Marshall

What section of the working class has not suffered under the Tories? Not only has the lid been put on wages, but speed ups have been imposed and rights curtailed. What is more, millions have found themselves thrown out of work and indeed millions of youth, especially black youth, have never had any steady employment. There has been resistance, in a few cases moderately successful, but nine times out of ten our trade union organisations have proved ineffective against a determined capitalist class. Even when the union leaders have not taken on the role of troubleshooters, and intermediaries bargaining away our jobs, our rights, and our conditions, long drawn out strike after long drawn out strike has apparently seen no substantial tangible gain for the workers at the end of the day. What is so for employed workers is a thousand times truer for the unemployed; two People's March For Jobs and a damp squib of a Jobs Express has not only seen unemployment continue its upward spiral but no permanent unemployed workers' movement is in sight.

Now 1984 is witnessing a decisive confrontation between the fully prepared and equipped forces of the state and the miners, the most militant and important section of the working class. Thatcher is banking on the work she has done since her first term in defeating one section of the workers after another, in introducing draconian anti-trade union laws, in weakening bargaining power and morale by creating a massive pool of unemployment, will see the miners defeated. At first it seemed that the last Labour government's introduction of productivity schemes, which set one pit and one area against another, would do the trick by itself. But as the strike gained momentum this hope has faded in the face of bitter determination by the majority of NUM members to win unity in their own ranks, and see the strike to victory. There is still a long way to go; the miners know this, they also know that it is only by winning genuine solidarity from other unions and by rallying the mass of workers to their cause can victory be gained over MacGregor's NCB and the state forces that stand behind him.

Standing By the Miners

Standing by the miners is not only a question of basic working class morality, it is also a matter of very immediate interest. For if we let the miners go down to defeat, the capitalist class will follow it up by a sustained assault on all our wages and conditions — have no doubt about this. It is because of this that all militants and all class conscious workers should be arguing not just the case for a solidarity levy for the miners but should be winning sections now prepared for a struggle with their own employers to coordinate their fight with the miners, to fight for a united workers' front on pay, jobs, and against all anti-trade union laws across a whole series of industries from the health workers to the teachers, from the carworkers to the gasworkers, from the printworkers to the waterworkers. We must link our struggles, coordinate our claims, develop a movement that will not only see every pit on strike, but also a whole range of industries — car plants, docks, railways, power stations, and steelworks. Such a strike wave would unquestionably bring the

Strike Back with the Miners

now arrogant Iron Lady to her knees and have her begging for mercy.

But to wait for the trade union leaders to do this would be to wait till judgement day; the vast majority of them have no stomach for such a class struggle perspective; they aim for class peace not class war; their politics, life style, and outlook is that of the negotiator and the compromiser, not the singleminded proletarian fighter our class needs today. Because of this we must start to organise independently of them; in this the miners themselves have already given a clear lead. In Lancashire, and above all in Nottinghamshire, militant minorities have organised themselves for the strike. The effect has been dramatic; rightwing leaders such as Sid Vincent and Ray Chadburn have begun to talk of the need for an all out strike and to demand that their non-striking members 'get off their knees and act like bloody men'. Of course we all know that this is just talk; at the first opportunity they will run for negotiations and surrender; that is why the militant rank and file must keep and build their own structures. In the same way workers in other unions must organise independently of the leaders if we are to go for a concerted organised offensive against the bosses and their government, if leadership talk of solidarity with the miners is to lead to meaningful actions of solidarity.

Militants must link up at all levels. They can begin this by building Miners' Support Committees in all the towns and cities; these bodies should draw in all working class organisations and be based on elected recallable delegates from trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, unemployed groups, miners' wives, and working class political organisations. They should organise speaking tours for miners, publish local bulletins, collect money, and get the Coop to provide large amounts of free food and supplies for the miners. On the basis of close coordination with the miners the Miners' Support Committees should take the lead in forming Workers' Defence Corps consisting above all of unemployed workers and strikers.

These Workers' Defence Corps are with every day becoming more and more needed: just look at the picket lines, where massed but untrained, undrilled, and unequipped miners have had to face disciplined squads of police, recently including mounted police to charge unprotected pickets. Workers' Defence Squads would ensure that picketing could be peacefully conducted, that picket lines are respected, and that police interference is rebuffed.

Miners' Support Committees must also be built across sectional and trade union divisions in workplaces, in factories, in offices, and in mills. They can be used to collect money and initiate solidarity actions for the miners. Miners' Support Committees should also be formed by workers in the media — papers, TV, and radio — and in this way the foul propaganda which is pouring forth against the miners can be blocked. They should take a lead from the *Daily Express* printers who demanded a right of reply for the NUM. But we should go one step further and demand that no propaganda against the miners shall be written, printed, or broadcast by trade union members.

For A General Strike

For a rolling strike wave to be really effective, if it is not simply to exhaust itself, it must be combined with the fight for a general strike. There can be no doubt that at present the only body that can call such a strike is the General Council of the TUC. Now all class conscious workers know the role it played in conniving with the last Labour government to drive down real wages through the social contract, the disgraceful sell outs it perpetrated over the steelworkers, the traindrivers, and most recently the printworkers, but to think we can ignore the TUC would be a fatal mistake. We must force the TUC to call a general strike and then fight to run the strike ourselves, fighting all TUC moves towards betrayal.

Arthur Scargill has so far been right to avoid TUC 'aid'. He no doubt reckons that Len Murray, despite (or

maybe because of) his announced early retirement, might well be determined on an act of 'solidarity' with the miners like 1926 when his predecessors perpetrated the sell out of sell outs. But it was not only the Len Murrays, David Basnetts, and Alistair Grahams of 1926 — J H Thomas, JR Clynes, and Walter Citrine — who sold the General Strike down the river; leading left reformists like AA Purcell, John Bromley, and George Hicks refused to prepare, stood passive during the strike and then did absolutely nothing to stop the betrayal. Are today's left reformists, like Ray Buckton, Ron Todd, and Jimmy Knapp, any different? Unfortunately, we sincerely fear not. What about Arthur Scargill himself? He is undoubtedly outstanding compared with other trade union leaders, including the left wing ones. He refused to bow to anti-Soviet hysteria over Solidarity where others including Communist Party members collapsed. What is more, he has visibly itched to lead a militant struggle and confront the Tories. Well, his predecessor in 1926, A J Cook, was also outstanding compared with the trade union leaders of his time. Although he was a founder member of the CPGB he soon dropped out, and despite claiming that he had 'no major differences' with the Party he was in truth far more of a syndicalist than a communist. Despite his often tireless fight on behalf of the miners and his championing of left-wing causes, when the general strike was betrayed he could not break from the TUC General Council and therefore engaged in secret negotiations for a return to work behind the backs of and against the wishes of the miners. He also refused to countenance CPGB initiated demands for an enquiry into the TUC sell out, and at the close of 1926 he struck an agreement with Walter Citrine against the supporters of the CPGB and the National Minority Movement.

Like Cook, Arthur Scargill has clear syndicalistic tendencies; brilliant, exciting, and dynamic when compared with the grey gutless reformism of most trade union leaders, but nonetheless flawed. Scargill is prepared to turn to the militant rank and file for votes for flying pickets but is he prepared to mobilise the rank and file against the right wing in his own union, let alone in others? Is he prepared to see the NUM transformed from its present rather rambling, Gothic, federalistic structure into a class fighting industrial union controlled by the rank and file? Is he prepared to see his and all other fulltime positions in the NUM subject to recall, put up for regular election, with officials' pay equalling that of the average faceworker? Above all, is he prepared to see control of today's strike exercised by the militant rank and file? Only to the extent he does should militants give him support, all the while remembering the motto coined by James Larkin, that great leader of the militant Irish working class, to 'never trust leaders'.

The miners' strike is undoubtedly political as well as economic, and as such it concerns the working class as a whole. We must have no truck with the rotten theory and practice of dividing working class struggles into watertight economic and political compartments. It is the role of a Communist Party to mobilise the greatest possible concentration of forces to strike with the miners, to deepen and extend the struggle to show with every turn of events that it is political, that total victory can only be won if this is recognised, and that the struggle is given a consciously anti-capitalist direction.



THE LENINIST

The PPPS AGM — How to Vote

The EC, Chater/Costello, and Straight Leftist slates for the Management Committee (MC) are equally liquidationist. In the absence of pro-Party candidates we strongly urge abstention.

As to the resolutions: (1) Mover: Vic Allen — Straight Leftist backed — wants a 'Moscow correspondent' although nothing is said about his or her politics. Vote for it. (2) Mover: Bill Cross — Chater/Costello group backed — supports the editor 'without reservation'. Vote against. (3) and (4) Mover: Grafton and Gospel Oak Branch CPGB. Resolution (3) attacks EC moves to 'distance the *Morning Star* from communism' and MC moves to 'distance the *Morning Star* from the CP', and calls for 'Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the news'. Resolution (4) 'deplores' the *Star's* 'nationalistic and chauvinistic tendencies' and demands the 'principled communist position of proletarian internationalism'. Support both (3) and (4). (5) Mover: Steve Howell — Straight Leftist backed — shows his faction's fear of open ideological struggle in 'urging' an end to 'public' exchanges by Party members. Oppose. (6) Mover: Dan Morgan. Welcomes 'new press' and, as a centrist, wants the *Star* to simply tail the 'outlook of the world communist movement'. Vote against. (7) Mover: Fergus Nicholson — Straight Leftist backed — says the *Star* should not accept ads from 'Trotskyite and similar disruptive elements' (presumably *The Leninist* but not *Straight Left*). Oppose. (8) Mover: Brian Topping — Straight Leftist backed — who, despite the element of pacifism, attacks anti-Sovietism and calls for linking 'day-to-day struggles with the fight to overthrow capitalism' as the 'only solution' to Britain's crisis. Critically support. (9) Mover: Ken Barlow — Chater/Costello group backed — 'supports' existing MC. Vote against.

In classic bureaucratic fashion the MC has ruled out of order the EC's resolution; we support its being discussed, but vote against it if it is tabled.

The Editor

CONTENTS

- 1 Editorial
- Letters
- 3 A Crisis of Leadership
- 4 The Backward March of Eurocommunism
- 5 Theoretical Supplement: Past Possibilities and Future Prospects
- 9 Open Ideological Discussion EEC Elections
- 10 Review: Bowing to Anti-imperialist Spontaneity
- 12 What Should Be the Role of the 'Morning Star'

CORRESPONDENCE

'The Leninist' BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(12 issues, one year)

Britain and Ireland £5.00, Institutions £7.00
Europe £8.00, Institutions £10.00
All other countries £10.00, Institutions £12.00
All cheques payable to 'The Leninist'

Printed and Typeset by Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU)
439 North Woolwich Road, London E16

Published by The Leninist Publications
World Copyright June 1984

ISSN 0262-1619

LETTERS

Ireland and Ward

Dear Editor,

At a recent conference of the Connolly Association on Irish Neutrality and World Peace Bert Ward — speaking from the floor as secretary of the National Irish Advisory Committee of the CPGB — informed us that it was 'immoral' to kill. Since he conveyed the impression of articulating current Party policy, it was yet one more sobering intimation of the widening abyss within our party between its leadership and the revolutionary role of a Communist Party. It would, after all, require strenuous if not tortuous philosophical gymnastics to reconcile such bourgeois idealism with the necessities of class war and revolutionary upheaval.

It is important also to recognise that comrade Ward's remarks were fundamentally directed against the current strategy of Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein. In this, his views clearly and accurately reflect those of the party leadership and current party policy as expressed in the resolution on Ireland passed at the last congress. At that time, the CPGB went on record as having 'unreservedly condemned Republican paramilitary actions in Britain and Ireland'. Although the resolution noted that 'State repression and Unionist violence have encouraged the IRA and INLA to continue their campaigns' it is important to note that *nowhere* in the resolution was British imperialism in Ireland 'unreservedly condemned'. Bert Ward's recent remarks at the Connolly Association Conference are wholly consonant with this position, which consistently represents the anti-colonialist war in Northern Ireland as something qualitatively different from similar struggles elsewhere in the world to which we give international support. When did we last hear anyone in the CPGB condemning the FLMN in El Salvador for rejecting electoral politics in favour of military struggle? Attempts to contrast the national liberation struggles in South Africa and Ireland have long been strangled by their own Byzantine logic; but, as the ANC increasingly turns to tactics that the British regard as 'terrorism' when practiced in Northern Ireland, the similarities simply become too great to ignore without great risk of engaging in sheer theoretical lunacy. A recent, simple case in point — again from comrade Ward. Writing in the latest issue of the Advisory's information bulletin on Ireland, he strains to explain why the ANC mode of resistance 'is not necessary in Ireland'. He writes:

'In South Africa, a nun was recently sentenced to twelve months imprisonment for possession of an ANC leaflet. In contrast, Sinn Fein have bookshops in Dublin and Belfast. They publish a weekly newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* which is publicly on sale...' (Number 6, p.2)

Disregard the fact that, if you buy *An Phoblacht* or a Sinn Fein badge, you are advised to display neither in front of security forces; is Bert Ward actually arguing that to evidence republican sentiments or sympathies does not frequently incur the displeasure of the state in Northern Ireland — not to mention physical injury or even death? Is he at all aware that association with the Republican cause in Britain is a punishable offence? Only today, I read the following story in *The Guardian* (May 10, 1984, p.3):

'A former British Army corporal turned Sinn Fein official was fined £150 yesterday for selling an IRA calendar in an "Irish" pub in London. The test case under section 2 of the 1976 Prevention of Terrorism Act may have important implications for fund-raising activities of the Irish Republican movement.'

Clearly, one crucial distinction between the ANC and the struggle for national liberation in Northern Ireland is the involvement of the Communist Party in the leadership of the former. In the Irish case the CPI has circumspectly distanced itself from the military struggle — and the CPGB has followed suit, embellishing its stance with bourgeois pieties.

The fact is that both CPI and Sinn Fein would gain considerably from the formation of a united front: the former would gain a credibility that its gratuitous nods in the direction of republicanism have denied it in Northern Ireland; the latter would find their cautious explorations of socialist thinking vastly strengthened. This alliance is not immediately on the cards; but should it ever occur (incidentally, in his book *The IRA* Tim Pat Coogan observes that a report submitted to the 1968 Ard Fheis of Sinn Fein 'posed the possibility of a link-up with the Southern Irish Communist Party.' 1980, p.429), how would the CPGB contrive to perform the necessary about-face? Either it can take the theoretical initiative *now* — or it can leave the necessary verbal acrobatics until later and entrust them to the care of our National Irish Advisory.

Yours in comradeship,
Colin Fitzpatrick
Wembley

Centrist Bankruptcy

Dear Comrades,
The following I think illustrates the total bankruptcy of the centrists.

At a recent *Morning Star* meeting which I attended a leading member of the Management Committee (MC) expressed the view that the communist majority on the MC should not attempt to impose their will on the non-communist minority. The reason was that the PPPS is an autonomous body and that the CP committee members must be seen as non sectarian.

The logical conclusion to this kind of liquidationism is obvious, as the Euros were quick to point out. 'What about communists at trade union

branch meetings?' one leading Euro asked. 'Should we only push our communist politics when we are in a minority? Is it sectarian for a democratic organisation to reflect the view of the majority?' The centrists' only reply to this argument was to make a personal attack on the speaker.

The meeting continued with the chairman interrupting every Euro contribution and ruling out of order anyone who made even minor criticisms of the Chaterites.

This kind of behaviour is typical of the centrists and shows their inability to put up any sort of effective fight against the Euros.

Finally, congratulations on going monthly.
Yours fraternally,
George Hacklesby
North London

RCG

Dear comrades,
The events of the Revolutionary Communist Group's 'Anti-Imperialist Weekend' (April 14-15) prompted me to write this letter to you to discuss some aspects of this group's policy. On certain points, such as Ireland, true communists should recognise the amount of good campaigning work that the RCG does. If we look at the RCG's position as a whole though and, along with the Irish question, consider such areas as peace, the black struggle, and Poland, we always see a record of bland, uncritical solidarity work, with no attempt to give a lead to struggles or pose tasks for communists in other countries. I feel that they are likely to remain in their present form of a small agitation-propaganda group for many years to come, with no hope of forming the embryonic Communist Party that they foresee in their recently published manifesto, *The Revolutionary Road to Communism in Britain*. It is unfortunate that they failed to reply to the *Call to Communists in the Leninist* No 3, because then we would be more clear on their position towards fighting inside the CPGB and the world communist movement to build a revolutionary working class party.

Fraternally,
Owen Tudor
East London

Bettaney

Dear comrades,
Once again the avenging anger of the bourgeoisie comes crashing down on an errant individual. Michael Bettaney's sentence of 23 years in the tender care of Her Majesty's screws spotlights our rulers for the vicious class conscious partisans they are and always have been.

So let us revel in every class suicide — from the bourgeoisie; let us welcome every class traitor from the bourgeois ranks. They have much to impart. Let us have more bourgeois traitors, more Bettaneys.

Yours fraternally,
Anthony Macartney
Manchester

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

A CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

Roger Freeman

The meeting of the Executive Committee of May 12-13 revealed one thing above all about our Communist Party — there exists a profound crisis of leadership... On the miners' strike, in contrast to the militant syndicalism of Arthur Scargill who declared to 45,000 cheering miners in Mansfield that their strike 'will pave the way for a transformation and roll back the years of Thatcherism', Pete Carter, the Eurocommunist Industrial Organiser, opposed any suggestion that the miners' strike was political in his Report to the EC: 'Any projection of the strike as a political strike aimed at bringing down the government will be of no help to the miners — quite the reverse'.

For comrade Carter the strike must be painted in patriotic red, white, and blue or it will fail to win the broadest possible sympathy. It must be 'aimed at... the defence of miners' jobs and the coal industry as a valuable national asset.' Such is comrade Carter's fate; dressed in a little brief authority he is most ignorant of what he is most assured about. He who failed to impose his 'no anti-Tory slogans' on the bureaucratically stage managed People's March for Jobs thinks he can now impose his petty bourgeois prejudices on the elemental forces of the miners' strike. This political pygmy thinks he can gut the miners' strike of its healthy growing politicisation, which in truth far from being an impediment offers the only sure route to victory.

It is only by recognising that they are fighting a political battle that the miners can win broad solidarity from the mass of the working class and win them to their fight, because it is a fight for all workers who have suffered under the iron heel of Thatcher. It is only by becoming clearly conscious of politics that the strike can be maintained for the long bitter months to come, and can the class war fight of the Tories and the bourgeois state be met and defeated. To argue against politicisation is not only to echo the TUC right reformists like Walter Citrine and Ernest Bevin in the 1926 General Strike but ultimately to play the same treacherous role. That Carter's report and pathetic 'bread and butter' food aid solidarity with the miners was unanimously endorsed by the EC exposes not only the grip which petty bourgeois charity and respectability has over the EC but the lack of political perspective of the EC opposition.

The YCL

But if comrade Carter, faced with a 1,000 decline in Party membership, has the appearance of a Canute when he says 'A big effort now could end our membership decline' what can we say about YCL General Secretary Doug ('call the police!') Chalmers? For while Party membership has dropped by about 60%, from over 32,000 in 1967 to under 14,000 today, in the same period the YCL has sunk like lead by 93%, from 5,842 to a mere 447 to date. Of course Chalmers of the Yard is not personally responsible for the catastrophic drop since the 1960s; this 'honour' must be firmly laid at the door of his faction, the Euros, who have bureaucratically dominated the League since the mid 1960s. But where comrades Bell and Temple presided

over rapid decline Chalmers seems determined to ensure extinction.

While Chalmers had the barefaced dishonesty to blame his failure and the failure of his trend on the 'sectarians' in the YCL, that is, Straight Leftists and Leninists, and while he excuses the inexcusable fact that he called the police on fifteen YCLers (six of whom were black) in Hackney, he knows that his hold over the YCL is tenuous. It is because of this, in order to ensure that the Euro stranglehold over the YCL is maintained until death, the EC agreed to scrape together 20 Party members, 'cadres', to specifically work in the YCL; with their votes, their 'experience' Chalmers feels that he could at least contemplate YCL members in London, for example, being given their democratic right of a District Congress, which under his leadership has been delayed and postponed for four successive years because of fears of an opposition victory.

Factionalism

But it was on the question of factionalism that the EC showed the depth of its bankruptcy and the full extent of the internal crisis of leadership that exists in our Party. The Euros, like all true hypocrites, have come to believe their own lies. These factionalists of factionalists now sit in sanctimonious judgement on those who have been forced into factionalism in order to effectively publicise their views, stem the tide of Eurocommunist opportunism, and attempt to salvage our Party. In the light of the Euros' own past and current factionalism the naive might expect some leniency from them: but no, on the EC they have been crying for blood. In particular they demanded the heads of the Straight Leftist comrades Gary Lefley, Nick Wright, and Nick Whitaker, something that conservative arch manoeuvrer Gordon McLennan opposed 'just for the moment' because of the imminence of the PPPS AGMs and the adverse impression expulsions might create. The vote for expulsions proposed by comrade Jacques and backed by Dave Richards, Dave Cook, Philippa Langton, Tricia Davis, and especially Gerry Pocock was narrowly defeated by a combination of McLennan loyalists and EC oppositionists. There was an agreement to consider at the July EC a full list of those who refused to disassociate themselves from the Straight Leftist Alternative Political List circulated at the 38th Congress and those accused of distributing *Congress Truth*. Despite this the Euros seem intent not only on letting all and sundry know about McLennan's backtracking but are now muttering darkly about the need to replace him.

Although McLennan is fully aware that 'factional activity' has 'reached levels unprecedented in our Party', he fears a mass of expulsions could spark off developments resulting in a 'Spain'. He is seeking to avoid this scenario by insisting that all expulsions must be watertight, thus hoping to convince the CPSU not to back any 'Spanish' moves — something which received a setback when the CPSU delayed the EC delegation's visit to Moscow until after the PPPS AGM, and which must have deeply worried McLennan.

So although the Newcastle Branch Committee has been suspended and the question of discipline, including the

reexamining of the cases of comrades Wright, Whitaker, and Lefley is promised for July, the conservative McLennan seems at present determined to hold back a vengeful Eurocommunism bent on creating a 'pure' Euro CPGB in case things get too out of hand and the majority of communists find themselves outside the CPGB as they have in Spain. This in practice means that while oppositionist activity will be suppressed and occasionally bludgeoned through the use of bureaucratic centralism, the existence of factions will be for the moment watchfully tolerated.

Now while in recent editions of *The Leninist* we overestimated comrade McLennan's determination to purge the Party, at least for the moment, the hung EC can only be an interregnum. If the EC candidates fail at this month's PPPS AGMs there can be little doubt that McLennan will either be forced to bend to Euro demands for a purge or find himself isolated as well as humiliated. It is to avoid this unpleasant outcome that comrade McLennan is pulling out all the stops he can, drawing up lists of 'old faithfuls' and CP trade unionists to declare their loyalty to the EC, and frantically calling on (though not instructing) Party members to vote for the EC slate at the PPPS AGMs for the sake of Party loyalty.

Of course even in the medium term McLennan is fighting a losing battle. His regime rests on the past; today he has little or no base amongst the mass of Party activists who are being polarised between the opposition and the Eurocommunists. McLennan's remaining loyalists are aging fast; the fact that they are all he can rely on to uphold the right opportunist bureaucratic centralist tradition may well prove to be his and their epitaph.

The Straight Leftists

Certain influential Euros, most notably Beatrix Campbell, are openly pontificating about the need for a new more overtly Eurocommunist, more petty bourgeois, more feminist version of the Party programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. Such propositions send shivers down the spine of comrade McLennan, not because he objects to being swept along in the wake of the Euros but because he fears fuelling the fire of inner-Party debate now raging over the PPPS and the *Morning Star*. This is something the Straight Leftist Adelaide Branch in London apparently also fears; they object to the EC publishing the documents relating to the differences that exist over the *Morning Star*, and call upon the EC to 'refrain' from doing so.

Most Party members and certainly all readers of *The Leninist* must be aware that the Straight Leftist line has frantically zigzagged before and certainly since the PPPS AGM last year. Last year they stood two candidates for the Management Committee and then, consistent to this line, they launched the fiercely anti-Chater/Costello 'Charlie Woods' pamphlet and their rank and file charged into the pre-congress discussion period shouting anti-Costello battle cries. Then out of the blue in their *Congress Truth* they claimed that there were 'no political differences' between the 'Hard Left' (as they term themselves) and the 'Soft Left' (as they term the pro-Chater/Costello centrists). Following the 38th Congress their

supporters repeated this line time and time again; it is even documented in their *Assessment of the 38th Congress* (a document we will review in our next edition).

Now, we were aware of an impending meeting of the national Straight Leftist leadership back in April. We were also aware that it was being said that political differences had arisen between those who wanted, for want of a better description, to return to the 'Charlie Woods' line, as opposed to others who felt an affinity to the *Morning Star* and the 'positive' developments therein. The fact that the pro-Chater/Costello camp had not, it seemed, lifted a finger to stop what looked like being a massive purge of Straight Leftists; the *The Leninist's* biting criticisms; and an obviously more or less evenly divided leadership which has no clear strategic perspective except liquidationism tilted the Straight Leftists leadership back to where it had been this time last year. As a result, last month the grapevine was buzzing with the news that at this year's PPPS AGMs we would see not only candidates from the EC versus pro-Chater/Costello candidates, but three more, Steve Howell, Vic Allen, and Jack Dash, supported by the Straight Leftists.

What the Straight Leftist rank and file makes of these dramatic gyrations of line one can only imagine. Surely though, it is about time they were given some ideological justification for the all too frequent times they have found themselves vehemently arguing one thing only to find next day that the line has to all intents and purposes gone into reverse.

'The Leninist' Ban

To conclude this article we must comment on the EC's decision to ban *The Leninist* from Party bookshops and to prohibit adverts for it from appearing in Party journals. Isn't it interesting, that when Central Books stocks every Trotskyite, pacifist, and feminist publication, even *Straight Left* and *The New Worker*, that what they feel compelled to ban, what they must prevent Party members reading, is *The Leninist*. Their call that Party members should not sell or contribute to *The Leninist* is again in marked contrast to their advice on *Straight Left* and their complete silence when Party members write for *The New Worker* or *Education Today*. For us the EC ban is a great compliment. They know that *The Leninist* is the only journal that seriously opposes them ideologically and politically. They know that increasing numbers of Party members look to us not just for our ideology but for simple inner-Party information and truth so patently lacking in official publications, and indeed the other unofficial ones including the *Morning Star*.

Our readers, our sympathisers, and our supporters now have a duty to break the ban. You must ensure that all the Party has access to *The Leninist*. If Party bookshops are not allowed to take it, let us make sure that every left and progressive bookshop does... If Party members are not allowed to sell it, then give a copy away or post it on and ask for a donation... Do not let the EC get away with its censorship. Let the voice of *The Leninist* ring out loud and clear.

SAY NO TO EC CENSORSHIP.
BREAK THE EC BAN.

The Backward March of Eurocommunism

Michael McGeehan

Remember the time, ten or so years ago, when the Eurocommunists painted themselves as the bright young radicals of communism, bursting with 'democracy' and new ideas? Well, just look at them now. In Spain they have virtually succeeded in smashing the PCE to pieces, in Holland, Sweden, and Australia they have provoked major splits and in Italy and France they have committed further acts of overt opportunism, particularly the PCF's disgraceful participation in a capitalist government.

And in Britain? After the Euros gerrymandered victory at the 38th Congress, the last remnants of their gaudy cosmetic of democracy crumbled away to reveal even more starkly their true ugly face; bureaucratic expulsion and exclusion of communists from the Party, the policing of Congress delegates and the suppression of debate. But perhaps the best illustrations of the Euros grotesque political features, their obsession with feminism, pacifism and liberalism, are to be found enshrined under the glossy cover of *Marxism Today*.

Eurocommunism Today

In September 1978 the leading Euro guru, historian Eric Hobsbawm, had his Marx Memorial Lecture published in *Marxism Today*. In *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* he presented his description of some changes in the British working class and problems (in fact 'the crisis') facing the labour movement at that time. Five years later, in October 1983 he delivered another epistle in *Marxism Today* entitled *Labour's Lost Millions* in which he agonised over the causes of the Labour Party's June electoral debacle. But whereas in 1978 a handful of non-Euro contributions to an ensuing debate were published by comrade Martin Jacques, in 1983/84 the debate was purely confined to Eurocommunists and assorted Labour 'lefts'. Furthermore, comrades cannot fail to have noticed that the columns of *Marxism Today* have been increasingly filled by non-communists (e.g. in the April 1984 edition, only 5 out of 17 contributors were listed as Party members) including Liberals, an Ecology Party spokesman, a Chief Constable and an editor of the *Financial Times*; these interspersed with profound articles on such burning political issues as the weather (!) the British on Holiday (!!) and Barry Manilow (!!!).

But of course, comrade Hobsbawm's articles on the labour movement are somewhat more political than that on Barry Manilow, we admit. In fact, because Eric Hobsbawm is one of the leading Eurocommunist theoreticians in Britain, his views provide us with a good idea of the trajectory of Eurocommunist politics, particularly because of his honest and open opportunism.

The main theme running like a pink thread through comrade Hobsbawm's essays is not 'pessimism' as some contributors have suggested but overt reformism, with Parliament and the Labour Party to the fore. And what we castigate Hobsbawm for is his reformist conclusions not for his attempting to describe the severe problems facing the working class

movement in Britain; unlike some centrists and right-opportunists who appear to believe that trade unions have attained divine perfection and shop-stewards the status of saints, they certainly seem to regard most workers organisations as almost beyond criticism.

But comrade Hobsbawm has cast his lot, and a sorry lot it is! Of particular significance is his comment in *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* that "If we look at the political expression of class consciousness, which means in practice, support for the Labour Party," (p.16, Verso/*Marxism Today*) which leads him to the conclusion that class consciousness reached its peak with Labour's record 14 million votes in 1951. Likewise, in *Labour's Lost Millions* we find him putting the electoral fortunes of Labour as the key criterion of the success of the labour or working class movement. Clearly this eminent professor has a deep and abiding faith in five seconds in five years democracy (for it is the naive belief in bourgeois ballots, in parliamentarianism that is the real 'ballotitis' that communists must fight against) and in the Labour Party. It is therefore hardly surprising that in Labour — *Rump or Rebirth* (*Marxism Today*, March 1984) — his reply to the truncated debate that followed *Labour's Lost Millions* — he characterised the Labour Party as "the mass party of the British left" that has developed as "a broad class and progressive front" (p.9) Heard it before? It is of course essentially the same opportunist definition used by *Straight Left* and others; a far cry from Lenin's scientific definition of Labour as a *bourgeois workers party*. Hobsbawm does not mention this but does remark that Lenin "stressed the unique character of the British Labour Party" and then suggests that his source, *Left-wing Communism — an Infantile Disorder* "repays careful reading even today" (*Ibid*).

We heartily recommend comrades read the *whole* of this excellent pamphlet, which incorporates Lenin's solid support for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the universality of soviets and against parliaments, and his proposed tactics by which to win workers away from social democrats like Britain's Labourites. Yes, the point was "to support Henderson with my vote in the same way as a rope supports a hanged man — that the impending establishment of a Henderson government will prove I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will accelerate the political death of the Hendersons and the Snowdons" (V.I. Lenin, *CW* Vol.31, p.88) It certainly does repay careful reading!

But Hobsbawm and his fellow Euros do not want to win the masses away from the Labour Party, from reformism to revolution, but 'help' the Labour Party to become broader-based and more willing to enter into an "anti-'Thatcherite'" alliance with the Liberal Party and the SDP, in addition to wanting it to "recover the support of the working class as a whole." (*Labour's Lost Millions*, p.9). His hyper Popular Frontist class-collaboration approach (with its implicit equation of "anti-'Thatcherism'" with anti-fascism) is starkly revealed in *Labour's Lost Millions*: "It is not (!) opportunistic to believe that we (sic) can and should appeal to all women and all young people, even if we

may not expect much success today among the ladies who attend Ascot or among Sloane Rangers. (But some of us remember that in the days of the 1930s, anti-fascism and a mass base in such strongholds of the ruling class as Oxbridge)." (p.9) Notice the "we"? For this little word speaks volumes on Hobsbawm's liquidationist direction, but let us look more closely at this later on. In fact Hobsbawm is quite open in admitting that he wants Labour to form the core of, in the words of that well-known militant methodist Eric Heffer, "an up to date version of the Popular Front" (*Labour — Rump or Rebirth?*, p.10), which today takes the form of "the broad anti-Thatcherite front which is quite essential" (*Ibid*, p.11).

Another question posed by "Kinnock's favourite Marxist" is — what sort of Labour Party do we want? For our Eric is well aware that "Some on the Left — probably a majority — believe that the time has come when the Labour Party itself can be transformed into the truly socialist mass party which we would all prefer." (*Ibid*, p.8) This scenario, shared by *Militant*, the Socialist League (the former IMG) and various other Trotskyite and radical left groups wading around in the Labour marsh, would entail the driving out of the right-wing leaders. For Hobsbawm this is at the moment a "dangerous daydream." (*Ibid*) for in his view the Labour Party should remain a "bread church" encompassing the "revolutionary left" and the "Centre" which presumably includes his favourite Labourite, Neil Kinnock. He is deeply concerned that the masses are taken along with any leftward shift, and actually quotes Lenin again, on the importance of compromises and the support of the masses.

But wait a minute — was not Lenin referring to the tactics of the communists for winning workers away from the Labour Party to communism? Moreover, where does our Party fit in to Hobsbawm's scheme?

The Communist Party Rump or Rebirth

What Hobsbawm does say about the Labour Party reveals his basic thoughts on the Communist Party, and on the rare occasion he does refer to our Party he displays clearly his liquidationist thinking in all its ugliness:

"In Britain there has been only one genuine mass party of the Left, based on the working class and its movement, the Labour Party.

"Most socialists, and today the great majority of Marxists, have accepted this as a fact of life. Like it or not, the future of socialism is through the Labour Party. This has been the basis of Communist Party policy since its programme *The British Road to Socialism* in the early 1950s, and was implicit in its policy since the middle 1930s." (*Labour: Rump or Rebirth?*, p.8 — our emphasis).

And not only does he consider that no form "another, truly socialist, party of the working class in competition with it... a non-starter." (*Ibid*) he also thinks that, because of the presence of "other Marxists" and the Militant tendency "...the Communist Party's long-held hope of winning collective and open affiliation to the Labour Party is difficult to the point of

impracticability." (*Ibid*) Now if we follow comrade Hobsbawm's (and the *British Road to Socialism's*) liquidationist logic, that the future of socialism is through the Labour Party but that Communist Party affiliation to it is impracticable, what on earth is the role of the Communist Party?

To obtain an indication of the Euros anti-Party position on the role of communists, we have to look beyond Hobsbawm and to a rare article on our Party in their journal. In *Crossed Lines* (*Marxism Today*, April 1984) we find Jon Bloomfield writing on the Party's serious decline and asserts that "At root it is an identity crisis." (p.25) For him part of the blame lays at the door of those he terms "fundamentalists" — the Chater-Costelloite faction and their centrist hangers-on, and of course the *Straight Left* group. But even he admits that "there are real limitations on the party's capacity and shortcomings in its work not simply attributable to internal divisions." (*Ibid*, p.29) Those limitations are in fact imposed on our Party by an opportunist leadership based on a thoroughly bureaucratic centralist approach to differences and on a rotten, tired, threadbare revisionist programme which even they do not wholeheartedly fight for. But let us see what one of the leading Eurocommunists, comrade Bloomfield, prescribes for the Party. The "...four hallmarks (that) can give the CP a clear sense of identity and purpose." are firstly "— the formulation of a realisable strategic perspective for the Left." i.e. the long and winding, stage by stage *British Road*. Secondly "...as an initiator and practitioner of struggle." Thirdly, "...its commitment to alliances." and fourthly, its role "...as an indispensable think-tank of the left." (*Ibid*, pp.28-29)

Our Communist Party was founded in 1921, as the vanguard of the working class, as an organisation of the most class-conscious workers, committed to revolution and communism. Our Party was formed in order to distinguish revolutionaries from the social-chauvinists, social-pacifists and centrists of the Second International, to allow the working class to see who the real defenders of their interests and the leaders of their struggle were. Our Party was based on *Marxism-Leninism* not a "closed" ideology but a scientific theory which guides the struggle of the working class for socialism. Over many years, these key features of a Bolshevik organisation have been corroded by opportunism, the latest and most virulent form being Eurocommunism. All their alliance and think tank neo-Fabian "hallmarks" have nothing to do with the role of a Communist Party and nothing to do with communism.

The result of the Euros "open and creative Marxism" has been the biggest ever sustained drop in Party membership, a pitifully low level of Party activity and a poverty of ideas and initiative with which to lead the working class movement. But not content with that, they are now more openly than ever before stating their liquidationist views, obviously as a prelude to the physical liquidation of our Party. Only the mobilisation of a mighty pro-Party offensive against liquidationism in all its forms can stop them, so rally comrades before it is too late, before our Party is nothing more than a footnote in one of Hobsbawm's books.

THE LENINIST

Theoretical Supplement

Past Possibilities and Future Prospects

The years 1910 to 1926 and their lessons for today

James Marshall

The reelection of the Tories in June 1983 was significant for a number of reasons; the Labour Party's claim under Wilson and Callaghan to be the natural party of government was well and truly scotched, indeed the Labour Party found itself not merely reduced to the position of offering itself as the alternative party of government but showed all the signs of being reduced to a party of crisis — a role it willingly carried out at the behest of the ruling class in WWI and WWII and the 1920s and 30s. We declared at the time that this showed that the days of consensus politics had come to an end, and certainly it could no longer play a role in the serious business of running a capitalist society which finds itself plunging into crisis. But even more importantly than all this we predicted that: "The laws of capitalist economics, the entire mentality of Thatcher and her team, can only lead one to the conclusion that an attempt to deliver a strategic defeat on the scale of 1926 is far from impossible." (*The Leninist*, No.5 August 1983)

Ten months later this prediction looks like becoming a reality. The Tories are locked into a bitter struggle with the miners and while a tactical retreat on their part cannot be ruled out all indicators seem to point to Thatcher being determined on a battle which will see the working class which she blooded in her first term cowed into submission, as it was in 1926, in her second.

There can be no doubt that Thatcher's mentality is perfectly suited to this task. She not only has wet dreams about crushing the trade unions and restoring Britain's former glory but proved her mettle as a fighter for British imperialism over the Falklands. But it is not a simple question of Thatcher's revelling in 'Victorian values', her conjuring up of past spirits; for as we have stated time and time again it is the necessities of capitalist economics which force her and the bourgeoisie as a whole to increase the rate of exploitation, it forces them to fight to lower real wages, and forces them to assault the rights and organisations of the working class. For the boom conditions which gave birth to the consensus politics of 'Butskellism' have been replaced by world wide capitalist economic difficulties which Britain is experiencing more acutely than its rivals.

What we must particularly take cognisance of is the fact that today's conditions are but a prelude before the outbreak of a new general crisis of capitalism. Theoretically there can be no question that when this crisis breaks it will not only assume a breadth that will dwarf even that of 1914-1948 but will see it reach greater depths than the great crash of 1929, which wiped out 42% of capitalist world industrial production, caused world trade to fall by 65%, and threw between thirty to fifty millions out of work.*

Now we must also note that at the depth of the last general crisis, in 1932, while the United States suffered a 46.2% loss of industrial output and Germany a 40.2% loss, Britain managed to get away relatively lightly

*See articles by Frank Grafton in *The Leninist* Nos 2 and 3, where it is argued that current massive extension of the credit system creates the conditions for a slump in reverse proportions to the greatest boom ever experienced by capitalism, i.e. the 1950s and 60s.

with a 16.2% decline.

But now unlike the 1920s and 1930s Britain no longer has a vast empire with which to cushion itself. It is this which today forces British capitalists to squeeze their own working class to a degree not witnessed since the exigencies of WWII. The consequences of Britain's loss of empire, its extraordinary reliance on paper money, banking, commodity trading, stockbroking, insurance, and jobbing, the fact that Britain is the most imperialist of the major capitalist powers at the same time as one of the domestically weakest economically must be fully comprehended. For these factors will mean that in the face of a new crash, a crash which we predict will be far more devastating than anything witnessed in the catastrophic 1920s and 1930s, there is every reason to believe that Britain will this time suffer a crisis of significantly greater severity than any of the other major imperialist powers.

What the dawning crisis means today and what it will mean even more in the future is that the most elementary interests of the working class become incompatible with the demands of the capitalist system. The system cannot guarantee workers an increasing standard of living and in fact comes to present a challenge to existing conditions, throws ever more out of work and begins to slide into the abyss of world war as its only way out of the crisis. Such conditions which are unfolding today not only shatter social peace but look like ushering in a period of open class war which, however prolonged, has today, given Britain's loss of empire, but two outcomes. The workers can either seize power and begin the task of building an economy based on socialism, or failing this the capitalists will out of necessity move towards an open dictatorship through which they will force the working class to yield to a massive increase in the rate of exploitation and the preparations for war the system demands.

The most overt Eurocommunists find the whole drift to open class war not to their taste. Their immediate response is to call plaintively for a return to the safe past of consensus politics, but at the first sign of class battle these petty bourgeois radicals scurry even further to the right. Thus in the face of police thuggery they call for the resuscitation of the rotten corpse of Dixon of Dock Green and community policing and not a workers' militia; in the same way the existence of over three million unemployed, far from leading them to the conclusion about the need to mobilise capital's reserve army of labour — the unemployed — as an army of the revolution, leads them instead to concoct utopian and utterly useless schemes such as local cooperatives as a way to overcome the "awkward problem". In the midst of the miner's strike they have so far remained unusually quiet; the "bully boy" tactics of the NUM flying pickets and assertions that the strike is political no doubt do not conform with their style of politics let alone their ambitions of forming an anti-'Thatcherite' government. So it must be inner-Party considerations, the necessity of not upsetting comrades McGahey and Bolton which dictates tactful diplomacy.

Others in the official CPGB leadership, have been little better; they indulge in windbagery and calls for patriotic solidarity with the miners "because the miners' strike is in the interests of all those who want

to see Britain have a future as an industrial nation." They and the oppositionist *Morning Star* have at best been able to act as cheerleaders for the miners and at worst they have actively fostered illusions about the NUM leadership and the nature of nationalised industries, incessantly referring to Britain's state monopoly capitalist mining industry as "ours". By doing this they link the interests of the miners to the incompatible interests of a capitalism rapidly drifting into a crisis which demands sacrifice by the workers. But of all the sins the opportunists have propagated, the idea that the state is neutral is the most damning.

The opposite side of this opportunist coin has been certain shrill declarations that Britain is already in a revolutionary situation, that bourgeois democracy has already been replaced by a police state or a bonapartist regime. Such descriptions of Thatcher's government are ironically close to Euro attempts to paint Thatcher with fascist features in order to justify a class collaborationist popular front against her. But most importantly they in no way help prepare the working class for the real struggle in the here and now let alone prepare it for any future fight against a real fascist threat. Such revolutionary phrasemongering has little to do with advancing the miners' struggle, creating a united workers' front against capitalism, and equipping the class for revolution.

The last time Britain experienced a really sustained period of open class war was between the years 1910 and 1926. Already many in the workers' movement have drawn analogies between 1926 and today. But while some in an unconscious parody of Ernest Bevin and Walter Citrine say "never again" and others content themselves with the foul Trotskyite myth that 1926 could have been our 1917 if only it had not been for the Communist Party, few have attempted to seriously examine and learn the lessons of the General Strike and the period leading up to it.

Unfortunately this is not the case with the ruling class: they have a long memory born of their traditions, culture, institutions, habits, and laws. As a result, following the drying up of the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s and the testing time of the transitional 1970s they have managed with relative ease to politically and logistically prepare themselves for a strategic confrontation in the 1980s. The police have effectively been nationally organised, they have been equipped with the latest riot gear and stand eager to use it against any massed picket the working class care to throw up against it. On behalf of the ruling class both Labour and Tory governments have carried out extensive preparation in the form of training special army units as strikebreaking replacement labour. The Civil Service has also developed detailed contingency plans for even the most demanding conditions, no doubt up to and including civil war. To cap the preparations to give them a legal facade a whole range of anti-trade union legislation has been passed through parliament, that glorified electoral college and talking shop.

It should come as no surprise that in the face of such preparations the reformist leaders of the working class, at least those who do not seek early retirement, are paralysed. Their ideo-

logy, debilitating even in boom times, becomes poison when faced with open class war; even the most left leaning of them find it impossible to go beyond syndicalism and radical rhetoric. The inherent danger reformism presents to the working class, the fact that it disarms the working class in all serious confrontations with capital, demands a Communist Party. The vanguard party acts as the memory of the class as well as its general staff. Thus confronted with changing conditions it draws on the practical and theoretical heritage of the past, and attempts to lead the class in the eddies as well as the swirling currents of the class war, fighting for new tactics in the light of each new development while never for one moment losing sight of the overall strategy and ultimate aim of revolution. The ability to act in this way rests on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism. Without it the Party, no matter how popular it and its leaders are, however heroic and determined its members, is destined at best to tail events and at worst actually to hamper a developing struggle.

Today there can be little doubt that our Party is suffering from, amongst other things, amnesia, a condition brought on it by the infection it has suffered over a considerable period by various opportunist tendencies. The existence of *The Leninist* and our fight to reforge the Party into a vanguard party is organically linked to helping our class to recover its memory, something that is far from possible behind closed Party doors but which can only be successfully carried out through open ideological debate, which links the inner-Party struggle to the class war. This necessitates our tendency not only exposing the Euros, the right opportunists and the centrists, but shouldering the task of providing communist leadership for our class. While at the moment this leadership cannot go much beyond propaganda, this is a vital precondition for drawing into the Party tens of thousands of militant class conscious workers, the raw material for a reformed CPGB.

It is with the aim of providing leadership and drawing the best fighters of our class into the Party that we present our observations on the years 1910 to 1926.

The Background

To understand what caused the outbreak of open class war between the years 1910 to 1926 we have of course to go back far beyond the direct participants and immediate factors; indeed to reach what could be described as a fully comprehensive understanding we would have to examine the evolution of Britain over several centuries, study the material, psychological, and social effects of protestantism, the 1642-8 Civil War, the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, the development of industrial capitalism, and a host of other events and factors. But for the sake of brevity and without too much sacrifice of general background, if we confine ourselves to commencing with an outline of Britain from the mid nineteenth century, when Britain was called the 'workshop of the world', we can include the essential material for our purposes.

The mid nineteenth century casts a distinct shadow over the events of 1910 to

1926 and even visibly affects us in 1984. In these days there were good reasons for calling Britain the 'workshop of the world' for it is estimated that in 1850 it produced as much as two thirds of the world's coal, about half its iron, and half of its commercially produced cotton. But Britain had rivals: by 1870 it only accounted for between a quarter and a fifth of the world's steam power, and only half its steel. By the end of the 1880s its decline in the face of competition from Belgium, France, and above all Germany and the USA was clearly visible even in branches of production in which it once reigned supreme. And it was of more than symbolic importance that in the early 1890s both Germany and the USA surpassed Britain in the production of steel, that era's crucial indicator of industrialisation. From this time onwards Britain was but one of a number of great powers, but as the previous four decades had shown it was one that was suffering from relative decline because of its sluggish industrial growth.

Britain's main way of responding to blocks it found in the way of capital accumulation resultant from growing competition, the inner laws of capitalism, and above all the tendency for the rate of profit to decline was not to turn to its home based industries but to export capital and to use its expanding colonial empire as a cushion. Cloaked in arrogant racist ideologies about Britain being "the chosen nation" and how it had a divine duty to shoulder "the white man's burden", the empire was steadily expanded so that at its peak it covered 13.3 million square miles, with 500 million people; it was therefore just less than a quarter of the world's land surface, and roughly a quarter of the world's population. Because Britain was first in the imperialist field, because of its power both economic and military (especially its navy) and its world wide commercial dealings, there was at first very little resistance to colonial expansion. But as other powers experienced the need to expand and sought their place in the sun there developed a scramble for the easily seized territories, most notably in Africa where the area held by European powers expanded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century from one tenth to nine tenths. Once this initial division was completed, the highly warlike and volatile nature of imperialism was fully revealed. For while Britain between 1870 and 1900 added 4,754,000 square miles of territory and 88 million people to its empire, and France between 1884 and 1900 added 3,583,580 square miles and 36,553,000 people to its, Germany, although now a leading power which rivalled Britain and was far more dynamic than it, only managed to secure for itself 1,026,220 square miles and 16,687,000 people. The fact that the world had been effectively divided meant that there developed a struggle for the redivision of colonies and spheres of influence, a struggle made particularly fierce given the uneven rate of development amongst the powers and which led to the situation where the existing division of the world reflected past not present strengths.

A whole series of wars broke out; the British war in South Africa, the struggle to divide China, the Russo-Japanese war, the Italian war in Tripoli, the Balkan wars, and in 1905, 1908, and 1911 an initially localised conflict threatened to lead to a world war, which of course it finally did in August 1914.

The development of imperialism not only had fundamental effects on international politics but caused profound developments on the domestic plane. The obtaining of super profits (or extra profits) by the imperialist monopolies created the material conditions for the creation of a labour aristocracy, a section of the working class which because of its direct benefit from imperialist plunder sided with its 'own' imperialist state. This development, first peculiar to Britain, became a general feature in all the 'great' powers and was at the root of the split

in socialism in 1914 when the international workers' movement divided into reformist and revolutionary wings. But as well as the creation of a labour aristocracy, imperialism, when it was going through a dynamic phase, was able to buy social peace at home at relatively small cost for considerable periods. Thus in the latter half of the nineteenth century the British proletariat was seemingly metamorphosed from a revolutionary follower of Chartism to a royalty admiring, conservative, narrow minded, church-going, pigeon fancying, Liberal voter.

But this was imperialism's golden age; as the twentieth century approached the more intelligent members of the ruling class in Britain not only desperately searched for answers as to why everything was in danger of turning to dross but demanded

practical measures to stave off the growing challenge to Britain's domination of the world market by the likes of Germany. In an attempt to preserve the disintegrating past not only was the holy icon of free trade unceremoniously ditched but in order to stiffen up Britain's increasingly hard pressed home industries employers fought to hike the rate of exploitation.

This led directly to a steady decay of social peace which for so long had characterised Britain. After the years 1888-92 the working class suffered a string of defeats in the face of a determined capitalist class. As a result, in the following few years not only did the number of strike days dramatically decline but many trade unions, most notably those organising the unskilled, suffered terrible losses of membership, a retreat in working class power that the employers sought to make permanent through the Taff Vale judgement. But it was not only the unskilled workers who suffered at the hand of the capitalist offensive; while the labour aristocracy was less vulnerable it found that its privileges were not merely reduced but so was its size; because of this the brake that the labour aristocracy exerted over the class and indeed the weight it carried was reduced and to an important extent replaced by the labour bureaucracy.

Thus the general, albeit temporary, upturn in the world economy which occurred around 1910 did not mean a return to the halcyon days of social peace but a strike wave of unprecedented proportions as the workers attempted to make up for what they had lost in the preceding period.

1910 to 1914

In the years between 1910 and the outbreak of WWI in August 1914 the number of strikes shot up in an explosion of rank and file militancy not witnessed since the days of Chartism (see Table One). Associated with this was a leap in trade union membership from 2,447,000 at the end of 1909 to 4,135,000 by the end of 1913, and events which caused the very foundation of the social order to visibly wobble.

The 1910 strike wave of railway

workers, shipbuilders, miners, and cotton workers was superseded by an even higher one in 1911 which in Liverpool reached general strike proportions. After clashes with the police and the reading of the Riot Act the city was brought to a halt by a strike involving over 100,000 workers. Their temper was vividly illustrated by the sacking of the Shipping Federation's offices because of the imposition of a lock out; in the subsequent attempt to quell the upsurge troops were called in and in the ensuing battles many workers were wounded and one was killed. Troops were also used by Home Secretary Winston Churchill in an unsuccessful attempt to break the railway workers' strike. But the most important industrial struggle of 1912 was that of the miners. Local disputes demanding five shillings a day as a

TABLE ONE

Strikes between 1895 and 1914 (yearly average)

| | Strikes (total) | Strikers (total) | Strike Days (total) |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1895-99 | 793 | 172,000 | 7,524,000 |
| 1900-04 | 495 | 103,000 | 2,919,000 |
| 1905-09 | 456 | 144,000 | 4,254,000 |
| 1910 | 531 | 385,000 | 9,895,000 |
| 1911 | 903 | 831,000 | 10,370,000 |
| 1912 | 857 | 1,233,000 | 40,915,000 |
| 1913 | 1,497 | 516,000 | 11,631,000 |
| 1914 (Jan-July) | 848 | 424,000 | 9,964,000 |
| 1914 (Aug-Dec) | 151 | 30,000 | 147,000 |

guaranteed minimum escalated when in February the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) declared a national strike. A million miners struck for a month and only returned to work after the government was forced to rush through parliamentary legislation in only five days, setting up Joint Boards to decide district minimum rates.

While 1913 saw a decline in the number of strikers and strike days compared with 1912 the number of actual strikes increased, showing that workers were finding it somewhat easier to win their demands after the employers' morale and defences had been sapped by the two previous years' struggles. But the most significant outbreak was not in Britain but in rebel Ireland where Jim Larkin led a transport workers' strike which not only grew into a general strike but assumed the character of a virtual civil war. Five workers were killed and hundreds wounded in clashes with police that saw the workers organise resistance in the form of a workers' militia which became the Citizens' Army of Easter 1916 fame.

1914 looked as if it would outdo 1911, 1912, and 1913; some have even talked of the outbreak of war in August intervening to cut short not merely a general strike but even the 'British Revolution'. This is of course more a question of wishful thinking than solidly based prediction, for while the mass of workers had arrived at some sort of militant trade union consciousness there can be no question that only a very, very small minority had achieved anything near a revolutionary consciousness.

While it is true Labourism's growth was dented by the magnetic pull of dynamic militancy, the ILP suffering a steady decline in its organisation because of its obvious irrelevance to industrial struggles, the revolutionary groups completely failed to take up the challenge. The Social Democratic Federation (SDF) under the leadership of that "rascal" Hyndman actually stood opposed to the strike wave because of their adherence to a peculiar academic, chauvinist, and sectarian version of Marxism, where learning the 'principles' of socialism by rote was considered of far more relevance than the actual class struggle itself. Even when the SDF became the British

Socialist Party (BSP) in May 1912, verbally responding to the militant pulse emanating from the working class, only one third of the delegates at the BSP conference later that year came out in full support for the strike wave.

The Socialist Labour Party (SLP) was different from the SDF but of little more practical use in leading the working class from the industrial battles to the monumental battle for state power. Having split from the SDF in 1903, it remained a very small group which while retaining much of the academic approach to socialism exemplified by the SDF came under the influence of the American Daniel De Leon and his version of syndicalism. It was its adherence to a syndicalistic ideology that enabled the SLP to flow with the tide and to grow (though always remaining tiny) with the strike wave. It gained an important foothold amongst the industrial workers of the Clyde.

It was the syndicalist movement which proved to be perhaps the most influential ideological trend in the vanguard of the working class. Under the leadership of Tom Mann, who returned from Australia in 1910, syndicalism enjoyed a brief but heady growth. By the summer of 1912, in the aftermath of Mann's arrest because of the "Don't Shoot" leaflet issued to troops and the national coal strike, the circulation of *The Syndicalist* soared to 20,000. The peak of success for syndicalism came with the Industrial Syndicalist Education League's Conference which claimed to have delegates representing 100,000 workers. Inevitably though, syndicalism proved not only incapable of combining economic and political struggle but incapable of effectively organising solidarity even on an industrial basis. Its congenital impotence, its mercurial nature, and its flawed ideology led to rapid decline and numerous splits which made it a totally unsuitable vehicle for the serious and exacting task of revolution.

Despite the poor performance of the socialist groups (and even syndicalism) compared with the primeval stirrings in the class itself, these groups were undoubtedly open to influence not only from their class roots but from the great international events of the day. The BSP, the SLP, and other tendencies therefore took an increasingly left centrist position, which while not having a clear revolutionary perspective or organisation stood opposed to the overtly rightist and parliamentary roadist Labour Party and the highly respectable (to the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia) Independent Labour Party. It was because of this that these organisations could, under the impact of WWI and above all the Russian Revolution, make the transition from left centrism to the banner of communism, raised by Lenin with the founding of Comintern in 1919.

The War

The war found the socialist and workers' movement totally inadequate for the task of defending workers' basic interests. The Labour Party adopted a straight down the line social chauvinist position in joining Lloyd George's War Cabinet; the ILP's more intimate contact with the socialistic working class meant that it was unwilling to actually support the slaughter, but on the other hand its links with the official Labour leaders who were actively collaborating with its execution meant that its chameleon like leaders in the main adopted a social pacifistic, centrist, colouration. The small revolutionary groups such as the BSP, the SLP, and the like found themselves first extremely isolated and then propelled to the left by the grim reality of war experienced by the mass of workers themselves.

The initial chauvinist hysteria that gripped much of the working class was soon swept away by the greatly increased hours and speedups neces-

sitated by the demands of war, by the declining standards of life many suffered, and above all by reports and direct experience of Ypres, Verdun, and the Somme. Such conditions, such events, could do nothing but result in the patriotic cataracts falling from the eyes of the workers and the wave of militancy suppressed by outbreak of hostilities reasserting itself in a far more politicised form.

The sell out by the Labourite and trade union bureaucracy to the merchants of death gave new impetus to the election of shop stewards and to the steady rise in unofficial actions. In areas like the South Wales coalfield, the Clyde, and Sheffield the strength of militancy enabled firm links to be forged not only between workers of the same trade but between different sections of the working class. In such areas the shop stewards were able to establish close unity with both lower level trade union officials and trades councils; and as the war dragged on the unofficial movement, at first scattered, endeavoured to organise on a national scale, delegates being sent from area to area in an attempt to give the movement some national form and direction. It was hardly surprising that the shop stewards' movement and the national unofficial movements took an ever more hostile attitude towards the war: a fact that provided the small revolutionary groups with very fertile ground for their influence to spread amongst the broad mass of the working class.

As in the 1910-14 strike wave, militancy went furthest, showed the way forward, became revolutionary, not in Britain but in its oldest colony, Ireland. With the exile of Jim Larkin his deputy in the T&GWU James Connolly became the recognised leader of the militant workers, especially those of heroic Dublin. Connolly not only castigated the betrayal of the leaders of the Second International but fought to unite the struggle for national liberation in Ireland with the struggle for social liberation, using the raging imperialist war as an ideal opportunity for striking while the enemy was occupied in a life or death struggle on the continent. "War waged by oppressed nationalities against the oppressors, and the class war of the proletariat against capital... is par excellence the swiftest, safest, and most peaceful form of constructive work the socialist can engage in" Connolly declared. He rightly castigated the republican movement for its pro-Germanism, its foolish belief that a victorious Germany would free Ireland. In opposition to this idea and in opposition to those Labour leaders who supported Britain he championed proletarian internationalism; a position summed up by the banner he had hung outside the headquarters of the T&GWU in Dublin "We serve neither King nor Kaiser but Ireland."

Unfortunately, despite Connolly's own personal ties with the Clyde and the revolutionary movement in Scotland there was no coordinated organisation formed between the advanced section of the shop stewards' movement in Britain and the revolutionary movement in Ireland, something that no doubt weakened both. This said there can be no question that the Easter Rising of 1916 did play an important role in inspiring and lifting the workers' movement in Britain. Connolly's heroic attempt to turn the imperialist war into a war of national liberation and the magnificent fight put up by the Citizen's Army had a profound impact. It was in sharp contrast to the treachery of the Labourites who in effect collectively signed Connolly's death warrant and the insipid social pacifism of the ILP who, wanting to be 'fair', condemned the Easter Rising because like the slaughter in Europe it was supposedly 'militaristic'.

But without belittling Connolly and his comrades in any way it was undoubtedly the Russian Revolution which acted as a catalyst and as a beacon-like answer to the workers'

movement and above all to the revolutionary groups who still languished in centrist inertia and confusion. The Russian Revolution of February combined with a new and accelerating strike wave in the engineering industry against conscription opened up a perspective for many revolutionaries in Britain which crystallised with October and the triumph of the Bolsheviks.

Trouble for the government was far from confined to industry. The army and navy became ever more restless in the last two years of the war, and with the end of hostilities and the government's reluctance to demobilise the forces unrest even assumed some open political manifestations. Mutinies and desertions, increasingly common in 1917, became organised and ever more dangerous to the authorities. Soldiers unwilling to return to France organised mass demonstrations and in January 1919 troops effectively took over Calais in protest at the refusal to demob them; only the dispatching of three divisions from Germany broke the mutiny. But as is often the case it was in the navy that discontent took on its most politically defined forms. At Plymouth and Portsmouth the red flag was run up on several ships and ships' committees became widespread with delegates going from ship to ship and from port to port.

The intervention against Soviet Russia could only fuel the unrest and the politicisation. The Black Watch and the Coldstream Guards actually refused to embark for Russia and in general the army and navy seethed with resentment against the government. Its support for Poland's invasion led to the *Jolly George* incident, when East India dockers refused to load munitions bound for Poland, an action which provoked widespread sympathy from the broad mass of workers and which forced the TUC to threaten a general strike unless the government desisted in its anti-Soviet vendetta. But this was not the only result of the Hands Off Russia Campaign: councils of action sprang into existence, which because of their combining unofficial and official structures and their flexible nature took on certain unmistakable features of embryonic soviets.

To 1926 and After

Out of the ferment of WWI, inspired by the Russian Revolution, and seeking to emulate the Bolsheviks, the Communist Party of Great Britain came into existence on January 29, 1921 when communists in Britain were finally united. While the newly formed Party took an active part in organising the councils of action and the Hands Off Russia Campaign, in the main its contribution was limited to issuing revolutionary slogans and general advice. This in fact did not change much in the next two years, because it was a period of retreat by the working class: the Party suffered a drop in membership.

Having recovered from the shock waves of WWI and the Russian Revolution the ruling class in Britain was again confronted by the necessity to increase the rate of exploitation. Britain had emerged from the war victorious but transformed from a creditor to a debtor nation. Under the lash of an £8 billion debt to the USA and slowly reviving competition from Europe it was again compelled to go on the offensive against the working class. It pursued a strategy of defeating the working class by taking on one section of the class at a time, so that domino-like with one section down the rest would duly fall in turn.

The first battle was with the miners; their defeat was by no means inevitable but with the betrayal of Black Friday (April 15, 1921) by their Transport Workers' Federation and National Union of Railwaymen partners in the Triple Alliance the MFGB was left isolated and an eleven week lock out saw them ignominiously surrender. With the miners down the other dominos followed: shipbuilders, engineers, boilermakers, seamen,

cotton workers, and agricultural workers all suffered wage cuts and a weakening in organisation. Trade union membership, which had reached a record 8,340,000 in 1920, plummeted to 4,250,000 in 1923, as a result of the combined effect of a steep rise in unemployment and the employers' offensive.

It was these conditions which saw the working class turn towards the Labour Party for satisfaction of their grievances. That there was taking place a transition from a Liberal/Tory, two bourgeois parties' swings and roundabouts parliamentary system to a situation where in essence the Tory party alone faced the emerging Labour Party meant that the ruling class was quite prepared to place into government a Labour Party which had a minority in parliament. The fact that MacDonald's government carried out an undeviating imperialist policy abroad and threatened workers at home with troops did not mean that when the ruling class felt the need to rule directly (as it did after Labour's failure to press home an anti-communist assault over the Campbell case) it had no compunction about despatching MacDonald using a shabby forgery in the form of the so-called 'Zinoviev Letter'.

The stage was now set for a strategic confrontation between labour and capital in which the miners yet again found themselves in the front line.

The mineowners put forward a demand for a repeal of the seven hour day and a return to eight hours; and on June 30, 1925 they gave notice of the termination of the National Wages Agreement. The miners refused to surrender their hard won gains and appealed to the TUC General Council for support. A special meeting of the General Council on July 10 pledged its "complete support of the miners, and undertook to cooperate wholeheartedly with them in their resistance to the degradation of the standard of life of their members". Because of the miners' intransigence and the TUC's willingness to reflect the determination of mass of the workers to back them by threatening a general strike, the government decided to bide its time it therefore enacted a tactical retreat. On July 31 (Red Friday) they announced a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the coal industry and agreed to subsidise the mineowners for nine months, after which time the commission was to deliver its predetermined report.

While the government prepared for the impending clash and sanctioned the setting up of the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS), an overt strikebreaking organisation, preparations by the TUC and the Labour Party were noticeable by their absence. It is true that at the Scarborough TUC held in September 1925 extraordinary militant sounding resolutions were passed, but the CPGB initiated resolutions declaring that "the union movement must organise to prepare the trade unions in conjunction with the Labour Party and the workers to struggle for the overthrow of capitalism", and pledges about the need for factory committees and about the right of self determination for the colonies not only remained rhetoric for TUC leaders but contrasted sharply with the other face of the labour bureaucracy, the Labour Party. At their Liverpool Conference they endorsed the general record of the short lived MacDonald government and because of fear about the growing influence of communism they not only rejected CPGB affiliation to the Labour Party but passed overwhelmingly a resolution barring communists from being individual members of the Labour Party. Thus the block votes which under pressure of the masses had gone to pass militant, communist initiated proposals at the TUC were used to bar communists at the Labour Party Conference.

Immediately after Red Friday the Communist Party launched itself into a concerted campaign to warn and prepare the working class for the

oncoming battle. *The Workers' Weekly* carried a box showing how many weeks remained before "the termination of the mining agreement and the opening of the greatest struggle in the history of the British working class... WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE STRUGGLE..." (*Workers' Weekly*, August 28, 1925). Up and down the country, at the TUC Congress, in the Labour Party, the CPGB ceaselessly hammered home the point that the class must be put on a war footing and that the workers' case must be taken to the army and the navy. The government was so disturbed by this campaign that the police were ordered to raid the headquarters of the Communist Party, the London District Offices, the YCL, and the headquarters of the National Minority Movement. Vast quantities of papers and documents were seized, and twelve leading Party members were arrested and charged with incitement to mutiny.

The Royal Commission reported on March 6, 1926, and the coalowners not only renewed their demands for heavy wage cuts but insisted on district agreements, a factor which greatly strengthened the determination of the workers to support the miners. Forced under mass pressure to call a general strike the TUC General Council postponed its commencement from May 1 to May 3, 1926 in the hope of a sign that the government was again prepared to compromise. But knowing that the General Council did not really believe in the strike, knowing that it would not follow it through to a struggle for power, the government refused to bend and instead called the General Council's bluff. The government used the martial law Emergency Powers Act, sent troops to all decisive parts of the country, and set in motion the fascists, the OMS, and its carefully prepared contingency plans.

The strike proceeded almost despite the TUC; the extent of the strike and its solidarity gave the mass of workers a sense of power, a feeling of their potential strength. Because most militant workers realised that they were not only fighting against the miners' wage cuts but against a future attack on themselves they were quite prepared to go far beyond the TUC's instructions about keeping "off the streets" and keeping the strike "non-political". Trades councils were transformed in many areas into councils of action which enforced aggressive picketing in order to gain control over food and other supplies and prevent blacklegging. Police interference with this picketing led in a number of localities to the organisation of elementary measures of workers' self-defence ranging from pickets carrying walking sticks to Workers' Defence Corps. The workers showed extraordinary fighting powers, overturning blackleg buses, closing down all bourgeois papers, controlling socially important services such as electricity, and calling on soldiers to disobey orders. In short the masses took the initiative and developed all the methods of organisation and violence so distasteful to reformist leaders.

The Communist Party on the whole passed the test of the general strike well. Before the strike, ever since Red Friday it had been making and urging preparations. It fought for the miners' case to be placed before the armed forces, it took the lead in the establishment of the councils of action, the Workers' Defence Corps, and from the start of the strike it posed the question of power and the need to bring down the Baldwin government. The Communist Party stood out as the only serious revolutionary force, a fact the government was clearly conscious of: 1,200 Party members were arrested, Party offices raided, and Party propaganda banned. Because of its role the Party gained enormous respect and influence particularly amongst the miners who made up the bulk of the Party's 5,000 recruits (thus doubling membership) in this period.

When the TUC General Council took

REVIEW

the Party in El Salvador and also in Nicaragua, where the socialist direction of the revolution is still undecided because the working class has as yet failed to establish its hegemony. The precedent in Cuba where the 26th July Movement transformed the opportunist Socialist (Communist) Party into the ruling Communist Party (imprisoning the former General Secretary in the process) is the exception that proves the rule. This was a unique experience due to the exceptional leadership of comrade Fidel Castro and the tremendous pressure placed on the Cuban revolution as an epicentre of confrontation between the Soviet Union and US imperialism. Yet the RCG kids itself into portraying it as the general rule.

In those countries where communist parties do not exist, but where the national democratic revolution has won state power, the priority must be to found one — possibly from within the anti-imperialist movement — but still definitely based on the class interests of the proletariat.

The founding of a communist party is a necessary requirement in determining the direction of such national democratic revolutions and this demands an ideological struggle both in the anti-imperialist movement and among the wider masses. This was shown by the tragic defeat in Grenada last year. In the events leading up to the US invasion, the overwhelming majority of the New Jewel Movement had elected to follow Bernard Coard's strategy for taking the revolution forward and building a party to carry it out. Despite Coard's fatal mistake of not involving the non-party masses in the ensuing ideological struggle, which enabled Bishop to mobilise against the party leadership and create the opportunity for imperialist intervention, his course was fundamentally correct (see *The Leninist* no.7). The Grenadan revolution had begun to face the choice which eventually confronts all revolutions — either capitalism or socialism — there being no middle way. Either the revolution retreats or it continues to advance to socialism under the hegemony of the working class.

The RCG closes its eyes to these controversies and internal struggles which are present in all revolutions. They do not want to be burdened with the headache of supporting one side in an ideological struggle against another. They just want to get down to the cosy business of shouting "Hip Hip Hurray!" as the world revolution smoothly and spontaneously overthrows imperialism, without debate or disagreement, and without having to think independently for themselves. They simply tail. For them, it is not important to become embroiled in the differences between the Soviet Union and China, between Khalqi and Parcham, or between Coard and Bishop.

They believe that a party or a movement can simply find the correct way forward to revolution and socialism without ideological struggle. They parallel those in our own Party, who condemn "internal backbiting". "Why don't we all unite and fight the class enemy?", they plaintively cry. For the simple reason, we answer, that the class enemy does not line up at one end of a field with us revolutionaries at the opposite end. The influence of the class enemy exists within our own ranks. And before we can do decisive battle, we must purge ourselves of this enemy within. Opportunism does not only affect communist parties in the imperialist countries as the RCG implies but sprouts spontaneously everywhere — even in the socialist countries and even in the most underdeveloped capitalist conditions. In those countries where communist parties do not exist, an ideological struggle must be waged to found one. Where communist parties are being consumed by opportunists, this must

be fought. If necessary, the revolutionary wing must be split from the opportunist wing as the Bolsheviks and Khalqis did in Tsarist Russia and feudal Afghanistan respectively, for the revolution in both those countries was not led by the communist party despite the ideological struggle against opportunism, but because of it. These are the lessons we must learn as communists in Britain, if we are to successfully lead the socialist revolution here.

The movement in Britain

Where do we begin therefore in Britain? Like most communist parties in the imperialist countries, our Party has been severely savaged by the growth of opportunism; in fact more so than most, because its very existence is now threatened by liquidationism. Predictably, the RCG chooses to turn its back on the CPGB as being beyond redemption, as it does with all other parties in the imperialist countries. It glibly dismisses the gains of the world communist movement in the imperialist countries by simply saying "the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of working class organisations and political parties in the imperialist countries remained with the pro-imperialist, racist Second International" (p49). This mentions nothing of the fact that the communist parties became the dominant mass party of the working class movement in Greece, Portugal, Spain; and that in two of the six most powerful imperialist countries — France and Italy — the communist party even retained a larger vote than the social democrats throughout the post-war boom!

The world communist movement still represents the continuation of the tradition of mass genuine working class parties, which was founded by the Second International and advanced by the Communist International after 1919. This is an extremely important fact which the RCG ignores. This leads it to surmise that the mass communist parties of the capitalist world could not play an important role in the reconstruction of the Communist International. So where did the Third International come from? It did not arise from small groups of individuals, but was founded on the parties which split from the Second International. Those countries where the mass tradition of workers' parties had been most firmly laid was where the largest communist parties generally emerged — in Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia. Surely it is not too difficult to see how the same possibility still applies today. Are the parties in the capitalist world which will help to reconstruct the Communist International more likely to emerge from small groups such as the RCG or from the mass communist parties of France and Italy? Even more important is the question of where small groups which want to reconstruct the Communist International should work. In the petty bourgeois wilderness? Or in parties which call themselves communist and are entrenched in the working class? These are the questions we must answer.

The RCG makes the crass and ignorant claim that "Communism has never taken root in the British working class movement" (p vii). This childish assertion emanates from its obstinate refusal to look at and learn from the 60 years of our Party's history, which, far from being the story of some propaganda group with less than a hundred members, represents the greatest chapter in the history of our working class movement. The CPGB may never have counted its supporters in millions yet it still gained a hundred thousand votes and reached a membership of

56,000 at its height. Given the strategic position our Party has occupied in the organised working class movement, it has cut a wide swathe of influence in the day to day class struggle. The hard-won experiences of organising Councils of Action and workers defence squads in the 1926 General Strike, of organising trade unionists and Labour Party members against their reformist leaders in the united front National Minority Movement and the National Left Wing Movement during the 1920's, of leading thousands in the street battles of the 1930's against unemployment and fascism, and of initiating the shop stewards' movement against anti-trade union laws in the 1970's are a priceless heritage for any revolutionary wishing to prepare for the future by learning from the past. Yet all these lessons of class struggle from the green tree of life are simply passed over in the RCG's programme without a second thought.

The RCG's contempt for the CPGB is rooted in the fact that it has effectively 'written off' the organised working class movement in Britain. It declares, "The traditional and now corrupt organisations of the British working class, the Labour Party and trade unions, are designed to prevent and contain any fightback — to restrict such a fightback to constitutional, parliamentary and ineffectual forms of protest. We must build anew." (p xii) It condemns the trade union movement for representing "the more privileged strata of the working class" (p124) — like nearly fifty percent of it, including the unskilled manual labour which is organised by the TGWU, GMWU, NUR, NUPE, etc — and excludes the growing army of white-collar workers from the working class altogether. It refers to them as the "new middle class" (p xi). The RCG has simply written them all off as 'corrupted' and 'privileged'.

Having turned away from the majority of the working class which constitutes the vast majority of the British populace, the RCG then tells us whom our salvation from imperialism rests with. They are, to be precise, the minority of "Black and immigrant workers" (p110). If ever there was a 'David versus Goliath' match, this is it. The RCG refers to these forces as the "vanguard" — a social definition which they share with many opportunists in our Party (who refer to manual industrial workers as being the "vanguard"). According to Leninism, both are wrong, because "vanguard" is a term referring to the most politically conscious section of the working class, which must be organised in and around a communist party. It is not a measure of how many bricks are thrown at the police or how effectively wages are increased through industrial action. It is a definition of those who lead the conscious struggle for socialist revolution.

The RCG has mechanically seized upon Lenin's 1916 article *The Split in Socialism* and raised its conclusions above all other considerations. The general point Lenin was making at the time of the First World War, when a revolutionary situation existed throughout Europe, but when the official labour leaders had paralysed the organised workers' movement in favour of pursuing the war interests of their own bourgeoisie, was that revolutionary socialists should not be overly preoccupied with the official movement. He called on them to go "lower and deeper" to the real masses. To understand the relevance of Lenin's thesis that the masses were ready for action despite the betrayal of their leaders, one only had to look at the burgeoning shop stewards movement in Britain during this time and the revolutionary movement which spontaneously rose up against the Tsar in February 1917. Europe was as dry as tinder and was

merely waiting for somebody to light a match.

The RCG interprets this to mean that communists should turn their backs on the reformist organisations of the working class in principle. This is absolute nonsense. Lenin first of all pointed to the fact that if revolutionary socialists are to lead the working class as a whole, they must reach down to the majority of workers who were not then even in trade unions. But in general, he still considered the struggle to defeat the reformist labour leaders in the trade unions and other mass bodies and to win the mass of organised workers to the banner of communism a priority. In *Left Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder* he called on communists to work in even the most reactionary trade unions, to stand in parliamentary elections for propaganda purposes and argued in favour of the CPGB affiliating to the Labour Party — all the better to expose its leaders.

Lenin's message for communists was to strive to win the working class as a whole, not to neglect the most backward unorganised sections by kowtowing to the official labour movement — or vice versa. What the RCG ends up doing is chasing after the spontaneous and unorganised actions of a small minority of the working class. It praises them for "their rejection of constitutionalism and the parliamentary sham" (p129), as if this was not an expression of their alienation from politics but some politically conscious act! Meanwhile, it deserts the overwhelming majority of workers, and leaves them to the mercy of the reformist labour leaders without raising a finger. In reality, the RCG has deserted the class struggle in Britain and has deserted the task of building a communist party. This is why it does not consider the 60 fighting years of the Communist Party of Great Britain as relevant.

Besides bowing to the spontaneity of the doubly oppressed minority of black and Irish masses, the RCG has also tagged on to the bourgeois movements for democratic rights. This is far from the correct position which the RCG held on the women's question in 1976. Then, they recognised the necessity to link the struggle for women's rights to the working class struggle for socialism. Having spurned the working class and the task of linking the democratic struggle to revolution they now support the bourgeois feminists and pacifists of Greenham Common — not because the latter are socialist or revolutionary, but because they are potentially 'anti-imperialist' in the sense that any liberal can sympathise with a 'good cause'. This is an ignominious retreat from principle for which any left group should feel intense embarrassment.

The precedent of an imperialist country moving rapidly from a position of stability to one of revolutionary collapse has already been provided by the case of Germany during the period 1914-1919. The failure of the revolution there was rooted in the left of the Social Democratic Party's failure to prepare the split from opportunism before, as the Bolsheviks did in Russia. The Communist Party of Germany therefore emerged only after the revolution had commenced, and after Scheidemann and Noske had already betrayed the first wave of insurrection.

The Leninists of the CPGB do not consign themselves to passively waiting, for that is the surest way of missing any unforeseen opportunities for revolution. We look to the example of Lenin's Bolsheviks, whereas the RCG is committing the same mistake of passivity and lack of preparation as the German workers' movement. Genuine revolutionaries in the RCG should give up their present path and join the real struggle for communism in Britain. That struggle lies not in the RCG but in the CPGB.

Open Ideological Discussion

Richard Hardy

If the current state of discussion in our Party is examined, we find that the extent of its openness, and indeed its general ideological quality, is severely circumscribed.

In the run up to the fracas of the year, otherwise known as the Annual General Meeting of the People's Press Printing Society (PPPS), the *Morning Star* and *Communist Focus* have thrown open their columns to the protagonists. Unfortunately, the *Morning Star* has only thrown them open to the extent of having a token few letters opposing its editor, Tony Chater, which have been overwhelmed by numerous supporting letters from his sycophants. Complain though they do, the Euros controlling *Communist Focus* have done the mirror image of this in its April/May issue, by printing letters from creatures of the Euros, including comrades Halverson, Reid, and Walshe; token letters, and old ones at that, from a couple of Hackney comrades were thrown in for 'balance'. You need not hold your breath for what the *June Communist Focus* deigns to print. (Or maybe it is quietly going bimonthly.)

To return to the opposition to the Euros. Over the last months comrade Chater has allowed into the letters columns of the *Morning Star* only those letters supporting the Chater-Castello course out of the Party. Numbers of letters, and not only from Euros, have been suppressed. Pro-Party elements have been banned from the misnamed debate. Only panderers to the trade union bureaucracy, conciliators with

opportunism, and liquidators in general can parade their ideas in the *Chaterite Morning Star*.

Comrade Davis's performance at the Hackney *Morning Star* supporters' meeting in April epitomised these centrists' and right opportunists' ideological poverty. Instead of debating the Euros' petty bourgeois radical ideas from a robust pro-Party position, her liquidationism forced her, in the absence of any rounded ideology of Chater-Costelloism, into an untenable and unprincipled abolition of discussion. This was little different in essence from the strangulation of discussion at our Party's 38th (Liquidationist) Congress last autumn. Comrade Davis fails to see anything wrong with imitating comrade Halverson, for the reality is that both trends (Eurocommunist and Chater-Costello) differ only on which particular liquidationist course to take. It is hardly surprising when both do their best to stop open ideological discussion.

Unity of action based on freedom of discussion and criticism. That is the criteria Leninists use and the criteria operated by a Leninist party. In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* Lenin also criticised an opportunist leadership. He derided the opponents of the Party who might gloat over disputes within it, and urged Party members who "are already steeled enough in battle not to be perturbed by these

pinpricks and to continue, in spite of them, their work of self-criticism and ruthless exposure of their own shortcomings". (Lenin, *CW* Vol 7 p.206). Our task is similar and cannot be curtailed just because the bourgeoisie might take temporary comfort in our open criticisms.

It is a fundamental precept of Leninism that there must be open political and ideological struggle in order to ensure Party unity in action. Especially when a Communist Party is riddled with tailism it behoves Leninists to insist on placing their disciplined criticisms squarely before it. And true openness of discussion of ideological differences and criticisms has to be extended to the rank and file workers outside the Party too. The Party is cloaked from view if the working class as a whole is kept ignorant of Party struggles. Our Party cannot become a truly mass party (that is, leading the working class) unless Party activists and the masses outside the Party know who in the Party defends what, or belongs to which trend. This is the way in which a healthy influx of recruits can be materialise. All the Machiavellian scheming by Straight Leftists and other centrists obscures the class's view of their real positions; Leninists will continue to pull down such dusty veils and force the insipid to commit themselves at last — are they pro-Party or not? Committed to a public position the centrist liquidationists are lost: pro-Party elements must come out of their shells and stand against each form of liquidationism — Euro, right, centrist, or left. We Leninist join with all pro-Party elements in denunciation of these opportunist trends, represent-

ed by *Marxism Today*, *Morning Star*, *Straight Left*, and those who abdicate the struggle the NCP.

In the absence of Leninist norms of open ideological discussion in *Marxism Today* and the *Morning Star*, the house journals of Eurocommunism and the Chater-Costelloites, and the iconic *Straight Left*, we are left with one course and one course only, pursue the discussion with an organ of Leninism, that is, *The Leninist*. Leninists of the Communist Party of Great Britain do have recourse: we appeal over the heads of the opportunists, to the pro-Party elements and to the class as whole. If they lock the door and board up the windows we shall come down the chimney.

Drafting a Declaration for the *Iskra* editorial board, Lenin tells us that "Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian Social-Democrats and class-conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions from all angles... We regard one of the drawbacks of the present day movement to be the absence of open polemics between avowedly differing views, the effort to conceal differences on fundamental questions." (Lenin, *CW* Vol.4 p.328) There are no hideaways for Leninists in coffee table journals, labour aristocrat rags, or Labour Party cheerleading. Our immediate demand is for the fullest, deepest discussion in our Party; for discussion which reflects accurately the ideological positions of every trend. That was Lenin's way; it is what our Party needs and our class requires.

EEC Elections

Statement

This month sees the second direct elections to the EEC parliament. What attitude should communists take towards it?

At the end of April we received an appeal from comrades in France to take part in a joint campaign for a boycott of the EEC elections. Under the *Platform for Struggle Against a Trans-Atlantic Europe* the Committee for the Reconstruction of the French Communist Party (PCF), the Martinican Communists Resident in France, and the Communist Grouping of the South-East declare that "The bourgeoisie will use every vote, whatever political colour, and even "no" votes, as proof of acceptance, and the legitimacy of European institutions and their authority'. A boycott, they argue 'is one step in the fight which must be strengthened against super-exploitation, industrial destruction and unemployment, against the budget and policies of war, against trans-Atlantic Europe...' which is 'inseparable from the struggle against capitalism and imperialism on an international scale.'

We have no argument with our comrades' assertion that a 'Workers' Europe will not be made inside of but against' the EEC, nor the fact that 'workers of all categories ... are crushed by the mechanism of capitalism' but we do consider the tactic of boycott is inappropriate in this instance.

It is true that the Bolsheviks gained a certain reputation as boycottists. But if we look at Lenin's writing as a whole we can see that not only was he forced to engage in an unremitting struggle against those who elevated this tactic to the level of a principle but he generalised this experience against the 'Left' in the Comintern who on principle refused to participate in

parliamentary activity. He constantly exposed the myth of Bolshevik boycottism, pointing to the examples of how they had participated in elections to the Tsarist Duma as a model of combining legal with illegal work, how they used the Democratic Conference, Kerensky's pre-parliament, and how they even fought in the elections for the bourgeois parliamentary Constituent Assembly after the October Revolution itself.

We can learn a great deal about the Leninist attitude towards parliamentary activity if we look at the resolutions of the early Comintern. In the Second Congress resolution on *The Communist Party and Parliament* it was maintained that: 'Anti-parliamentarianism as a principle, as an absolute and categorical rejection of participation in elections or in revolutionary parliamentary work, is ... a naive and childish position which does not stand up to criticism. Sometimes this attitude expresses a healthy disgust with the manoeuvring of the parliamentarians, but is nevertheless a failure to recognise the possibilities of revolutionary parliamentarianism.' After declaring that a recognition of parliamentary work 'does not imply absolute acceptance of need to participate' and giving examples of Bolshevik actions where they had withdrawn their parliamentary factions, the Leninist attitude is summed up as follows: 'while accepting as a general rule the need to participate in elections to both national parliaments and the organs of local government, and in work in these institutions, the Communist Party has to decide each case separately, evaluating the specific conditions of the given moment. A boycott of elections or of parliament, or a withdrawal from parliament, are permissible

primarily when conditions are ripe for an immediate move to the armed struggle for power.' (Our emphasis)

Few would argue that the conditions are ripe for an immediate armed insurrection in France let alone Britain or in the rest of the EEC. But do the EEC elections, because of their multinational character or their undoubted unpopularity (especially in Britain), lead us to the conclusion about the need to employ the tactic of boycott for some other reason? We think not. For communists elections, even if they are held in the most unfavourable, or even rigged, conditions are a golden opportunity to pose demands on the misleaders of the working class and to deepen the links between the communists and the broad mass of the working class.

In recent years many members of the Communist Party of Great Britain have urged our Party to drop direct participation in parliamentary elections, not because of any leftism, but because of a combination of our Party's pathetic results and because of the magnetic attraction that the Labour Party exerts. They falsely characterise the Labour Party as the working class party, and conclude from this that the Communist Party ought to seek affiliation to the Labour Party as a matter of principle. Because of this strategic aim parliamentary activity is branded as splitting the working class vote, and as the Labour Party is the main working class party all communist work should be channelled into fighting for Labourite candidates.

Faced with this growing liquidationist cancer and the overall material conditions in Britain, and basing ourselves on a study of the Leninist strategy and tactics of Comintern and an understanding of the true nature of the Labour Party, we have declared that standing communist candidates in Britain is obligatory. But this does mean that we accept the appalling left

reformist platform CPGB candidates at present stand on, or the overall parliamentary roadist perspective they are committed to. We have taken up the ideological struggle for them to stand on a true revolutionary platform; at the same time we say that where there is no communist candidate Party members should support Labourites with critical communist propaganda. With this approach we not only fight to ensure that liquidationism is fought ideologically but in concrete forms as well; it also enables communists to approach the masses and get a hearing from them.

So what about the EEC elections? For us they are in no way fundamentally different from local or national elections; the same criteria apply to the EEC election as to others. We will therefore use them to raise the ideological struggle against liquidationism and for Marxism-Leninism. Votes for a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist platform in no way help to legitimise parliament, whether it be a multinational one or merely a national one; the key is of course to get the votes, to construct the platform.

We consider that our comrades in France, where there is a mass Communist Party, where the proletariat have a long and splendid revolutionary tradition, should reconsider their boycottist tactic. We think they should place demands on PCF candidates, expose the social chauvinism of the misleaders, and support with critical propaganda. This is the way to construct links with both the vanguard and the broad masses, the way to hasten the day when we will again see genuine communist candidates in France, who stand in parliamentary elections not to transform the bourgeois parliament but to destroy it and the bourgeois state as a whole.

REVIEW

Bowling to Anti-imperialist Spontaneity

Revolutionary Communist Group *The Revolutionary Road to Communism in Britain* Larkin Publications, London 1984, pbk, pp xii 163, £1.50

Frank Grafton

Since splitting from the Socialist Workers' Party a decade ago, the Revolutionary Communist Group has made some important steps in the right direction. It has made a significant contribution towards reestablishing the orthodox Marxist explanation for capitalism's renewed slide into economic crises, broken from its original adherence to Trotskyism and orientated itself towards the tradition of Lenin's Communist International. Yet its recently published programme *The Revolutionary Road to Communism in Britain* shows us that despite these positive developments, the RCG has arrived at the thoroughly unMarxist conclusion of *bowling to spontaneity*.

This is partially the result of its leadership retreating from any real form of ideological struggle, having been severely mauled by the infliction of several splits, especially when Frank Richards' Revolutionary Communist Tendency (now one of several Trotskyist parties!) took most of its supporters; but is also due to the adoption of a world view dominated by economic determinism. The RCG now has a position similar to that of the Economist trend in the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party at the turn of the century, whereby "politics always obediently follows economics". For them, the prospect of socialist revolution in Britain is impossible so long as imperialism provides the economic basis for opportunism's ascendancy in the working class movement. Consequently, the task of building a communist party is postponed, in favour of rallying uncritical support for those existing forces already confronting imperialism: the socialist countries, the anti-imperialist movements of the Provisional IRA, ANC, etc, and the spontaneous outbursts against oppression by black masses who have taken to the streets, as in the 1981 riots. The RCG has effectively invented a 'stage', much as the Mensheviks did in Russia, as justification for their organisation not preparing the working class in their own country *now* for the eventual seizure of state power.

By bowing to anti-imperialist spontaneity, the RCG has deserted the ideological and political struggle to win the working class away from opportunism and refuses to work out independent communist politics corresponding to the general tasks of socialist revolution in the present conditions of Britain. Far from strengthening the spontaneous movement against capitalism and imperialism wherever it bursts out, the RCG is condemned to lagging behind, to slavishly tailing, to being caught unawares. But such spontaneous upsurges are bound to be defeated (not that we argue against them happening), because they lack planned organisation and leadership. Only by building a Communist Party *now*, capable of leading the revolutionary movement as a whole, of welding its spontaneous parts into a conscious unity, can the final assault on the citadels of the British imperialist state be made.

The world communist movement

The communist parties throughout the world, both those ruling in the socialist countries and those in the capitalist countries, are part of the heritage of the Communist International. The dissolution of Comintern in 1943 and the liquidationism which is now hanging over so many communist parties like our own are interlinked because they are both derived from the disintegration of communist ideological unity with the growth of opportunism. The RCG quite rightly declares "the victory of imperialism, and the defeat of imperialism throughout the world

demands the reconstruction of the Communist International" (p 150), but in our view its understanding of the problem of opportunism in the world communist movement, of how the Communist International was dissolved and how Eurocommunism emerged, is desperately inadequate. The remedy which the RCG offers us for the resurrection of Comintern is purely a quack medicine, for it does not involve an ideological struggle against the very cancer which has progressively corrupted our movement for the past fifty years — *opportunism*.

The roots of opportunism in the world communist movement are crudely confined by the RCG to the "working class movements in the imperialist countries" (p 149). This is because, of course, the imperialist countries provide the richest conditions for bribery of the workers' movement. Yet this does not explain how opportunism is not only confined to the communist parties in the imperialist countries, but has arisen in under and medium developed capitalist countries, as in the case of the Tudeh Party's tragic appeasement of that butcher Khomeini, and has even emerged in the socialist countries themselves. What about Titoism in Yugoslavia, Maoism in China and Albania, and Dubcekism in Czechoslovakia to mention a few non-controversial examples so far as the RCG is concerned? The unity of the world communist movement has not disintegrated simply under the impact of opportunism in the parties of Britain, France, and Italy, but has come about due to most parties becoming affected in some form and to some degree. Let us examine this assertion by looking at the role of the most powerful, influential and respected party in the world communist movement — the Soviet Party.

The RCG absolves the CPSU of any guilt in the dissolution of Comintern, by describing its obvious and decisive involvement in that act as: "necessary" (p149). In fact, the Soviet Party determined the policy of Comintern throughout the policy periods of 'social fascism' and popular frontism, and was instrumental in securing the CPGB's change in line at the beginning of the Second World War, which involved Harry Pollitt resigning from the General Secretaryship. Nobody but the most ignorant can claim that the Soviet Party did not play the main role in winding up the Comintern. The reason why the Soviet Party did this is also pretty obvious, because it was preoccupied at the time in "tearing the guts out of the Nazi war machine". The decision to dissolve Comintern essentially boiled down to a bit of horse-trading with American and British imperialism, in order to strengthen the wartime alliance against Hitler. Although we cannot condemn all deals between socialism and the imperialist devil, is there not such a thing as paying too high a price, especially when it involves a principle? Was the Communist International not the highest expression of our

movement? Furthermore, can we really say that the Soviet Party's hands are clean, even so far as the growth of opportunism in the parties in the imperialist countries after 1943 is concerned? *Pravda* called the CPGB's programme *The British Road to Socialism* "a creative development of Marxism-Leninism" in 1951, when the Soviet Party's opinion still carried immense weight with the leaders of all other parties. But if there is one event which removed any remaining constraints for the maturation of opportunism in the parties of the imperialist countries, surely it was Khrushchev's veneration of the 'parliamentary road to socialism' at the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

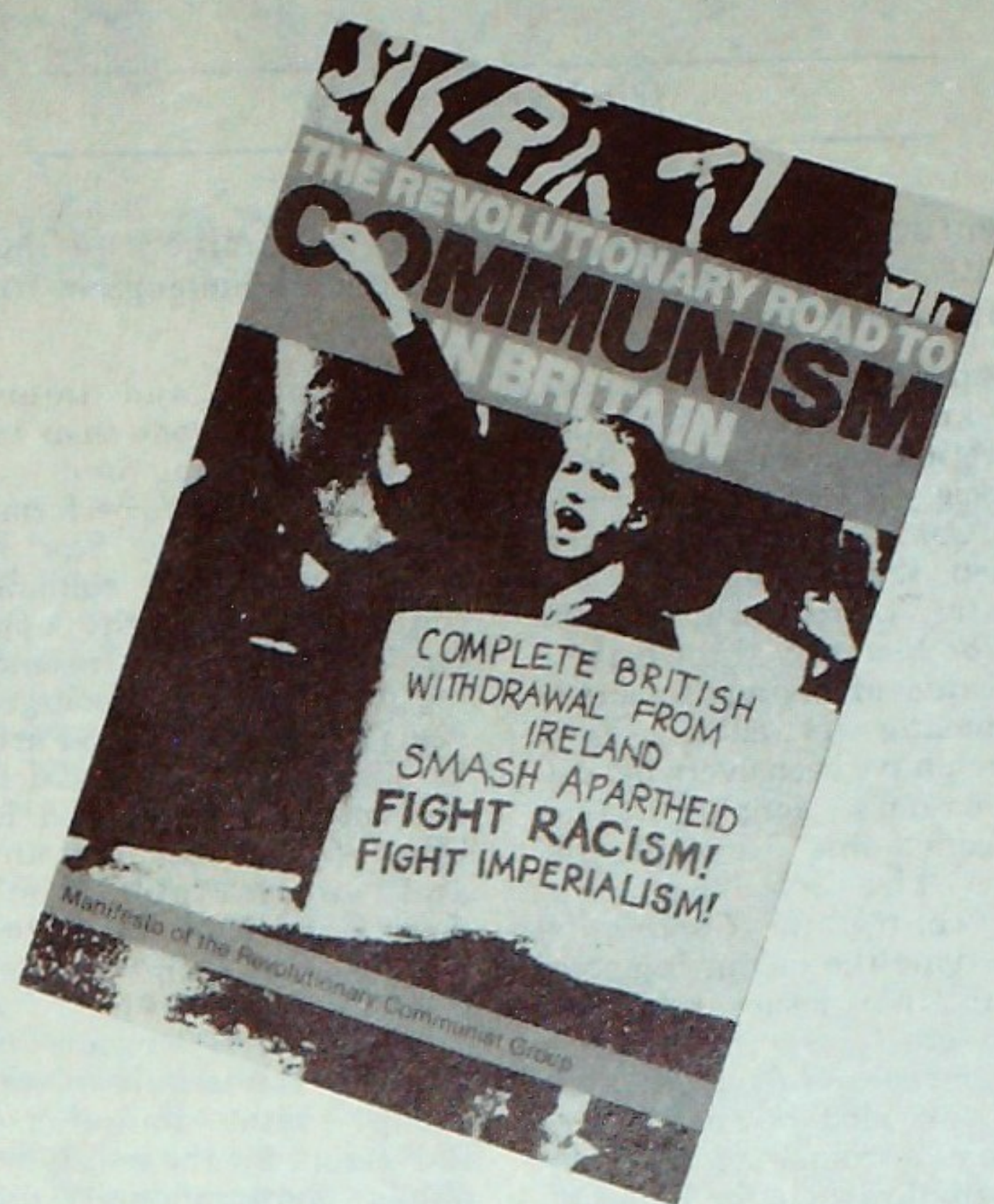
Although we totally reject the Trotskyist characterisation of the CPSU as 'counterrevolutionary', we cannot close our eyes to its serious mistakes, in the way the sweet innocents of the RCG do. The Soviet Party has conducted the longest struggle and secured the greatest achievements in the world communist movement, and therefore has gained the greatest respect and authority. Yet this also means that when it makes mistakes, these also have widespread repercussions, to which the ideological disintegration of the world communist movement stands as evidence. In order to reverse this process, we feel it is necessary to openly and honestly voice our criticisms in a fraternal manner. Only then can a solution be found.

While the RCG uncritically fawns upon the communist parties in the socialist countries, much in the same manner as the centrists in our own Party do, they go to the other extreme in their attitude towards all other communist parties in the capitalist world. They remain haughtily disdainful of them, not even recognising them as parts of the world communist movement. Instead, they look to the IRA, ANC, PLO, and FMLN as the "vanguard forces ... in the struggle to destroy imperialism. These are the forces of the future." (p ix) In fact, it becomes quite clear reading their programme, that the RCG do not look to the existing communist parties in the capitalist countries to becoming component parts of a refounded Communist International, but look to the anti-imperialist movements being united with the ruling communist parties around the vulgarly adapted slogan "workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite". This clearly not only diverts communists from the task of fighting opportunism in the world communist movement and striving to commit all communist parties to the Leninist recognition of their revolutionary duty in their own countries, but rather, helps to undermine the

independent role of the communist party in the struggle for national liberation in the under-developed and oppressed countries.

The anti-imperialist movements of the world are not confined to the forces of the working class alone. They consist of a *revolutionary alliance* of classes, including the working class, urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and in some cases, even the national bourgeoisie. The RCG's recognition of anti-imperialist movements as substitutes for non-ruling communist parties in general, is an over-pessimistic response to the latter's frequent failure to come to the fore in these movements, which in the case of the Communist Party of Ireland amounts to complete dereliction of its responsibility to the national liberation struggle in the Six Counties (and Ireland as a whole). We do not support the position of the CPI and consider it a disgrace that that Party claims to uphold the tradition of James Connolly, who fought to put the working class in its rightful and honourable place in the national struggle — *at its head!* But our solution is not to turn our backs on the communist parties and to tail the national liberation movements. For the multi-class character of the latter confine them to a national democratic stage of the revolution — unless the working class led by the communist party gains hegemony over the revolution and carries it *uninterruptedly through to socialism*. We do not look to the Provisional IRA as the solution to the opportunism of the CPI, although we support all revolutionaries unconditionally in the struggle against British imperialism. No, we call on all genuine communists in Ireland to look to the example of their comrades in Vietnam and to fight to transform the Communist Party of Ireland accordingly.

But the refusal of the RCG to acknowledge any communist parties in the capitalist world at all, means they even dismiss those which have actually taken up the armed struggle such as the Iraqi, El Salvadoran and Guatemalan parties. In a whole chapter of their programme given over to the fight against apartheid, the RCG does not mention once the revolutionary role of the Communist Party of South Africa. For them, it is the ANC and the ANC alone which is waging the struggle there. But while we give support to fraternal parties in the armed struggle, we still do not relinquish our right to openly voice criticisms. For instance, we find that many communist parties only join the armed struggle late in the day, when it has already gained a formidable momentum, and therefore find themselves *tailing it*. This was the case with



REVIEW

the Party in El Salvador and also in Nicaragua, where the socialist direction of the revolution is still undecided because the working class has as yet failed to establish its hegemony. The precedent in Cuba where the 26th July Movement transformed the opportunist Socialist (Communist) Party into the ruling Communist Party (imprisoning the former General Secretary in the process) is the exception that proves the rule. This was a unique experience due to the exceptional leadership of comrade Fidel Castro and the tremendous pressure placed on the Cuban revolution as an epicentre of confrontation between the Soviet Union and US imperialism. Yet the RCG kids itself into portraying it as the general rule.

In those countries where communist parties do not exist, but where the national democratic revolution has won state power, the priority must be to found one — possibly from within the anti-imperialist movement — but still definitely based on the class interests of the proletariat.

The founding of a communist party is a necessary requirement in determining the direction of such national democratic revolutions and this demands an ideological struggle both in the anti-imperialist movement and among the wider masses. This was shown by the tragic defeat in Grenada last year. In the events leading up to the US invasion, the overwhelming majority of the New Jewel Movement had elected to follow Bernard Coard's strategy for taking the revolution forward and building a party to carry it out. Despite Coard's fatal mistake of not involving the non-party masses in the ensuing ideological struggle, which enabled Bishop to mobilise against the party leadership and create the opportunity for imperialist intervention, his course was fundamentally correct (see *The Leninist* no.7). The Grenadan revolution had begun to face the choice which eventually confronts all revolutions — either capitalism or socialism — there being no middle way. Either the revolution retreats or it continues to advance to socialism under the hegemony of the working class.

The RCG closes its eyes to these controversies and internal struggles which are present in all revolutions. They do not want to be burdened with the headache of supporting one side in an ideological struggle against another. They just want to get down to the cosy business of shouting "Hip Hip Hurrah!" as the world revolution smoothly and spontaneously overthrows imperialism, without debate or disagreement, and without having to think independently for themselves. They simply tail. For them, it is not important to become embroiled in the differences between the Soviet Union and China, between Khalqi and Parcham, or between Coard and Bishop.

They believe that a party or a movement can simply find the correct way forward to revolution and socialism without ideological struggle. They parallel those in our own Party, who condemn "internal backbiting". "Why don't we all unite and fight the class enemy?", they plaintively cry. For the simple reason, we answer, that the class enemy does not line up at one end of a field with us revolutionaries at the opposite end. The influence of the class enemy exists within our own ranks. And before we can do decisive battle, we must purge ourselves of this enemy within. Opportunism does not only affect communist parties in the imperialist countries as the RCG implies but sprouts spontaneously everywhere — even in the socialist countries and even in the most underdeveloped capitalist conditions. In those countries where communist parties do not exist, an ideological struggle must be waged to found one. Where communist parties are being consumed by opportunism, this must

be fought. If necessary, the revolutionary wing must be split from the opportunist wing as the Bolsheviks and Khalqis did in Tsarist Russia and feudal Afghanistan respectively, for the revolution in both those countries was not led by the communist party despite the ideological struggle against opportunism, but because of it. These are the lessons we must learn as communists in Britain, if we are to successfully lead the socialist revolution here.

The movement in Britain

Where do we begin therefore in Britain? Like most communist parties in the imperialist countries, our Party has been severely savaged by the growth of opportunism; in fact more so than most, because its very existence is now threatened by liquidationism. Predictably, the RCG chooses to turn its back on the CPGB as being beyond redemption, as it does with all other parties in the imperialist countries. It glibly dismisses the gains of the world communist movement in the imperialist countries by simply saying "the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of working class organisations and political parties in the imperialist countries remained with the pro-imperialist, racist Second International" (p49). This mentions nothing of the fact that the communist parties became the dominant mass party of the working class movement in Greece, Portugal, Spain; and that in two of the six most powerful imperialist countries — France and Italy — the communist party even retained a larger vote than the social democrats throughout the post-war boom!

The world communist movement still represents the continuation of the tradition of mass genuine working class parties, which was founded by the Second International and advanced by the Communist International after 1919. This is an extremely important fact which the RCG ignores. This leads it to surmise that the mass communist parties of the capitalist world could not play an important role in the reconstruction of the Communist International. So where did the Third International come from? It did not arise from small groups of individuals, but was founded on the parties which split from the Second International. Those countries where the mass tradition of workers' parties had been most firmly laid was where the largest communist parties generally emerged — in Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia. Surely it is not too difficult to see how the same possibility still applies today. Are the parties in the capitalist world which will help to reconstruct the Communist International more likely to emerge from small groups such as the RCG or from the mass communist parties of France and Italy? Even more important is the question of where small groups which want to reconstruct the Communist International should work. In the petty bourgeois wilderness? Or in parties which call themselves communist and are entrenched in the working class? These are the questions we must answer.

The RCG makes the crass and ignorant claim that "Communism has never taken root in the British working class movement" (p vii). This childish assertion emanates from its obstinate refusal to look at and learn from the 60 years of our Party's history, which, far from being the story of some propaganda group with less than a hundred members, represents the greatest chapter in the history of our working class movement. The CPGB may never have counted its supporters in millions yet it still gained a hundred thousand votes and reached a membership of

56,000 at its height. Given the strategic position our Party has occupied in the organised working class movement, it has cut a wide swathe of influence in the day to day class struggle. The hard-won experiences of organising Councils of Action and workers defence squads in the 1926 General Strike, of organising trade unionists and Labour Party members against their reformist leaders in the united front National Minority Movement and the National Left Wing Movement during the 1920's, of leading thousands in the street battles of the 1930's against unemployment and fascism, and of initiating the shop stewards' movement against anti-trade union laws in the 1970's are a priceless heritage for any revolutionary wishing to prepare for the future by learning from the past. Yet all these lessons of class struggle from the green tree of life are simply passed over in the RCG's programme without a second thought.

The RCG's contempt for the CPGB is rooted in the fact that it has effectively 'written off' the organised working class movement in Britain. It declares, "The traditional and now corrupt organisations of the British working class, the Labour Party and trade unions, are designed to prevent and contain any fightback — to restrict such a fightback to constitutional, parliamentary and ineffectual forms of protest. We must build anew." (p xii) It condemns the trade union movement for representing "the more privileged strata of the working class" (p124) — like nearly fifty percent of it, including the unskilled manual labour which is organised by the TGWU, GMWU, NUR, NUPE, etc — and excludes the growing army of white-collar workers from the working class altogether. It refers to them as the "new middle class" (p xi). The RCG has simply written them all off as 'corrupted' and 'privileged'.

Having turned away from the majority of the working class which constitutes the vast majority of the British populace, the RCG then tells us whom our salvation from imperialism rests with. They are, to be precise, the minority of "Black and immigrant workers" (p110). If ever there was a 'David versus Goliath' match, this is it. The RCG refers to these forces as the "vanguard" — a social definition which they share with many opportunists in our Party (who refer to manual industrial workers as being the "vanguard"). According to Leninism, both are wrong, because "vanguard" is a term referring to the most politically conscious section of the working class, which must be organised in and around a communist party. It is not a measure of how many bricks are thrown at the police or how effectively wages are increased through industrial action. It is a definition of those who lead the conscious struggle for socialist revolution.

The RCG has mechanically seized upon Lenin's 1916 article *The Split in Socialism* and raised its conclusions above all other considerations. The general point Lenin was making at the time of the First World War, when a revolutionary situation existed throughout Europe, but when the official labour leaders had paralysed the organised workers' movement in favour of pursuing the war interests of their own bourgeoisie, was that revolutionary socialists should not be overly preoccupied with the official movement. He called on them to go "lower and deeper" to the real masses. To understand the relevance of Lenin's thesis that the masses were ready for action despite the betrayal of their leaders, one only had to look at the burgeoning shop stewards' movement in Britain during this time and the revolutionary movement which spontaneously rose up against the Tsar in February 1917. Europe was as dry as tinder and was

merely waiting for somebody to light a match.

The RCG interprets this to mean that communists should turn their backs on the reformist organisations of the working class in principle. This is absolute nonsense. Lenin first of all pointed to the fact that if revolutionary socialists are to lead the working class as a whole, they must reach down to the majority of workers who were not then even in trade unions. But in general, he still considered the struggle to defeat the reformist labour leaders in the trade unions and other mass bodies and to win the mass of organised workers to the banner of communism a priority. In *Left Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder* he called on communists to work in even the most reactionary trade unions, to stand in parliamentary elections for propaganda purposes and argued in favour of the CPGB affiliating to the Labour Party — all the better to expose its leaders.

Lenin's message for communists was to strive to win the working class as a whole, not to neglect the most backward unorganised sections by kowtowing to the official labour movement — or vice versa. What the RCG ends up doing is chasing after the spontaneous and unorganised actions of a small minority of the working class. It praises them for "their rejection of constitutionism and the parliamentary sham" (p129), as if this was not an expression of their alienation from politics but some politically conscious act! Meanwhile, it deserts the overwhelming majority of workers, and leaves them to the mercy of the reformist labour leaders without raising a finger. In reality, the RCG has deserted the class struggle in Britain and has deserted the task of building a communist party. This is why it does not consider the 60 fighting years of the Communist Party of Great Britain as relevant.

Besides bowing to the spontaneity of the doubly oppressed minority of black and Irish masses, the RCG has also tagged on to the bourgeois movements for democratic rights. This is far from the correct position which the RCG held on the women's question in 1976. Then, they recognised the necessity to link the struggle for women's rights to the working class struggle for socialism. Having spurned the working class and the task of linking the democratic struggle to revolution they now support the bourgeois feminists and pacifists of Greenham Common — not because the latter are socialist or revolutionary, but because they are potentially 'anti-imperialist' in the sense that any liberal can sympathise with a 'good cause'. This is an ignominious retreat from principle for which any left group should feel intense embarrassment.

The precedent of an imperialist country moving rapidly from a position of stability to one of revolutionary collapse has already been provided by the case of Germany during the period 1914-1919. The failure of the revolution there was rooted in the left of the Social Democratic Party's failure to prepare the split from opportunism before, as the Bolsheviks did in Russia. The Communist Party of Germany therefore emerged only after the revolution had commenced, and after Scheidemann and Noske had already betrayed the first wave of insurrection.

The Leninists of the CPGB do not consign themselves to passively waiting, for that is the surest way of missing any unforeseen opportunities for revolution. We look to the example of Lenin's Bolsheviks, whereas the RCG is committing the same mistake of passivity and lack of preparation as the German workers' movement. Genuine revolutionaries in the RCG should give up their present path and join the real struggle for communism in Britain. That struggle lies not in the RCG but in the CPGB.

What Should be the Role of the 'Morning Star'?

Frank Grafton

AT THIS year's AGM of the PPPS, Party activists are given the choice of three platforms: the first is the Management Committees' 'Survival plan' the second is the Eurocommunists' proposal to establish their control over the *Morning Star* by replacing the editors Chater and Whitfield with Eurocommunist loyalists Myant and Chalmers and the third is of the tactically zigzagging Straight Leftists. Although *The Leninist* vehemently opposes the Eurocommunists' plan to destroy the last vestiges of communist tradition in Britain, it also opposes the Chater platform as one of divorcing the vital task of saving the *Morning Star* from the urgent need to reforge the Communist Party on the lines of Marxism-Leninism. We therefore call on all pro-Party comrades to abstain from voting for any of these three liquidationist positions in the absence of an independent pro-Party option. This is not an ideal way to influence the political development of the *Morning Star*, but any pro-Party platform in the Management Committee elections must be carefully prepared before hand, which is why we are now declaring our intention to launch a campaign to elect pro-Party candidates to the Management Committee at the 1985 AGM.

First, however, let us answer the question: what should be the role of the *Morning Star*?

Few comrades on the left of the Communist Party deny that the crisis facing the *Morning Star* is intimately tied up with the decline of the Party. In a more healthy Party, the lack of numbers could be made up by greater efforts and commitment on behalf of its mainstay — the Party activists. In 1939 for example, the Party circulated 100,000 copies of the *Daily Worker* with less than 20,000 members. Yet the difference today is that the commitment and morale of our activists has been undermined by the growing cancer of opportunism which has now reached the rotten over ripe stage of Eurocommunism. If we are to save the *Morning Star* as a communist paper, then that struggle must be linked to the struggle against opportunism and liquidationism in the Communist Party. It is the role of the *Morning Star* as a genuine communist paper which must take priority, even over the question of whether it remains a daily or goes weekly. Of course a daily paper is an essential weapon in the strategy to build a mass revolutionary movement, but then a *Daily Herald*, a *Reynold's News* or even a *Newsline* (which compares more favourably in format and price with the bourgeois press than the *Morning Star*) are unable to fulfill this role because they do not have a Communist Party to carry out the agitation, propaganda and organisation which such a paper should conduct. We must not be afraid to take one step back to a weekly paper, if that allows us to consolidate the revolutionary wing of the Communist Party against Eurocommunism and liquidationism, for on that firm basis, we can then advance two steps towards a genuine communist daily paper at a later date.

The role of the *Morning Star* as a genuine communist paper must also take priority over the question of whether it is 'official' or not. Of course we need a Communist Party with an official paper around which it can organise the working class in the struggle for socialist revolution, but if the 'official' leadership is imbued with class treachery in the guise of liberalism, then our priority is to wage an inner-Party struggle to purge our ranks of that opportunism and liquidationism.

It is ironic that comrade Neill of Glasgow should write to the *Morning Star* (April 27, 1984) in support of the Chater 'Survival Plan' and conclude: "It should be remembered that *Iskra* predated the Bolsheviks, and comrades should ask themselves why?" His answer was given in the gist of his letter, that having a 'labour movement paper' is a priority over everything else, including we assume the existence of a Communist Party. If we look more closely at the

history of Bolshevism and the episode of *Iskra*, however, we find that this is not the case. Lenin founded *Iskra* for two fundamental reasons. First, to provide a centre around which a disciplined centralised party could be built. Secondly, to wage an ideological struggle against the opportunist influences of Legal Marxism and Economism, which initially dominated the 'official' party structure, and which posed the priority, not of building a revolutionary Marxist movement but of facilitating the trade union struggle and tailing behind the liberal democratic movement. Lenin made the question of building the Bolshevik Party and waging the struggle against all forms of opportunism and liquidationism as his priority above all else. This is why *Iskra* was initially an 'unofficial' party paper, and is also why Lenin constantly published other such papers, like *Vperyod*, *Proletarian* and *Social Democrat*, until he had won sufficient support from the party activists to declare his Bolshevik wing the 'official' party organisation. *Iskra* was not founded, as comrade Neill presumes, as simply a "labour movement paper", but as a weapon in the struggle to build a communist party and to purge opportunism from its ranks.

Contrary to Lenin's precedent, many comrades on the left of the Party do not look upon the rift between the *Morning Star* and the Eurocommunists entrenched in the EC as an opportunity to intensify the ideological struggle against opportunism. In fact many are calling for 'unity' through conciliation and for a halt to the hostilities. The reason for this is that the Chater group has vacated a strategic position in allowing the Eurocommunists to hypocritically pose as the defenders of the link between the *Morning Star* and the Communist Party. While these left comrades rightly see through the pretence of the Eurocommunists as merely being a ruse to transform the *Morning Star* into the daily equivalent of *Marxism Today*, which is about as Party orientated as *The New Statesman*, their political weakness is exposed by their inability to counter the accusation of supporting a schism between the Party and the paper. What are we expected to believe when we turn up to the *Morning Star* rally on May 3 in Fulham Town Hall to see the walls bedecked with slogans "owned by its readers", "the paper of the left" but nothing about the Communist Party; to hear Tony Benn support the Chater group in a thinly veiled attack on the Eurocommunists, on the basis of declaring that the *Morning Star* "belongs to the whole movement and not just one party, and its future should be shaped with that fact in mind"? When comrades applauded Tony Benn's very clever speech, they were clapping to all intent and purposes a call for the Communist

Party to wind itself up and to join the Labour Party, as was the case when Mr Benn debated with other left organisations such as the IMG. This was what he was really saying when he spoke of overcoming "sectarianism".

How do comrades who have fought all their lives for the Party justify their support for comrade Chater's plan to transform the *Morning Star* into a broad left labour movement paper? Some such as comrade Photis Lysandrou deny reality and undermine their own credibility; in his letter to the *Star* (May 2, 1984) he attempts to wriggle out of his discomfiture by going onto the offensive and pointing to the Euros' own plan for liquidating the *Star* as a Party paper, in the hope of drawing attention away from comrade Chater's selfsame crime. The respected veteran comrade Bill Keable writes, on the other hand, "Our Communist Party is in a state of sickness as a result of anti-Soviet opportunism and Eurocommunism which has so debilitated it that thousands have left and many of the present members do not even buy the *Morning Star*."

"Facts are facts — the Communist Party as a whole is unable to fulfill its commitments to the paper its pioneers created — and is in no position to claim virtual ownership which does not correspond to reality.

"This sickness will pass — the class struggle will teach. And the responsibility remains!

"At this moment the steps which are being taken to broaden the support for our paper as the daily spokesman for the left are necessary for practical and political reasons. This need not weaken its power to expound genuine Marxism and internationalism." (*Morning Star*, April 17, 1984)

While recognising opportunism as the source of the problem in both the Party and the paper, comrade Keable does not pose any steps to counter it; he simply hopes it will miraculously go away. Meanwhile, the schism between the *Star* and the Party is justified on the premise that the latter can no longer support the former. This passivity is guaranteed to destroy the Communist Party, for while opportunism can grow spontaneously in the rich soil of capitalist society, Marxism as a science cannot. The lesson of Lenin's struggle is that opportunism must be combated; the class struggle has already taught us that fact and the task now is to act upon it! It is no use comrade Keable telling us the sickness will pass, when the disease has already reached a critical stage while at the same time allowing an effective weapon which could be used to cure that disease, to pass out of the Party.

Comrades on the left further justify their position of not intensifying the ideological struggle against opportunism and calling for a halt to the Eurocommunists' offensive, by claiming that the *Morning Star* expounds the policy of the Party's programme *The British Road to Socialism*; "so what's all the argument about?" they ask. It is ironic indeed, that a programme which when adopted in 1977 was considered rightly by all to be a step forward for the Eurocommunists, is now defended by many who vehemently opposed it seven years ago. *The British Road to Socialism* is a thoroughly reformist document which contrary to being proved 100 per cent correct by the present situation, as the Management Committee claims in the *Star* (April 10, 1984) has been shown to be completely bankrupt by the present Party crisis. How can a programme

which is meant to unite a Party around a strategy and tactics be correct, when the two factions which actually agree with it are using it to justify the liquidation of that very Party? The Chater group claims orthodoxy by emphasising the catchphrase "the leading role of the working class", primarily because they wish to emphasise the importance of the organised labour movement. Yet what does the *Morning Star* do in relation to the trade unions and the Labour Party? It does not lead, but tails. The reformist essence of the *British Road* is that it does not pose the task of winning the working class to the revolutionary leadership of the Communist Party, but plots a course for communists of tailing behind reformists in the labour movement and various bourgeois democratic movements. The divisions that have arisen between the Eurocommunists and the Chater group centre around which in particular to tail: the trade unions and the Labour Party or the feminist and peace movements.

The *Morning Star* can claim to be implementing the *British Road to Socialism* because it is reformist programme which negates the need for a Communist Party. Communist unity however cannot be built around such a programme, for it raises the mass working class movement above the need for a Communist Party. Consequently, some comrades in support of comrade Chater argue that the Communist Party should not impose policy decisions on its members working in mass organisations, in particular the PPPS. Furthermore they generalise this attitude to the case of trade unions, where they say that union decisions and responsibilities must take priority over Party policy. This is an illustration of the state of ideological disintegration that our Party has come to. Of course the struggle against opportunism takes priority over formal Party discipline, where that discipline is imposed bureaucratically, and the ideological basis of principled unity no longer exists; but in a genuine Leninist Party, where Party discipline complemented by open ideological debate and general agreement on communist principle, then all communists must be expected to carry out the decisions of the Party, even when they are in conflict with the policy of mass working class organisations.

For all genuine pro-Party comrades, the issue at the PPPS AGM must not simply be the survival of a daily "labour movement paper", for also at stake is the survival of our Communist Party. The Chater group has already abandoned the Communist Party to the Eurocommunists by accepting the latter's bureaucratic right to speak for the Party as a whole. We must challenge the EC's legitimacy on the grounds that it is opportunist, liquidationist and dominates the Party's organisation without the support of the majority of its activists. We need to prepare now to campaign for the *Morning Star* as a pro-Party paper, as an anti-opportunist paper through which our Party can be reclaimed for Leninism and the thoroughly reformist *British Road to Socialism* be slung out in favour of a genuine Leninist programme.

No to the Eurocommunist plan for a daily *Marxism Today*.

No to the Chater plan for a broad labour movement *Morning Star*.

No to Straight Leftist liquidationism.

Combine the fight for the *Star* with the fight against Eurocommunism and liquidationism.