

WITHOUT REVOLUTIONARY THEORY THERE CAN BE NO REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

# *The Leninist*

The place for all genuine communists is in the Communist Party of Great Britain



## **Contents:**

- ★ **Open the Fight Against Liquidationism on All Fronts**
- ★ **A Letter to Comrade Chater**
- ★ **Preparing for the 38th Congress**
- ★ **Britain: Before and After the Election**
- ★ **The 'Morning Star' Crisis**
- ★ **The Struggle Against Unemployment**
- ★ **Letters**

**Number Five**

**Price: £1.00**

# The *Leninist*

Communist Theoretical Journal-Number Five

## Correspondence

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

## Finance

We need donations — large and small. Each edition costs around £1,000; help us to ensure that the next edition comes out and that we can expand our activities. Take out a monthly or weekly standing order. Payable to 'The Leninist Magazine' Co-op Bank P.O. Box 163, 110 Leman Street, London E1 8HQ, account number 501 89913, Bank sorting code 08-03-08. Write to us to let us know you are crediting our account.

## Subscriptions

**Britain and Ireland** Four issues (one year) £5.00 Single issue £1.00 (plus 25p. postage) Institutions four issues £10.00

**All Other Countries** Four issues (one year) Surface Mail £6.00 Surface Mail (single issues) £1.00 (plus 50p. postage) Institutions four issues £12.00

**Air Mail**-(sealed) Four issues £10.00 Single issue £1.00 (plus £1.50 postage) Institutions four issues £20.00

Cheques, Postal Orders and International Money Orders: payable to *The Leninist* Publications. Overseas payments not using IMO add equivalent of £1.00 to cover bank charges.

Copyright August 1983

Printed by Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (T.U.)  
Published by The Leninist Publications  
ISSN 0262-1649

## Editorial Statement

page 1

### Open the Fight Against Liquidationism on All Fronts

What is liquidationism? Why do the Euros, *Straight Left* and the current stance of the *Morning Star*, all pose a danger to the Communist Party? Where did these trends originate from and where are they going? Where the pro-Party forces must orientate themselves to, and around what principles.

### Appendix I Letter to Comrade Chater page 8

### Appendix II Preparing for Congress page 9

## James Marshall

page 10

### Britain: Before and After the Election

We examine the significance of the June General Election, and argue that the result has not only thrown the Labour Party back into the role of a party of crisis, but poses the question of whether our task should be to save the Labour Party or to break its hold. The article also deals with the term 'Thatcherism', and answers those who consider the Thatcher government 'semi-fascist'. We also look at the broad perspective the workers' movement needs to develop if it is to defend its interests in the conditions of the wardrive and emerging general crisis.

## Frank Grafton

page 35

### The Crisis of the 'Morning Star' and the Communist Party

What was the PPPS AGM all about? Can the *Morning Star* survive? Where is the Communist Party going? Why the left in the Party must break from their tailism. We give the answers and show the way forward.

## Michael Mc Geehan

page 38

### The Struggle Against Unemployment

A review article on Hannington's classic *Unemployment Struggles*, and the recent work on the hunger marches by Kingsford. What lessons does the past have for today's unemployed? What we think of the Peoples' March for Jobs.

## Letters

page 42

We have greatly expanded this section. This edition includes letters on: Colin Roach; the Communist Party in Tower Hamlets; the state of the Young Communist League; the General Election and the Communist Party in Hackney; we also print an extensive letter by W.P. Cockshott concerning his impressions of *The Leninist*, and an interesting letter from comrade Glen Baker questioning the analysis of the *British Road* we carried in issue number four.

# Open the Fight Against Liquidationism on All Fronts

The growing crisis of world capitalism, which re-emerged during the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, has affected the British capitalist economy more sharply than most other major imperialist countries, as is shown by the figures for unemployment now standing at an all time record of over three million. The shock of this crisis, as it undermines British imperialism's position as a world power, is beginning to seep through to its political fabric. Subsequently, the result of the recent general election was of great historic importance, not only because a Tory government was returned on a programme of open class confrontation, but more, because the Labour Party's share of the vote was dramatically reduced to pre-1922 levels, thus effectively discrediting its claim in the medium term, to be an alternative to government.

This has undoubtedly hurled the British working class movement into a profound crisis, the effects of which will become clearer in the future. Ever since the 1926 General Strike, when the growth of working class independence from bourgeois political influence was abruptly curtailed by that decisive defeat, the mass of discontent in Britain has been contained by the reformist trade union and labour leaders within the safe bounds of of parliamentarianism and bourgeois legality. The rising militancy of the strike movement in the early 'seventies for instance, was forestalled by the possibility of securing the election of the Labour Party into power in 1974, and by the illusions among politically conscious workers that reformism would provide a solution in their interests as against those of capital. Such expectations of the Wilson and Callaghan Governments were eventually dispelled between 1974 and 1979 by the dispiriting experiences of wage restraint, the Fireman's strike, Grunwicks and the 'winter of discontent'. Yet illusions in reformism in general, especially its left variety, are still strong.

The dilemma now facing the reformist trade union and labour leaders however, is that the capitalist class is taking the opportunity to launch a savage offensive against living standards, just as reformist channels have become partially occluded and weakened. In this situation, the demand by class conscious workers for new forms and methods of open class struggle is bound to grow, thus providing opportunities for revolutionary politics in general and for our Party in particular, the Communist Party.

But those of us in the Communist Party who look to the task of building and leading a revolutionary proletarian movement, are confronted by a paradox. Our Party was founded 63 years ago as a component part of an international proletarian movement based upon the Leninist principles of party organisation and the programmatic task of world socialist revolution. Yet instead of being in the healthy and dynamic disposition of grasping revolutionary opportunities when offered, our Party is in a chronic state of decline and ideological disintegration, which if continued, can only lead to liquidation. This process has entered a new critical stage with the emergence of an open split in the right opportunist trend, which has traditionally dominated the Party leadership since 1956. One group around the General Secretary comrade Gordon McLennan has taken a step closer towards embracing the Euro-communist trend, while the other group around comrades Tony Chater and Mick Costello has effectively strengthened their grip on the *Morning Star*, by securing its autonomy of the Party EC at the recent AGM of the PPS and thus circumventing the Euro-communists' strategy of taking the paper over.

The continuation of this inner-Party struggle may prove to

be of decisive importance at the forthcoming 38th Congress, either by becoming a turning-point in the fight to re-establish the Party's revolutionary Marxist-Leninist foundations, or the event from which the Party dives into headlong dissolution.

The present situation looks bleak, if we are to be honest, for the three most influential trends in the Party, represented by *Marxism Today*, *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star* are incapable of putting a halt to the current state of decay. On the contrary, they all reflect the Party's degeneration by exhibiting liquidationist inclinations in various forms and guises.

The healthiest pro-Party elements consciously oppose both the Straight Leftist and Euro-communist liquidators, yet they are still a weak force due to lack of co-ordination beyond branch and area level, which is also aggravated by ideological incoherence as an overall trend. Attempts by these pro-Party comrades especially in the London District, to forge an anti-liquidationist bloc have focused on support for the faction around the *Morning Star*. Yet if this bloc is based upon comrade Chater's plan for the *Morning Star*, it will inevitably take a course out of the Party and therefore become equally as liquidationist as the other two trends.

*The Leninist* stands resolutely for pro-Partyism and poses for all comrades, who wish to safeguard and renovate the Party, the task of forging a united pro-Party bloc, on a principled basis. That bloc must be definitely opposed to unity with *Straight Left*, the Euro-communists or any other form of liquidationism. We do not reject out of hand the possibility of joining forces with comrades Chater and Costello, for unlike the other two trends, they are still in a fluid phase and have yet to concretise their perspectives and course forward. Even so, comrade Chater has in practise accelerated the process of transforming the *Morning Star* from a Party paper into one of the official trade union and labour movement. We consider a pro-Party paper to be of vital importance in organising the defence of the Party and partyism, and if comrade Chater is to play a leading role in that, he must open up the columns of the *Morning Star* to that purpose.

Our task in this editorial is to help consolidate the formation of a genuinely pro-Party bloc, by further elucidating the nature of liquidationism as a phenomenon inextricably rooted in opportunism of all varieties. Only then can the fight against liquidationism in all forms truly begin. But first, let us examine the historic origins of the Party's major opportunist trends.

## The Historical Origins of the Party's Three Main Opportunist Trends

Our Party in recent years has become dominated by three major opportunist tendencies, nominally referred to here as 'centrism', 'right opportunism' and 'Euro-communism'. These are not only symptomatic of the bourgeois influence which emanates from British capitalist society and has pervaded the working class in general for over a century, but moreover, reflect consecutive stages in the protracted development of opportunism in the world communist movement.

The effect of this process, which began to dominate Comintern ideologically as early as the late 'twenties, has been to negate our founding Leninist principles, viz the task of world socialist revolution, adherence to "... the dictator-

ship of the proletariat and soviet power. . .”(V.I. Lenin, *CW*. Vol 31. p184. Moscow 1977) and commitment to the resolute struggle against opportunism.

So what are the characteristic features of centrism, the right opportunists, and Euro-communism? What differentiates them from each other?

Before answering this in detail, let us clarify the use of these terms. ‘Centrism’ is used in its broadest historical context and not to denote necessarily the ‘centre’ trend of a particular party or organisation. Lenin first applied it to describe ‘Kautskyism’, an ideological trend that vacillated between the revolutionary and reformist wings of the international proletarian movement during and after the First World War. The fundamental role of centrism ever since then has been to attempt to reconcile revolutionary Marxism-Leninism with opportunism, a position which Lenin characterised as “revolutionary in words, opportunist in deeds”. The term ‘right opportunist’ trend on the other hand, is used for want of a better term; for in reality, all three trends are manifestations of right opportunism in the broadest sense, with the right opportunists representing a transitional form between the other two, and Euro-communism, the ripest for completely going over to the side of the bourgeoisie and becoming social democratic.

Now let us look at each trend in detail, starting with centrism.

## Centrism

The centrist opposition in our Party first differentiated itself from the right opportunist leadership under General Secretary John Gollan in 1965, when Sid French and the Surrey District organised a faction against the name change of the *Daily Worker* to the *Morning Star*. This trend ‘hardened’ after the Executive Committee of the Party opposed the 1968 Soviet intervention into Czechoslovakia, and was joined by a second opposition group around the then Party Student Organiser comrade Fergus Nicholson. French of course, later took his faction out of the Party in 1977 to form the NCP, while comrade Nicholson’s group remained inside, to later publish *Straight Left* in 1979.

To understand the historical roots of centrism however, which, although has been reduced to a minority trend in our Party, is still the most powerful ideological force in the world communist movement, we must go further back in time.

Centrism first rose to a position of dominance in the Communist International as well as in our Party, in the late ‘twenties, as an opportunist response to a series of setbacks to the imminence of world revolution. The German debacle of 1923, the defeat of the 1926 General Strike in Britain and the massacre of Chinese Communists by the Kuomintang in 1927, all shifted the focus away from the prospect of world revolution and onto the one remaining hope of socialism — the Soviet Union. Stalin had already facilitated this process in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with his 1924 thesis of ‘Socialism in One Country’, and by 1928, the 6th Congress of the Comintern had adopted the view that “. . . defence of the Soviet Union should be the keynote of the anti-war struggle.” (*Outline History of the Communist International*. p283. Moscow 1971). Later on, Comintern’s complete disorientation during the hopelessly sectarian ‘Third Period’ of 1928-1934, when the bloody and tragic victory of fascism in Germany and Austria sent shock waves through the movement, only acted to further weaken and discredit the aim and struggle for world revolution.

This process was completed at the Seventh Congress of Comintern in 1935, where it was at last declared openly that the defence of the Soviet Union “. . . was the most important task of the international communist movement.” (*Outline History of the Communist International*. p395).

In retrospect, it is possible to state that the new orientation towards ‘popular fronts’ adopted at the Seventh Congress, constituted the decisive turning point for the rightward drift into opportunism, for as the eminent bourgeois scholar of Soviet history E.H. Carr writes, “. . . the new

course implied the postponement of the pursuit of proletarian revolution in favour of an aim — the defeat of fascism — which, though perhaps a necessary prelude to proletarian revolution, was not in itself revolutionary, and could be pursued in alliance with declared enemies of revolution.” (E.H. Carr. *Twilight of Comintern 1930-1935*. London 1982). The most important principle for centrism was no longer the task of world revolution, but the defence of the Soviet Union, and it was in pursuit of this perspective that centrism sought justification for its reconciliation with opportunism in the capitalist countries, if not the imperialist bourgeoisie itself. At the time of the Seventh Congress, the leaders of the Comintern attempted to cover themselves by warning that “. . . the Right danger will grow”. (*Seventh Congress of Comintern*. Moscow 1939 p584). The truth of this omen was not only confirmed by the dissolution of Comintern itself eight years later, but also by the fact that today, Santiago Carrillo can openly declare the popular fronts to be “antecedents of Euro-communism”. (S. Carrillo. *Euro-communism and the State*. London 1977 p110).

The golden years of centrism in our Party were clearly delineated by the General Secretaryship of Harry Pollitt between 1929 and 1956. He retained utmost loyalty to Comintern and Soviet Party leaderships throughout the twists and turns of ‘social fascism’ and ‘Popular Frontism’, despite his jumping the gun to support British imperialism against Hitler in 1939, before Comintern had declared it to be an anti-fascist war in defence of the USSR. Yet during this period, the Communist Party of Great Britain, as did other parties in France, Italy and elsewhere, took the greatest qualitative step towards reconciliation with opportunism, by relinquishing the revolutionary proletarian aim of soviet power in favour of the ‘parliamentary road to socialism’, having seized upon the peculiar precedent of ‘People’s Democracy’ in Eastern Europe with full support from the Soviet Party leadership.

This was the logical outcome of the rightward course begun with the popular fronts, for although Comintern still initially proclaimed the universality of Soviet power at the Seventh Congress, while our own Party had only just adopted the programme *For Soviet Britain* in February 1935, the whole idea was quietly and gradually dropped, until the first edition of *The British Road* in 1951 declared it to be “a slanderous misrepresentation of our policy” by “enemies of communism” (*BRS*. p14. 1951). All of this is honestly reported by one of our most articulate spokespersons of Euro-communism comrade Monty Johnstone in *Marxism Today*, where he celebrates the popular fronts for having “. . . laid the basis for the subsequent development of Communist strategy in the capitalist countries, on which to no small extent rests our *British Road to Socialism* and its conception of a broad democratic alliance”. (*Marxism Today*. September 1978. p292).

To sum up centrism, we can say that it is peculiar to other forms of opportunism because of its attempt to embrace opportunism in the capitalist countries while retaining uncritical support for the revolutionary living embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat — the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. For us, this is a distortion of proletarian internationalism, for centrism forgoes the first and foremost duty of internationalism, which is “. . . working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in *one’s own country*. . .” (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 24. p.74), while at the same time subordinating that struggle in any one country “. . . to the interests of that struggle on a world-wide scale”. (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 31. p148). The unconditional defence of the socialist countries against the attacks of the international bourgeoisie is an essential part of proletarian internationalism, but unlike the centrists, we measure the words and actions of the leaders of the socialist countries against the general interests of the world struggle, and speak out critically when mistakes are made. Anybody who has followed the centrists, as they sycophantically tailed behind a succession of discredited leaders in Poland, without any attempt to independently assess the crisis for themselves should realize that that road can only lead into a mire of political bankruptcy.

## The Right Opportunists

The right opportunist trend in our Party evolved as a continuation of the rightward drift already present in centrism and became closely associated with Harry Pollitt's successor as General Secretary in 1956, John Gollan; while the earliest point of departure from centrism can undoubtedly be traced back to the historic 20th Congress of the CPSU. Yet this transition was quite gradual, for the trend which remained consistently centrist only really recognised the significance of the 20th Congress after 1968, when it became clear that the right opportunists had prepared the ground for a political break with the Soviet Party.

The impact of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in relation to the further development of opportunism in our Party and the world movement in general was twofold. Firstly, its decisions backed the direction already taken by the *British Road to Socialism* and its equivalents in the Italian and French Parties with the great authority of the CPSU. Secondly, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin was a decisive factor in releasing opportunism from the inhibitions of its centrist heritage and allowing it to pursue popularity in bourgeois politics by distancing itself from the socialist countries. The fundamental change, which the right opportunists had continuously agitated for since 1956, was in the words of John Gollan "... the right of each party to autonomy and to put forward its own policy for the advance of its people to socialism." (J. Gollan, *Marxism Today*, January 1976, p5.) This process developed through the 1957 and 1960 world conferences, culminating with the declaration of "non-interference in each other's internal Party affairs" at the last world conference to be held in 1969.

As soon as the 'autonomy' of our Party from the Soviet Party became concrete in 1968 with the Executive Committee's condemnation of the intervention into Czechoslovakia, so opportunism received renewed impetus to move to the right. Since then, the right opportunists have stood as a transitional form between centrism and the riper form of opportunism, later to become known as Euro-communism. Consequently, the stability of the right opportunists as a separate trend has become increasingly tenuous to the point where today, it is disintegrating as it becomes polarised between centrism and Euro-communism over the *Morning Star* crisis.

## Euro-communism

The Euro-communist tradition gained strength and dynamism by its criticisms of the deficiencies of socialist democracy in those countries where the dictatorship of the proletariat had already been established. Only the blinkered view of centrism underplayed the fact that these problems existed, for until 1968, any criticisms remained within the framework set by the 20th Congress, expressing faith that the socialist countries were rectifying the problems through their continued development. But this was no longer the case for the opportunist leaderships of those parties, which opposed the intervention into Czechoslovakia. Their alarm was reflected in Santiago Carrillo's despondent but justifiable remark at the time, in respect to the series of crises which had dogged Eastern Europe, "... that the same errors are repeated after such a long interval and that action is taken only against the consequences and little or none against the causes." (S. Carrillo, *Problems of Socialism Today*, p191, London 1970).

Although the opportunists brought the very real problems of living socialism out into the open, their intention was never to resolve them in the interests of the world socialist revolution, but alternatively, to take a further step back from that task, in order to advance their own development into bourgeois politics. To consolidate this process, the leaders of the Italian, Spanish and French parties not only adopted the term 'Euro-communism' in 1976, to differentiate themselves from the Soviet Party in name, but also finally rejected the concept 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a verification of their commitment to parliamen-

tary democracy, thus reverting back to Kautsky's reactionary position of 1918. It is ironic that Carrillo enshrined both these changes in his book *Euro-communism and the State*, whereas eight years previously, he had dedicated a third of *Problems of Socialism Today* to defending the Marxist theory of the state and what is more, had rebuked, "those who cherish illusions about the emergence of a 'new communism' of a geographical nature, of a 'western communism'." (S. Carrillo, *Ibid.* p176).

Euro-communism has since degenerated even further under the impact of the most recent crisis in Poland, to the point where Berlinguer now states contemptuously that, "... this phase of socialist development (which began with the October revolution) has exhausted its driving force ..." (*After Poland*, p16, 1982, Nottingham), and calls for a 'third way', which in reality represents nothing but a new stage in the social democratisation of the Communist Party of Italy.

The Euro-communists in our Party have become established on all leading committees due to the political patronage of the right opportunist leadership, and have now become the strongest trend on the Executive and Political Committees. An invaluable insight into the Euro-communist perspective was given by the one-time dynamic duo Purdy and Prior, in their 1979 publication *Out of the Ghetto*, a book which definitely parallels Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* in its honest and open rendition of opportunism. For example, they state quite blandly, "The term 'bourgeois democracy' is in any case by now misleading as a description of the political system which has evolved in most of the advanced capitalist states, and particularly in Britain. It suggests a political regime fashioned exclusively in the image and interests of the bourgeoisie." (*Out of the Ghetto*, p47, Nottingham). For them it is not a case of avoiding the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' with its 'tactless phrasing', but simply the fact that "proletarian democracy" is neither "feasible, necessary nor desirable" (*Ibid.* p50). Purdy and Prior have unashamedly culled Kautsky's argument (against which Lenin wrote *Renegade Kautsky*) that bourgeois democracy is devoid of class content and is 'democracy' pure and simple — a view that Euro-communists in general now subscribe to.

The Euro-communists see the crisis of British capitalism as a malaise of relative and absolute decline to other capitalist economies, brought about by repeated post-war mismanagement of the economy and a failure to implement a programme of modernisation, to re-establish British industrial competitiveness in the world market. Their answer to the problem is not socialism, but a 'radical' alternative economic strategy, involving 'planned' collaboration between monopoly capitalism and the working class along the lines of the system in operation during the Second World War. This theme has been further developed and popularised in *Marxism Today* by the Cambridge economist comrade Bob Rowthorn, and of course, by that Party veteran of economics, comrade Sam Aaronovitch, in his pamphlet *The Road from Thatcherism*. The logic of the Euros' class collaborationist arguments has taken them to positions which are hard for even some of the right opportunists to swallow, as was shown by Purdy and Prior's notorious support for wage controls during the Callaghan Government, and by comrade Bob Rowthorn's recent agitation for a pro-EEC policy in the May 1982 issue of *Marxism Today* and other non-Party journals.

The difference between the Euro-communists and other forms of rightist opportunism in the Party is their readiness to extend the framework of reformist alliances beyond the bounds of the trade unions and the Labour Party, to include liberals and even the left wing of the Tory Party. Comrade John Bloomfield puts this position in relation to CND, and even castigates the Labour Party left as "sectarian" for wanting to establish a closer relation between the Labour Party and CND to the exclusion of the SDP/Liberal Alliance and Tories. (See *Marxism Today* April 1983). The Euro-communist group in the NUS leadership around comrade David Aaronovitch went so far to the right at the 1980 Conference by reducing NUS campaigns down to 'student issues', in order to appease non-political and liberal students, that the Labour student organisation

NOLS ended up breaking away from the Broad Left. NOLS has subsequently won the leadership of the NUS and reduced the Communist Party students' presence to a rump. The best illustration of Euro-communist class collaborationist politics in practice however, is the 'People's March for Jobs', of which the recently appointed Party Industrial Organiser comrade Pete Carter is a prime mover. He stated that the objective of the March was to build the "... broadest possible alliance . . . from bishops to brickies, from non-Thatcherite Tories to revolutionary socialists." (*Morning Star*, March 25 1983), the result of which has been the expulsion of youths from the March for shouting anti-Tory slogans! Again the Euros have exhibited their bankruptcy by putting our Party even to the right of the Labour Party on yet another issue!

Opportunism in our Party has now matured to the point, where the very existence of our Party is threatened, due to all opportunist tendencies having begun to exude liquidationism from every pore. Only by rigorously characterising this phenomenon of opportunism can we begin to counter it, and so let us turn to the question: What is liquidationism?

## What is Liquidationism?

Liquidationism is the form taken by opportunism, to specifically counter the principle of the democratic centralist or Leninist-type party, first established by the historic emergence of Bolshevism at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party in 1903 (later to become the founding organisational principle of the Communist International in 1919). The historical evolution of the Leninist party principle has fulfilled the class need of the world's proletariat for an organisation equipped to carry out the specific task of socialist revolution; yet wherever that ideological perspective has been lost through opportunist inroads, then the party structure has become as fragile as an empty shell — certain to shatter with the growing pressure of political crises and disagreements. Lenin therefore defined liquidationism, when it first manifested itself in both the Menshevik and Bolshevik wings during the period of Black Reaction 1907-1912, as "... ideologically in negation of the revolutionary class struggle of the socialist proletariat . . ." and organisationally, as denying the necessity of the Party, meaning "... leaving its ranks." (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 15. p454).

What different forms has liquidationism taken during the history of the world communist movement and what significance have they had?

The first major differentiation, which we must clarify is between 'left' and 'right' liquidationism. These generally reflect the differences between left and right opportunism respectively, yet much confusion has been generated in our Party by the labelling of *Straight Left* as 'left' liquidationist, simply because this liquidationist group stands on the left of the Party. This is untrue however, for as our examination of the historical origins of the Euro-communist, right opportunist and centrist trends indicate, *all three are generally rightist orientated*, to which *Straight Left* as a centrist trend is no exception. Yet complexity does arise from the fact that centrism by its very nature can often turn towards the left, towards revolutionary Marxism, as well as towards the right, towards reformism. We therefore recognise the fact that left centrism can give rise to left liquidationism. But rather than *Straight Left* being an illustration of this, we consider the original split by the New Communist Party to be a far more pertinent example.

Right liquidationism in essence, looks to replacing the Party with a "legal amorphous federation of workers' associations", which today, boils down to dissolving it in the organisations of social democracy. Left liquidationism on the other hand, is often a reaction to right liquidationism, attempting to replace the Party by forming sectarian, doctrinaire groups in isolation from the workers' movement, and like all forms of petty bourgeois revolutionism such as anarchism and Trotskyism, being "a sort of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working class movement." (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 31. p32). The classic example of this relation between left and right liquidationism was the

RSDLP prior to the First World War, when the majority of Mensheviks agitated for the dissolution of the illegal Party organisation and the formation of a legal workers' party; while the 'Otzovist' trend within the Bolsheviks called for the boycott of the Third Duma, repudiating the need for working in legal mass organisations where possible, and idealising illegal methods as the only revolutionary form of class struggle. Lenin rejected both as liquidationist and waged a "fight on two fronts" to safeguard and preserve the Party, as the only vehicle capable of securing proletarian hegemony over the Russian revolution.

These two fundamental features of liquidationism have not only become a discernable threat to the integrity of the world communist movement with the emergence of Euro-communism, but have been an underlying tendency ever since centrism first began to erode Comintern's Leninist programme. This came to the surface in its rightist form in 1943, with the dissolution of Comintern, which Earl Browder as General Secretary of the CPUSA attempted to take to its logical conclusion, by replacing his own Party with an educational sect (called the Communist Political Association) between 1944 and July 1945. Both Communist Parties of Egypt and Turkey were effectively liquidated by centrism during the 1950s and 1960s. But it is the Communist Party of Turkey in particular, which has exhibited liquidationism almost throughout its history, not having had a National Congress since 1932! In the early 'sixties for instance, communist support was diverted away from the illegal Party and into the formation of the legal Turkish Worker's Party under the influence of 'Khrushchevism'. And even after the 1973 advance, when the TKP was effectively reformed, the opportunists and centrists still pursued the prize of legality above all else. This eventually led them to the point of absurdity, when it was proposed to form a legal workers' party in conjunction with two petty bourgeois groups — days before the long heralded fascist coup in 1980 took place! Today, the Menshevik wing of the TKP has ceased to operate inside Turkey, and its leadership abroad has been usurped by a group now in control of the Party radio station, having been an organisation of the Turkish Workers' Party as recently as 1974.

Equally damaging to Marxism-Leninism has been the left liquidationist response to the continuous drift by the world communist movement into opportunism, which has taken potentially good comrades out of the movement and into the sectarian wilderness of petty bourgeois activism. The three historical stages of right opportunism, outlined earlier, have subsequently been mirrored by the formation of breakaway tendencies, which have generally evolved from a left centrist position, both in our Party and internationally. The most significant and durable left liquidationist split to emerge during the 1930s was Trotskyism, which formed its own farcically fractious Fourth International, five years after Trotsky had declared the Third International to be dead in October 1933. The impact of the historic Twentieth Congress in 1956 sparked an ideological schism between the CPSU and the Communist Party of China, which eventually led to the formation of a spate of pro-Chinese and Maoist splinter groups, such as McCreary's MLOB and Reg Birch's CPBML, both of which split from our Party in the 'sixties. This left liquidationism was further supplemented during the same period by the romanticism of guerrillaism or 'Guevarism', especially in South and Central America, where many communist cadres left the Party to form guerrilla armies, under the inspiration of the Cuban Revolution. More recently, the emergence of Euro-communism in the parties of Western Europe have provoked another type of left liquidationism in the guise of parasitical 'pro-Soviet' sects. The first of this type to break from our Party was the short-lived Appeal Group, followed by the more tenable New Communist Party, whose existence has increasingly relied, not upon replacing the Communist Party of Great Britain, but upon its sycophantic role as a 'pro-Soviet' propaganda group, for which it seeks finance and recognition from socialist countries.

The combination of opportunist retreat from principle and the amelioration of class struggle during the post-war boom eroded the strength and cohesion of the Party to the point, that by the mid-seventies, we began to reap the fruits of opportunism in the form of a profound inner-Party

crisis. In 1976, the resignation from the Party of leading comrades Jimmy Reid, Bernard Panter and John Tocher was symptomatic of a wider malaise; for membership since 1975 has plummeted by a half to around 15,000 this year. Liquidationism has become rife among all tendencies as was shown by the NCP split in July 1977, by the Euros' continuous attempts to demolish the remaining links with Marxism-Leninism, by the publication of *Straight Left* since 1979 and by the recent coup, which has further divorced the *Morning Star* from the Party.

The two most dangerous forms of liquidationism are the Euro-communists and *Straight Left*, but because the healthiest, potentially pro-Party elements have yet to decisively break from the latter tendency, we would go further and say, that *Straight Left* is the most insidious enemy of pro-Partyism. Let us therefore now characterise how these two factions are liquidationist, beginning with the Euro-communists.

## Euro-communist Liquidationism

Lenin stated at the height of the 1905 Revolution that, "... while non-party organisations ... arise as a result of the relatively undeveloped state of the class struggle, strict adherence to the party principle, on the other hand, is one of the factors that make the class struggle conscious, clear, definite and principled." (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 10. p81). This position was subsequently proved correct twelve years later when the Bolsheviks won the non-party soviets to their programme of seizing state power. Yet it is precisely this principle that the Euro-communists have completely overthrown, replacing it with their own concept of building a 'broad democratic alliance', in which the independence of the Communist Party is totally subordinated to the petty bourgeois autonomy of every non-party, one-issue social movement and the lowest political common denominator. Purdy and Prior put this most openly, when they said, "... the tasks of building a series of mutually re-inforcing social movements ... are more fundamental than ... building 'the Party'." (*Out of the Ghetto*. p166). The very idea of partyism in general is now such an anathema to the Euro-communists, that they have even taken to denouncing the Labour Party for introducing party politics into the 'People's March for Jobs', while comrade Jon Bloomfield enunciates in relation to CND that, "A party committed to nuclear disarmament" should not "seek to impose party slogans on the campaign." (*Marxism Today*. April 1983. p13). This general approach of the Euro-communists is in total accord with their desire not to sharpen the class struggle, but to blunt it, and to reduce everything down to the crudest level of class collaborationism.

The Euros have never hidden their animosity towards the Leninist principle of party organisation, as was shown by Purdy and Prior's bewailing of the fact that, "... [our] Communist Party which is quite clearly *not* Leninist in its strategic perspective has been unable to come to terms with its retention of a Leninist mode of organisation." (*Out of the Ghetto*. p13). So it was not long after the 1977 Party Congress, which enshrined the 'broad democratic alliance' in the *British Road to Socialism*, that the then Party National Organiser comrade Dave Cook made his opening shot against democratic centralism by declaring, "If ever the maxim 'once the political line is decided, organisation decides all', needed replacing by 'involvement decides all', it is now". (*Marxism Today*. December 1978. p375). Comrade Cook's intention in formulating this catch-phrase was not to inaugurate a frontal assault, but to first 'open up' the Party machine to the growing influence of the Euro-communists and to weaken the grip of the right opportunist leadership. For instance, he proposed that advisories should be opened up to 'new forces' and given "more autonomy" (*Ibid*); and furthermore, he was instrumental in putting forward the 'Alternative Proposals' to the 1979 Congress Report on Inner Party Democracy, of abolishing the EC recommended list and legitimising factions during the pre-Congress discussion. The right opportunist trend rejected these proposals — not through any fidelity to genuine democratic centralism — but because they recognised, that

these changes would undermine their dominance of the Party leadership.

Yet the Euro-communists have equally demonstrated their willingness to resort to the same 'bureaucratic centralist' practices as the right opportunists, in order to fend off any oppositionist threat to their positions of power. For example, while the Euro-communists lacked the strength to reform the Party in 1979, they were able to completely replace all pretence of democratic centralism in the YCL with a new federalist regime in the same year (on the basis that *agreement* with the Euro-communist strategy outlined in the *BRS* and *Our Future* became conditions of membership). This freed all members of any commitment to work for the policies of the YCL, thus allowing the organisation to absorb every fad and fashion in the most anarchic manner, political direction being decided by self-appointed 'collectives'. But when the Euro-communist/feminist faction led by the General Secretary Doug Chalmers suffered a setback at the 1983 YCL Congress, they used the re-adoption of 'democratic centralism' as a cynical and bureaucratic ploy to re-establish their hegemony through control of the League Executive Committee and bi-monthly paper *Challenge*, and of course, to *discipline* the opposition.

However, it is in the liquidation of *Marxism Today* as a Party publication, that the Euro-communists have made greatest headway. *Marxism Today* was never a vibrant Marxist-Leninist theoretical journal during the staid editorship of James Klugmann; for it was never designed to inspire the Party with a revolutionary perspective, but was used by the opportunist leadership to consolidate the rightward drift into opportunism in a controlled, but deadly boring manner. Many younger comrades who sing the praises of the 'old' *Marxism Today*, may be interested to know that even the centrist opposition at the time called it 'Revisionism Today'. Yet one thing which allowed it then to appear as a Party journal, was the space given over to inner Party discussion, and although the opposition was always 'pre-ordained' to lose the debate, as in a fixed wrestling match, it provided a platform for comrades to write more than 300 word contributions — something which simply does not exist in the 'official' Party press today (apart from the biennial pre-Congress journal).

The current editor, comrade Martin Jacques, has transformed *Marxism Today* into a glossy coffee-table magazine, whose list of contributors reads like a roll-call of college academics, bourgeois media personalities and even outright representatives of the capitalist state. It unashamedly champions Euro-communism and excludes significant contributions from all other trends in the Party. *Marxism Today* is no longer oriented towards the Communist Party, but towards developing a discussion with the bourgeoisie on how to resolve the crisis of British capitalism in a reformist manner, as a first step in transforming the Communist Party into a Fabian-type "think-tank of the left" (See *Morning Star* report on the LBC radio interview with Party members. April 4. 1983).

To sum up Euro-communist liquidationism, we can say it is opportunism in its ripest form, in the sense that it strives to complete the ideological and organisational dissolution of all Marxist-Leninist tradition, in preparation for openly going over to the side of the bourgeoisie. Euro-communist liquidationism does not necessarily involve the physical abolition of the Communist Party as a nominal organisation; for by overthrowing democratic centralism under the auspices of 'greater inner Party democracy', the result is often a worse form of bureaucratic centralism than existed before, by means of which the Party is exorcised of all communists in opposition to Euro-communism. For example, the Euro-communist autocrat Santiago Carrillo has reduced the Communist Party of Spain to a state of demoralisation and disintegration, whereby the whole Basque Party organisation has been expelled and the Catalonian Party organisation has split away. Although the Spanish socialist party leader Gonzalez openly rejoiced at the collapse of the Communist Party's electoral vote last year, his following acerbic remark has unfortunately got an ironic ring of truth; "Senor Carrillo is a man so capable, he has succeeded in seven years (since the dictator's death) in achieving what Franco couldn't do in forty — finishing off the Communist Party" (*The Times*. March 1. 1983). So

long as there are those determined to fight for the Party, it is unlikely that Carrillo or any of his acolytes in our Party will succeed in "finishing us off" but it is certainly their historical role to try.

## 'Straight Left' Liquidationism

*Straight Left* is the 'pro-Soviet' publication of the centrist group in our Party around leading comrades Fergus Nicholson, Filling, Turnbull, Wright and Murray, which, by posing as a broad Labour Party paper and combining a dull and stolid mixture of 'official' positions from the British Labour movement and the world communist movement, attempts to build a non-Party base from which to influence the Communist Party. Honesty and ideological openness are not its greatest assets, but rare glimpses of its true intent are sometimes gleaned from the wistful musings and meanderings of the 'Harry Steel' column, such as the following: "What would clear the way would be a statement by the Labour Party National Executive Committee that it is only the question of candidates which excludes communists from the Labour Party. It would then be up to the Communist Party to decide whether its independent candidates were enough to justify self exclusion from the Labour Party, including the right to participate in the selection of Labour Party candidates. If that could be resolved satisfactorily, the Labour Party would gain several thousand activists to make up for those right wing individuals who might take a transfer fee." (*Straight Left* January 1981). The Straight Leftists subsequently campaigned for the Communist Party to raise the issue of affiliation to the Labour Party and to modify its electoral strategy accordingly, which in essence, boiled down to calling on the Communist Party "... not to stand candidates against the Labour Party" (Susan Michie. *Pre-Congress Discussion Journal*. No2. Oct 1981). The culmination of their efforts formed the *Congress Documents 10* and *11* as composite amendments to the main resolution at the 1981 Party Congress, receiving support from about one fifth of the delegates.

Contrary to the Straight Leftists' claim however, that "Affiliation would not mean any sacrifice of principle by the Communist Party" (*Congress Document 10*. Nov 1981), or to comrade Nicholson's claim in a letter to the *Morning Star* (Aug 27 1982), that his position is the same as Lenin's, it is our contention that *Straight Left's* politics are thoroughly unprincipled and liquidationist.

What are the three basic opportunist assumptions which pin together their ideological viewpoint?

Firstly, they declare that affiliation should be raised "in the context of the Labour Party once again becoming the all embracing federal organisation of the working class" (*Congress Document 10*. Nov 1981) — a definition of the Labour Party which they share with all other opportunist trends in our Party. Yet it was precisely this view that Lenin opposed when he stated; "the concepts 'political department of the trade unions' or 'political expression' of the trade union movement, are erroneous ... the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party ... which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns" (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 31. pp257-8). Has the character of the Labour Party changed since 1920? No it has not. It is still essentially *the bourgeois party of the working class*.

Secondly, having declared the Labour Party to be the legitimate workers' party, the Straight Leftists then state that the strategic importance of Communist Party affiliation is that it would "enormously strengthen the Labour Party as an instrument of progressive change" (*Congress Document 10*. Nov 1981. Our emphasis). Furthermore, comrade Nicholson quotes Lenin in his letter mentioned above, as advocating both affiliation and support for the Labour Party in elections. This is quite true of course, but our comrade omits to mention Lenin's reasons for doing so. For example, Lenin states quite categorically in *Left Wing Communism* (in relation to an electoral bloc with the Labour Party) that, "I want to support Henderson (then leader of the Labour Party — TL) in the same way as the

rope supports a hanged man — that the impending establishment of a government of the Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons" (V.I. Lenin. *CW*. Vol 31. p88). Lenin never considered an electoral bloc as strategic, for he believed its rejection by the Labour Party would demonstrate to the masses "that the Hendersons prefer their close relations with the capitalists to the unity of all the workers" (*Ibid*. p87). Again, in relation to affiliation, Lenin never considered this objective to be a principle, but merely a tactic, for he declared at the Second Congress of the Comintern; "If the British Communist Party starts by acting in a revolutionary manner in the Labour Party, and if the Hendersons are obliged to expel this Party, that will be a great victory for the communist and revolutionary working class movement in Britain" (*Ibid*. p263). Therefore, anybody who has read the whole of *Left Wing Communism*, and not just the two sentences quoted by comrade Nicholson, will know that Lenin's position was never to *strengthen* the Labour Party, which is what *Straight Left* is striving to do, but to *expose it* to the masses as a party of the bourgeoisie, by applying tactics in a skillful and intelligent manner. *This is what comrade Nicholson omits to mention.*

Thirdly, comrade Nicholson reveals the underlying opportunist premise of *Straight Left* politics in his letter, when he says, "The question today is, does our Communist Party see as the main line of electoral advance the triumph of a transformed Labour Party including in its ranks the members of the Communist Party or the replacement of the Labour Party by the Communist Party as the main electoral expression of the British working class. What are we trying to achieve?" (*Morning Star* letter. Aug 27 1982). Comrade Nicholson would say the former, while implying that the Euros would say the latter. But if comrade Nicholson is asking Lenin, then the answer is neither! He advocated participation in parliament as a propaganda platform for communism and soviet power, saying "the number of parliamentary seats is of no importance to us; we are not out for seats" (*Ibid*. p86). But most important was his concern for accelerating the class understanding of the mass of workers by using the parliamentary process. Thus he goes on to say, "we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill ... second, we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right i.e. that the Hendersons and Snowdens are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petty-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; third, we must bring nearer the moment when, *on the basis of the disappointment of most of the workers in the Hendersons*, it will be possible, with serious chances of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once" (*Ibid*. pp85-6). It is obvious from this quotation that Lenin is not interested in any "electoral advance" as a thing in itself, but only in the means of *overthrowing a Labour Government* (a perspective which no doubt sends a cold shiver down comrade Nicholson's back — and of even abolishing parliament altogether! This is totally different to comrade Nicholson's variation on a *British Road* theme.

All of this, of course, is dismissed with a shrug of the shoulder by all the opportunists in our Party, including comrade Nicholson and *Straight Left*, as ultra-leftist nonsense. But if these comrades are going to use Lenin to support their own position, then they should honestly admit to Lenin's true position, and not try to distort it. Lenin's attitude towards the Labour Party was motivated by the interests of proletarian revolution and building a genuine party of the working class — the Communist Party. The intention of *Straight Left* on the other hand is to strengthen the Labour Party by dissolving the Communist Party within it, and is therefore profoundly opportunist and riddled with liquidationism.

Because *Straight Left's* liquidationism is so blatantly obvious, it has left itself wide open to such accusations from all trends within the Party. Even the Euro-communists have had a dig, which coming from them, really is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. For example, comrade Dave Cook's contribution to the pre-congress discussion in 1981 opened with the absolutely correct assertion that, "Those



who want campaigning directed towards affiliation with the Labour Party to be our main priority, are proposing a liquidationist recipe" (*Comment*, Oct 17 1981). His intention in saying this, was to attempt to draw the Straight Leftists out into the open — something *Straight Left* has assiduously avoided doing inside the Party. The Euro-influenced Executive Committee came out with a similarly wry remark in its own statement on *Straight Left*: "We also note that there is what amounts to a virtual blackout of any reference to the activities of the Communist Party and the *Morning Star*. Communists who are asked to write are always introduced in the positions they occupy in broad, non-party organisations" (EC Statement on *Straight Left*, July 1982). More important however, is the fact that *Straight Left's* liquidationism has been exposed and condemned by comrades on the left of the Party, such as comrade Alan Stevens, whose views are far healthier in terms of pro-Partyism: "The call for us not to stand candidates against the Labour Party and therefore not to stand at all, in the name of Labour-Communist unity, is capitulation and tailism, not working class unity" (*Comment* Oct 17 1981). We find ourselves in complete agreement with comrade Stevens on this question.

Another development has been the growing awareness among many of *Straight Left's* supporters over the past two years, of the inherent dangers in its position. This has led to a series of "disagreements" and splits away from that tendency — as was the case with comrade Mary Davis in London and comrade John Foster in Scotland. Yet despite *Straight Left's* growing isolation from the rest of the left in the Party, especially in the London District, it still has a controlling influence in the Northern, East Midlands and West Middlesex Districts, as well as Camden Borough in London, and it also has a factional presence in Scotland, Sheffield and Hackney Borough. But apart from its supporters baulking at the spectre of liquidationism and moving towards a pro-Party position, the fundamental weakness of *Straight Left* (because of its orientation), is that it could lose supporters and even whole branches to the Labour Party — if it has not done so already!

It is our contention that *Straight Left* is the most dangerous form of liquidationism, because the dissolution of individual communists and possibly the whole Party into the shapeless, sponge-like morass of the Labour Party poses the greatest threat to the continued existence of the Communist Party. This is made worse by the fact that *Straight Left* has the most debilitating effect on the very wing of the Party from which pro-Partyism can be expected to emerge. In fact, pro-Partyism will not become a decisive force until Straight Leftism is thoroughly beaten and ostracised from the left of our Party.

Finally, let us turn to the question of how to organise the struggle for pro-Partyism and on what basis it can be fought.

## The Struggle for Pro-Partyism — What is to be Done?

At a time of lowest fortunes in the RSDLP, when the onslaught of Black Reaction had invoked a process of disintegration and liquidationism within the Party during the period 1907-1910, Lenin issued the following call to all pro-Party members and tendencies: "objective conditions have dictated a *rapprochement* of all pro-Party members of all factions and sections of the Party, above all a *rapprochement* between the Bolsheviks and the pro-Party Mensheviks, and with Mensheviks of the type of the Vyborg comrades in St Petersburg and the Plekhanovites abroad. The Bolsheviks for their part have openly proclaimed the need for this *rapprochement*, and for it we issue a call to all *Mensheviks* capable of openly combating liquidationism, of openly supporting Plekhanov, and of course, to all Menshevik workers above all. The *rapprochement* will occur rapidly and extensively if an *agreement* with the Plekhanovites is possible: an agreement on the basis of the struggle for the Party and the Party principle against liquidationism, without any ideological compromises, without any glossing over of tactical and other differences of opinion" (V.I. Lenin. *CW*.

Vol 16. p101). In many respects, we in our Party today face a similar situation, which demands that a similar call for a *rapprochement* between pro-Party forces is made. The condition of a bloc being formed, is that all forms of liquidationism, including *Straight Left*, be excluded, and that any agreement be genuinely pro-Party. But as Lenin says, this does not preclude the right to openly voice ideological differences on other issues within the confines of the Party, of which *The Leninist* has many in relation to pro-Party comrades on the left and to the right opportunist faction around the *Morning Star*.

*Firstly*, the *Morning Star* should be opened up to all pro-Party groups and tendencies with the purpose of combating opportunism and liquidationism of all forms and strengthening it as a Party publication. The *Star's* present course is taking it out of the Party, to become a left publication of the official trade union and labour movement. The example set by *Straight Left* is equally anti-Party, and moreover, when comrade Steve Howell wrote of the *Morning Star* in *Straight Left's* columns, he virtually recommended it to the working class movement not because of, but *despite* its relation to the Communist Party by saying, "Although the *Morning Star* editorials reflect the policy of the Communist Party, the paper gives a daily voice to the broad left through its news and feature items. Indeed members of the *Straight Left* editorial panel are frequent contributors to the *Morning Star*." (*Straight Left*, May 1983). The fact that comrade Chater has recently not attended Executive and Political Committee meetings, and will only attend a joint meeting of the EC and Management Committee of the PPPS "as being one between two bodies of equal and autonomous status" (*Morning Star*, July 25 1983) is an ominous sign of this general non-Party direction.

*Secondly*, the *Morning Star* should adopt a principled position of proletarian internationalism, giving *unconditional* support to the world struggle for socialism, and defending the socialist countries, which represent the living embodiment of working class power and in particular the Soviet Union. By this, we do not mean the sort of uncritical sycophancy as practised by the New Communist Party. The leaders of the socialist countries are not immune from making mistakes and these will only be corrected and prevented from recurring in the long run, if we honestly speak out in the spirit of communist fraternity and commitment to a common revolutionary purpose. Yet it has not gone unnoticed that the *Star* has recently been carrying more frequent favourable articles on the socialist countries. Is this evident of the *Morning Star's* genuine proletarian internationalism or is it a sign of diplomatic internationalism? It is no secret that nearly half of its daily sales are accounted for by the socialist countries (14,365 compared to 14,936 UK sales during the second half of 1982), and that according to comrade Phil Piratin at the London meeting of the PPPS AGM, comrade Chater has already sought help from the socialist countries. Internationalism based upon the axiom "he who pays the piper plays the tune" is bound to be politically unprincipled and prone to evaporate as soon as a different paymaster is found.

*Thirdly*, the *Morning Star* should commit itself to fight any hint of tailism toward reformism, and to strengthen the vanguard role of the Communist Party. A flagrant example of the problem we face was the letter to the *Morning Star* by comrade George Guy, who stands on the left of our Party and has even been recently interviewed in a double-page spread of *The New Worker*. He objected to the *Morning Star's* quite correct assessment of the TUC — Labour Party document *Partners in Rebuilding Britain*, as being class collaborationist. Comrade Guy justified his voting in favour of it on the TUC, by saying, "Had we voted against then there would have been two communists (including comrade Gill — TL) in glorious isolation, which may have satisfied our personal egos and even the *Morning Star*, but our broad left colleagues might well have seen us as people they no longer wished to support on other issues." (*Morning Star*, April 1983). This is a classic case of sacrificing principle, in order to paper over differences for the sake of a very superficial and temporary 'unity'. *The Leninist* on the other hand supports the *Morning Star's* call for "class struggle not class collaboration" (March 21 1983), which not only means our Party must stand on a

principled platform independent of the bourgeoisie, *but also independent of opportunism* if it is to lead the working class in a revolutionary struggle for power. *Straight Left* has adopted the same strategy as comrade Guy of burying themselves in the broad movement and have even castigated the independent role of the Party as "sectarianism" (See B. Filling, *Pre-congress Discussion Journal* 2, Oct 1981), which is merely a ruse for drawing attention away from their own treacherous reconciliation with opportunism inside and outside of the Party.

Fourthly, the *Morning Star* should become a weapon to re-establish a healthy democratic centralist regime in the Party; in which differences are openly debated, with all tendencies having equal access to Party publications; in which all tendencies are represented on higher Party committees according to their strength; and in which all comrades are committed to *unity in action* after the Party's policy has been decided. We are opposed to the present situation, where all Party publications and higher committees are controlled by opportunist factions who are not motivated by the interests of the Party as a whole, and who therefore act to exclude all other tendencies. It is for this reason that the healthy pro-Party forces have no alternative but to resort to factionalism themselves. Factionalism is the sign of extreme ill-health within the Party, and the disease is not cured simply by banning factions in a bureaucratic manner. Only by laying the principled foundations of renewed ideological unity can factionalism be overcome, and ultimately, this demands the defeat of the suffocating dominance of opportunism in the Party. For our part, to show our commitment to the Party's interests above those of factions in the inner-Party struggles, *The Leninist* has made the following offer in its letter to comrade

Chater: "If the *Morning Star* was transformed into a pro-Party publication open to all pro-Party groups and tendencies we would cease publication of *The Leninist*, transfer all our resources and energies to building and fighting for the *Morning Star*. If the pro-Party forces defeated the opportunist clique who at present factionally rule the Party, we must institute a healthy Party regime based on genuine democratic centralism. Under such conditions the need for factions in the Party would end and we would certainly dissolve our organisation and revert to existing merely as an ideological tendency." (Letter to Comrade Chater. *The Leninist*, No 5).

Our Party is now entering a period of grave danger with the forthcoming 38th Party Congress in November this year. It will reveal to us the strength of forces capable of fighting for pro-Partyism, and it will reveal whether the faction around the *Morning Star* is capable of changing direction from its present liquidationist course. If the Party does lose the *Morning Star*, then the task of all pro-Party comrades uniting round the formation of a pro-Party paper along the lines we have outlined, will take on even greater urgency; for the Euro-communists will then be looking to publish a regular Party paper under their own control, and to eventually squeezing all remaining 'oppositionists' out of the Party.

For the sake of our Party's existence, we urge all comrades who agree with our proposals to overcome their insularity and reservations due to differences with *The Leninist* by writing to us at BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. We will guarantee absolute confidence if this is requested. But above all, we call on all comrades to throw themselves into the pre-congress discussion with the purpose of *opening the fight against liquidationism on all fronts!* ■

## Appendix I

### A LETTER TO COMRADE CHATER July 5 1983

Although we offered him unstinted support, if only he would sincerely commit himself to four fundamental pro-Party principles, comrade Chater refused to even acknowledge our letter. Genuine communists will draw the appropriate conclusions from his silence.

Dear Comrade,

The re-election of the Tory government represents the greatest post-WW2 threat to the working class, the fact that this comes at a time of deepening capitalist crisis can only mean that the danger is all the greater. The Tories can only offer the working class Draconian anti-trade union laws, growing mass unemployment, and increased spending on equipping the forces of coercion with firearms, anti-riot gear and training in crushing popular upsurges. Such a situation, combined with the Labour Party's electoral support slumping to 1918 levels, and its consequent inability to pose as an alternative party of government, as well as presenting great dangers to the working class also offers immense possibilities.

The ability of reformists to channel working class anger and energy into parliamentary dead ends is declining. This is above all the result of the increasing contradiction between what the working class needs and what the capitalist system can afford. Because of this growing contradiction, in order to secure their needs the masses will seek out new organisations, new answers, and can thus break from Labourism with its commitment to running the system. In the emerging crisis conditions of the '80's, the greatest weapon in the hands of the working class is the Communist Party; which under a

determined revolutionary leadership, provides the key through which the working class can liberate itself and open up the road towards a society based on need and not profit — socialism.

Unfortunately, as you are aware, today our party is itself in deep crisis, not only is membership plummeting and activity degenerating, but our leadership is in the hands of an opportunist clique, which is determined to liquidate the Party into a reformist and petty bourgeois milieu. This leadership has presided over the decline of the Party, it has deliberately discouraged the study of Marxist-Leninism, it has peddled every form of bourgeois feminism, revisionist, and petty bourgeois trash in *Marxism Today*. Only orthodox communism has been considered taboo, all those comrades who look towards the tradition of the October Revolution are branded as pariahs, are barred from the Party press, from Party committees. Petty bourgeois dilettantes, reformists, even religious zealots are given party membership while genuine communists are bureaucratically excluded. This unhealthy situation has naturally engendered opposition from many dedicated communists in the Party. This is, of course, natural and correct, and given the restriction and suppression of Party democracy and open ideological debate, many have been forced to organise themselves into

factions, and while factions are a sign of ill-health, their formation is inevitable and must be defended, for organised rebellion against opportunism is the duty of all disciplined communists, it is their class duty, and fully in line with the spirit of Leninism.

Unfortunately, some oppositionists have been drawn towards liquidationism, arriving at the same position as the leadership via a different route. For under conditions of sharpening class struggle and deepening capitalist crisis, comrades not firmly rooted in Marxism-Leninism find themselves pulled towards liquidationism, like iron filings to a magnet.

It is because of our total opposition to all forms of liquidationism, that we expressed our concern about the developments culminating in the AGM of the PPS in June '83. But despite our warning that the orientation of the *Morning Star*, away from the party, and towards becoming the paper of the left reformist Labour and trade union leaders, represented a liquidationist course — this can still be reversed.

The rebellion by the management committee of the *Morning Star* can come to play a central role in overcoming the present unhealthy Party regime. But this can only happen if prostration to left reformism is ended, for this greatly weakens the struggle to build the Communist

Party our class so desperately needs. For ironically, although opposing the Euro-communist leadership, the present orientation could lead the *Morning Star* to liquidationism ahead of the Euro-communists.

It is because the *Morning Star* can still change course, because the die is not yet fatally cast, that we are writing to you. We offer to you four specific proposals — which we believe provide the basis for building a pro-Party bloc and laying the foundations for a dynamic Communist Party that can meet the challenge of the '80's.

The four proposals are:-

(1) To strengthen the fight for the Communist Party, the *Morning Star* should be open to all pro-Party groups and tendencies. It should become an anti-opportunist, pro-Party paper opposed to all forms of liquidationism.

(2) The *Morning Star* must oppose anti-Sovietism, must resolutely oppose counter-revolutionary forces in Afghanistan and Poland. The *Morning Star* should adopt a position, which although criticising mistakes, is fundamentally based on

unconditional defence of the socialist countries.

(3) The *Morning Star* should commit itself to fighting against any hint of tailism towards reformism. It is rightly said that today it is either a question of class collaboration or class struggle.

(4) The *Morning Star* should become a weapon to overthrow the present unhealthy Party regime. It should be committed to instituting a new regime in the Party based on unity in action, open ideological debate, and proportional representation of all pro-Party forces in Party publications, on leading committees and at congresses. In other words it should commit itself to the struggle for genuine democratic centralism.

If the *Morning Star* was transformed into a pro-Party publication open to all pro-Party groups and tendencies we would cease publication of *The Leninist*, transfer all our resources and energies to building and fighting for the *Morning Star*. If the pro-Party forces defeated the opportunist clique who at present factionally rule the Party we must institute a healthy Party regime based on genuine

democratic centralism. Under such conditions the need for factions in the Party would end and we would certainly dissolve our organisation and revert to existing merely as an ideological tendency in the Party.

Comrade Chater we urge you with all sincerity to commit yourself to the pro-Party cause, you could play a decisive role in leading the fight against liquidationism. If you adopt this course we offer you our unstinting support.

If you wish to keep your reply confidential, if you wish to clarify our proposals, we will refrain from publishing the correspondence. On the other hand we must interpret silence as an indication that you are set on a liquidationist path, and as such are opposed to the Party, if this is the case it is our duty to resolutely expose you. But we naturally hope that you will commit yourself to the Party and therefore eagerly await your reply.

Yours with Best Communist Greetings,

James Marshall  
(On behalf of *The Leninist*) ■

## Appendix II

### PREPARE FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST LIQUIDATIONISM AT THE 38TH CONGRESS

Statement of *The Leninist* for the *Marx With Sparx* festival, issued on June 19 1983 (extract)

The recently held historic AGM of the PPPS marked a new critical stage in the Communist Party's slide into opportunism and liquidationism. The election of the Management Committee's recommended list of nominees by a majority of Party activists has effectively removed the *Morning Star* from the control of the Executive Committee, and moreover, further distanced the paper politically from the Communist Party as a whole.

*The Leninist* is using the opportunity of the *Marx with Sparx* festival (as it did with the PPPS AGM), to issue this leaflet as a warning of the liquidationist dangers of supporting any of the three major organised factions in the Party, namely the Euro-communists, *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star*.

Comrade Gordon McLennan, in his statement to the *Morning Star* (June 4) spoke of the relations between the PPPS and the Communist Party as "fundamental to the existence and survival of the paper". Yet it is precisely the Party leadership which has for the past twenty years pursued a course of *weakening* those relations, as was the fundamental issue underlying the name change from the *Daily Worker*, under the fatuous notion that a 'broader' political stance secures greater political influence.

In reality this unprincipled attitude is everything to do with the Party's continuous rightward slide into opportunism. Especially notable is the EC sub-committee resolution adopted in 1978, projecting a course for the *Morning Star* as the paper of the 'broad democratic alliance' and demanding that its columns be opened even further to the 'left and democratic forces'.

Comrade Gordon McLennan and the

majority of the EC have essentially taken up the programme of the Euro-communist liquidators. Their perspective is nothing less than the complete dissolution of the Party's Leninist foundations into a broad amorphous milieu of reformist and petty bourgeois trends.

The importance of the emerging opposition to the Euros on the Executive and Political Committees and the possibilities which it offers for a sustained fightback against opportunism should not be dismissed. Yet the extreme reluctance of leading comrades Chater and Costello to take up the ideological cudgels against opportunism in a principled manner, preferring to base themselves on the politically indeterminate and ideologically incoherent support of Party trade union officials, only debilitates the struggle for pro-Partyism.

Although comrade Chater rejects the Euro-communist concept of a 'broad democratic alliance' paper, he replaces it with his own version of a 'broad left' publication centred on the official trade union and labour movement. This has led to the ominous schism of relations between the Party and the *Morning Star*.

The size of support nationally for the third major faction around *Straight Left* was measured roughly by the 274 and 292 votes cast for comrades Howell and Westcott at the PPPS AGM. *Straight Left* has isolated itself from the rest of the opposition on the left of the Party, and no doubt disoriented its own supporters by clumsily opposing comrade Chater on the narrowest of factional considerations. Yet the political content (or lack of it) of *Straight Left* and comrade Chater's plans for the *Morning Star* are almost identical and equally anti-Party.

They are both striving to dissolve the revolutionary banner of communism into the 'broad' reformist mainstream of the labour movement, condemned to trail aimlessly behind the official trade union and labour leaders.

All comrades must now turn to the forthcoming 38th Congress where comrade McLennan and the Euro-communists will be fighting to recover the situation in their favour. It will be the most important congress since the Party's formation, either by becoming a turning-point in the struggle to re-establish our Leninist foundations, or the point from which the Party dives headlong into dissolution.

It is the task of all comrades, who seek to safeguard the Party, to transform the emerging opposition to the Euro-communist liquidators into a principled bloc against *liquidationism of all varieties*. We call upon comrades Chater and Costello to give up their present suicidal course out of the Party, to join that bloc, to deal opportunism a decisive blow in November and to put a halt to the Party's slide into political oblivion. Comrade Chater could start that fightback now, by opening up the *Morning Star* to all pro-Party forces.

The landslide victory of the Tory government, at a time when Britain's position as a leading imperialist power is under threat, can only mean a rabid onslaught on the working class in the near future. The need for the clear revolutionary perspective of the Communist Party has never been greater, and our fight for Leninism inside the Party will be decisive for the eventual victory of the class struggle for socialist revolution.

Open the fight against liquidationism on all fronts! ■

---

# Britain: Before and After the Election

---

James Marshall

---

## 1. The Election

Future historians might well look back upon the June '83 election as a milestone on Britain's path to social revolution. For while the Tories secured a massive post-1945 record majority of 144 seats, this has revealed and exacerbated the deepening crisis of reformism. This crisis and the consequent dangers for social stability were referred to, in oblique fashion, even as the election campaign was in progress. Former Foreign Minister Francis Pym expressed his fears for parliamentary democracy if the Tory victory were to turn into a landslide. While he concentrated on the possibility that a landslide might create divisions on the Tory backbenches, it was clear that he was referring to the ramifications which would flow from a collapse of the Labour Party as *the alternative party of government*. Similar fears were voiced by other Tory 'wets' after the massive majority had been secured; both Heath and St John Stevas openly warned of the prospect of working class discontent breaking out from the confines of the parliamentary system. And Arthur Scargill and Ken Livingstone, eager to secure leadership of any future extra-parliamentary mass movement, quickly threw their hats into the ring and called for opposition to Tory attacks using mass actions rather than parliamentary rhetoric. Scargill vehemently argued that "we should undoubtedly need to take extra-parliamentary action, and that includes the possibility of political strikes."

Certainly the prospect of the working class seeing no realistic possibility of defeating the Tories on the parliamentary field, and seeking other avenues, is real enough. What's more it must be stressed that although the Tory Party gained a sweeping victory, it achieved its landslide on the basis of a fall of 2% in its popular vote. Also this was a peak of popularity, for if we look at opinion polls and by-elections over the last four years we can see that public opinion has been exceptionally volatile. Thatcher's early years saw the polls registering her as the most unpopular Prime Minister since records began; and when the SDP was formed it soon swept ahead of both the Tory and Labour Parties, confirming its standing with dramatic by-election victories in alliance with the Liberals. It was only with Thatcher's determined,

some say even fanatical struggle to 'liberate' the Falkland Islands from Argentina that the Tories saw their fortunes lifted to the 'dizzy heights' which enabled them to win 42% of the popular vote. So we must note that the Tory victory represented their standing in relation to other parties at the moment which Thatcher considered most favourable; i.e. when the volatile electorate were swept by a jingoistic fervour and, because of the British constitution, could be 'photoed' at their most right wing. Nevertheless, while the Tory landslide must be seen as only a parliamentary landslide, this must not distract us from the growing fundamental crisis which is affecting the Labour Party.

### 1.1. The Crisis of Labourism

The Falklands factor, the formation of the SDP and the inept bunglings of Michael Foot did, of course, contribute to the parliamentary debacle suffered by the Labour Party, resulting in its lowest share of popular support since 1918. But if we were to concentrate on these questions alone we would be failing to see both the deep-seated nature and fundamental cause of Labour's crisis.

In a period of deepening economic crisis of capitalism the Labour Party goes from being a man attempting to ride two horses at once to being a man attempting to ride two horses which are determined to go in opposite directions. This analogy rests on the role played by Labour's right and left. In 'normal' times the right must present to the capitalist class the acceptable face of alternative government; while the left rallies the support of the militant working class for 'their' government which, despite carrying out rightist measures, is still 'theirs' and therefore must be supported. Now during a period of crisis the complementary roles of these two wings of reformism become increasingly difficult to harness. A crisis of capitalism demands an increase in the rate of exploitation of the working class; it produces mass unemployment and cuts in the incomes of the working class as a whole. The right presents proposals in line with the interests of capitalism — they have no choice if they are to be an acceptable alternative party of government. But these proposals are ever more difficult to reconcile with the needs of the working class for jobs and for maintaining living standards. So the right find themselves completely out of line with the demands of the workers and increasingly in direct opposition to them.

The last Labour government, like all other Labour governments, carried out policies fully in the spirit and the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie. But because of the growing effects of the crisis and the demands imposed by the logic of capitalism, the Callaghan government found itself cast in the invidious role of conniving in an unprecedented decline in working class living standards. The index of real wages showed a steady fall from 104 in 1974 to 95 in 1977. Only the massive strike wave, popularly known as the 'winter of discontent', reversed the trend, forcing the index up to 102 by the end of 1978. Of course, such a role performed by reformists is by no means unique to Britain; the Mitterand government in France, supported by the Communist Party, has imposed a rigid austerity programme which has meant a savage cut in working class living standards in the name of 'socialism'. The likes of Callaghan and Mitterand have never questioned their anti-working class role, they are totally committed to running the capitalist system — and if this means deploying nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union, co-operating hand in glove with US imperialism and slashing working class living standards in order to restore capitalist profitability — then what must be, must be. This may be true for the right wing, but what about the left? How do they react when faced with the necessity (under capitalism) of attacking the working class? We can answer this in one sentence. To secure continued loyalty to the party from increasingly militant workers the left turns to ever more radical rhetoric and utopian schemes, which increasingly contradict the 'realism' espoused by the right.

The June 9 election was a clear illustration of the bankruptcy of both Labour's old and new reformism. Few believed their transparent promises; those who voted Labour did so not because of any illusion about their introducing sweeping measures, let alone the socialist millennium. No, they voted Labour because they hated the Tories, because Labour was for them the most realistic anti-Tory party. But many of those who previously voted Labour because they considered it more efficient in running 'the country' than the Tories — in other words those Labour voters who fully supported British capitalism — they in the main switched to the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

The formation of the SDP was itself a direct product of the growing effects of the crisis of the capitalist system. Its formation was precipitated by the shift to the left in the Labour Party which caused many bourgeois politicians to become utterly frustrated with what they saw as the unrealistic programmes increasingly being pressed on them by the left. For them the left's proposals were extreme, but not just that, they could in no way be presented as a basis for an alternative government. But while the SDP/Liberal Alliance secured around 25% of the vote in June '83, their utter failure in parliamentary terms counts them out as an alternative government to the Tories. And more important, the election saw the emergence of a situation where the non-Tory

vote was split roughly 50:50, thus preventing any party presenting itself convincingly as *the* parliamentary alternative to the Tories.

Now while Labour's claim to be *the* alternative party of government has been severely dented, its pretensions under Wilson and Callaghan to be the *natural* party of government, today carry absolutely no credibility. Not only that but the Labour Party shows every sign of reverting to the role it performed during the 'twenties and 'thirties, when it was a *party of crisis*. No matter how the right wing Labour politicians vow and declare for a return to the 'successful' and 'realistic' policies of the Wilson years, when the Labour Party was in government with only one interruption between 1964 and 1979, there can be no going back while keeping the loyalty of the working class, so there can be no going back and getting into government. For the policies the right are wanting to return to were based on the residues of the 'long boom' which saw a massive growth in GNP and real disposable income. These days of 'Butskellism', of consensus politics, when knowledgeable philistines prattled on about consumerism, the post-capitalist society and how 'we're all middle class now', these days are long gone. True, such politics limp on in the form of the SDP, but as the crisis deepens polarisation will become ever more pronounced. Ideologies based on boom and social peace become ever more incongruous and will surely be deserted by the electorate, certainly they will be of no use when it comes to the serious business of running a capitalist society which finds itself plunging into crisis.

## 1.2. Tailing the Labourites

The Tory advert entitled 'Like Your Manifesto, Comrade' equated the manifestoes of the Labour and Communist Parties. In response our Party's General Secretary, comrade Gordon McLennan, attempted to dismiss the comparison as "crude and inaccurate". According to comrade McLennan the Communist "election manifesto is greatly in advance of Labour's in many issues, as well as in its Socialist passion and commitment to mass extra-parliamentary struggle." But the truth popped out, for comrade McLennan not only declared the Labour manifesto more radical than in the past, but openly boasted that the Tories could only compare it with the the Communist Party manifesto "because of the united fight by Communists, Labour lefts and others through the Wilson, Callaghan and Thatcher years." The great question for comrade McLennan was "will the more radical policies in the manifesto be carried out by the new Labour government that we are all fighting to have elected on June 9?" (*Morning Star* May 27 1983).

So the Tory comparison was not unfair; the real point was that the leaders of the Communist Party believed in the policies — the question was: what about the leaders of the Labour Party?

There can be no doubt that the Labour manifesto was the most radical since 1945, but this did not stop it being nothing more than a typical left-Labourite concoction, full of utopian nonsense on the one hand and cynical, under the table anti-

working class measures on the other. For while it 'committed' the 'next Labour government' to unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC, this sugar coating was counter-balanced by the poison of continued commitment to NATO, and wage controls (something comrades Ken Gill and George Guy went along with on the TUC General Council in their sycophantic desire to buddy-buddy with Labour lefts).

Labour's *New Hope for Britain* was a left-reformist document which, as comrade McLennan rightly declared, had its inconsistencies. As to our Party's manifesto, *Jobs not Bombs*, comrade McLennan also rightly argued that this was consistent. But surely this consistency was on the terrain of left-reformism; it was consistent left-reformism as opposed to Labour's inconsistent left-reformism.

It was thus hardly surprising that the Party membership, faced with the prospect of a second term for Thatcher and a Labour Party with a manifesto only marginally different to that of the Communist Party, should be lack-lustre in their fight for Party candidates. And indeed total Communist votes in 1983 were only 11,595, compared with 15,958 in 1979. This derisory result would be a damning indictment of failure even if the Party were fighting on a revolutionary platform, let alone when its leadership is committed to a parliamentary strategy lock, stock and barrel.

Of course, if the truth be told, the similarity between the Labour and Communist Party manifestoes, attacked by the Tories and boasted about by comrade McLennan, has very little, in fact nothing, to do with comrade McLennan's claims that the Labour Party is moving towards communism; surely it is the other way round — he and the Communist Party leadership have unfortunately steadily drifted towards social democracy.

What about those forces who consider themselves to be on the left of the leadership of the Communist Party; what was their position during the election?

Well not surprisingly *Straight Left* was fully and revoltingly behind the Labour Party. These self-styled 'supporters' of the Soviet Union argue for a 100% backing for the social-imperialists. The advocates of no communists contesting elections tell us that social democracy has the answers on jobs, peace and democracy. Labour, we are told, will "create new jobs and safeguard old ones", Labour will "work to make Britain safer by scrapping Cruise and Trident and kicking out Reagan's bases." In fact "Labour offers a different and more progressive policy on all... issues." (*Straight Left* June 1983)

The old stable mates of *Straight Left*, the New Communist Party, have interestingly arrived at the same liquidationist conclusions. They too argue that it is wrong for communists to stand in elections: "We think it is wrong tactically and strategically to put up... candidates." They have also developed the same position about communists needing to end their organisational independence (the NCP has no political indepen-

dence) by finding their 'rightful' place in the ranks of social democracy. "Our *long term* aim is to be recognised as the vanguard (sic) party of the class operating inside the mass-based party of the working class which is the Labour Party, and to operate in the principled manner Lenin envisaged... in the 1920s." (*The New Worker* June 17 1983, our emphasis). The NCP has the nerve to say this *strategic* prostration before the Labour Party is based on Lenin. This is monstrous. Lenin advocated the tactic of the united front in order to expose the social democrats; the united front tactic of applying for affiliation was suggested, but only in order to destroy social democracy — "to support the Labour Party as a rope supports a hanging man." Lenin never advocated the *strategic* position of seeking the unity of the Communist and Labour Parties, as the centrists of the NCP maintain with their usual dishonesty.

As to the Trotskyites, they in the main have already taken the decision to dig their own graves. Once buried in the Labour Party wards and GMCs they surface occasionally as terribly r-r-r-revolutionary councillors, and now even as MPs. Let the bourgeoisie tremble for *Militant* can now use House of Commons notepaper. And what *Militant* has achieved the Socialist League (originally the name of the right rump of the ILP, which remained in the Labour Party after the ILP disaffiliated; a much more apt name for the absurdly mis-named 'International "Marxist" Group'), *Socialist Organiser* and a host of other disciples of Leon Trotsky aspire to. These groups, for all their so-called Marxism and socialism, refer to the Labour manifesto in terms of veneration; they call for its defence as 'our policies', and rightly so because in truth they have embraced social democracy as their own, not just in organisational terms but most startlingly in political terms as well.

While the Communist Party fielded 35 candidates there can be no doubt that the platform on which they stood was only distinguishable from that of the Labour Party in that it was more consistently left-reformist. Our comrades were not standing under the banner of revolution, using the election as Leninists in order to conduct propaganda aimed at breaking the hold that parliament has over the masses. What is more, where we had no candidates we were urged to offer unconditional support for Labour. On the ground this unconditional support often became completely uncritical support for the Labour candidate; thus independent communist work was at an all time low, members often as not diluted their work into the 'ra-ra for Labour — Tories out' lowest common denominator stream. This approach was by no means unique to our Party — the Straight Leftists, NCPers and most Trots were, if anything, even more abject in their tailism of the Labour Party.

The fact that the election on June 9 saw a decisive drop in the Labour vote and the fact that the Labour Party has found itself increasingly reduced to a party of crisis has not only thrown that party into crisis; all the main left groups find their entire strategic orientation undermined, their clever little plans shattered and their

members disorientated.

### 1.3. Dangers and Possibilities

The re-election of the Tory government, because it comes at a time of deepening capitalist crisis, represents the greatest post-World War Two threat to the working class. The only things the Tories could offer the working class were a continuation of mass unemployment, Draconian anti-trade union laws, a massive increase in arms spending and the equipping of the forces of coercion, the police and army, to deal with popular upsurges.

The Tories, being committed to the success of British capitalism, must attack the working class. This combined with the erosion of the Labour Party's position as the alternative party of government not only means that leading Tories, including Thatcher, confidently talk of their being in government into the 'nineties, but what is more important the period unfolding before us promises to be one of greatly heightened class struggle. While this prospect poses great dangers for the working class, it also offers great possibilities.

Undoubtedly the Tories, if faced with a dispirited, badly prepared working class, will press home their offensive, will cynically crush working class living standards and rights, and might even succeed in breaking the back of the organised trade union movement through the combined effect of anti-trade union legislation, mass unemployment and the imposition of non-strike or non-union agreements. But while only the complacent would dismiss such a scenario, there is another brighter possibility. As we have already stated the Labour Party is in crisis, it cannot convincingly pose as the alternative party of government and because of sharpening class struggle it is in danger of losing its grip on working class action, which will focus more and more outside the parliamentary arena. The defeat for Labour in the June '83 election not only produced a tussle for leadership, it also posed to the party a conundrum which is impossible to resolve in crisis conditions. What sort of party to be? That is the question hanging over Labour like a threatening storm cloud. To be a party of the right, committed to the system, to NATO and nuclear weapons? If this course is chosen then the loyalty of the activists in the constituencies and the votes of the masses thrown into desperation by the effects of the slump become ever more difficult, if not impossible to maintain. Or to be a party of the left? In this case the party will seek to place itself at the head of the masses, to reflect their demands, of course at the same time sparing no effort to ensure that the masses don't go too far. This course would entail much socialist sloganising, and perhaps if things really hot up then concessions (at least in rhetoric) could be given to calls for revolution. But whatever path Labour eventually takes the goal of a parliamentary majority will, in all likelihood, remain frustratingly outside the party's grasp. For nothing, not even compromise leaders such as Neil Kinnock can straddle the growing chasm separating the programme of 'realistic' government and the needs of the masses. The only chance Labour has

of getting into office increasingly rests on their renewed role as a party of crisis — to be put into government as an emergency measure in order to stem the threatening tide of working class anger.

Whether the Labour Party goes to the right or to the left is, for revolutionaries, only a secondary question. What is fundamental is the inevitable effect the crisis will have of weakening the hold of reformism on the working class. It will throw millions into political action for the first time and shatter previously held reformist prejudices, opening up the possibility of mass revolutionary politics. Undoubtedly this will affect the Labour Party, pushing it one way or another, but whichever way it jumps, its hold over the working class is jeopardised — a maintenance of respectable rightism can only mean the masses will look for new organisations, new answers; and paradoxically a shift to the left likewise inevitably opens the masses up to these very same new organisations and new answers.

## 2. The First Term

Although the working class had been somewhat disorientated by the vicious attack launched on them by 'their' Wilson/Callaghan government, the Tory general election victory in May '79 saw the workers' movement by no means cowed. Trade union membership was at a record high, 12.5 million; the class had just emerged from the 'winter of discontent', when a strike wave of proportions not seen since 1926 had forced the restoration of wage levels to something near the level before Wilson had been in office. What is more over the preceding decade or so the workers' movement had secured important victories as a result of outstanding militant struggles: the 1972 and 1974 Miners' Strikes, with their mass pickets, solidarity strikes and as a result of Heath, the February '74 general election. These were linked to the overtly political battles against the Industrial Relations Act, which witnessed tens of thousands participating in one day strikes organised by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions culminating in the massive strike wave in solidarity with the Pentonville Five and the threat of a General Strike.

Because of the militant record of the late 'sixties and the 'seventies, and the ability of the working class to resist successfully measures designed to force down wages and attempts to chain the unions, whether from Barbara Castle or Robert Carr, there were many who were brimming with confidence at the prospect of a show-down with the newly elected Thatcher government. But such a view was soon shown to be based on a foolish misreading of the last decade, the fallacy that the miners had in 1974 swept the Heath government out office in semi-revolutionary fashion and above all the failure to take into account the changing economic conditions. For whereas the 'sixties battles took place at the end of the boom, and those of the 'seventies in a time of stagnation and transition, the 'eighties saw the emergence of the early but unmistakable signs of a looming general crisis of capitalism. In the 'sixties the capitalist class could afford to placate the working

class with not inconsiderable increases in living standards. This course had become impossible by the 'eighties, and far from a general increase in prosperity the needs of the day led to attacks on working class living standards, pitiless speed-ups and a staggering growth in the number unemployed.

The first great battle under the new Thatcher government, one that clearly marked a turning point and was destined to affect the general pattern for the proceeding period, was the Steel Strike of 1980. The right wing ISTC leadership under Sirs did its best to tone down the struggle, to prevent it going too far. But despite their being ever willing to compromise their members' jobs and living standards, the strike assumed a bitter and protracted nature as a result of the determination of the rank and file and the intransigence of the Tory government. It lasted 13 long weeks, but despite the mass picketing, solidarity strikes from the private sector steel workers and widespread sympathy from the working class (all taken to their highest forms in South Yorkshire), the failure to organise effective assistance meant that the strike collapsed. The result on the position of steel workers was appalling. BSC Chairman MacGregor implemented a programme which included increased exploitation, differentials to facilitate divide and rule and a decimation of the number of workers in the industry. Between 1979 and 1982 the workforce was cut by 52%, and because of the demoralisation caused by the defeat of the 1980 strike this was carried out with only minimal resistance.

This pattern was paralleled in many respects by the car industry. Even before the election of the Tory government the employers had been on the offensive, and in the summer of '79 they successfully defeated strikes by Vauxhall and Talbot workers. As a result speed-ups were imposed and real wages cut. Following this and the debacle of the steel strike the Labour-appointed Edwardes management at Leyland smelt blood. A concerted assault was directed at undermining the shop stewards' organisation; particularly because of his prestige, but also because of his isolation from the shop floor, the Longbridge convener, Derek Robinson, was the ideal target. Despite 57,000 workers downing tools to defend Robinson the management won the dispute, mainly as a result of overt betrayal by the AUEW leadership and the passivity of the T & GWU. Because of this failure to prevent Robinson being sacked Edwardes felt completely confident whereas the shop stewards were despondent and the workforce was completely disorientated and powerless to resist. Isolated pockets of militancy were crushed, a rigid works discipline, the 'Slaves' Charter', was introduced along with a speed-up, cuts in real pay and a rationalisation programme which cost 70,000 workers their jobs. The sacking of militant Cowley shop steward Alan Thornett in 1982 along with the successive imposition of real pay cuts and the inability to resist the erosion of rights all bear witness to the extent of the retreat by Leyland workers. And as with Leyland the

other car producers were equally successful in imposing their own versions of the 'Edwardes Plan' and the 'Slaves' Charter', thereby increasing their rate of exploitation.

Despite partial and isolated victories the overall picture of Thatcher's first four years was clearly one of working class retreat. Public sector workers saw their struggles undermined by inept and sectional leaderships, and in the case of the health workers and train drivers defeat was ensured through cynical betrayal by the TUC itself.

The miners exemplified above all others the crisis of the working class. During the 'seventies they had justly earned the reputation of being the most powerful, most determined and best organised section of the working class. So with the retirement of the dearly beloved (by the bourgeoisie) Joe Gormley, and the election of Arthur Scargill with a massive 70% first preference vote, the stage seemed set for decisive confrontation. But this was not to be, for the divisive productivity deal which set pit against pit and area against area, plus the government's refusal to be drawn into an early, and for them premature battle, meant that not only did one strike ballot after another show that the miners had no inclination to fight, but even when the NCB closed pits in Scotland and South Wales attempts to launch solidarity actions collapsed in disarray and despondency.

The lack of resistance to the Tory onslaught was vividly illustrated by the dramatic slump in strike figures. They fell from a post-war peak of 29.5 million days in 1979 to a low of only 4.2 million days in 1981, and the figure for 1982 continued to reflect the low level of struggle. Such conditions enabled the Tories to attack social services with near impunity — health care, education, child care and benefits for the working class all deteriorated.

One central element changing the balance from the days of militancy of the late 'sixties and early 'seventies to the setbacks of the 'eighties has been the massive growth of unemployment. It not only doubled under the Wilson/Callaghan government, but doubled again in Thatcher's first term, rising by 1.71 million from 1.3 million to 3.02 million. Using the old method of calculation the number unemployed at the time Thatcher called the '83 election would have been nearer 3.35 million (at the height of the 'thirties slump Britain had 2,796,000 unemployed). Commenting on the effect that this had on the economic power of the working class Philip Basseth, the Labour Correspondent of the *Financial Times* wrote:

"... fear of unemployment has dramatically altered the bargaining climate. Long gone are the days of the wage free-for-all in the 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79, and the less noticed, but at least as pervasive wages explosion in Mrs. Thatcher's first year in office. Then pay across all industries and services rose by an average of 22.4%...

"Now most settlements are running at about a third of that rate"... (unemployment has) "produced a cowed and demoralised workforce". (December 2 1982)

Faced with mass unemployment, the unwillingness or inability of the trade union leaders to fight and a determined offensive by the employers and the Tory government, the working class saw their living standards stagnate. While real take home



pay for those with jobs rose by about 3% over the last year of Thatcher's first term, the living standards of the working class as a whole fell by 1.25% since she took office. "But the drop in real (inflation adjusted) personal disposable incomes — the official measure of living standards — has been borne almost entirely by the 2.25 million people who have lost their jobs over the past four years." (*The Times* June 30 1983)

It was upon the shoulders of the oppressed, the unemployed, women and blacks that the greatest burden of the Tory offensive fell. Women, despite the fact that Britain had a woman Prime Minister for the first time, suffered a decline in their relative earnings to men. They found themselves suffering increased unemployment at a rate 5 times faster than men, and were forced back into the home or into part-time work as a result of cuts in social services and in particular in child care facilities.

Instead of locating these glaring examples of the oppression of women in the growing crisis of the capitalist system, and drawing the logical conclusion that to free women it is first necessary to overthrow the capitalist system, in our Party's election manifesto we read the following half-baked, ignorant statement:

"The entire structure of British society is dominated by men. It is overwhelmingly men who take the decisions that affect the lives of women. Men in government and Parliament decide issues of peace and war, of jobs or unemployment, of women's rights, of the quality of their lives. The cabinet has only one woman in it. Only 19 of the 635 MPs elected at the last General Election were women. The pattern continues (throughout) all the multifarious organisations that make up British society." (*Jobs not Bombs*)

In fact not only is the male sex blamed for women's oppression, but the real basis of the oppression of women, capitalism, isn't even mentioned. As to the ultimate source of the liberation of women, communism, silence remains the rule. So in the section devoted to the women's question in our Party's election manifesto we find nothing more than petty-bourgeois feminist trivia, certainly not a trace of revolutionary Marxism.

Blacks, especially black youth, not only found themselves victims of fascist gangs and police harassment, but suffered unemployment rates far exceeding the white population, and if they managed to find work the chances were that it would be low paid and dead end.

In contrast to the low level of struggle by organised labour, the summer of '81 saw a series of spontaneous uprisings by black youth, supported by large numbers of white youth. The cities of Britain were the scenes of fierce street confrontations between rioters and the police. This situation, where police thugs found themselves on the receiving end of concerted violence for a change, where short-lived no-go areas were established, where police baton was met with Molotov cocktail and where black and white youth united in a carnival of the oppressed, this all shattered the meticulously cultivated facade of social peace that the British bourgeoisie had for so long prided themselves on.

The ruling class responded to the riots by increasing money spent on equipping the forces of

coercion. Vast amounts of new weaponry were introduced including CS gas, rubber bullets, riot shields and helmets; also specially trained squads in mobile units were deployed to intimidate, terrorise and isolate potential 'troublemakers'. The government concealed all this behind much publicised enquiries and tedious platitudinous gobbledegook about resurrecting the Dixon of Dock Green local bobby. Aiding them were the liberals, reformists and in particular the vast army employed in the community and race relations 'industry', the state's concerned professions, who while gnashing their teeth and making pious calls for community policing, did all in their power to prevent a recurrence of the 'disturbances' — anything other than see Britain's cities become battlegrounds once more. But while opportunists like comrade Dave Cook called for "a determined government-led attack on racism" (*Morning Star*, May 28 1983) and various reformists campaigned for police accountability (something echoed by house-trained Straight Leftist comrade Nick Wright at the London District Congress of our Party, when he unashamedly called for community policing and a 'left-wing' law and order policy), the state bludgeoned the black communities into submission, flinging thousands into prison and spending millions of pounds on perfecting methods of oppression while buying off certain aspirant 'leaders' of the black community by creating lucrative little posts for them.

Despite lamenting the fact that two years after the '81 riots the government had done little or nothing to relieve their causes (unemployment and racism), the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) along with other liberal flunkies could only urge tinkering reforms and "the training of police officers to take into account the fears and needs of the ethnic minorities." (*Morning Star*, July 8 1983). For the liberals the answer to the 'disturbances' lay in following the American experience of the 'sixties, where in conditions of boom the US bourgeoisie had created a black middle class and spent millions of dollars on welfare schemes. Unfortunately for our timorous, obsequious liberals and our vexed rulers, Britain in the 'eighties is in no position to carry out significant reforms, it cannot conjure up millions of jobs, and what's more it has no intention of fighting racism: it relies on racism as a weapon to divide and rule. Because Britain is on the threshold of protracted crisis and qualitative decline, the bourgeoisie must rely to a greater extent on naked state violence, which under prevailing conditions can only be thinly veiled by gooey platitudes from organisations such as the CRE.

While the Tory goons find themselves increasingly forced to rely on the forces of coercion against the black population in Britain, there could be no choice in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Confronted with a nationalist population which refuses to accept Ireland's continued colonial status, who are ever more determined to fight to rid the country of the venal British presence, the Tories, like Labour before them, could only turn to the military machine in an

attempt to suppress the national liberation forces.

Tragically, our Party leadership could only wag a pious condemnatory finger at repression by the British state, for it apparently creates "the conditions in which the shooting and bombing campaigns of the Provisional IRA and INLA take place"; these liberation forces are themselves blamed for maintaining the divisions amongst the population of the Six Counties, and even alienating "support in Britain" (*Jobs not Bombs*).

Using this logic one would be forced to condemn the ANC in South Africa for perpetuating the apartheid regime. And indeed the paper of the Northern Area of the Communist Party of Ireland, *Unity*, commenting on the virtually simultaneous car bomb attacks carried out by the ANC in Pretoria and the Provisional IRA in Andersonstown, revealed the full revolting extent of its opportunism by actually declaring in its editorial that not only was the Provisional IRA "reactionary", but that it is "nonsense to compare" the situation in Northern Ireland to that in South Africa, because in Northern Ireland, unlike South Africa, "it is still possible to work legally for political change", that the state's violence is "restricted".

This cowardly treachery at home leads the editors of *Unity* to come to the 'logical' conclusion that they must distance themselves from the national liberation movement in South Africa, for no matter how they vow and declare that the national liberation struggles in Ireland and South Africa are diametrically opposite, their pungent opportunism leads them to denounce the ANC. This is because of their hatred of the IRA and their dread of the responsibilities which a principled communist position in Ireland would lead them to — they might have to use illegal methods, might have to suffer persecution from British imperialism. In order to totally distance themselves from the "reactionary" IRA these 'internationalists' who claim to follow the memory of James Connolly, monstrously, and in full stinking opportunist 'honesty', wonder if the "action in Pretoria (the car bomb exploded by the ANC) might have been misguided." !!! (*Unity*, May 28 1983)

The June 9th election result provided ample evidence for all those with sense enough to take it in, that Sinn Fein is a legitimate expression of the nationalist masses. Sinn Fein stood in 14 of the 17 constituencies in the North. They not only won West Belfast, but more important for those not obsessed with Parliament, their overall share of the vote increased from 10.1% in the October 1982 Assembly elections to 13.4%, or nearly 43% of the nationalist vote.

How should we sum up Thatcher's first term? What are its lessons?

Well in our short potted survey we have shown that the working class has suffered a long string of defeats; one industrial dispute was lost after another. As to the 'victories', the Cowley 'washing-up' strike ended in defeat after the election while the water workers' struggle saw Thatcher openly denounce and belabour the Water Council for not fighting. So these 'victories' showed all too clearly

that the exception most definitely proved the rule of defeat. But we must note that despite the near universally bleak last four years, the working class has only been forced to retreat — it has not suffered a defeat of a strategic nature along the lines inflicted by the Tories in 1926, when trade union organisation was decimated and thousands of militants were blacklisted.

The first four years of the Thatcher government showed that the bourgeoisie was prepared to carry out an increasingly vicious attack on the working class, screwing down the real incomes of our class in order that we should pay for their crisis. But while the bourgeoisie's leadership showed great determination to fight the class war, our Labourite leaders showed no such determination. One sell-out followed another, one after another piece of utopian and even chauvinistic hypocrisy was cynically proclaimed as the salvation of 'Britain' and the workers' movement, all in order to avoid the task of leading the class struggle against the bourgeoisie and their system. But in contrast to the increasingly evident treachery of the reformist leaders, sections of the oppressed took to the streets spontaneously, providing a lesson of combativity and militancy for all workers. What's more the Six Counties of Northern Ireland witnessed the continuation of a protracted military and political campaign for national liberation, which proved a constant thorn in the side of the bourgeoisie, the only solution for which they see as being military terror.

But all in all the important lesson for us is the fact that Britain has not only three million unemployed, declining industrial production, growing social unrest and a seemingly intractable (for the bourgeoisie) armed conflict going on inside the 'United Kingdom', but this is *before* the capitalist system has plunged into general crisis. This indicates that Britain is becoming far more ripe for socialist revolution than ever before in its history — something that will be fully revealed when the general crisis emerges. For let us remember that slumps occur in direct proportion to the preceding boom. This phenomenon is closely connected to the role played by the credit system, which allows booms to be far more protracted and powerful than would otherwise be the case, but when the over-extended credit system finally bursts the resultant crash is catastrophic. (see articles by Frank Grafton in *The Leninist* No.s 2 and 3). So the longest ever capitalist boom, that of the 'fifties and 'sixties, will paradoxically result in the deepest, most protracted, most destructive and dangerous slump in the grotesque history of capitalism.

### 3. The Crisis of Britain

When Thatcher called the election in May the figures for her first four years revealed the following grim picture:

- Unemployment had risen by 1.71 million. This is from 1.31 to 3.02 million (3.35 million using the old method of calculation.) Compared with Britain's doubling of unemployment the other EEC states

experienced only a 30% average increase.

●Prices had risen by 51.8%, making an average inflation rate of 11.5% per annum.

●Incomes of those in work rose by 3% in the last year of office. But incomes of the population as a whole fell by about 1.25% over the four years, this decline borne almost entirely by those made unemployed.

●Industrial production for all industries had fallen from a base of 113.0 to 103.6.

This record was mournfully portrayed by many on the left as a result of Tory irrationality, their commitment to doctrinaire monetarism and a hatred of the working class. According to the Labour Party manifesto *The New Hope for Britain* "When the Tories took office... unemployment was falling and the economy growing. Living standards had gone up by a sixth in two years and North Sea oil held out the prospect of economic growth, high levels of employment and better social services." (p6) The brilliant prospect offered under the Callaghan government was it seems "thrown away by the Tories." (p6) And yet if we take an objective look at the last Labour government the golden picture painted by *The New Hope* turns to dross.

For Thatcher's first term in office came in the wake of the notorious 'winter of discontent' and Labour's wretched Social Contract with its Stages 1, 2 and 3. Because of the Social Contract the working class suffered a precipitous decline in living standards, by the end of the day unemployment had more than doubled and social services had been slashed. Labour's boast about increasing living standards was a cynical piece of misinformation that Goebbels himself could have taken pride in. For the truth is that after crushing down the living standards of the working class at an unprecedented rate, the Callaghan Labour government was faced with a massive strike wave which took on proportions not seen since the 1926 General Strike. The trade union leaders, who had traded their members' living standards for comfortable positions on government commissions and frequent meetings at Downing Street to discuss the 'national interest', proved incapable of preventing the explosion of militancy from the rank and file. It was this rank and file rebellion, not the benign acts of the Labour government, which forced wages up; although even the titanic struggle during the winter of 1978/9 failed to fully restore living standards back to the level they were when the Labour government commenced its period in office.

The real picture of the last Labour government was one of soaring inflation, growing mass unemployment, falling real wages and a continuation of Britain's decline. This truth could not be hidden from the working class, and an attempt to revive the Social Contract in the form of a Social Concordat could only aid the Tories sweeping into power.

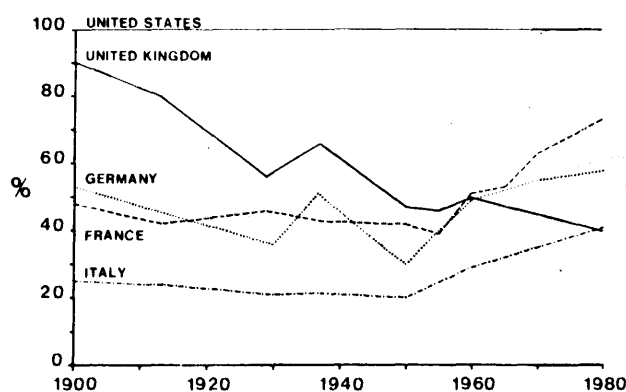
### 3.1. The Background

We have shown that despite the baleful Tory record, that of the Labour Party was hardly any

better as far as the working class were concerned; both the Wilson/Callaghan and Thatcher administrations carried out policies which were consciously directed against the working class.

Now to come to anything like an understanding of what drove the last Labour government and what drives Thatcher's Tories we must take into account Britain's crisis in historical terms. We can see from *Figure One* that in relative terms Britain has declined continuously more or less throughout this century. But it is since the end of World War Two that the decline has become particularly precipitous, particularly significant, for Britain's decay has increasingly assumed a qualitative as well as quantitative nature.

**Figure 1**  
Per Capita Gross National Product as a Proportion of the United States, 1899-1980



(Source *Socialist Challenge* April 22, 1982)

Immediately following the Second World War Britain's GNP was second only to the USA's. Its per-capita income stood at £260 — behind the United States and some small countries, but well ahead of France, Federal Germany and Japan. But by 1981 Britain had slipped to fifth in the league table of GNP for OECD countries.

**Table 1**  
Shares of OECD GNP in 1981

United States	38.5
Japan	14.8
Federal Germany	9.0
France	7.5
Britain	6.5
Italy	4.6
Canada	3.6

(Source: *Financial Times* December 23, 1982)

What's more Britain's per-capita income had slumped to eighteenth in the world, behind Finland. Underlying this were Britain's sluggish growth rates; during the 'fifties its GNP growth averaged only 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ % a year, compared with an OECD average of 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ %; in the 'sixties 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ % compared with 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ % in the 'seventies 2% against 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ %. (*The Economist* February 27 1982,p.34)

So although the post-war years saw an immense economic expansion, the uneven growth rates throughout this period meant that Britain's

power has in real terms continuously declined: its share of OECD industrial production has declined from 7.4% in 1963 to 5.6% in 1975, and its share of world trade in manufactured goods from 16.5% in 1960 to only 9.3% in 1973. Reactionary politicians from all the major bourgeois parties have placed most of the blame for this slide at the feet of the working class; they have demanded harder work, higher productivity, and certainly since the late 'seventies massive unemployment to reverse this decline. Indeed the only major difference between the approach of the Labour and Conservative Parties was *how* they attempted to squeeze the working class. Labour operated through agreement with the trade union leaders, while the Tories have used mass unemployment and the threat of head-on confrontation.

"If only the workers would work harder, strike less, work for less money, then *we* could make 'our' industry profitable and compete against the Japs, and then we could make Britain GREAT again!" — so argue the 'realistic' bourgeois politicians, and because most leaders of the labour movement are completely committed to British capitalism they have been drawn along by the logic of this argument. For if British capitalism is to be successful it must be able to compete with other countries and its industries must be profitable, and to achieve this the interests of the working class must be sacrificed. Of course such arguments are being used by bourgeois politicians and reactionary labour leaders throughout the capitalist world, not just in Britain. Because there is a growing world-wide capitalist crisis every country is suffering from adverse effects, and without exception the solution being imposed is at the expense of the working class.

While many left-reformists protest indignantly about the effects of the crisis, and while a number of 'Marxists' curse the day Maynard Keynes was replaced by Milton Friedman as the economic guru of the bourgeois establishment, all that these 'friends' of the working class can offer as an alternative are utopian schemes on the one hand and calls to follow the Labour Party on the other (see section 5). What they all shy away from is a scientific analysis of capitalism and its inevitable tendency towards crisis. While they iconise Marx, mark the anniversary of his death by holding festivals, publishing dry-as-dust books and delivering pompous lectures, in theory and practice they reject the *essence* of Marx. For the analysis of capitalist crisis developed by Marx not only explains what lies behind the crisis, but shows that the *only* solution that is in the interests of the working class is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat. It is because of this conclusion that so many 'Marxists' spend so much of their time (and perhaps why they are employed in so many university posts) in 'developing', 'improving' and 'refining' Marxism, in the course of which they rip out the revolutionary guts to leave an acceptable (to the bourgeoisie) doctrine, which has as much relationship to the original as a burnt kipper has to a free-swimming North Sea herring.

So what lies behind the crisis?

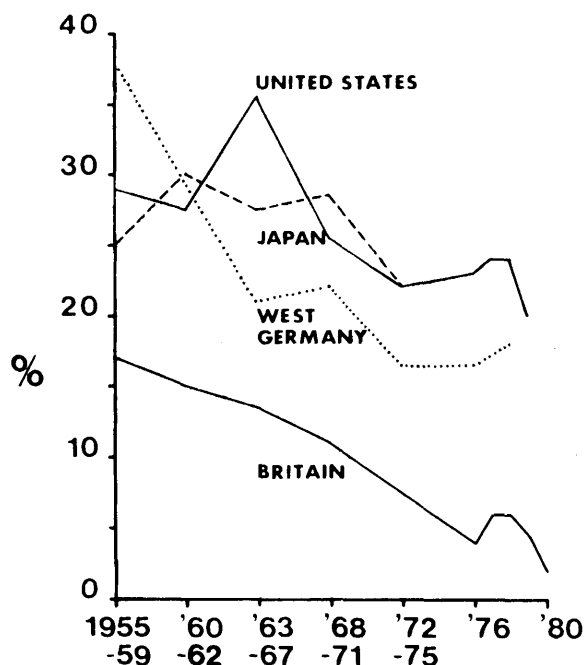
We have argued in *The Leninist* that the fundamental factor underlying the crisis is the declining rate of profit:

"It is the competitive drive for profit which forces the capitalist to revolutionise technique, to reduce costs and expand sales by undercutting the average market price.

"The general effect of this increased social productivity in the long term gives rise to a tendency for variable capital (which employs labour power) to decline as a proportion of total capital. As value produced by living labour is the source of surplus value, so this is expressed as the tendency for the general rate of profit to fall." (See articles by Frank Grafton in *The Leninist* No.s 2 and 3)

Now while there are a number of different potential avenues open to the capitalists to counteract the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, these are temporary and can only mean that when the crash comes eventually it will be all the deeper. Britain, particularly because of its trail-blazing role developing capitalism, has been in the unenviable position of having a significantly lower rate of profit than its major competitors. This is reflected, if imperfectly and in a distorted fashion, by *Figure Two*, which shows how Britain's net rate of return on capital in manufacturing industry is not only declining as with other major countries, but its rate of return is significantly lower than its rivals. The decline in the rate of profit has led to the rate of investment also being much lower; in the 'sixties Britain devoted 17.8% of its GDP to investment compared with the OECD average of 20.8%, and in the 'seventies Britain managed 18.7% while the other OECD countries' average rose to 22.2%. The result of this means that in relative terms Britain's industries have become under-capitalised, backward and thus unproductive.

Figure 2  
Net Rates of Return on Capital  
Manufacturing Industry



(Source *The Economist* February 27, 1982)

Historically this position has been offset by the export of capital, by the development of Britain as an imperialist power. Through the export of

capital capitalism secures super-profits (or extra profits) which are used to 'top-up' domestic profit rates. Now despite Britain falling to fifth place in OECD GNP, throughout the 'sixties it managed to maintain a position second only to the mighty USA in terms of overseas investments.

Table 2

## Percentage Share of World Foreign Investment

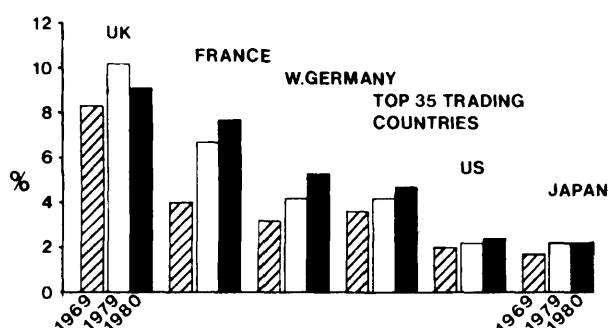
	Britain	USA	France	Germany	Total
1914	50.3	6.3	22.2	17.3	78.8
1930	43.8	35.3	8.4	2.6	87.5
1960	24.5	59.3	4.7	1.1	88.3
(1970s)	(20.0)	(?)			

(Source: Colin Sweet *World Economic Crisis* p.9 n.d.)

What is particularly significant is the fact that Britain leads the world in terms of the proportion of its GNP coming from invisible trade (which can be considered in very broad terms to reflect the export of capital and receipt of super-profits.) (See *Figure Three*). In other words *Britain is the most imperialist of all the major capitalist powers.*

Figure 3

## Invisible Trade Receipts as a Proportion of Gross National Product



(Source *Financial Times* November 3, 1982)

This reliance on banking, commodity trading, consultancy, insurance, stockbroking and jobbing, and foreign investment plus the growing importance for the economy of North Sea oil, has inevitably affected the structure of the metropolitan economy. In terms of employment this is seen in a decline in productive labour and a massive and disproportionate expansion in the service sector. This service sector has experienced steady growth despite the growth of mass unemployment; in 1971 there were 10 million working in this sector and by 1982 this had increased to 11.5 million. The number of people employed in manufacturing has slumped, showing the full effects of the crisis, from 8 million to 5.8 million in the corresponding period. And while millions of jobs disappeared in 'old' industries such as steel, cars and shipbuilding, paradoxically the 'new' technology areas also saw a decline, which although small, when contrasted with the growth of the service sector indicates the parasitic direction of the economy. For compared with the service sector's 1.5 million increase in the five years up to April 1982, 65,000 jobs disappeared from the electronics and information technology industries. (*The Times* August 16 1982). As a

result of the combined effects of the crisis and the importance of imperialism the percentage of workers employed in the service sector has risen from 42 in 1971 to around 50 today. (*Financial Times* November 3 1982).

This development was described and explained by Lenin in his famous work *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Imperialist capitalism was, he maintained, decaying parasitic capitalism because:

"More and more prominently there emerges, as one of the tendencies of imperialism, the creation of the 'rentier state', the usurer state, in which the bourgeoisie to an ever-increasing degree lives on the proceeds of capital exports and by the 'clipping of coupons'... capitalism is growing more and more rapidly than before; but this growth is not only becoming more and more uneven in general, its unevenness also manifests itself, in particular, in the decay of the countries which are richest in capital (Britain)." (V.I. Lenin *CW* Vol.22 p300)

So viewed in the light of a declining rate of profit, and the attempt to offset this through the export of capital, we can see that Britain's 'de-industrialisation' and low growth rates are little to do with particular governments, or as claimed in *Jobs not Bombs* the "anti-British policies of the monopolies and British based multi-national companies". No, they have everything to do with Britain's position as an old, moribund, decaying and parasitic capitalist/imperialist power.

Now while Britain has been in second position to the US in its percentage share of world foreign investment, throughout the 'seventies it came under increasing pressure from rivals. And in fact 1980 saw France oust Britain from second place in terms of receipts from invisible trade. (*Financial Times* November 3 1982) For with the decline in the rate of profit affecting them all to one degree or another, all capitalists will seek to offset their declining profit rate at least partially through securing super-profits. Thus countries like Japan, Federal Germany and France, who possess extremely dynamic and highly efficient capital, increasingly pose a threat to Britain's world position, threatening to squeeze out British capital from its 'traditional' 'domains' such as South Africa, Nigeria and the Middle East.

This means that British capitalism, faced with a *world decline in the rate of profit*, which it is experiencing *more acutely* than its rivals, and at a time when its position as the second imperialist power is under increasing pressure, is forced to squeeze its domestic industries to a far greater extent than in the past, and that means it must resort to increasing the rate of exploitation. As long as the mass of surplus value can be increased crisis can be offset, but in periods of overproduction as we are in now, this must entail fierce attacks on working class living standards. And if workers' wages cannot be forced down through voluntary agreement, then monetary and fiscal measures, with their resultant unemployment, and the law will be used to undermine working class bargaining power. It is because of the Tories drive to enhance Britain's domestic industrial competitiveness and increase profitability that we see a situation where, in relative terms, the crisis has expressed itself in a more severe form in Britain than in its major European rivals; its

industrial production has declined further, unemployment has risen faster and growth has been more tardy. Because of its less dynamic capital and its greater reliance on imperialism, British industry has carried 'more fat', and as a result, in order to raise the level of productivity and profitableness, more value has had to be destroyed. For in order to raise the rate of profit not only must the rate of exploitation be increased, but ultimately the number of capitals competing for profit must be lowered, thus small, backward or undynamic capitals must be eliminated.

#### 4. The War Drive

The struggle to 'offload' the destruction of capital onto other countries, not only to protect one's own capital, but to secure an extra slice of the available profit, has led to world war twice this century, at a cost of at least 75 million lives. The development of various capitals takes place at uneven rates. It is because of this, and varying historical conditions, that each war only creates the conditions for the next. Due to the uneven rate of development, the existing division of the world inevitably becomes a fetter on those who possess the most dynamic capitals. As a result there arise sharpening conflicts against barriers to exploitation and profit, which inevitably culminate in endeavours to smash through using military might.

In the pre-1914 period Germany's capitalism was far more dynamic than Britain's, but because Britain had been in the forefront in developing capitalism and imperialism it had already secured a massive empire to cushion its capital and exclude others; France and Russia likewise possessed vast territories, so in essence they and the other established imperialist powers had divided the world. But already by the late nineteenth century Germany had out-stripped Britain in heavy industry and technical efficiency, and by the twentieth century the economic challenge passed into a naval one, and the demand for colonial redivision. The antagonism between Britain and Germany epitomised the great division between the possessing dominant powers (the 'haves'), and those who sought redivision (the 'have nots'). Smaller powers organised themselves around the bigger ones and sought advantage. And while peaceful solutions were considered, including the transfer of Portuguese colonies to Germany, and a British-German division of the Middle East, all these negotiations failed. World war, which came close to breaking out in 1905 and again in 1911, finally began in August 1914.

The uneven rate of development means that every war under capitalism can only prepare the conditions for a new one. For war is the continuation by forcible means of the politics of the ruling class already being pursued long before the outbreak of war. Likewise peace is a continuation of the very same politics with a registration of the changes in the relation of forces of the antagonists brought about as a result of military operations. And although Germany was smashed by the combined might of Britain and the USA, Britain's continued possession of a massive empire (along with France, Portugal,

Holland etc.) remained a crippling block on the development of countries with more dynamic capitals. Thus the 'thirties saw the re-emergence of bellicose German demands for redivision, leading as we know to the outbreak of an inter-imperialist world war in 1939 which was far more ghastly and destructive than even the 1914-18 'war to end all wars'.

Now while Germany, along with its allies Japan and Italy, were forced into unconditional surrender, the aftermath of the Second World War was significantly different to that of the First. For instead of preserving its great empire, Britain and the other major colonial powers were, in the main, forced to grant formal independence. This was both the result of the wars of national independence, such as in Vietnam and Algeria, but also because of the insistence of US imperialism. The US had, of course, no concern for the colonial peoples, what it was concerned about was the opening up of markets to its own dynamic capital. For although it had, at least up to the early part of the twentieth century, functioned adequately through exploiting the vast markets inside the US itself, US capital now demanded unrestricted access to every corner of the world market. It did not, or maybe could not, force the dismantling of the old empires following 1918, and as a consequence found itself gripped by a crisis of huge proportions in the 'thirties (because of the inability to find new outlets for its capital.) But because the US emerged from World War Two with such overwhelming relative strength compared with its potential rivals, unlike in 1918, there was a major redivision of the world market. As a result of the impact and penetration of dynamic US capital (and the massive destruction of capital in the Second World War) the rate of profit soared, and the world economy expanded at an unprecedented rate for an unprecedented period. The US emerged from the Second World War not only as a great power, but also as a sort of 'super imperialist' state, dominating all other capitalist states and imposing unchallenged leadership over the entire capitalist world.

But as we have stated above, each war only creates the conditions for a new one. The raising of the rate of profit in the 'fifties and 'sixties, while substantial, could only be temporary, for the tendency for the rate of profit to fall inevitably wormed its way through the veneer of prosperity and boom. And as in the past, because of the uneven rate of development, those in possession of the most dynamic capital — today Japan and Federal Germany — find themselves increasingly at odds with the 'haves', foremostly the US, but also Britain.

While the underlying factors which led to the First World War also led to the Second and are now leading to a Third, a number of new elements have come into existence which mean that each world war has not, and could not, simply be a repetition of the last. The drive for profit still leads to imperialism, the uneven rate of development still leads to 'haves' and 'have nots', and this still leads to demands for redivision. But there are new factors:

1. The most important change, significantly changing the situation from 1914, was the establishment of working class power in Russia in 1917 and subsequently the creation of a socialist bloc after 1945.

2. The second important development has also occurred since 1945. This was the end of colonial empires. Today imperialism dominates and exploits backward capitalist states indirectly through neo-colonialism.

How do these factors affect the drive to war? Since 1917 the redivisionist drive to war of imperialism has not only manifested itself in wars of colonial conquest and inter-imperialist wars, but also in counter-revolutionary wars against socialism. Socialism by its very nature not only represents a permanent threat to capitalism, but also, because it prevents capital freely operating within its borders, it is an area of the world considered fair game, the target for numerous moral and, in the last resort, military crusades. As to the end of colonial empires which acted as a block to more dynamic capitals, their demise has changed the way in which imperialist powers and their contradictions develop. In recent times the use of protectionism has become increasingly common, not only by particular countries, but also by trading blocks like the EEC. However this has not yet meant a reversion to a pre-1945 empire-type set-up, and thus the dynamic capitals have so far found it possible to expand at the expense of the more established powers.

So while in 1955 the US accounted for 50% of the capitalist world's industrial production, the fact that the world capitalist market remained more or less open has meant that its rivals could, if they possessed more dynamic capitals, increase their share of the market. Thus, as we can see in *Table Three*, the US share of OECD industrial production has been steadily eroded (along with Britain's).

**Table 3**  
Percentage Share of OECD Industrial Production

	1963	1970	1975
US	44.4	43.3	34.9
Britain	7.4	6.4	5.6
Japan	5.3	11.9	15.5
France	5.0	6.0	7.9
Italy	3.5	4.4	4.9
Canada	3.0	3.6	3.7
Federal Germany	8.5	13.3	13.5

(Source: National Institute Economic Review)

Although these changes did not produce undue problems in the years of boom, as the capitalist world is becoming increasingly gripped by crisis the resultant contradictions lead inexorably to the re-emergence of the threat of war as a method of solving economic problems. Of course, at the present time there can be no realistic possibility of an inter-imperialist world war, simply because the US still maintains a completely overwhelming military superiority over its imperialist rivals, spending \$169.6 billion in 1982 compared with a combined total of all other NATO powers of only

\$116 billion. It is because of the ability of the US to retain hegemony over the capitalist world that it has been able to orchestrate a series of concerted campaigns against the USSR, conjuring up one hysterical media onslaught after another in order to blacken the name of the USSR, and brand it as the great threat to world peace.

While some, Japan and Federal Germany in particular, have baulked at some of the measure demanded by the US, (even Britain gingerly broke ranks with the US over the Siberian gas pipeline project) all capitalist powers have, in the main, fallen in behind US propaganda campaigns and under US pressure have agreed to step up anti-Soviet actions, and in particular, (but not without fudging) to hoist up arms spending. But this US inspired anti-Sovietism has received the most consistent and on occasions even rabid backing from the Tory government. They rushed with gleeful enthusiasm into the campaign to boycott the Moscow Olympics, also using the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as a cover to introduce trade boycotts, and above all to give a massive boost to the arms programme. The crisis in Poland and the declaration of martial law were likewise used to stoke up the war drive, again Thatcher's Britain proved the most vehement of all European powers in its backing for US anti-Sovietism, as it had been in advocating the need for Cruise and Pershing missiles to be stationed in Western Europe.

So at present, unlike the pre-World War One and Two situations, it is the capitalist 'haves' who are the most war-like, the most militaristic, and who spend the most on weapons. For although Britain only spends an eighth as much as the US in absolute terms, it is not only outstripping other members of NATO, but spends more per head and as a proportion of GNP than any other leading European member.

Even with the defence 'cuts' introduced after the '83 election, the Tories' 'defence' budget in 1983 was to be 3.1% higher than in 1982. As a result arms spending rose by 17.1% since the beginning of Thatcher's first term, and even if the expenditure on the Falkland's campaign were deducted the increase was still 12.5%.

#### 4.1. The Falklands

This bellicose arms programme, the £ billions being spent on new weapons, including the Trident system, is fully in line with the logic of capitalism and Britain's struggle to maintain itself as a major imperialist power. For while British capitalism has been forced to 'turn in' on itself to a greater degree than in the past, this must not divert us from giving full recognition to the continued central importance the bourgeoisie attaches to maintaining Britain's position as a major imperialist power, (something denied or played down by the Euros).

It was this importance which caused Britain to react so strongly to Argentina's seizure of the Falkland Islands; it was not that they had any great economic value — the cost of recapturing and maintaining Britain's hold over them has certain-

ly dwarfed the drawing board schemes for krill fishing. No, Britain responded with such vigour and determination because its *reputation and standing as a major imperialist power* had been dented by Argentina's desperate attempt to become an imperialist power, (for it has been gripped by crises because of its inability to expand). It was to reassert its imperialist standing that led to Britain's re-invasion, to the death and injury of 2,000 British and Argentinian servicemen; to the willingness to spend billions of pounds to keep the islands (amounting to £3 million per Falklander by 1986).

Britain's gruesome message to aspirant imperialist powers, to countries deep in debt to London banks, to underdeveloped countries searching for freedom was: "Britain's not for defying, you do so at your peril!" The effect in Britain itself is well known. The 'Falklands factor' saw Thatcher's popularity ratings shoot up in a wave of chauvinistic fervour not seen since the end of the Second World War. David Blake, writing in *The Times*, makes the germane point that:

"No one ever lost votes by winning a war, but in a country which had seen 30 years of declining world influence, a victory of this kind was symbolic to many people." (June 11 1983)

And despite the dilettantish blockheaded idea from the petty bourgeois RCP and IMG (now Socialist League) that "In Argentina, defeat will aid reaction", as we have seen, and as we predicted, defeat breeds turmoil and lays the basis for revolution! We also made the point that the Argentinian fascist regime was definitively incapable of any progressive role, that the task of workers in Argentina and in Britain was to work for the defeat of their own ruling class, and that independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie, especially in Argentina, would be aided by workers recognising the democratic rights of the inhabitants of the Falklands. (*The Leninist May Day Manifesto '82*) The farcical Trotskyites called for an Argentine fascist victory, in practice calling for Argentine workers to subordinate their interests to those of crisis-ridden excrescent Argentine finance capital. Likewise in their own parasitic galumphing manner the centrists in our own Party (most notably *Straight Left*), attempted to obscure the fascist character of the regime in Argentina in order to call for an Argentine victory. Opposed to this opportunism, the leadership of the Party, while by implication recognising the fascist nature of the regime, also like the centrists, recognised the *legitimacy* of the Argentinian claim over the Falklands; but because of their desire to snuggle up to the CND, the Labour Party left, the Church and assorted fickle peaceniks they adopted a schizoid social-pacifist position, effusively calling for the UN to do this, and the UN to do that, shying away from calling for an Argentine victory and a British defeat, labelling this position as 'divisive'.

The only tendency in the Party which pinpointed the fascist character of the Argentine regime, which linked this to Argentina's position as a medium developed country, which called for the defeat of the aspirant imperialism of Argentina and the established imperialism of Britain, which

refused to bow before pacifism and pander to nationalism, which resolutely carried out its principled proletarian internationalist duty of calling for the turning of the imperialist war against one's 'own' bourgeoisie, was the tendency around *The Leninist*, the *bête noire* of the opportunists. We were also the only tendency to draw the most important lesson for the working class in Britain (and for that matter internationally):

"We should now look to the future and show the Falklands war to be an illustration of imperialism's drive to war. The threat of world war looms ever closer, and it is our duty to draw lessons from small wars, in order to prevent world wars. So long as imperialism exists, each finished war sows the seeds for a new war. The only way of eliminating that threat altogether is to link the demand for peace to the struggle against imperialism. Only the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism can safeguard world peace." (Bill Cobban, *The Leninist*, No.3)

Small wars test all trends in the workers' movement, exposing flaws in their world outlook and ability to tactically orientate themselves, and giving advanced proletarians the chance to examine the various groups and parties. What's more, in the light of this we can see that small wars provide a sort of dress rehearsal for the struggle against the looming threat of world war.

## 4.2. Fighting the War Drive

There can be no question where the Labour Party stood, and will stand. They sided with Thatcher, and except for a few technical, even petty, differences, backed 'our boys' against the Argentinians. Who can doubt where they will stand in a world war? As to the social-pacifism adopted by some in the Labour Party, and by the leadership of the Communist Party — surely it will prove as impotent in preventing a world war as it was in stopping the Falklands task force, even mid-way, as suggested by Benn. As to the petty bourgeois groups — most are dominated by an obdurate Anglo-centric approach to the world. In order to oppose Thatcher, they felt they must support the grotesque vulture Galtieri. Here petty bourgeois instability leads to a wry 'principles' going sour. The IMG, because of their worship of every trendy fad, their struggle to integrate into the left wing of social democracy, slip into social-pacifism and the tailing of CND. The SWP, because of their despicable anti-Sovietism, side objectively with imperialism by equating socialism with capitalism as illustrated in Afghanistan, where they call for victory to the Islamic black reaction against the PDPA revolutionary government. More eccentrically the RCP denies that the drive to war is directed against the Soviet Union at all, no, they say it is essentially inter-imperialist, full stop. As if US missiles are trained on Bonn!! As if US pressure on Japan to increase arms spending is designed to equip Japan to fight the US!!... Of course, as the Falklands proves, as the Iran/Iraq war proves, as Turkey's invasion of Northern Cyprus proves, there will be small wars, but to suggest at the moment that *the main thrust* towards war is *not* against the Soviet Union is blockheaded gibberish if we are generous, or petty bourgeois cowardice if we are to be honest.

The anti-Soviet war drive by the 'haves' should



not necessarily be considered as some sort of permanent feature, no doubt their leadership could be a transient phenomenon, based on the continued relative openness of the capitalist world market and the resultant ability of the most dynamic capitals to expand, to supplant less efficient rivals (and thus exacerbating the need for expansionism by the 'haves'). The fact that the changing balance in the world economy has yet to assume qualitative significance has meant that inter-imperialist rivalries have, so far, been subordinated, the rivals integrated into the US led drive against the socialist community. Reagan and junior partner. Thatcher have alternately painted the socialist countries as the devil incarnate and as a backward region of the world economy which, if broken from communism, would prove an El Dorado for capitalist exploitation. It is hardly surprising that it is the US, and side-kick Britain, which have been at the forefront of anti-Sovietism and moves to dismember the socialist community. As we have stated they are the most desperate for new areas and markets to exploit, for they are the powers who have seen their share of the cake eroded by the likes of Federal Germany and Japan, and while the world economy remains open this shift in balance, the displacement of US and British capital by more dynamic capital, must continue. To offset this the 'haves' push for an anti-socialist community redivision, using human rights, Poland, anything that comes to hand, as a cover.

But while an open split between the leading imperialist powers, the surfacing of armed and open inter-imperialist rivalries, a reversion to something like empires and empire protectionism cannot and must not be ruled out, the present basis for the world capitalist economy means that the threat of war is not only growing, but the main thrust today comes from the 'haves', unlike the position directly leading up to the last two world wars, and at present this in the main is directed against the socialist community, above all against the world revolutionary centre, the Soviet Union. But despite, and because, the present main imperialist war drive is being directed against the Soviet Union it must be proclaimed time and time again that the *cause* of war is the mechanism of the capitalist system — not the existence of a world divided between capitalist and socialist countries. And in spite of the greater aggressiveness by the 'haves' as opposed to the current relative pacifism of the 'have nots', we must not take the side of one category or another. They are both thoroughly reactionary and ultimately equally war-like, so both pose a threat of launching a world war, including a war against the socialist states. For modern war is born of imperialism in general; the character of war is not determined by who is the 'aggressor', it is determined by the class that is waging the war, and the politics of which this war is a continuation. An imperialist war, waged by one coalition against another, can only be a reactionary war, a war of plunder whoever is the 'aggressor', whichever imperialist is being 'wronged'. Whoever departs from this position can

only depart from Leninism, from revolutionary communism. The Soviet Union and the other socialist countries in contrast have absolutely no interest in world war, but it is not this nor their non-imperialism that determines our position towards them, for us it is above all the fact that the socialist countries are based on workers' power and socialised property relations, which means that in the face of reactionary threats we communists maintain a position of **UNCONDITIONAL DEFENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND ALL OTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES**. Any other position is **opportunism**, and can only mean objectively siding with the bourgeoisie.

But while unconditional defence of the USSR is a vital principle, in itself it does not stop the imperialist war drive. So how are we to stop the war drive, how are we to get peace?

Let us turn to Lenin for some answers. Writing in March 1916 he declared:

"... our 'peace programme' must explain that the imperialist powers and the imperialist bourgeoisie *cannot* grant a democratic peace. Such a peace *must* be sought for and fought for, not in the *past*, not in a reactionary utopia of a non-imperialist capitalism, not in a league of equal nations under capitilism, but *in the future*, in the socialist revolution of the proletariat. Not a single fundamental democratic demand can be achieved to any considerable extent, or with any degree of permanency, in the advanced imperialist states, except through revolutionary battles under the banner of socialism.

"Whoever promises the nations a 'democratic' peace, without at the same time preaching the socialist revolution, or while repudiating the struggle for it — a struggle now, during the war — is deceiving the proletariat." (V. I. Lenin, *CW* Vol 22, pp.167-8, emphasis in original)

What is being said is clear enough: the revolutionaries must fight war by preparing and carrying out revolutionary mass actions for the overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie, and for the conquest of political power by the working class. This, and only this, will save the world from war. And as we know Lenin carried out exactly this programme, turning the war conducted by imperialist Russia into a civil war for soviet power.

There are some in the communist movement who, while loudly proclaiming their 'loyalty' to Leninism, seek, because of their revolting opportunism, to invalidate the revolutionary tactics advanced by Lenin and the Bolsheviks by dishonestly manufacturing two Lenins. The first Lenin advocated the slogan of turning imperialist war into civil war, they say, but the second Lenin, the post-October 1917 Lenin, renounced, dropped or advanced from this position. And in place of calling on the proletariat of the world to overthrow imperialism, Lenin was supposed to have been only concerned with peaceful co-existence.

Well, speaking on the fourth anniversary of the revolution, on October 14 1921 to be precise, Lenin emphatically shows the true significance of the October Revolution, and the necessity for the entire world's proletariat to learn the lesson pioneered by the Bolsheviks:

"... the millions who are pondering over the causes of the recent war and more and more clearly realising the grim and inexorable truth that it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace (...) which inevitably engenders imperialist war, that it is impossible to escape that inferno,

except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution.

"... No torrents of abuse, no calumnies and lies can ... conceal the historic fact that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the slaves have replied to a war between slave-owners by openly proclaiming the slogan: 'Convert this war between slave-owners for the division of their loot into a war of the slaves of all nations against the slave-owners of all nations.'

"For the first time in hundreds and thousands of years that slogan has grown from a vague and helpless waiting into a clear and definite political programme, into an effective struggle waged by millions of the oppressed people under the leadership of the proletariat; it has grown into the first victory of the proletariat, the first victory in the struggle to abolish war and to unite the workers of all countries against the united bourgeoisie of different nations, against the bourgeoisie that makes peace and war at the expense of the slaves of capital, the wage-workers, the peasants, the working people.

"The first victory is *not yet the final victory*, and it was achieved by our October Revolution at the price of incredible difficulties and hardships, at the price of unprecedented suffering, accompanied by a series of reverses and mistakes on our part. How could a single backward people be expected to frustrate the imperialist wars of the most developed countries of the world without sustaining reverses and without committing mistakes! We are not afraid to admit our mistakes and shall examine them dispassionately in order to learn how to correct them. But the fact remains that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the promise 'to reply' to war between the slave-owners *has been completely fulfilled* — and is being fulfilled despite all difficulties.

"We have made a start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown." (V. I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.33, pp.56-7 emphasis in original)

Opposed to the Leninist advocacy of turning the imperialist war drive into a war against the bourgeoisie, *Jobs not Bombs* not only refuses to definitively and unashamedly counterpose war-like capitalism to peaceful socialism, but instead mistakenly poses the false task for the communists of making British imperialism independent of US imperialism, and calling for campaigns "against Cruise missiles, for the scrapping of all British nuclear weapons" etc. etc. In place of linking the fight for peace with the fight for socialism all we have is social pacifism and the utopian dreams of the "abolition of war as a means of settling disputes between states" without revolution!

What about the new 'hardline' hero of many of our centrists, comrade Tony Chater? Well, writing in his *Morning Star* he totally exposes his true opportunist colours:

"Britain (that is capitalist Britain — J.M.) will need a certain level of armed forces. But they should be the minimum required for defence. They should not be used to enable British capitalism to play a key role in NATO as a junior partner of the U.S." (May 28 1983)

For Leninism there can be no support for 'defence' spending by any capitalist government (not even the most 'left') given today's universal domination of the advanced capitalist countries by imperialism. We stand against comrade Tony Chater's position of moderate manpower, moderate spending, for the bourgeois army.

No, we are with the German socialist and revolutionary, Karl Liebknecht; his slogan was: Not a man, not a penny for the bourgeois army! For 'defence' spending by the imperialist bourgeois nations can only be defence of the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie, against either the capitalists of some other nation, or the working class with state power, such as in the

Soviet Union, or the working class struggling for power in the imperialist nations.

Turning to Lenin once again, let's see what his course is, as opposed to pious pacifist calls for peace and disarmament with capitalism left inviolate:

"Our slogan must be: arming the proletariat to defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie. These are the only tactics possible for a revolutionary class, tactics that follow logically from, and are dictated by, the whole *objective development* of capitalist militarism. Only *after* the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie will it be able, without betraying its world-historic mission, to consign all armaments to the scrap heap. And the proletariat will undoubtedly do this, but *only when this condition has been fulfilled*, and certainly not before." (V. I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 23, p.80, emphasis in original)

The war drive has caused millions throughout the world to engage in intense discussions about the threat of war and its origins, many of these millions have demonstrated their feelings of despair at the looming holocaust; the streets of Bonn, Washington, Berlin and London have all echoed to slogans demanding peace. But these movements (given the weakness of the forces of revolution) have been influenced by bourgeois-pacifism, have been channelled into locating the source of war in the antagonism between the US and the USSR, even into equating the imperialist war drive with the measures taken by the socialist community, especially the Soviet Union, to defend themselves. What's more, because of a lack of a revolutionary proletarian leadership, the peace movement has increasingly assumed an air of frivolity, of stuntism and even semi-lunacy. Tragically under such circumstances the Communist Party leadership, instead of fighting against the petty-bourgeois pacifist tide, can only call for veneration, prostration and emulation of pacifist clowning, such as at Greenham Common with its mystical, women only, earth mother mumbo jumbo. Retired generals, priests, feminists, liberals, all are lionised by the leadership just because they declare for peace. But surely these people refuse to recognise that war is the continuation of politics by other means; refuse to recognise that the First World War was nothing other than the continuation of the imperialist policies of 1871-1914, that the Second World War was nothing other than the continuation of the imperialist policies of 1918-1939, and that the Third World War will be nothing other than the continuation of the imperialist policies of 1945-? We must never forget that under conditions of imperialism, 'peace' is nothing other than an *imperialist* peace, a continuation of *imperialist* war, and a preparation for a new *imperialist* war. For it is not only the pacifists and their numerous tails in the workers' movement (including many in the Communist Party) who 'want peace'; Thatcher the Iron Lady, 'Star Wars' Reagan, Kohl, the 'socialist' Mitterrand, and Nakasone, every one of them wants peace. The trouble is that every one of them wants the peace that suits their imperialism, their nation, as opposed to someone else's, so their imperialist peace can only be a preparation for imperialist war.

And let nobody be under the illusion that the horrendous destructive power of today's nuclear weaponry rules out war. These weapons are not

designed for show, and like the repeater rifle, the machine gun, the tank and the aeroplane — all thought of in the past as so terrible as to make their use impossible — nuclear weapons do nothing to make war 'impossible'. Those who say that Leninism and its tactics have been invalidated by the awesome power of the nuclear bomb not only commit an intellectual blunder bordering on the cretinous, but contribute to the *disarming* of the proletariat.

In truth the power of modern armaments, far from invalidating Leninist tactics, makes their employment, their victory in the minds of the masses, ever more necessary and urgent. It is *even* more true today that the proletariat must retaliate against the war drive, not by tailing the pacifists, but by propaganda and preparations for carrying out the revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism. Only when we have completed the job started by our Russian comrades in 1917 can peace be guaranteed. It is this idea that has always distinguished Leninists, revolutionary communists, from those who suffer from the delusion that you can have peace on Earth while retaining the capitalist/imperialist system.

## 5. Thatcherism, Labourism and the Communists

Thatcher's cold determination during the Falkland's War, her conjuring up of past spirits, appeals to Victorian individualism, social-Darwinism, and Land of Hope and Glory; the looming spectre of world war, and Britain's inexorable slide into economic and social chaos has produced widespread theoretical confusion in the Communist Party about the nature of the Thatcher government.

### 5.1. What the Euros say

Looking back at the long boom of the 'fifties and 'sixties with eyes warmly aglow — and a fond heart, many Euro-communists find themselves disconcerted to say the least, when confronted by Thatcher's politics, above all her 'style'. Their immediate response is to call for a return to the safe past, to resurrect the policies of 'Butskellism', to give the kiss of life to Wilsonian social-democracy. Unfortunately for our would be miracle workers the dead cannot be raised, and far from reviving the putrefying past they find themselves infected by the same deadly disease, known as 'irrelevance', that laid low consensus politics.

The Euro-communists and associated opportunists, being products of petty-bourgeois radicalism, nurtured in conditions of boom, find themselves increasingly impotent when it comes to the conditions of transition to the emerging general crisis. Sadly, instead of dropping dead instantly, their death is lingering, agonisingly drawn out. Sad because these opportunists occupy many important posts in our Party, act as a voice for our Party. And because the 'disease of irrelevance' first affects theory, we find the Euro-communists and their friends collapsing into seemingly gibbering theorising about today's conditions and above all about 'Thatcherism'.

While some in their 'delirium' have been content to describe what they call 'Thatcherism' as "a concerted and consistent attack on social-democracy — on the welfare state, on the whole idea of a caring society... an attack on the whole idea of social decency and its values...", as a "definite break...from past governments", their "pragmatism" etc. etc. (Jeff Rodrigues *Marxism Today*, September 1980) others have really gone in theoretical terms, gaga. Most glaring so far (to our knowledge) has been comrade Eric Scott, who reviewing a book in comrade Chater's *Morning Star*, voices starkly what others have only been inching towards, the idea that there is a "close resemblance between the thought of Margaret Thatcher and Adolf Hitler". But let's quote comrade Scott at length so as to leave not a shadow of doubt as to what he is saying:

"After the First World War, Germany was a defeated nation, physically and in spirit. The introduction of Socialism was on the cards...

"Socialism was fought by an appeal to national feelings and successes in confronting foreign countries, particularly weak ones. It was what we now call the Falklands factor.

"More fundamental to Hitler's thoughts was what was called at that time social-Darwinism. The nazis preached that the weak must perish in competition with the strong.

"Ailing businesses like ailing nations must go under in a battle for the survival of the fittest. It was the philosophical justification for the attempt to exterminate the Jews.

"In Britain the same philosophy means that some industries must give way to their more efficient rivals, and those working in them must be thrown on the dole.

"A principal target for attack for both Hitler and Thatcher has been the trade unions. One of Hitler's first acts in power was to suppress the trade unions and throw their leaders into concentration camps. In Thatcher's case the main battle is yet to come.

"Both have expressed great admiration for small shopkeepers. Hitler promised them that department stores would be abolished when he achieved power though in fact that pledge was cynical broken. Under Thatcher the bankruptcies of small shopkeepers are breaking all records. The list could be extended." (June 30 1983).

While many would not go so far as comrade Scott's direct linkage of Thatcher and Hitler, the general Euro conclusion about 'Thatcherism' amounts to the same thing: "authoritarian populism", "an exceptional form of the capitalist state", "fascism", which "has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place"; or even "semi-fascism" or just "one woman dictatorship". (*The Politics of Thatcherism* Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds.)) You takes your choice, but the message is the same.

Now before looking at what lies behind all these fascistic descriptions of the Thatcher government, it is vital to deal with the fascistic description itself.

So what is fascism?

It is the open terroristic dictatorship of the capitalist class. It is counter-revolution under the conditions of domination by finance capital.

This definition conveys the essence of fascism (a subject to which we intend to return in greater depth in a future article in *The Leninist*). Now, we would contend that in Britain today, we do not have the open terroristic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie — or for that matter anything like it. No, we have a bourgeois democracy, relying in the last resort on naked force, yes, but depending at present on the consent of the masses, enthusiastic

or grudging, it does not matter. So the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is not open, it is concealed by the consent of the masses.

As to the question of counter-revolution, well, unless we've somehow missed it, Britain hasn't had a revolutionary situation this century — let alone in the last four years. It should be understood that fascism is born out of the defeat of revolution, either because the workers' movement has found itself directly defeated in its attempt to seize state power, or because the workers, lacking leadership, courage or determination, fail to mount a determined struggle to seize state power, and let the revolutionary situation slip through their fingers. Now the very conditions of crisis which create a revolutionary situation, which pose the task of conquering state power for the working class, forces finance capital to turn towards fascism, it encourages the growth and confidence of fascism, eventually placing it into government as a force that seeks to resolve the revolutionary situation negatively — through counter-revolution and war. Such was the case in Germany, as it was for Italy and as it is today in Chile and Turkey, but not yet in Britain. (Also, isn't it rather ironic that while the Euros and their ideological stable mates brand Thatcher a fascist, they refuse to do the same to Evren and his genuinely fascist regime in Turkey?)

It might be foolishly argued that fascism is merely the use of repressive measures like Tebbit's anti-trade union legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the use of troops in strikes. Well, if this is the case, then every government is 'fascist', for all use repressive measures. It would certainly also make recent Labour governments 'fascist' for Labour attempted to introduce Draconian restrictions on the trade union movement during Wilson's 1966-70 government and they also used troops to break strikes — remember the firemen's dispute under the Callaghan government, and what about the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act? Well, this was actually originally introduced by the Labour government in 1974!

As to nationalism and jingoism being defining features of fascism, this is surely another case of 'simple-minded' confusion. For all apples are fruit, but not all fruit are apples; all fascist regimes use nationalism and jingoism, but surely all nationalistic jingoistic regimes aren't fascist, are they! Likewise, the same accusation of 'simple-mindedness' can be made about definitions of fascism based on capitalist competition, and shopkeepers going bankrupt. This is a mechanism of capitalist competition dating back to the dawn of the system. It is not a peculiar facet of fascism.

But to dwell on disproving such patently ridiculous definitions of fascism is only to test the patience of our readers, not that understanding fascism is not of great importance, but surely, as we have shown, there is no reasonable, and certainly no scientific basis for describing the Thatcher government as something similar to fascism. No, more important in reality is the need to get down to asking the question of what causes the right in our Party to indulge in such obviously

shallow, fraudulent attempts to paint the Thatcher regime in fascist colours? Is it a case of the gods first turning mad those whom they wish to destroy? What is the cause of the Euros' theoretical 'ravings'?

The answer to this is, in truth, simple. It enables them to call for an anti-Thatcher alliance in which there would be, or so it is supposed, Labourites, Liberals, SDPers, 'progressive Tories', anyone, any movement, any class, as long as it is opposed to the 'ideology' of 'Thatcherism'.

It is in order to justify class collaboration and turning the Communist Party towards the bourgeoisie that the Euros seek to ascribe fascistic features to the Thatcher government. For, through the mists of time, the Euros claim their origins at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, when Dimitrov advocated, or so the Euros say: "a fight against sectarian and ultra-left arguments that the working class should 'go it alone'". This heritage is then used in the following way: "Thatcher's attacks on democratic rights again raises the need for a broad alliance around a united working class to defend and extend democracy". (Dave Priscott *Morning Star* July 20 1983) By concocting formulae that 'Thatcherism' equals some sort of semi-fascism, the strategy of class collaboration can be given a pedigree going back to the Seventh Congress. Likewise these advocates of 'the left' laying hold of British nationalism, waving the flag, and 'Rule Britannia', claim an 'orthodoxy' based on Dimitrov, the Seventh Congress and the struggle against fascism, their antecedents.

But while the Euro's theoretical attempts to equate Thatcher with some form of fascism are rubbish and assail one's sense of smell with the stench of dishonesty, there is an important truth underlying all the garbage. This was pinpointed by comrade Dave Cook:

"The heart-breaking truth is that Labour's support among the traditional working class is declining, and it has lost the 'new' working class, at least in the south.

"Equally worrying was Labour's failure to attract young voters" (*Morning Star*, June 17 1983)

What comrade Cook and his fellow Euros have painfully come to realise is that there is no medium-term prospect of the Labour Party forming a government. For them, the 'Left' has thus already lost the 'eighties; and being completely, unalterably and unashamedly committed to parliament (for, despite their advocacy of 'mass movements', at the end of the day they are always directed towards Westminster) the task for the 'eighties must be to win an anti-Thatcher majority, so that in the 'nineties, the little by little 'forward march of Labour' can begin again. For Cook and Co. the looming general crisis and its political effects are nothing other than a nuisance which has put an annoying spoke in the smooth transition to socialism envisaged in the *British Road to Socialism*. The fact that the Labour Party has been toppled from its comfortable position as the alternative party of government, plunged back to being a party of crisis, means for them that it is unrealistic at present to struggle for socialism, so what is important now is to ensure that the worse

effects of the crisis are alleviated, the excesses of 'Thatcherism' prevented, and a social explosion avoided; if this is to be done though another, and above all, *realistic parliamentary alternative must be created*.

It is because of the need for a realistic parliamentary alternative to 'Thatcherism' that the Euros have inventively taken to using the fascist brush. This is why they have urged workers to abandon their 'narrow economism' to subordinate their interests to the project of class collaboration with sections of the bourgeoisie opposed to 'Thatcherism'; why the Euro masterminds of the Peoples March for Jobs outlaid anti-Tory slogans, and why they sought to encompass everyone from 'brickies to bishops', in order to appeal to liberal opinion (something which is, by the way, fully backed by the majority of our centrists, illustrating their lack of political independence and also the ease that the Euros find in sweeping them in their wake — eventually). Given the Tory election landslide, the rough 50:50 division in the anti-Thatcher vote, and the decline in the Labour Party's electoral support, the Euros feel that they must lecture the Labourites on 'sectarianism' and the need to maintain the party as a 'broad church', and, what is more, they offer the (for them) far-reaching solutions of *proportional representation* and a greater emphasis in the so-called 'broad democratic alliance' on the so-called 'new social forces and movements' and the middle class.

With PR "we might never have had Thatcher inflicted on us" says comrade John Peck (*Morning Star*, June 15 1983), for 57.61% of the population "voted against Thatcher". The parliamentary logic of the Euros leads them inexorably to the need to weld this 57.6% into an anti-Tory alliance. Of course it is highly unlikely that this grand 57.6% anti-Tory coalition will ever see the light of day, the idea even, in parliamentary terms, is a non-starter. The Labour Party, to retain its base amongst class conscious workers, needs to be seen by them as independent. The ghost of MacDonald still haunts many in the labour movement and coalitionism (at least outside wartime) is an anathema amongst the activists. But more damning to the project than this should be the class nature of the Liberal Party and the SDP, for they are unquestionably bourgeois parties, through and through. An 'anti-Thatcher' government, based on a Labour, SDP, Liberal (and others?) coalition, would, and could only be a bourgeois government. And given the crisis of capitalism, and the resultant economic necessities it would be forced to embark on a vicious programme of attacking the working class. No bourgeois government can be pro-working class, whatever anti-Thatcher ticket it is running on. It is of course correct, under certain circumstances, to use the tactic of the united workers' front, in relationship to the Labour Party, in order to expose the Labourite misleaders of the working class, simply because it is a bourgeois *workers'* party. But this is very different from the reformism envisaged in the Euros' *Britain Road to Socialism*, and diametrically opposed to their

*bourgeois anti-Thatcher coalition crisis government*.

What really concerns us, and must concern all genuine communists, is not the practicality of the Euros' parliamentary alchemy, but the direction in which such 'anti-Thatcherite' schemes take our Party. For ultimately the Euros will, if they are allowed to have their way, totally eliminate the Leninist heritage of our Party and transform it into a bourgeois workers' party, like the Labour Party. It is in order to achieve this, that they launched attacks on the socialist countries, Marxist-Leninist principles, national liberation movements and now the trade unions, accusing them of being 'economistic', by which they mean resistant to their moves to subordinate the labour movement to every petty-bourgeois protest, fad, and above all to their bourgeois coalitionist parliamentary fantasies. This charge of 'economism' in fact reveals in full colour, in living 3D, the theoretical poverty of the Euros themselves. For economism is not the pursuit of improved wages, conditions and related issues, by the trade unions to the exclusion of broad political struggles, as the Euros suggest, but on the contrary, it is an outlook held by elements in the workers' party, which leads to calls from the party for workers to limit their action to narrow trade union politics. Economism is thus a sin of the party and not of the trade unions.

We can see the perspective the Euros envisage for the Party if we glance at their *Marxism Today*. Here we have not only 'in depth' interviews with Chief Constables, Loyalist para-militaries and media guru's, but in the July '83 edition we even had Malcolm Rutherford, the Political Editor of the *Financial Times* being given two pages to spout his reactionary liberalism.

This degenerate perspective is *fully in line with, and flows directly from* the logic of the *British Road to Socialism*. For it aims at concocting numerous capitalist governments and all the Euros now propose is to define these *BRS* governments in terms of antipathy to Thatcher Blue, rather than empathy to Reformist Pink.

The period of transition to general crisis, which we are now in has made the *BRS's* utopian, reformist, effortlessly smooth road to socialism come completely adrift from all reality. The fact that it envisages a crisis-free capitalism and its bureaucratic militaristic state machine being peacefully transformed into socialism increasingly means that there is opening an unbridgeable chasm between the *BRS*, and the concrete contemporary reality of war drive, militarisation, riots, slump, mass unemployment and heightening class antagonisms. What is more, the main instrument of social change as seen in the *BRS*, the Labour Party, can no longer achieve anything remotely like 50% of the vote. Reduced to the status of a party of crisis it offers no realistic possibility of even forming a majority government, so how can it fulfil the task of ushering in the epoch of communism?

## 5.2. What the centrists say

Given the evident bankruptcy of the *BRS* not

only in terms of theory (this should be obvious to anyone adhering to Marxism-Leninism, see my article in *The Leninist* No. 4) but also in terms of concrete reality, one would have thought that the centrist forces in the Party, who in 1977 castigated the draft of the current edition as a "rationalisation" of the "consistent undermining of Marxism-Leninism in our party" (Glen Baker *Comment* April 16, 1977), would shout at the top of their voices: REALITY PROVES THAT THE BRS IS BANKRUPT — LET'S REPLACE IT NOW! But no, instead of this, we find some centrists actually *defending* the 1978 *BRS* against what they perceive as a Euro attempt to 'undermine' it!!!

The Euro-communists "seem to infer", suggest comrades Edmund and Ruth Frow, that "the Communist Party's programme has been amended prior to the party's congress" (*Morning Star*, July 1, 1983) And leading centrist comrade John Foster unashamedly hopes that the *Morning Star* will continue to express the ideas of the existing *British Road*, "as opposed to" another *British Road* ... "one not yet written but with influential supporters" (*Morning Star*, July 18, 1983)

The centrists' conservatism leads them to defend existing 'orthodoxy', and that this 'orthodoxy' is nothing more than 'last year's' revisionism, not only means that they have ever less theoretical basis in genuine revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, but they assume the appearance of a second-hand follower of fashion who is always picking up what others are discarding — the result is far from consistent, no, it is farcical *jumble sale Marxism*.

Most centrists have yet to adopt the 1978 *BRS* into their pantheon of theoretical 'orthodoxy', but one thing that does concern most is defending the Labour Party!

A typical centrist response to the Euros' PR recipe for anti-Thatcherite success came from comrade Jeff Staniforth:

"With PR there would not have been a single Labour government in Britain this century. With PR there would have been 30 less Labour MPs in Parliament today, though it is possible (...) that we would have got at least the left leg of a Communist elected." (*Morning Star*, July 22, 1983)

So we wouldn't have had a single Labour government this century with PR, would we? Surely comrade Staniforth must be aware that before 1945 the Labour Party was in government four times, *placed in government every single time, as a party of crisis in order to dampen down working class discontent and militancy*. This was the case in both world wars, and was likewise so with the MacDonald governments. Why should PR have made the slightest difference to this role as a party of crisis? As to getting communists elected to Parliament, in order to operate as agitators in the enemy camp, comrade Staniforth seems totally contemptuous. If PR helped in this, surely we should favour it? But then comrade Staniforth, like most other centrists in the Party, has adopted the revisionist parliamentary road to socialism, he has retreated from the Leninist perspective of a disciplined democratic centralist vanguard party, which would use parliament to expose and undermine its authority in order to

prepare the masses for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie, through which we will replace their shattered state, including Parliament, with our new state organs based on soviets.

For comrade Staniforth, the road to socialism is not only through Parliament but through the Communist Party taking its 'rightful place' in the Labour Party, the 'federal party of the working class', the key to socialism. This liquidationist perspective is no less dangerous than that of the Euros — except that coming from the left of the Party it sows the seeds of confusion and liquidationism amongst forces which could otherwise be moulded into a pro-Party, anti-Euro bloc.

But the centrists' rejection of the Euros' perspectives is concentrated on the Euro call for an even greater emphasis on the middle class and the so-called 'new social forces and movements'. While the centrists rightly detect in this move by the Euros an attempt to prise the Party away from its working class heritage and base, some have fallen into the trap of defining the working class in terms of only those doing manual work, in large factories, or in workplaces such as mines. Now, in terms of theory, some are naturally stupid, some like the Euros find stupidity thrust upon them by increasing irrelevance, but others seem to rise, after great effort, to the status of dunce. Thus comrade Photis Lysandrou (mockingly referred to by comrade Noah Tucker as a "rising intellectual" who "comes dangerously close to economism"

*Morning Star*, July 18, 1983), writing a letter to the *Morning Star*, which belies his pretensions to the status of a leader, actually excludes from the Labour movement "clerks, caterers and community workers" whom he considers to be the Euros' "new shock troops" to which the working class is supposed to "be relegated to an auxiliary role" (July 13, 1983).

But these elements are not the force to which the Euros want the working class to subordinate itself to — they want us to bow before the bourgeoisie! What is more, comrade 'rising intellectual', caterers, clerks and community workers are most certainly in the labour movement. Aren't they in trade unions, more importantly they are part of the working class, they are wage slaves with every interest in socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the dictatorship of their own class!

While Leninists would be the first to recognise the strategic importance of certain sections of the working class, such as car workers, miners, and railway workers, we emphasise the need for the hegemony of the vanguard over the class, the struggle for which is part and parcel of the struggle to overcome narrow trade union politics, sectionalism and all bourgeois influences over our class.

And what is the most important agent for imposing bourgeois influences on the working class?

It is none other than the very Labour Party some of our centrists are so desperate to join, defend and follow!

The acid test for communists today is the attitude that we take to the growing crisis of

Labourism. Some centrist comrades lack faith in the power of the working class, can only think of the class in terms of full-time functionaries, the TUC and the Labour Party, and can see no possibility of the coming battle with the Tories going beyond the safe banks of parliamentarianism. Because of the decline in the Labour vote, and the Tories' sweeping victory, they tremble at the knees, and like the Euros call for a return to the past, when Labour was the alternative party of government. Some of these in their fear of the future, castigate independent communist electoral activity, point to left-Labourite Arthur Scargill as a beacon to follow, and champion the first past the post electoral system, ironically something opposed by Scargill. But no matter how these advocates of the 'anti-monopoly alliance' holler and wail, there is no return to the past, this door is firmly locked and bolted, and not even the near hysterical gnashing of the teeth that followed June 9 will change that.

### 5.3. What the Leninists say

How do the Leninists respond to today's conditions?

We defiantly declare that the working class has no interest whatsoever in the Labour Party's revival as the alternative party of government, on the contrary it has every interest in breaking the Labourite stranglehold. We say that those who throw Labour a life-line are in the greatest danger of sharing Labour's fate. Now that Labour is in crisis along with the capitalist system, what the working class needs is not an anti-Thatcher bourgeois government, such as that offered by comrade Cook, or the revival of the Labour Party as the alternative party of government, such as offered by closet Straight Leftist and *Morning Star* Political Correspondent Andrew Murray. No, the working class vanguard must oppose these liquidationists (alternatively the Euro and centrist buttocks of the liquidationist bum!). What is desperately needed is a clear alternative to capitalism, a fighting alternative, which will unambiguously and determinedly take the fight to the Tories, and smash through the narrow constraints of Labourism — an alternative which will have an unbreakable commitment to shattering the bourgeois state and replacing it with a proletarian dictatorship. We must build our Party as this alternative. This is our task, this is our communist duty.

To any comrades who might be tempted to lable this approach 'sectarian', we say communist politics are determined by the interests of the working class as a whole — certainly not by the interests of a group or a section of the class above that whole. It is those communists who fight for the Labour Party and its resurrection as an alternative party of government who, in practice, fight for the interests of a section of the class above the whole — the interests of the Labour bureaucracy, which are fully in line with the interests of capital. Workers' unity should never be considered as a slogan calling for unity with the agents of the bourgeoisie, as some centrists monstrously suggest Marx and Engels do in *The*

*Communist Manifesto*; such a claim is nothing but a cover for opportunism. Workers' unity is unity for the class as a whole, for the class's long term interests. We have no interest in any other sort of unity.

To those in *Straight Left*, who consider the Labour Party the mass federal party of the working class, the source of social progress, and who wish to become an appendage of the Labour Party; who, despite their post-election feint to the left, and donning of the mantle of commitment to the Communist Party, still in reality wish to liquidate the Party — to these comrades we say: go and join the Labour Party. But pro-Party communists must have no illusions about the Labour Party. For while in the main it consists of workers, we communists characterise parties not just in terms of their membership composition, but above all by the leaders and the programme. This determines what sort of party we are dealing with. Labour is led by dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries, who are fully committed to running the capitalist system. And indeed, every Labour government has been anti-Soviet and most determinedly on the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Our task is to *break the hold* of the Labour Party over the working class — it is how to do this that we should be addressing ourselves to *not how to save it!*

Now to return to our original theme, the question of 'Thatcherism'. How do the centrists characterise the Thatcher government?

Not being exactly prolific writers, there is no published evidence immediately at hand. But if you visit a certain well-known haunt, you might find one of our 'rising intellectuals' propping up the bar. And if in philosophical and expansive mood, you will be sure to get the following 'deep' analysis of Thatcher. "Thatcher represents 'finance capital' while Heath, Pym, and the 'wets' stand on the side of 'industrial capital'". Of course this view of the 'wet'-dry division in the Tory Party is not unique to our centrists sages, a number of Trots also adhere to it, but no matter, for we are not into the guilt by association business. For us what is important is an examination of the ideas. And as to this particular idea we must say wrong, wrong, wrong!

Our friends have clearly got their theoretical terms into a twist. Their counterposing of 'finance capital' and 'industrial capital' shows just how far these 'rising intellectuals' have risen. For finance capital is in essence the merging of *bank capital with industrial capital*. This was explained by Hilferding in his *Finance Capital*:

"A steadily increasing proportion of capital in industry, ceases to belong to the industrialists who employ it. They obtain the use of it only through the medium of the banks which, in relation to them, represent the owners of the capital. On the other hand, the bank is forced to sink an increasing share of its funds in industry. Thus, to an ever greater degree the banker is being transformed into an industrial capitalist. This bank capital, i.e. capital in money form, which is thus actually transformed into industrial capital, I call 'finance capital'. Finance capital is capital controlled by banks and employed by industrialists." (quoted by V.I. Lenin CW Vol.22 p.226)

Thus finance capital is a result of the *merging or coalescence of banks with industry*, something

caused by the growing concentration and monopolisation of capitalist production.

So unless our friends have decided to re-define basic Marxist concepts, we have on display, in sharp relief, centrist stupidity. But there is more to it than that, for the implication, or the inference, that can be drawn from the centrists' 'finance capital' (maybe these 'rising intellectuals' confuse the words *finance and banking*?) conflict with 'industrial capital', is that the working class should support 'industrial capital', support the Heath/Pym 'wet' wing of the Tory Party, as opposed to the Thatcher 'dry' wing. But as we know Heath, Home, Macmillan and other so-called 'wet' Tory Prime Ministers led administrations that were the direct representatives of finance capital. And as far as we are concerned, *every single government in Britain this century has ruled on behalf of finance capital. There is no distinct 'industrial capitalist' wing of the Tory Party, the Tory Party is the party of finance capital. Likewise, the Labour Party is a workers' party committed to the interests of finance capital.*

So what about the 'wets' and 'drys', the question of 'Thatcherism'?

The fact is that there is no fundamental difference between the Thatcher government and any other government this century. They have all ruled in the interests of finance capital, using bourgeois democracy. There is no distinct 'Thatcherite' ideology, Thatcher does not stand outside the mainstream of twentieth century Tory liberalism. What is different about the present period though, from the pattern set following the end of the Second World War, is the decline and demise of consensus politics. One victim of this has been the Labour Party, it has reverted to its pre-Second World War role of being a party of crisis. This collapse of consensus politics has also affected the Tory Party, the boom consensus politics espoused by Home, Macmillan and Heath are no longer applicable to the conditions of the 'eighties. What the capitalist class requires now is the politics of class war. It is this change that Thatcher and her government reflect, not the emergence of 'fascism' nor the victory of 'finance capital' over 'industrial capital'.

The workers' movement must respond to Thatcher, not by searching for some agreement with the 'progressive industrial capitalist class' and their wing of the Tory Party, but by ourselves developing leaders and perspectives which reflect the harsh needs of the 'eighties! We need to be meeting Thatcher's class war with our class war, her determination and intransigence with our determination and intransigence! Away with coalitionism, away with illusions about 'progressive' capitalists, away with the Labourites and our 'wet's'. What we need is a programme which orientates the working class against the capitalist class, which aims to crush the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat!

## 6. The Second Term

In the conclusion to the article *The Economic*

*Crisis and its Political Effects in Britain* (part one), our comrade Frank Grafton states the following:

"The epoch of imperialism has expanded and generalised the economic cycle through which capitalist production must develop. The period since the late 'sixties may be termed a period of over-production and speculation, in which the determining features are the tendency for the simple rate of profit to fall. Capitalism counteracts these tendencies to prevent a contraction into a General Crisis by raising the rate of exploitation and stretching the credit system to its limits. Periodically, the delicate equilibrium of this period is disturbed, giving rise to partial crises or recessions, of which the two in 1973 and 1979 were stimulated (but not caused) by oil price rises. These recessions are eventually overcome by further extending the credit system and increasing the rate of exploitation; but this process acts to accelerate the development of productivity, and thus helps to bring about, in the long term, the point where the period of over-production must give way to the General Crisis of Imperialism. The counter-measures taken by imperialism, inevitably raise the features of instability to a political level, and intensify class antagonisms between imperialist and working classes, between imperialism and the socialist camp, and between imperialist classes." (*The Leninist* No.2 our emphasis)

Now, let us bear in mind the ideas contained in the above quoted passage, when we look at the following information.

The OECD has projected a growth rate in Britain for 1983 of 1.75% and 2.25% in 1984, thus making Britain's economic recovery the strongest of all Western European countries, albeit from a relatively low level. But despite this, the OECD could hold out no hope that there would be any drop in unemployment. It is expected to hold steady at its recent level of 12.25% (after allowance has been made for removal from the unemployment register of men over 59). So even with Thatcher's economic fortunes looking brighter, mass unemployment at around 3 million plus has become a permanent feature. And this is *before* the general crisis. The fact that recovery can happen hand in hand with continued historically high records of unemployment, obviously indicates that the economic upturn is being fueled only by increasing the rate of exploitation and an even further extension of the credit system. Indeed, the London Business School predicted that output per person in manufacturing would rise by 7% this year and another 4% in 1984, and this will occur they believe on the basis of the ability of employers to keep their unit labour costs well below the prices charged by manufacturers at the factory gate. While this will enable the capitalists to increase their mass of profits, ironically it can only speed up the decline in the rate of profit. What is more, the credit system, on which so much new investment rests, while showing no signs of bursting immediately, shows all the signs of stress associated with a coming collapse. For although there is no theoretical limit to how far the system can be extended, the integration of the world economy, means that it is totally inter-locked and inter-dependent and, as a result, it has the appearance of a house of cards, where, if one card is removed, collapse is universal.

At the present stage of development of the world economy, the most likely 'cards' to trigger off a collapse are not, as some might believe, the extremely poor countries, but what we call the *medium developed countries*. These countries,



such as Argentina, Turkey, South Korea and Brazil have become burdened with stupendous debts, in fact Brazil has the world's largest debt, owing \$90 billion. The recent frantic efforts by the IMF to ensure that Brazil keeps paying the interest on this massive sum, not only had the international banking network on tenterhooks, but was significantly ensured on the backs of the country's working class. Not only is Brazil's output likely to drop by 4% this year (this is after a decline in two of the last three years, meaning that national income will shrink by 15%) but unemployment is expected to soar, and real wages plummet, as they are cut through increasing them at only 80% of the rate of inflation, which is currently running at 127%.

Weak links of the imperialist chain, such as Brazil, are the focal points of capitalism's crisis, it is their economic ill-health, and social instability, which will most likely trigger the bursting of the international credit system. Through reneging on the crushing debt repayments burden, either because of economic collapse, inability to further squeeze the masses, or by the masses liberating themselves via revolution the international credit system can come crashing down, thus triggering the entire world capitalist system into general crisis. A dramatic result made possible only because capitalist production ever more relies on a massive over-extension of the credit system.

So the capitalist world is heading towards a general crisis which looks like being of greater severity and going to even greater depths than the last general crisis. In this light, it must be emphasised that Thatcher's much vaunted economic recovery can be nothing more than a temporary respite in the inexorable slide towards a crash. What is more, this economic recovery will unquestionably not only prove as fragile as others in the 'seventies, but more importantly it undoubtedly rests on the ability of the capitalist class to shift the burden of the country's economic problems onto the working class and the capitalists of other countries. And significantly for Britain, oil revenues, which have been used in a cushioning manner akin to the empire in the 'thirties, are now declining.

It is against this background that we must consider the class struggle in Britain. For the interests of the capitalist class, the necessities for the survival of British capitalism are increasingly at variance with and in direct contradiction to those of the mass of the working class. For the interests of British capitalism come ever more to demand war and sacrifice on behalf of the working class, our living standards, our health care, the education of our children and our housing conditions. And whether the working class is committed to make such sacrifices is, for the Tories, a technical question, for, whether the consent is willing or unwilling, they demand working class interests be placed on the altar of profit. These measures, necessary for capitalism, are the cause of heightened class antagonisms, which eventually take on a sharp political dimension.

## 6.1. The Class War

In its first term Thatcher's government was able to force the working class into one retreat after another, but as we have stated these defeats for the working class have not assumed a strategic nature. The working class is thus bloodied but unbowed, its trade union organisations are still intact, membership only marginally weakened by loss due to the growth of unemployment. But, importantly, the underlying mechanisms of the capitalist economy propel the capitalists towards imposing measures on the working class which could well require a strategic struggle. For while the expected economic upturn may produce an upsurge in pay demands, for British capitalism to compete on an international scale, requires that wages are kept down while profits are boosted. A fierce clash is therefore well on the cards, and it is to meet such an eventuality that the Tories have not only passed through Parliament anti-trade union measures, under both the 'wet' Prior and the 'dry' Tebbit, but have also assiduously prepared the forces of coercion to ensure that the law can be imposed.

For while the Tories have exploited many of the undemocratic procedures in the trade union movement, using them as a cover to introduce anti-trade union legislation, the key question at the end of the day, is the ability of the state to enforce its will. The Tories have not forgotten the fiasco of Heath's Industrial Relations Act, and the humiliating reversal they suffered at the hands of the working class organised in defence of the Pentonville Five. The fact that they were forced to release the imprisoned dockers from jail, using the shaddy figure of the Official Solicitor in the face of a growing general strike threat, made a deep impression on the ruling class. This and the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, especially the failure to keep the Saltley Gates Power Station open, despite a massive police presence, not only led to near hysterical editorials in the bourgeois press about Britain becoming ungovernable, but years later, under the Thatcher government, to the measures which would, they hoped, ensure that there could be no repetition.

Under the guise of anti-IRA and anti-'terrorist' operations the police and army have been trained in what Brigadier Kitson called 'low intensity operations'. The riots of 1981 capped the process, for during the struggle to control the streets, we not only saw a situation where certain Chief Constables were on the verge of calling in specially prepared army units, but the aftermath swiftly witnessed emergency measures carried through in the organisation of the police, and a radical upgrading in their anti-personnel equipment. The end result means that now illegal mass pickets, such as witnessed at Saltley Gates, would not be facing mass counter-pickets of 'good old-fashioned bobbies, so loved by our opportunists, Euros and Straight Leftists alike, but in all likelihood highly trained, specially equipped police, just itching to deliver swift, deadly and vicious assaults, using CS gas, rubber bullets and

a host of other newly introduced instruments of intimidation and repression.

The fact that during Thatcher's first term the mailed fist was reserved for the nationalist population of the Six Counties, rioting youth and Argentinians should in no way make us complacent, for this was unquestionably not the result of Tory concern for the sensibilities of British workers, but a reflection of the fact that at no point did British workers raise the struggle to a stage which required either extensive or significant use of the new style forces of coercion against them.

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. Already the Tories are making the issue of no-strike clauses a fact of life in the public sector, many new industries, the darling sunshine industries, so beloved by Thatcher are keeping their operations union free. On the basis of a strategic defeat such isolated measures, can become generalised in order to facilitate a substantial increase in the rate of exploitation.

## 6.2. Organising the Offensive

The necessities of capitalist economics *forces* the bourgeoisie to increase the rate of exploitation, *forces* them to lower real wages, and *forces* them to throw millions onto the dole. In order to carry through this objective, aggressive anti-working class laws, such as those passed under Prior and Tebbit (plus further measures which are in the pipeline) are introduced. In the face of this capitalist offensive all shades, all organisations are put to the test, presented with a concrete challenge, which exposes all that is weak and vacillating.

How does our Party meet the challenge?

Of course it opposes the Tory offensive, declares that the struggle to defend the trade union movement is "a major democratic question of key importance to all workers", but, instead of directing this struggle against the capitalist system, we are told to "support all campaigns by the TUC", to fight for "binding ever closer the traditional organic links between the trade unions and the Labour Party, which is the mass party of the working class and its allies"; for our leadership believes that the crisis of capitalism can be overcome, without socialism, that the TUC's AES can transcend all the economic laws of capitalism, including the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

"The TUC has developed an alternative economic policy which could drastically reduce the numbers unemployed, improve wages and conditions of all workers, and transform Britain's economic prospects"... which ... "this government (can) be compelled to implement". (Political Committee Draft Resolution for '83 Congress)\*

\* This article was written before the E.C. issued its *Draft Resolutions* for the 38th Congress. As a result we have used the P.C.'s draft for the E.C. Interestingly both drafts reflect the bland approach of the right opportunists, though some of the more glaring rightist statements by the P.C. were subsequently deleted by the E.C., as witnessed by their *Draft Resolutions* published in *Focus*.

And going from the ridiculous to the downright dangerous, the leadership declares that when trade unions are "drawing up their demands... they will always take account of the economic situation and policies being followed by government" (*Ibid*).

We are presented with a perspective, which far from criticising the existing structure and politics of the workers' movement, calls for communists to fall in behind the TUC, fight to strengthen the Labour Party — which, in truth, is far from being the "mass party of the working class and its allies", (and its allies!?!?!); it is the bourgeois party of the working class, something proved by every day of its existence since it was established in 1906. And what is more, the perspective presented for the working class is compelling the Thatcher government to carry out the TUC's AES of reforming the capitalist crisis into a capitalist utopia, where unemployment, the war drive and wage cuts can be abolished, simply by an act of will. And even worse it seems that in return for this reformist package, the Party leadership are calling upon the working class to draw up 'sensible' wage demands in line with the interests of the (capitalist) economy.

Any such suggestion is utterly alien to the spirit of communism, and extremely dangerous in that it links the interests of the workers to those of the capitalist economy.

Against the Party PC's worship of the AES and potty dreams of forcing the Tories to introduce it, we stand with the position outlined by the Communist International at its Third Congress:

"The Communist Parties do not put forward minimum programmes which could serve to strengthen and improve the tottering foundations of capitalism. The Communists' main aim is to destroy the capitalist system. But in order to achieve their aim Communist Parties must put forward demands expressing the immediate needs of the working class. The Communists must organise mass campaigns to fight for these demands, regardless of whether they are compatible with the continuation of the capitalist system. The Communist Parties should be concerned not with the viability and competitive capacity of capitalist industry or the stability of the capitalist economy, but with proletarian poverty, which cannot and must not be endured any longer."

(*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestoes of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* pp.285-6)

We must offer a struggle for the concrete demands of the proletariat which, in their totality, challenge the power of the bourgeoisie. For, even before the broad mass of workers consciously understands the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, they can respond to particular individual demands. As more and more people are drawn into the struggle around these demands, and as the needs of the masses come into conflict with the needs of capitalist society, the working class will come to realise that if it wants to live, capitalism will have to die. This realisation, not the utopian AES, and the struggle to compel the Tories to implement it, is at the heart of the struggle for socialism.

We must raise the slogan:  
BEGIN WITH WHAT THE WORKING CLASS  
NEEDS, NOT WHAT CAPITALISM CAN  
AFFORD.

What we must do is to build our Party to fight around what the working class needs, something which under the conditions of emerging general crisis comes into direct conflict with what the capitalist system can afford. We must also fight

for changes in existing mass workers' organisations, and the creation of new forms to facilitate, deepen and underpin the struggle for what the workers need, something which today inevitably leads to raising the question of power.

It is because many old organisations of the working class are incapable of meeting the offensive against working class living standards and rights, let alone the tasks of revolution, that we must seek changes in them, and create new ones. The first term of Thatcher's government, and even the last Labour government, showed all too clearly that the trade union movement had great difficulty in even maintaining the living standards of their members in work, but what about fighting unemployment, women's oppression and racism? Thatcher's second term will undoubtedly expose the weaknesses of the existing trade union structure, its inability to defend wages, and most certainly democratic rights.

Already, we have seen workers' struggles undermined, not only by direct sell-out, but by the sectionalism of trade union organisation. Examples of this have been legion, but vivid examples must include workers in the car industry, the health service and printing. The fact that workers in these industries are organised in many different unions, not only creates difficulties in terms of coordination, but leads to sectional conflict, divide and rule, and the collapse of united struggles by one union leadership caving in. There can be no question that a restructuring of the unions so that one union organises one industry would greatly strengthen the ability of the workers to fight. The slogan: ONE UNION IN ONE INDUSTRY must be revived. This must be achieved not as a result of trade union mergers based on narrow financial considerations as we saw with the Agricultural Workers' Union merging with the T&GWU, not as a result of bureaucratic self-interest, but by action and pressure from the rank and file.

But in order to truly unite the working class in the workplace, and then beyond, new organisations must be created to supplement the existing ones, for no number of reorganisations can meet the exacting demands of the 'eighties. For today, and to an even greater extent in the future, any gain we make can only be in proportion to the extent that we develop militant direct mass actions by the working class. In order to achieve even minimal results, we must go onto the offensive. Talking to Tebbit is of course treacherous, but to merely attempt to stay still, to be content to merely preserve and defend old forms and institutions, can lead to equally disastrous results.

Paradoxically, in order to have a vision of the future, we must look at the past. In the light of this communists today should not only learn the lessons of the Russian Revolution, but study the history of our own Party, with particular emphasis on the struggle to build the National Minority Movement, the National Unemployed Workers' Union, Councils of Action and factory councils. It is not a question of re-inventing the

past, imposing alien forms, for new organisations will emerge out of the class struggle itself. As this struggle grows more widespread and intense, the new will be ushered in at the call of necessity, the mother of invention.

Surely to expect the TUC and the Labour Party to put up a serious fight against Thatcher would be, on past performance, naive. Most leaders of the official labour movement are content with petitions, protests that are securely confined within 'moderate' shackles, for these leaders' cosy chats with government ministers and school-boy catcalls and hoots on the floor of the House of Commons, are to be preferred to mass political strikes, occupations and other forms of direct militant action which might lead to a challenge to 'Parliament and the rule of law'. It is because such leaders are in the overwhelming majority in the official labour movement, and even most of the left-Labourites show great determination not to go beyond rhetoric, that we must seek to construct forms that circumvent the deadly bureaucratic grip.

This is why we should look at factory committees. They unite under their banner all workers, whether in a trade union and in whatever trade union. Factory committees can be built on the existing shop-steward structure, they can directly respond to rank and file demands, shun all unprincipled redundancy deals and fight determinedly in full accord with the mass of workers. To link these forms, to extend them, to give them a national direction and revolutionary perspective, to enable them to influence the official structure, something akin to the National Minority Movement would be a necessity.

The NMM sought to unite all workers committed to an unremitting fight for what the working class needs. It linked rank and file organisations around unified demands and structure. On its foundation in August 1924 it not only represented 200,000 workers, but, as we can see from its programme, it was under no illusions about the need for revolutionary perspectives:

"... to organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from oppressors and exploiters and the establishment of a Socialist Commonwealth; to carry on a wide agitation and propaganda for the principles of revolutionary class struggle, and work within existing organisations for the National Minority Movement programme and against the present tendency towards social peace and class collaboration and the delusion of the peaceful transition of capitalism to socialism; to maintain the closest relations with the Red International Labour Unions."

The programme also made detailed proposals around the need for a minimum wage, the fight for higher wages, the abolition of overtime. It also dealt with the issue of reorganising the trade union movement; calling for factory committees and representation of Trades Councils and the National Unemployed Workers' Movement on the TUC. What is more, it demanded workers' control of industry and a united front of workers to fight capital.

The pursuance of a broadly similar perspective today would surely meet the needs of the working class, avoiding the pitfalls of relying on the TUC. It would provide not only the best means of

uniting all militants, but also the basis on which to launch a struggle to boot out the knight-errants of capital in the workers' movement, such as Frank Chapple and Roy Grantham.

We call for a perspective which draws on the experience of our Party's Leninist heritage, in order to equip the working masses with the weapons to meet the challenge of the 'eighties. Our vision must be clear and revolutionary, it must not be clouded by reformist fantasies and a desire to accommodate ourselves with the official labour movement. We should support officials only in as much as they fight to fully represent the needs of the workers, but we must organise independent unofficial actions in the event that they pursue bureaucratic self-interest, and impair the militant anti-capitalist struggle.

What of the problem of the unemployed? While the present structure of the labour movement atomises unemployed workers, casts them into despair, today's conditions can propel unemployed workers into actions which violently oppose the capitalist system. It is no good the Party PC coming out with pious speculations, such as: "The possibility of the development of an unemployed workers' movement should be kept continually under review". We must declare the creation of an unemployed workers' union our solemn aim.

But the real damning indictment of all recent Party proposals and initiatives over the unemployed is the determination to make the unemployed subjects of charity and parsimonious liberals. This and the obsession to subordinate the unemployed to the official labour movement is something that can only lead to defeat.

No, the communists must realise that the unemployed are of tremendous revolutionary importance, the fact that around half of the long-term unemployed are under 25 can only underline this. Their energy, courageousness and latent revolutionism must be harnessed. By doing this, the struggle to oust the toadies who head so many unions today can be enhanced. For, by uniting unemployed workers' organisations with the class struggle, minority struggles can be extended far beyond the limits of the original conflict, can come to threaten traitors in our movement, and become the launching pad for strategic offensives.

While the unemployed are used by capital as a reserve army of labour, used to force down wages, they can even become victims of fascist contamination, organised as strike breaking gangs. In the face of this the PC seems determined to mould the unemployed into cannon fodder for the TUC and the Labourites. But instead of this disgraceful course surely we should focus ourselves on making the unemployed into an *active army of the revolution*.

Faced with the looming general crisis of capitalism, the resultant necessity of the capitalists to attack the working class, concretely manifested today in the form of mass unemployment, savage cuts in social services and anti-working class laws, we must prepare our forces for a decisive struggle for power. The fact that defence of working class interests takes us to the level of direct confrontation with the capitalist state

means that reformist baloney is not only utterly impotent in the face of the class enemy, but actually acts to divert the necessary revolutionary struggle to defend even the existing conditions of the working class.

We have already referred to the undeniable truth that a strategic struggle is on the cards. The ability of the working class to resist the onslaught, to turn the defence of their interests into an offensive against capitalism, rests ultimately on the state of their revolutionary party — the Communist Party. While it is dominated by Euro-communist revisionism there is no chance of the working class acting independently, charting its course to socialism.

Opportunism disarms the workers, delivers us bound and gagged to the altar of capitalist profit. The period ahead demands a relentless struggle against all forms of opportunism, for unless the Communist Party ends its tailism to the official trade union movement, ends its servile attitude to the Labour Party and its infatuation with the reformist, myopic AES, the working class will be like an army with no general staff. Resistance can be heroic, but any offensive will prove to be nothing more than a desperate gesture.

We must equip the class for the coming struggles, build rank and file oppositions to reformist officialdom. We must transform the capitalist reserve army of labour into an active army of revolution.

We must train the unemployed youth to fight side by side with employed workers. We must protect our meetings, pickets, occupations and demonstrations from attacks by developing militant self-defence groups.

If we are to do this, if we are to carry out our duty to the working class, fulfil our tasks as communists, then we must reassert the vanguard role of the Communist Party.

Central to this is the struggle begun by *The Leninist*, we have raised the banner of revolutionary revolt in the Communist Party against all forms of opportunism. This is our communist duty, an act of disciplined communists. Attempts to deny the necessity of open ideological struggle, calls for unprincipled 'unity', and ideas that other parties will think and act for us, are cowardly evasions of communist discipline, acts of irresolution which will weaken the struggle for workers' rights, deflect us from the struggle for the salvation of our class, even our species. For, if we fail to destroy capitalism the chances of thermonuclear war being unleashed, incinerating the planet, plunging civilisation into a new dark age, are gruesomely real.

Comrades, now is not the time to slink off into domestic 'bliss', to drop into cynical despair, because of the state of the Party. Now is the time to rally to the fight in the Party. The period ahead promises fierce battles, the decisive life and death struggle with our class enemy looms over the horizon. The first skirmish, the vital preparation, is the ideological and political struggle in the Party. The best elements in the class, all genuine communists, whether in the Party, or excluded, must take up the challenge. ■

# The Crisis of the 'Morning Star' and the Communist Party

Frank Grafton

The prolonged decline in sales of the *Morning Star* over the past two decades has finally reached crisis level. In just one year between 1981 and 1982, circulation fell by nearly 2,500 copies to 29,301 (See *38th Annual Report PPPS*, May 1983). Subsequently, not only did the January meeting of the Party's Executive Committee declare 1983 to be "crunch year" for the paper, but the editor comrade Tony Chater also warned at the recent PPPS AGM that, "This annual general meeting of the PPPS may be historic in one crucial aspect — it may be the last" (*Newsline*, June 15 1983). He went on to report that a deficit of £257,000 is projected and that 7,000 extra daily sales are needed to break even, of which 3,000 are needed immediately, in order to guarantee its survival in the interim period.

Yet to simply say, as the secretary of the PPPS comrade Mary Rosser does, "that the overriding problem is financial . . . directly linked to circulation" (*Morning Star*, May 27 1983), is to disguise the essence of the crisis. The fall in the readership in the *Morning Star* is directly linked to the declining membership and influence of the Communist Party, and is in that respect fundamentally a political problem which demands a political solution. This is the reason why the Management Committee's seemingly rational proposal to seek financial and organisational support from the trade union movement in the form of an agreement to print commercially, has brought to the surface a deep schism in the ranks of the Communist Party leadership. The real issue at stake is not simply whether the *Morning Star* can survive or not, but which factional trend controls it, and moreover, whether it remains formally tied to the Communist Party at all.

It was during the run up to the PPPS AGM and at that meeting itself, that the major divisions within the leadership opened up. Yet many Party activists declared themselves to be at a loss as to what was going on, as did comrade Nick Connolly at the London AGM overflow meeting, complaining that "political differences are hidden" and that everybody needed to see what they were.

So what are these differences and when did they begin to emerge? The most important development has been the split in the right opportunist trend in response to the growing influence of the Euro-communists. One section around the General Secretary comrade Gordon McLennan has allied itself more closely with the Euro-communists, while the other group around comrades Tony Chater and Mick

Costello has increasingly opposed the Euro-communists. Rather than having emerged overnight, however, these differences first began to arise in the aftermath of the Party adopting its revised version of the *British Road to Socialism* in 1977.

While the Chater — Costello group accepted the opportunist and reformist premise of this programme, including its central theme of the 'broad democratic alliance', they objected to the perceived erosion of emphasis on the 'leading role of the working class' in the broad democratic alliance. A number of leading Party trade unionists such as comrade Ken Gill, for instance, responded critically to comrade Eric Hobsbawm's thesis in his 1978 Marx Memorial Lecture, that the *Forward March of Labour* had been *Halted*, seeing in it a downgrading of trade unionism in general, and more importantly, an attack on their own prestige inside the Party. But the first real blow against the Euro-communists by this trend was struck by the then Party Industrial Organiser comrade Mick Costello. He attacked an article on the *British Road* by the Euro-communist National Organiser comrade Dave Cook in the following way:

"In our correct enthusiasm for plans and programmes for all areas of life, some comrades are falling into the trap of losing sight of the 'class wood' for the trees. This is done in my opinion, in several ways that are incorrect interpretations of the *British Road to Socialism*.

"Some of these find expression in the article written by comrade Dave Cook in last December's issue of this journal. I should like to express sharp disagreement with him, principally because he treats the broad democratic alliance virtually as a reform movement, with only formal acknowledgement of the leading role of the working class. . . . Comrade Cook's interpretation of the 'new', puts it in contradiction with the 'old' and would give the impression that the 1978 edition of the *British Road to Socialism* was the founding document of a new Party that was writing off its roots in the labour movement.

"His underestimation of the work of the trade unions and, by clear implication, of the activities of Communists in industry, goes hand in hand with this." (M. Costello. *Marxism Today*, pp77—78, June 1979).

While affirming his ideological support for the *BRS*, comrade Costello was clearly voicing the alarm of many Party trade union activists and officials at their decline in influence both *inside the Communist Party*, and the labour movement in general, as well as the lack of commitment by the Euro-communists to reverse this process. The Euro-communists were far more interested in social movements in which they had a base, such as feminism, gays and peace.

The practical implications of adopting the revised *BRS* were becoming clear. The Party was beginning to break up into several opportunist cliques, all promoting 'sectional' interests, and in this sense, comrade Costello was promoting trade unionism, not as an integral component of communist work, but as a 'sectional' interest.

Although the right opportunists closed ranks at the 1979 National Party Congress, in order to defeat the Euro-communists' attempt during the debate on Inner Party Democracy to loosen their grip on the Party machine, the cracks

eventually began to show prior to and during the 1981 Congress over the *Morning Star* resolution. In 1978, the Euro-communists had managed to get the EC to adopt the recommendations of an EC sub-committee report, identifying the *Star* readership as the components of the broad democratic alliance, saying that, "the *Star*'s objective should be to throw its columns open to a wider range of viewpoints both from within the Party and from the left and democratic forces than has so far been the case." The Euro-communists, in essence, wanted to transform the *Morning Star* into a daily version of what *Marxism Today* has since become. While the Editor, comrade Chater, publicly accepted the report, it was obvious from the impatience of the Euro-communists, that he was resisting its implementation. The Euro-communist Assistant Editor of the *Morning Star* comrade Chris Myant 'resigned' from that post, as did the Euro-communist National Organiser comrade Dave Cook (the latter move may have resulted from pressure by the General Secretary, as an attempt to dampen down the growing antagonisms between the Euro-communists and comrades Chater and Costello).

Despite these two setbacks for the Euro-communists and their inability to get the EC resolution on the *Morning Star* which they wanted, they still managed to secure sufficient votes from the increasingly polarised right opportunists to get EC support for composite amendment 31A from the branches, committing the EC to "explore further with the Management Committee ways in which more rapid progress could be made" in the implementation of the 1978 report (*Congress Document No 31A*). Comrade Chater openly called this amendment "arrant nonsense" (*Morning Star*, November 17 1981), while the *Star*'s Circulation Manager comrade Joe Berry asked rhetorically in opposing it, "When Dave Cook moved that amendment in Clapham did he tell the branch of the executive rejection? Did Pete Coughlin when he moved the North-West amendment say the EC had rejected?" (*Ibid*). Thus the significance of the 37th Congress with its acceptance of *Document 31A* was that the split within the right opportunists emerged openly for the first time, with comrade Chater and the *Morning Star* becoming the focal point for opposition to the Euro-communists.

Another feature of that Congress was the fact that leading comrades on the left of the Party purposefully distanced themselves from the Straight Leftists and sought an alliance with the Chater — Costello trend. For example, instead of supporting the Straight Leftist composite on the *Morning Star*, *Document 30*, comrades Mary Davis and John Foster both spoke in favour of composite 29A, which more closely reflected the position of comrade Chater. Comrade Foster had also indicated in his pre-Congress letter, that he had retreated to the position of *agreeing* with the 1978 *BRS* and the concept of the broad democratic alliance, but 'interpreting' it *à la* comrade Costello. In opposing comrade Steve Illiffe, who more openly than anybody else, argued for the liquidation of the *Morning Star* as a Party paper and its transformation into the paper of the broad democratic alliance, comrade Foster stated the following:

"... the concept of alliance argued in the *British Road* is founded upon the leading role of the working class, on recognising that we live in a class society, face a state which embodies the interests of an antagonistic class and that accordingly every issue represents some facet of the struggle for emancipation, and demands the organised force of the working class for its realisation." (*Comment*, October 19 1981).

Comrade Foster has since come out even more openly in defending the 1978 *BRS* against the Euro-communist 'interpretations' of the Scottish Party District Secretary

comrade Jack Ashton. (See *Morning Star*, July 18 1983).

The fundamental weakness of the growing opposition to Euro-communism around the *Morning Star* is its lack of any principled ideological foundation. This has allowed it to adopt a narrow, uncritical attitude towards the official trade union and labour movement, and an inability to grasp how to conduct a healthy principled ideological struggle against opportunism of all forms. The tragic result of this, is that instead of being used as a weapon against Euro-communism and liquidationism, the *Morning Star* itself is now set on a course out of the Party. An illustration of the ideological poverty of this trend was the celebrated 'Tony Lane Debate', which, from outside the Party, must have really looked like a storm in a teacup, due to the inability of either side to raise the debate to a higher level of principle.

The important issue at stake should have been the fact that the Euro-communists are not genuinely interested in an open and critical Party press, *when it is critical of them*. The fact that comrade Lane could criticise shop stewards, while comrade Costello suffered the EC's censure and undoubted pressure to resign for criticising comrade Lane's article is evidence of this. The Euro-communist member of the EC comrade Bill Innes expressed a narrow bureaucratic understanding of democratic centralism and a disdain for any freedom of views which smacked of opposition to the EC, declaring them to be "serious breaches in the principle of democratic centralism and collective leadership." (*Morning Star*, October 11 1982). Comrade Betty Reid accused comrade Costello of opening the gates to those "whose unbridled enthusiasm for waging this controversy has more to do with their deep hostility to *Marxism Today* and to the overall policies that it pursues in conformity with our Congress decisions" and that, "Those of us who may have reservations about the article should therefore look critically at the attempts to widen the issue which seems to me to be very evident and greatly to be deplored." (*Morning Star*, October 7 1982). It is obvious that the Euro-communists and their allies do not understand democratic centralism to mean the right to openly voice opinions and criticisms within the Party for all Party comrades (so long as it does not endanger the unity of a specific Party action). In reality, the Euro-communists are just as guilty of stultifying debate in fear of losing their bureaucratic grip over their positions of power. Yet the only letter to really contend the Euros on this important point was that of comrade Martyn Stevens. He got to the heart of the matter when he stated of the Euro-communists:

"They like freedom of criticism, provided it is criticism of communist policies and not criticism of their sociological twaddle. They like the free flow of ideas, but only in a one-way flow against our Marxist traditions in favour of their brand of 'Marxism'. They like the open debate of contending views, provided they are only contending on what is wrong with Marxism and are not contending in Marxism's defence.

"When they say *Marxism Today* shouldn't be in the 'straightjacket' of a party line, what these hypocrites mean is that it should be in the straightjacket of their anti-party line." (*Morning Star*, October 13 1982).

The majority of letters opposing comrade Lane, however, became entrapped in the cul-de-sac of condemning all criticisms of shop stewards and trade union leaders. As soon as comrades George Matthews and Monty Johnstone used Lenin and Engels to show, quite correctly, that criticism is essential and that corruption in the workers' movement is a long established weapon of the bourgeoisie, so many comrades on the left instinctively reached for the nearest and most superficial arguments to disprove it. Comrade Mary Davis's implication that criticism of trade unions is only justifiable in private, but not in public, is obviously untenable, when compared to the practise of Lenin or even Pollitt, while comrade Photis Lysandrou's condition that criticism is only acceptable "within the framework of re-

cognition of the leading role of the industrial working class in the struggle against capitalism" (*Morning Star*, October 13 1982), assumes that we are all consenting Marxist-Leninists. Both arguments are devoid of the perception, that the way to expose opportunism, is to bring all differences out into the open and to force it to declare its true colours. Is it not better that Euro-communism publishes its views for everybody to see, rather than keeping them wrapped up? Should we not thank comrade Lane for being honest? Such an approach proved inconceivable to many of those comrades on the left, preferring to counterpose the Euro-communists by sticking a minus sign in front of their statements. This line of argument was taken to its extreme when comrade John Foster implicitly denied Lenin's thesis that the labour bureaucracy provides a rich basis for opportunism, by saying, "The counterposing of the rank and file and elites of bureaucrats of one kind or another, a product of sociology and not Marxism, has cost the working class dear in terms of past diversions" (*Morning Star*, October 11 1982).

A more ominous sign of how many comrades, drawn to the position of comrade Chater and the *Morning Star*, have surrendered principles, and especially the party principle, to the politics of expediency, is the platform on which they defeated the Euro-communists at the recent PPPS AGM. They have unquestionably taken a very dangerous liquidationist orientation, which in some senses surpasses that of the Euro-communists in its speed of development, for the Management Committee's statement describing the Communist Party EC as "a body outside the PPPS" (*Morning Star*, June 1 1983) cannot be considered anything but liquidationist. The subsequent victory of the Management Committee at the PPPS AGM, and its most recent statement that any future meeting with the EC would be viewed "as being one between two bodies of equal and autonomous status" (*Morning Star*, July 25 1983), has meant that this course is now set for the forthcoming 38th Party Congress in November this year. By vacating the principle of waging the struggle for the *Morning Star* in the manner of an open ideological struggle *within the Party*, the Chater — Costello group has handed a position of strategic importance to the Euro-communists on a plate, allowing them to hypocritically parade as paragons of Party virtue and defenders against any changes "which would result in weakening the relationship between the Communist Party and the paper" (*EC Statement*, July 1983).

Apart from the Euro-communists and the Chater — Costello group, the third faction which agitated for a separate list of nominees to the Management Committee at the PPPS AGM, was of course, *Straight Left* which supported comrades Fred Westacott and Steve Howell. They received 292 and 274 votes respectively, being an indication of the number of Party activists around *Straight Left* nationally.

Up until 1979, the Straight Leftists pursued a line of alliance with the right opportunists as a whole behind the Party's General Secretary, in the hope of drawing that tendency into opposition against the Euro-communists. *Straight Left* then decided to change tack and pose themselves as the opposition inside the Party, as was expressed by comrade Fergus Nicholson's letter to the IPD debate which stated: "Our problems are not in our existing rules or inner-Party democracy but in a sectarian reaction to the historic opportunism of the British labour movement reinforced by our forced exclusion from the federal political expression of the trade union and socialist movement, the Labour Party." (*Comment*, October 27 1979). All attempts to forge alliances, even with those right opportunists in opposition to the Euros, were dropped. This was reflected in comrade Brian Filling's letter to the 1981 pre-congress debate, describing "two mutually antagonistic trends in the Communist Party which have presided over a massive decline in our membership and influence" (*Pre-congress Discussion Journal*, No.2 October

1981), meaning the Euro-communists and right opportunists, the latter of which he inaccurately described comrade Mick Costello as being 'typical'.

Problems for *Straight Left* arose when some of its supporters and leading comrades began to opt for closer ties with the embryonic Chater—Costello group. *Straight Left's* negative attitude towards the latter was conditioned by their reluctance to uncritically support the socialist countries, and their "tendency to narrow down class struggles to the trade union struggle" (*Ibid*). This accusation of 'economism' is not only confined to the Chater—Costello group, but is also made, quite justifiably, against those former allies of *Straight Left* who have rallied unconditionally behind the *Morning Star*, as was the case of comrade Noah Tucker's criticism of comrade Photis Lysandrou (See *Morning Star*, July 18 1983). This was the reason for *Straight Left's* disdain for contributing to the 'Tony Lane Debate', not one letter being published by a noted Straight Leftist throughout the whole controversy. But for *Straight Left*, the 'political factor' lacking in the 'economists' is not their incorrect orientation inside the Communist Party, but of course, their rejection of *Straight Left's* emphasis on Labour Party affiliation, as the means of *orientating out of the Communist Party!*

As the Straight Leftists began to orientate themselves towards the overtly non-party paper *Straight Left*, keeping their communist colours under wraps as if it was illegal and becoming in essence liquidationist, so the issue of the *Morning Star* for them became merely incidental. But it is evident from their composite amendment on the *Morning Star* at the 1981 Congress (*Congress Document* 30), that they pose *Straight Left* as a model to be copied, thus revealing their 'plan' for the *Morning Star* to be as equally liquidationist as the Euro-communists' 'plan' for a paper of the broad democratic alliance and comrade Chater's 'plan' for a paper of the official trade union movement. It is with this strategy of liquidating the *Morning Star* in the image of *Straight Left*, that comrades Howell and Westacott were supported in the nominations for the Management Committee by the followers of *Straight Left*. Yet because this tendency always operates in a Machiavellian manner, shunning any suggestion of openly declaring their true intent, so comrades Howell and Westacott posed as 'honest brokers' of the Party and the broad labour movement. The problem which arose however, was the declaration of open hostilities between the Management Committee and the EC with the publication of separate recommended lists of nominees to the former. The Straight Leftists subsequently saw their potential vote on the left being diverted away in support of the Management Committee, and therefore declared a "pox on both your houses", purely for the narrowest of factional reasons. For instance, comrades Howell and Westacott chided both the EC and Management Committee for raising their disagreements in public (*Morning Star*, June 1983); comrade Pat Turnbull dismissed both sides as having "no functional differences" at the London overflow AGM, while at the main London AGM, comrade Noah Tucker condemned both comrade Gordon McLennan for having "completely sunk into the Euro-communist trend" and the Management Committee's principles for being "unendorsable".

The conclusions which we can draw, as all the tendencies inside the Party approach the 38th Congress, are the following.

The Euro-communists have increasingly been excluded by the Chater — Costello group from any influence in the control of the *Morning Star*. This became apparent last September when comrade Chater refused to comply with an EC directive to give comrade Bea Campbell the right of reply to an article criticising her. Since the *Morning Star* has declared itself 'autonomous' of the EC, many Euro-communists have refused to sell the paper, as was indicated by comrade Cook in a press conference reported in *Newsline*

(June 4 1983). Subsequently, the Euro-communists are beginning to demand a separate weekly Party paper, which they would be likely to control. This inevitably would further reduce the circulation of the *Morning Star*, and intensify the inner-Party crisis.

*Straight Left* has entered a period of acute crisis, for not only has the General Election delivered a blow to their strategy of building a handwagon for sucking the Communist Party behind the Labour Party, but their isolation from the left of the Party has reached an impasse. Yet there is a possibility of *Straight Left* 'toning down' its position, in order to worm its way back in. There is no question that comrade Chater has thrown them a life-line, by manufacturing a debate in the letters column of the *Star* around the reply by comrade Cook to the post-election analysis of comrade Andrew Murray, as an attempt to unite as many forces against the Euro-communists as possible, including the Straight Leftists.

Comrade Chater's position of seeking financial and political support from the official trade union movement is taking the *Morning Star* away from the Party. What's more, the fact that the TUC has broached the possibility of backing a new daily paper, which is sympathetic to the labour movement has weakened the possibility of him securing the *Morning Star*, as the officially accepted paper of the labour movement.

Instead of arguing the liquidationist dangers of comrade Chater's position, many comrades on the left are giving their *unconditional* support to the Chater — Costello group and consider the removal of twelve Euro-communists from the EC at the forthcoming Congress as far more important than the political platform on which they stand. Because the opposition to the Euro-communists lacks any genuine political cohesion and principled unity, the possibility exists that a victory by these forces at the Congress could detonate the complete disintegration of the Party.

Finally we turn to *The Leninist's* attitude towards the

EC Congress Resolution on the *Morning Star*.

The objective of this resolution is quite clear: it confines itself to merely restoring the former relationship between the Party and paper, while at the same time, avoiding any discussion of the underlying political differences. Furthermore, it is inevitable that the present majority on the EC will eventually have to move against comrade Chater, in order to secure control of the *Morning Star*, but is seemingly reluctant to do so openly in front of the Party, perhaps preferring a coup of some sort after the Congress. Despite the EC's platitudes that "the relationship between the Communist Party and the PPPS is of key importance in the fight to save the paper" (*Focus*, p15, August 1983) and that "Any danger of the *Morning Star* adopting a narrow and sectarian, or non-class approach does not arise from the closeness of its ties with the Communist Party" (*ibid*), the truth of the matter is that, the liquidationist threat to the *Morning Star* is derived from a chronic cancerous growth of opportunism within the Party, being typified above all, by the present Party leadership itself.

The choice facing the *Morning Star* is one of 'the devil or the deep blue sea', for either comrade Chater transforms it into a paper of the official trade union movement, or the Euro-communists transform it into a daily or weekly version of *Marxism Today*, as an integral part of liquidating the Communist Party into the reformist 'broad democratic alliance'. The only genuine pro-Party alternative to these is that, the *Morning Star* not only *strengthens* its ties with the Party, but also becomes a weapon in the inner-Party struggle against opportunism and liquidationism. Therefore the whole of the EC resolution should be deleted and replaced by one based on the four points outlined in the editorial of this issue and *The Letter to Comrade Chater*. Only then will the healthy pro-Party forces have a chance of reversing the process of decline and disintegration, which has progressively gripped our Party over the past thirty years. ■

# The Struggle Against Unemployment

W. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles 1919-1936*, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1979, pbk, pp337, £3.95 .

P. Kingsford, *The Hunger Marchers in Britain 1920-1940*, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1982, pbk, pp244, £4.50 .

---

Michael McGeehan

---

## Introduction

"I, a member of the great army of the unemployed, being without work and compelled to suffer through no fault of my own, do hereby solemnly swear with all the strength and resolution of my being, to loyally abide by, and carry out the instructions of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, with the deliberate intention of pressing forward claims of the unemployed so that no man, woman or child suffers hunger or want this winter.

Further, realising that only by the abolition of this hideous capitalist system can the horror of unemployment be removed from our midst, I here and now take upon myself a binding oath, to never cease from active strife against

this system until capitalism is abolished and our country and all its resources truly belong to the people." (*Unemployed Struggles* p81)

Thus the members of the first national Hunger March in October 1922 expressed their revolutionary spirit and determination. In the succeeding years the N.U.W.C.M. (after 1929 the N.U.W.M.) was to become one of the main working class organisations fighting not only for immediate demands but for the destruction of capitalism. That the Movement had some success in achieving its demands and having a considerable impact on British politics is abundantly clear from both these books. But you would be quite unaware of this from reading the bourgeois press, for the story of the Hunger Marchers is shrouded in silence. Instead, only the Jarrow March (or 'crusade') receives the attention, the gushy liberal praise, of the capitalist media. Today, with mass unemployment again being spawned by capitalism in crisis, the working class movement is starting to react politically and organisationally. In 1981, on the initiative of the Communist Party, the Peoples March for Jobs was launched, with official trade union backing, and has since been repeated this year. It is therefore particularly pertinent to compare the Peoples March with both the Hunger Marches, and the Jarrow March of 1936. Such a comparison and a close examination of the political impact of the unemployed workers' struggles of the '20s and '30s are vital, for the lessons of the past provide us with invaluable guid-



ance in formulating the correct tactics for our future tasks.

## The Birth of the N.U.W.C.M.

In tracing the origins of the Movement, we arrive at the rank and file shop steward and workers' committees formed during World War 1. These bodies mushroomed due to the total capitulation of the official trade union leaders to aiding the imperialist war effort, being particularly important in the engineering and war industries. As the labour bureaucrats would not defend even these workers' most basic rights, they were by-passed by the rank and file organisations which became an increasingly powerful force between 1915 and 1918. But after the war, the National Shop Stewards and Workers Committee Movement's power began to wane.

The slump of 1920 saw a great increase in unemployment in Britain, reaching 2 million by that autumn. Not only did this directly undermine the N.S.S.W.C.M. (especially as the war industries were particularly affected by the slump) but also gave the bosses the golden opportunity to sack leading shop stewards and militants, many of whom were such outstanding revolutionaries as Wal Hannington himself.

As the conditions of the unemployed worsened and their numbers increased, signs of organisation began to be seen. At first these were merely local, mainly ex-servicemen's organisations, which as Hannington pointed out "... had no clear working class policy and they appeared to be formed purely for charity-mongering purposes." (*Ibid* p13). That situation did not persist. With the injection of the experience, militancy and revolutionary dynamism of the many sacked shop steward and workers' committee leaders, the unemployed organisations were transformed. As Hannington put it: "(we) ... realised that these embryonic unemployed organisations — which after all, had risen out of the discontent of the unemployed masses — could be developed on proper working class lines with a clear policy and could become a mighty force for improvement in the conditions of the unemployed and for protection of working class standards in general. All they needed was proper guidance and leadership." (*Ibid* p15). Which was of course provided by Hannington and his comrades, but was also linked with an event of historic significance — the formation of the C.P.G.B. in 1920. In fact, Hannington was a founder member of the Communist Party and as Kingsford notes the Party circularised its branches, calling on them to take an active part in the unemployment struggle and "must, where possible, take the lead" (*The Hunger Marchers* p19). Initially, there were objections from some active unemployed workers to the idea of a militant class movement, but they quickly drained away with the blood of the workers bated by police at the mass demonstration against unemployment in October 1920.

The culmination of these developments was the formation of the N.U.W.C.M. at a conference on 15 April 1921. From then on, until the Movement's end in 1939, it fought against evictions and organised countless demonstrations, occupations, meeting local and regional marches and of special note, the 6 national Hunger Marches — in 1922, '29, '30, '32, '34 and 1936. It was bold, disciplined and well-organised for it was led by experienced communists. It was the product of both the objective material conditions, the spontaneous upsurge of unrest amongst the unemployed, and the conscious subjective element — communist leadership. It was a genuine rank and file body and generally had a principled, non-tailist position in relation to the Labour Party and official trade union leadership. It is this key aspect of the N.U.W.C.M.'s history that we will examine first.

## Unemployed and Unions

As previous experience has shown, the unemployed, if not organised by working class bodies, would be used as strike-

breakers and to undermine the wages and conditions of unemployed workers (or even worse, as the '30s were to show, to provide fodder for fascist groups). The N.U.W.C.M. leadership realised that as employed and unemployed had the same basic class interests they could be united, though this would entail a difficult struggle. With this in mind the N.U.W.C.M. approached the T.U.C., and in 1923 the T.U.C. Congress decided to support the Movement's proposal to set up a Joint Advisory Committee on unemployment. Thus the J.A.C. was created, comprising of 4 representatives each from the T.U.C. and the N.U.W.C.M.

But the J.A.C. was to prove an abortion, for the participation of the T.U.C. had very little to do with a commitment to wage a struggle against unemployment and its cause. The T.U.C. leaders who were to sabotage preparations for the miners' struggle and subsequently the General Strike, merely contented themselves with the adoption of pious resolutions and proposals such as the J.A.C.'s Unemployed Workers' Charter and supporting the odd demonstration. Try as the Movement might, it could not obtain anything more than hot air — general condemnations of unemployment — from the T.U.C.; the J.A.C. was therefore paralysed. For example, the J.A.C.'s proposals to the 1924 T.U.C. congress for N.U.W.C.M. affiliation and a membership transference scheme (so that the unemployed could retain their union membership) were rejected, and following the General Council led defeat of the working class during the General Strike, the J.A.C. was wound up in 1927 by the traitors of 1926. However it was a defunct body anyway, for the T.U.C. representatives had refused to meet those of the N.U.W.C.M. since 1925.

So why did the T.U.C. bureaucrats respond at all? That the T.U.C. carthorse was prodded into briefly twitching its muscles was only due to pressure from the masses, the dying ebb of the revolutionary wave that swept through Europe after 1917.

The J.A.C. episode provides us with valuable lessons on the real nature of the T.U.C. leadership. These privileged labour bureaucrats had no interest in assisting a rank and file movement of the unemployed, being far more concerned with their own elevated position, above the working class. It seems that the N.U.W.C.M. and the Communist Party (which is very important in this context as it played a dominant role in the Movement's leadership) had erred in their estimation of the possibility of creating a united front with the labour bureaucrats. But despite their mistakes, they both continued to fight tooth and nail against the capitalist class and their agents within the workers' movement, a struggle which became particularly bitter after the General Strike.

## Class Against Class

The open display of the General Council's reactionary colours in May 1926 are well-known. Subsequently, they offered the hand of friendship to the bourgeoisie, eventually resulting in the blatantly class-collaborationist Mond-Turner negotiations; but to the Communist Party, the N.U.W.C.M. and the National Minority Movement they offered the clenched fist, declaring membership of these bodies to be incompatible with loyalty to themselves and withdrawing recognition from trades councils associated with the N.M.M. Concurrently the Labour Party was disaffiliating local parties that had refused to implement the ban on communist membership. It was then no surprise that there was no official trade union support for the Hunger Marches of miners in 1927. However, relations were to deteriorate still further.

Whilst Hannington noticeably avoided dealing directly with the C.P.G.B.'s change of line following the Communist International's commission on the British situation in February 1928, Kingsford does describe that drastic turnabout of '28. Though this new line had more to do with events within the Soviet Union than circumstances in Britain, its

adoption by the C.P.G.B. was no doubt facilitated by the increasingly reactionary position of the trade union and labour leaders and the sharpening class struggle due to deepening crisis. The upshot was the severe isolation of the Communist Party from great masses of workers (later in 1928 the Labour Party conference proscribed joint activity with communists and furthermore, C.P. members were finally prohibited from being elected as delegates from trade unions to Labour Party meetings and conferences) and the abandonment of the successful united front tactics of the N.M.M. (which proceeded to collapse just two years later). But although the C.P.G.B.'s sectarian line of calling the T.U. and labour leaders 'social-fascist' and the Labour Party simply the 'third bourgeois party' was undoubtedly incorrect, its attack on the 1929 Labour government's disgusting record on unemployment must be applauded. In Chapter 7 of his book, Hannington makes it quite clear that Labour happily continued along the course set by Baldwin & Co; in refusing to abolish task work (a system of virtual slave labour) for relief payments and presiding over a further increase in unemployment from 1,127,000 (when they took office) to 2,643,127 in December 1930. And though that Government did grant a slight increase in unemployment benefit, its general perspective was well summed up by Hannington: 'First, it was based on the belief that any substantial reduction in the number of unemployed depended solely upon the ability of British imperialism to defeat its rivals in the struggle for world markets; therefore the government devoted itself openly to help the recovery of British capitalist industry.' (*Unemployed struggles* p211).

How did these developments affect the N.U.W.C.M.? The second national Hunger March had taken place during the last months of the Baldwin government (February 1929) and as Kingsford noted "the rank and file of the labour movement, in spite of discouragement from its leaders, had rallied to them" (*The Hunger Marches* p106). However, the third Hunger March took place during the spring of 1930, against a background of not only greater hostility from the official union leadership but also from many rank and file workers. Again, this was directly due to the position of the Communist Party which had by now embraced the 'class against class' line with a vengeance after its November '29 Leeds congress, extending its condemnation of the labour and union leaders as social-fascist to the trade unions themselves.

The inedible fruit of this tragic approach was the plummeting of the C.P.'s membership and influence and the N.M.M.'s disappearance. That the N.U.W.M. survived, despite being led by well-known communists and considerably isolated from the trade union memberships, was due to rapidly snowballing unemployment and the resulting terrible poverty and hunger amongst millions of workers and their families, driving many thousands into action. That it was not millions was because of the greatly mistaken C.P. G.B.'s tactics and the reactionary politics of the labour and union leaders.

### The Marches

The Hunger Marches always had a programme containing specific demands. For example, the 1922 (first) March demanded 'full maintenance or work at trade union rates' and for a national scale of poor relief rather than those decided by local Boards of Guardians. Later, in 1929, their main targets were the hated 'Not genuinely seeking work' clause of the 1927 Unemployed Insurance Act (which meant that unless a worker had proof of having looked for work he would be deprived of benefit) and the 'thirty stamps qualification' which required claimants to have worked for thirty weeks in a year in order to receive unemployment benefit. That march could with some justification be considered to have gained a victory, in that the 'thirty stamps' clause was suspended for 12 months, after the protest. Following the election of a Labour government in May 1929, the Movement drew up a list of demands similar to before, plus a call for the abolition of task work. The

march itself was small and its degree of isolation was indicated by the large use the marchers made of the workhouse (whose regulations they would invariably flout, often bringing them into conflict with the authorities; that they were not obsessed with being thought respectable and law-abiding is to be admired).

But the conflicts of 1929 and '30 were to pale in comparison with the upheavals of 1931 and '32. The National government formed in August 1931 and elected in October, lost little time in pushing the general proposals of the May Committee through Parliament and into effect. The final list of cuts included 10% in unemployment allowances, pay of public employees, the armed forces and police and a 15% cut for teachers. They were not meekly accepted. Teachers and civil servants came out on demonstrations against the cuts and on the 15th September sailors at Invergordon mutinied because of a proposed cut in their pay of 25%. But the greatest resistance came from the unemployed. Throughout September and October there were mass demonstrations on the streets of London (100,000), Bristol (20,000), Manchester (80,000), Bolton (20,000), Nottingham (20,000), Dundee (30,000) and several in Glasgow (50,000 - 150,000) one of which was defended by 500 men carrying heavy sticks. And not without good reason, for the police usually met such protest with baton charges. In fact, as Hannington relates, at one demonstration at Glasgow Green the police charged into the unarmed crowd but "The workers fought back ferociously; iron railings around the green were torn up and used as weapons." (*U. St* p223) Hannington's book is particularly useful in giving us a vivid picture of the bloody and bitter struggle workers had with the State. This included the persistent activities of the Special Branch and their agent provocateurs within and around the N.U.W.M. and the repeated imprisonment of the Movement's leaders.

But at that time the police were also being hit by the 'economies'. In 1932 the Movement issued a leaflet calling on them not to interfere with demonstrations and to support the fight against the cuts. Kingsford reproduces that leaflet on page 157, and it is interesting to note that it also contains a warning that the unemployed would "... know how to defend ourselves, and how to fight back if attacked again. . . to REMEMBER BIRKENHEAD, REMEMBER BELFAST".

In 1932 the seething cauldron of discontent came to the boil, rising to its greatest heat in Belfast and Birkenhead. Hannington justifiably devotes a chapter (14) to describing the huge street battles in these towns, where the police (and in Belfast the Army) waged a campaign of terror against the demonstrators, including in Belfast the shooting of workers. Hand to hand fighting with police also took place in Liverpool, North Shields, Glasgow, West Ham and even Croydon during the autumn of 1932. Hannington rightly does not attempt to apologise for such violent working class resistance but defends it, slamming the State violence and oppression as we communists should do today whether in Ireland, Brixton, Bristol or Toxteth.

The Hunger March of 1932 took place against this backcloth of bitter class struggle. It was the largest and best organised yet, and as Kingsford points out, had "... given a strong lead to the unemployed, while the rank and file of the labour movement had rallied to them in spite of discouragement from the leadership." (*T.H.M.* p163). The marchers' demands for abolition of the Means Test and withdrawal of all cuts attracted mass support. The positive response from workers was enhanced by the dilution of the Comintern's and hence the C.P.G.B.'s attitude to the social-democrats, and although the so called 'class against class' line was still operated it was not, according to Kingsford operating "... with undiminished purity". This is indicated by the assistance the 1932 march received from local trade unionists and trade councils, despite T.U.C. disapproval. The C.P.'s shift from an untenable position was undoubtedly of benefit to the N.U.W.M. and the workers'

struggle in general.

The marches of 1934 and '36 took place in somewhat different atmospheres. The fifth national march in '34 was during the period when the C.P.'s line was shifting fast to that of the 'united front', for the defence of the working class against capitalist cuts but in particular against fascism. Consequently, there was still greater rank and file trade union and Labour Party (the I.L.P. had actually joined the C.P. 'united front') support than in '32, and therefore the marchers rarely needed to use the workhouse, hence clashes with the police were similarly rare. The N.U.W.M. could also claim another small victory, as the 1931 cuts in benefit were to be restored. But it was the 1936 Hunger March that really marked a break with the past.

Hannington did not cover the events of 1936 whereas Kingsford does, though only giving the slightest hint at the C.P.G.B.'s lurch to the right in 1935. In fact both books noticeably avoid dealing with the profound change in Comintern policy from 'class against class' to the 'popular front'. Such tactics were adopted in response to the fascist victory in Germany in 1933, and although officially agreed at the 7th Congress of the Comintern in 1935, were already operating in France and Italy. (It is worth noting this period of communist history has previously remained conspicuously untouched by C.P.G.B. writers, and must therefore be a question for *The Leninist* to deal with in the future.) Despite that shift, the N.U.W.M. still did not receive official union backing, having to rely on the growing rank and file support. However, they also received assistance from some distinctly unsavoury quarters, as Kingsford notes, quoting the Lancashire march leader: "We have been welcomed by Unionist (i.e. Tory — McG) and Liberal mayors and ministers of religion and all kinds and creeds have helped." (*Ibid* p212)

So with the march of 1936, ended the Hunger Marches, culminating in a demonstration of 250,000 in Hyde Park in November. But the Means Test was not to be abolished, the only concession made by the government was a delay in the implementation of further cuts in benefit. In that respect the last Hunger March achieved no more than previous marches had. But there was another event in 1936 which needs close examination.

## The Jarrow March

Although we are critical of the '36 Hunger March for its tendency to regard itself as a 'national' march rather than a workers' march, the 'Jarrow crusade' reeked of class collaboration. Whereas all the Hunger Marches had had a militant and often revolutionary character, the Jarrow Crusade was eminently respectable. It was overtly 'non-political', not a working class protest, rather a 'popular' one. This is well illustrated by the fact that "... the divisional agents for both Conservative and Labour Parties were sent ahead to prepare the way and support came from the political right as well as the left. At Harrogate the Territorial Army took care of the Jarrow crusaders; at Leeds a newspaper owner gave food and drink; at Sheffield the Conservative Party were the hosts, and in Chesterfield it gave meals and accommodation, and again at Nottingham." (*T.H.M.* p219) Those well-known proletarian bodies, the Rotary Club and Toc H also gave assistance en route.

It may seem surprising that the T.U.C. and Labour Party did not give their blessing, advising local organisations not to assist. This can be understood if we bear in mind that the labour bureaucrats were worried that any march smacked of the Hunger Marches, and support might create a precedent for future N.U.W.M. actions. These reactionaries were so deperate not to be associated with any movement against unemployment, that they would not even support a pious charity-mongering protest.

What then were the results of that much-publicised begging-bowl 'crusade'? As Ellen Wilkinson in her book *The Town that was Murdered* said, their aim was "to make

government face up to its duty to Jarrow". They wanted public charity but all they got was private charity in the form of a handful of small factories and a small steel works. According to Kingsford: "The result of 5 years campaigning was work for about eight hundred men and boys." Only with the advent of war did the naval shipyards provide a mass of jobs. One thing the Jarrow Crusade certainly did not achieve was an elevation in class consciousness amongst the working class.

## The Peoples March for Jobs

So mass unemployment is with us again. The leadership of the working class, the Communist Party has responded by initiating the People's Marches of '81 and '83, on both occasions receiving support from the T.U.C. and Labour Party. In comparing the P.M.J. with the pre-war marches we are led to the inescapable conclusion that it is the Jarrow March which is being emulated rather than the Hunger Marches. In the *Morning Star* (March 25 1983) the new National Industrial Organiser of the C.P. noted Euro-communist comrade Pete Carter, writing in his capacity as a Midlands regional official of U.C.A.T.T., said that the "... governments economic policies (are) mainly and directly responsible for Britain's unemployment". This in itself is incorrect, unemployment is primarily due the capitalist system, i.e. overproduction of capital and the declining rate of profit. But he went further, saying that concentrating "on those central elements of government economic strategy which is creating unemployment" would provide "... the opportunity for the broadest possible alliance of all who agree with the central demand, which of course ranges from bishops to bricklayers, from non-Thatcherite Tories to revolutionary Socialists." (*ibid*)

What the Euro-communists and various other opportunists in the Party are really calling for is an alliance with 'progressive' (!) i.e. "non-Thatcherite" sections of the bourgeoisie. This approach has dragged the Party into even deeper levels of opportunism, to the point where even anti-Tory slogans were banned on the last Peoples' March! The result of that policy has been disillusion amongst many marchers and further decline in the reputation of the Communist Party among militants in the class.

Comrade Hannington's book is an inspiring account of how a determined revolutionary organisation can play a leading role in a genuine rank and file working class movement. The spirit and determination of the N.U.W.M. despite its (and the C.P.G.B.'s) serious mistakes, are an object lesson in how the campaign against unemployment should be conducted. Kingsford to a great extent complements Hannington's work by touching on developments in the C.P. which had a direct bearing on the struggle. But what both books show is the importance of: correct communist political leadership; the movement to be a rank and file movement, active throughout the year; a movement which is working class, but does not isolate itself from other working class organisations even if they are under the leadership of reactionaries though neither depend on T.U.C./Labour approval to act.

The key to the creation of a successful unemployed workers' movement which challenges the foundations of this decrepit system, lays at the door of the Communist Party. Unfortunately, so diseased is our Party with various strains of opportunism that the lead we are presented with lays more emphasis on bishops than on brickies. Great opportunities are presenting themselves to us, the upsurges of 1981 being merely a foretaste. A mass movement against unemployment must be forged; yes we must not repeat the sectarian mistakes of the past — neither should we throw the Bolshevik baby out with the sectarian bathwater. Yes, conditions have changed since the '20s and '30s — our tactics must therefore relate to today's conditions. But unless our Party is cured of its infatuation with respectability and the opportunist infections it will not play its rightful role at the head of a militant unemployed workers movement. ■

# Letters

## Colin Roach

Dear Comrades,

The death of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington police station has brought to the surface yet again, the opportunism of our Party's anti-racist policy. From the inception of the Roach campaign militant black youth played the leading role and objectively rejected the class collaboration of the Euros. Unlike our Party, black youth in Hackney have no illusions about the police. The long, brutal and racist history of the Stoke Newington police has been known for years, yet leading Party spokesmen have consistently called for cooperation with the police, and have refused to adopt a principled position.

Very early on in the campaign the Party isolated itself from the masses, thus finding itself out on a limb. Even the local Labour Party called for the closure of Stoke Newington police station, albeit for opportunist reasons. This was a demand rejected by our Borough Committee as 'ultra-leftist'.

Instead of waging a principled agitation for the working class to understand what the police really represent, the Communist Party used Colin Roach's death to raise the 'issue' of pol-

ice accountability. The Euro-communists became the shrillest voice for 'law and order'. As one C.P. leaflet issued during the campaign said: "The truth is that the police in Hackney are not tackling crime effectively. They are undermining respect for law and order" (sic). What law and order do communists defend, that of the ruling class?

Another leaflet, issued by the Borough Committee for a Roach demonstration, showed how degenerate and reformist the Euro-communists have become, it was headed "Wanted, police who work with the community not against us". The reformists in our Party have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing from history. Capitalist instruments of repression have never, nor can they ever, serve the working class.

The Roach campaign should have been used to show that there can be no deals with the police. Yes, in times of economic boom the police can play at being 'Dixon of Dock Green', but today they have no choice other than to openly use repression. The attacks on the demonstrators by police, (over a hundred arrests), the viciously harsh attitude of the courts, the swamping of

Hackney with riot police, all expose the police's real role. For the working class the main question is not how the police, police us, but whether they have the right to do so. The only way the working class can defend itself is by creating its own organisations.

The local Euro-communists' distaste for militant action found expression in the way they distanced themselves from the riots of 1981. They were 'appalled' that the situation following Roach's death was manifested in militant anti-police sentiment by the black population.

The Euro-communists, and fellow opportunists, hate militant action and will seek to channel it into the dead-end of 'normal politics'. The future of black youth depends on the Communist Party re-establishing its vanguard role. Those comrades who condemn the actions of militant black youth are, of course, in reality scared of revolution. We as revolutionaries applaud their potential revolutionism, their militant acts against the ruling class and their state.

Cary Phillips  
East London

## The Tower Hamlets Party

Dear Comrades,

In most areas of London, elections is the issue that most clearly divides the Euro-communists in places such as Hackney from the 'pro-Soviet' opportunists in the Borough of Camden, for example. Wherever the Euros contest elections their object is to attract the social-democrats in the Labour Party into some sort of 'broad alliance' or joint work with the Communist Party. On the other hand, the left-liquidationists nearly always advocate standing down in favour of a candidate from the 'mass party of the working class', the Labour Party. The perspective of the Party in Tower Hamlets concerning elections is somewhat different though. The Borough Party regards electoral work as something that is vital to the continuing existence of the Party as an independent entity, and there is no question of stepping down in favour of a Labour candidate, in an unprincipled manner. The elections resolution which was adopted by the Borough Party at its annual conference on March 6 1983 commits the Party in Tower Hamlets to stand in both general and local elections. The Labour Party in Tower Hamlets is notoriously right-wing and it is a welcome sign that the local Party is organising to provide the electors with a communist alternative.

Out of the five active branches of the Party in Tower Hamlets, only one (Poplar, Nina Temple's old branch) is

under the control of the Euro-communists. The other branches are dominated by a traditional pro-Soviet trend that has resisted the Euro-communist onslaught which has taken a grip on the Party elsewhere. There is no liquidationist tendency in the party in Tower Hamlets, where the Party has remained free from the influence of *Straight Left*.

As well as their healthy attitude toward participation in elections, the Borough Party also regards education as an important matter. This can be seen from the fact that there were three resolutions on the question of education from branches in Tower Hamlets to the London District Congress held in November last year. (The resolutions were from Bethnal Green, Limehouse and St. Georges). The momentum is being kept up by St. Georges Branch which has recently finished holding a series of evening classes on the subject of 'Dialectical Materialism'. Unlike in neighbouring Hackney, there is no question of taking the 'Leninist' out of the term 'Marxist-Leninist' in education programmes.

The membership of the Party in Tower Hamlets is not that high compared with Camden or Hackney — there are a little over a hundred members there — but it is a Borough where there could be some interesting developments in the future seeing as it is dominated by neither the Euros nor the Straight Leftist liquidationists. The commitment to

stand in elections on a communist ticket, without pandering after the class-traitors in the Labour Party, allows us to recall the example of Phil Piratin, who was MP for Stepney and Poplar just after the war. Participating in electoral activity will hopefully enable the Party to grow in Tower Hamlets, and enhance the agitational experience of the present membership; this, however, should be considered against the discouraging background of the moves towards liquidation and towards submerging communist politics in 'community' politics in so many other London boroughs.

Yours fraternally,

Paul Burian  
Tower Hamlets.

Alan Degler replies

We found your letter most interesting as it emphasises the fact that a keen and healthy pro-Party attitude is prevailing in Tower Hamlets. This being said, we do however have two points to make with regard to the current situation and elections.

Firstly, it is a common misconception among many comrades in the Party to define *Straight Left* as 'left liquidationist', nothing could be further from the truth. For although they are thorough going liquidationists, and

indeed the potential 'grave diggers' of the Communist Party: (that mighty weapon forged through the experience and example of the Bolsheviks, the Party of Lenin), *Straight Left* themselves stand on a centrist platform of tailing Labourism and of obsequiously prostrating and subordinating the independent role of our Party to that of the Labour Party. They wish, through their pusillanimous rejection of the vanguard role of the Communist Party, to merge our Party into the Labourite swamp. *Straight Left* have to be exposed for what they are, centrist-liquidationists — they are most certainly not left.

Left-liquidationism was a term used by Lenin to describe the boycottist tendency which existed within the Bolsheviks, this grouping refused to countenance standing in elections to the Duma, and stressed the necessity of maintain-

ing a totally illegal organisational apparatus. Lenin saw this attitude as being essentially liquidationist because it would effectively isolate the Party from the masses.

Therefore from a Leninist evaluation *Straight Left* are hardly 'left' despite their pretensions and often ridiculous efforts to portray themselves as the 'hard left' of the Party. No, this anti-Party tendency stands very far from the left, they are certainly nothing more than centrists. The duty of pro-Party comrades is to make sure that it is *Straight Left* that are exposed, that it is they who are liquidated, and not they who liquidate the Party.

The second point is that although it is important to stand Communist Party candidates in elections, it is equally important to stand on a platform which promotes our position as the vanguard

of the working class. Phil Piratin (Communist Party MP for Stepney [Mile End] 1945-50) has many lessons to teach communist activists today, his sweep, initiative, and dynamism, being outstanding — but surely we must also question those who seem merely content to emulate his example in a purely parochial fashion, ignoring the broad political development in the communist movement, both in Britain and internationally.

## YCL (1)

Dear Comrades,

I would like to congratulate comrade Thomas Wright on his exacting analysis of the Young Communist League's 34th National Congress, which was published in issue number four of *The Leninist*. In the course of his article comrade Wright illustrated well the crisis in the YCL, and the existence of numerous ideological tendencies and factions. It was indeed refreshing to read such an open and serious discussion of YCL politics.

It is out of a similar sense of commitment to the YCL that I write. It is vital to expose the unhealthy forces at work within our organisation; not only out of concern for the future of the League, but more importantly, for the future of the working class youth of Britain, whom we seek to lead.

I have, on my part attempted to be as open and frank as possible. We must show no mercy in our criticism of those who have proven themselves by their actions to be anti-League. We must challenge them openly to reply and account for their actions — if they dare!

Over the past year, factionalism in the YCL has become more pronounced, manifesting itself most crudely in Euro-communist bureaucratic skulduggery. This has plunged the League into deepening crisis; in this the Euro-communists have taken up the lead in the race towards political and ideological liquidation.

An example of the Euros previous bungling could be seen earlier this year. The adoption of comrade Doug Chalmers' (YCL General Secretary), personal protegee candidate, comrade Nicky Bown, as YCL National Organiser, was a disaster. I shall not dwell upon the

irresponsible conduct of comrade Bown, for its controversial nature is well known to the League. I would, however, just add that the whole episode could well have been avoided with a little more integrity, and a lot less sectarianism, on the part of those whom the League has elected to leading positions.

The Congress was significant, as comrade Wright noted, in that the liquidationist excesses of the Euros was to prove the main locomotive force behind the right-opportunists move to a right-centrist position, thus helping to isolate the Euro-communists. It was in direct response to these advances that the Euros, led by comrade Chalmers, began to re-unite their previous bickering elements. The fact that 'democratic centralism' was exhumed (with the full support of the centrists) enabled the Euros to attack the left using the only weapons they really know and understand — bureaucracy, manipulation, and sectarian factionalism. This 'democratic centralism' being, of course, nothing more than bureaucratic centralism.

This tendency was well illustrated by comrade Chalmers' work during the recent London Aggregate, at which he was, incidentally, to get his fingers well and truly burned. The aggregate was called to elect two new General Council members and the contest was to prove a bare-knuckled fight between two Euro candidates and two left-wingers. As it turned out the two left-wingers were to prove to have more support than comrade Chalmers and the Euros had bargained for.

The Euros, shocked by this, on top of their setback at Congress, have retreated back to the security of the national offices, there to bolster up their

weakening position by using their strangle-hold of the official YCL bureaucracy. This has led to the assumption of dictatorial powers by comrade Chalmers; one need go no further than to glance through the pages of issue number 81 of *Challenge* (paper of the YCL), where comrade Chalmers, under one guise or another, accounts for an amazing near 50% of the contents.

Another indication of the dictatorial shift has been the even greater assumption of powers by the E.C. (equivalent to the Party's Political Committee) over the G.C. (equivalent to the Party's E.C.). The fact is that the E.C. plays an ever more central political role, the G.C. being reduced steadily to a rubber stamp forum. I am told that one minute 'democracy' rules, while Chalmers and his ilk deliver seemingly endless, and often irrelevant, introductions. A damning indictment of the increasingly narrow base of the Euros is that they not only have to rely on factionalism, but farcically it seems on one family. Yes, the Chalmers dynasty has been founded. First there was Frank, now there is Doug, and following him Iain, already an E.C. member and heir apparent to the crown?

Party members should be duly horrified by the state of their YCL. Now the Party E.C. has dropped its National Congress draft resolution on the state of the YCL and youth, it is up to Party branches and districts to take up the issue.

Yours comradely  
Laura Wallis

## YCL (2)

Dear Comrades,

In February 1980 I joined the YCL because I believed, and still do, that young people who are suffering under the capitalist system need a revolutionary alternative, the alternative of Marxism-Leninism, but I found that the YCL at present seems to retain little or no resemblance to the revolutionary youth organisation it used to be.

Over major questions the YCL takes a very un-Marxist stance. My own experience, in the . . . branch of the YCL, is best illustrated by the attitude taken to the annual Bloody Sunday march held this year in . . . I suggested that we take part in the march and also bring our banner, but I was told that seeing as the General Council of the YCL did not 'officially approve' of the march because of the slogans that would be chanted i.e. 'Troops Out Now', 'Self determination for the Irish people', my local branch would not take part. As it happened I was the only YCL'er from . . . on that annual national march. What is happening to our revolutionary organisation comrades?

Thomas Wright replies :

Comrade Jacks makes some quite correct and trenchant criticisms of two of the YCL's more crassly opportunist positions. As he quite rightly points out, on most major issues, but notably on the questions of peace and Ireland, the YCL's stance is characterised by a fawning subservience to liberal bourgeois opinion and not by any form of revolutionary perspective.

However, much as we agree with comrade Jacks' diagnosis of the 'illness' we disagree strongly with his projected 'cure'. The road that the comrade seems to suggest, i.e. attempting to 'win' the YCL by first 'taking' one branch, then a district and finally a congress, is one that has been well travelled. For example, the 1979 National YCL congress was the Euros *coup-de-grace*, in effect marking the decisive routing of the centrist opposition then dominated largely by *Straight Left*. The response of those centrists who actually chose to remain in the YCL, for example, those in Camden, is instructive, for it not only betrays the centrists' cretinously narrow approach to the inner-Party and League struggle, but it also reveals the bankruptcy of attempting to win the YCL by limiting yourself to starting 'at branch level'.

Essentially, the response of these 'hard-line' branches to the 1979 Euro victory was to cut themselves adrift from the rest of the Y.C.L. and to go it alone with their self-styled brand of 'pro-Sovietism'. They refused to take *Challenge*, did not bother to send delegates to congresses, rarely deigned to submit an article for publication in any League organ and on the rare occasion that they did, the turgidity and conservatism of these tracts gleaned from *Soviet Weekly* were incapable of challenging the Euro-communists' ideological onslaught. We

The manner in which the YCL tackles the question of peace is back to front. They at present tail the CND leadership and accept the pathetic position of fighting the *technology* of war instead of the *system* which creates war — capitalism. The same mentality is applied when tackling one of the most crucial questions facing Marxists in Britain — Ireland. The YCL says 'Ban Plastic Bullets'. Does this mean they would rather the British state suppress the Irish people using different means, not as openly murderous as the murder campaign on young children using plastic bullets?

Comrades, our organisation has fallen prey to ideas alien to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the League's position on Ireland being highly indicative of this trend. Instead of giving support to the anti-imperialist forces in Ireland that are leading the battle against the British state, leading figures in the YCL are giving excuses as to why violence of the PLO and ANC is different to that of the anti-imperialist forces in Ireland. Let me say to these comrades: take a communist stance on Ireland and refute reformist

are not for a moment suggesting that comrade Jacks has anything whatsoever in common politically with these centrist hermits — even a brief glance through his letter shows the comrade to be a convinced and fervent revolutionary — but the Leninist perspective is one which envisages the struggle against opportunism being waged openly and at all levels of our organisation. Anything less is to essentially duck the tasks of revolutionaries. As we said in *The Leninist No.1*:

"It is not open ideological struggle that is alien to Leninism but 'pub-room conspiracy' . . . Plotting and conspiracy in matters of ideology only leads to the stultification of comrades, it isolates them from the masses and in the end can only result in bitterness and disillusionment. Such a position has nothing to do with Leninism and Bolshevism — it is a poison."

It is a "poison" which can have some curious side-effects on its victims. For instance, it is amusing to note the extent to which certain centrists within the Y.C.L. seem to have factionalism on their diseased brains. Indeed, they are caught in a rather uncomfortable predicament. Publically, they disavow factionalism as a great evil, while simultaneously many are engaged in quite frenzied factionalism behind the scenes. Thus, they lead a Jekyll and Hyde existence, unable to justify their actions to their own consciences, but equally unable because of their political poverty, to conduct the inner-League and Party struggle on any level other than the organisational. A good example of their primitive approach can be seen in their recent manoeuvrings in the Y.C.L. With the League's shift to the left at its 34th Congress, certain *Straight Left* centrist elements must have felt rather left out in the cold. And so, with a view

ideas or you will lose credibility in our youth organisation.

The way communists in the YCL can start to bring the organisation back to its true revolutionary path is to start at a local level, to aim to show youth that the capitalist system *cannot* be reformed — only overthrown — by a youth organisation in conjunction with a communist party based on Lenin's Bolsheviks. Communists in the YCL can begin to show youth how crucial struggles against British imperialism are, like those in Ireland by Irish youth and in Britain by black youth facing the prejudice of the state. They are all part of the joint struggles of revolutionary youth internationally.

Rid the YCL of social democratic ideas and bring it back to the path of revolution within the world communist movement!

Mike Jacks

to re-establishing their hegemony over all the leftward moving trends within the Y.C.L., these 'trog's have been clumsily broaching the idea of setting up . . . wonder of wonders — a faction!

Theirs is a totally undynamic and lifeless approach to the inner-League struggle. Having little politics themselves, they choose to vegetate in their little backwater branches, only timidly venturing out to form 'factions', never to engage in any form of ideological polemic or debate. Leninists, on the other hand, recognise that factionalism is a symptom of ideological crisis that grips our organisation. We understand that to subordinate everything to organisation, to be content to exist in your own particular feudal 'faction' and to neglect to conduct the sharpest of ideological and political struggles means that opportunism will simply not be defeated. Organisational methods alone are neither sufficient nor desirable. The battle within the Y.C.L. and Party must be primarily a *political* struggle for the re-establishment of the Leninist credentials of our organisation, a struggle which necessarily must transcend a "local level" and be conducted throughout the Y.C.L. at every level. The policy of attempting to create a small island of 'Marxist-Leninist' orthodoxy in a sea of opportunism is one only worthy of the blockheadedness of the centrists — it is doomed to failure and unworthy of revolutionaries.

Having said that however, we don't for a moment advise recklessness. We have no childish illusions in the commitment to internal democracy of either the Euros or indeed the centrists. The former's rhetoric about 'openness' and 'democracy' tends to vanish rapidly when it comes to allowing the airing of revolutionary ideas, as has been shown by their crude bureaucratism within the

Y.C.L. recently. The latter, with their pin-up idolatry of Joseph Stalin (not a man known for his love of internal Party democracy) seem to delight and revel in bureaucratically excluding certain views and using administrative heavy-handedness to squash, in the name of 'unity', any real debate. Thus, as we have pointed out before, Party and League membership must be jealously guarded. This does not mean the cessation of struggle, rather an awareness of the difficulties and dangers involved for genuine revolutionaries in the Y.C.L. or Party.

Comrade Jack's letter is most welcome as it represents the healthiest forces in the Y.C.L. — those elements looking towards Leninism and revolution as the future for our organisation. We criticise comrade Jacks precisely because we are anxious that these healthy forces do not remain tied to the sort of restrictive and narrow form of inner-League struggle that has disabled the centrist opposition forces in the past. The struggle of Leninists must not and will not repeat their errors. The stakes are now far too high to risk defeat again.

## Edinburgh Review

Dear Comrades,  
I was interested to come across your magazine in *Collet's* during a visit to London. It struck me that the general emphasis of publications had changed since the last time that I was there. There was less in the way of Trot stuff and more from various pro-Soviet groups.

I have over the past few years come across a number of publications by Yurukoglu, which had struck me as being remarkably good orthodox Leninist stuff, especially for CP publications. From the general tone of your publication and from one or two hints it seems that you are sympathetic to the general line put forward by Yurukoglu. Is this true?

My impressions of *The Leninist* No. 3 are:

(1) The approach of your editorial statement seems sound, and refreshingly non-sectarian. It was also interesting because of the brief summary of the positions of other groups mentioned. It is the first time that I have seen anyone attempt to justify Leninists joining the Communist Party. It makes the proposition at least seem worth considering.

(2) The positions advanced in the article by Frank Grafton seem to coincide with some that myself and other comrades in Communist Formation were advancing some years ago, particularly the arguments about over accumulation. It has a number of weaknesses however:

a) It has a rather timeless quality about it. The general points could have been advanced at any time over the last 10 years. It does not give a sufficiently concrete analysis of the specific causes of the current recession. There is no examination of the structural imbalances within the system of international trade and finance that

combine to exercise a deflationary pressure upon individual capitalist states.

b) It does not address the issue of state monetary and fiscal policy as it affects the accumulation and circulation process. This has to be addressed if the analysis is to be relevant.

c) Some mention should be made of the change in the pattern of income allocation that has taken place over recent years leading to a very high savings ratio in Britain. A significant part of the inflationary and recessionary crisis is due to this.

d) It is necessary to say something more concrete about inflation.

Despite these criticisms of the article's omissions, what it does say is plausible.

(3) The position advanced in the article on elections is the same as that classically adopted by Trotskyist groups with respect to elections. This is not to damn it but point out that it is one of the three possible positions that Marxists can take on the question of elections. These are:

— Communist Abstentionism the classic formulation of which was in the Rome Congress of the Italian Communist Party (1922)

— Elections as a Propaganda Platform the classic formulation of which is in the pamphlet *Left Wing Communism* by Lenin

— Fighting elections in order to win them so that the party of the working class can take hold of the state machinery on the basis of a parliamentary majority. The classic exponent of this was Karl Kautsky in the *Social Revolution*.

The last of these is the only one that is usually accompanied by a clear conception of how the party is to come to power. In the first two cases, there is a commitment to Soviet power but their weakness is that they generally go along with a certain vagueness about the circumstances under which Soviet power might be realised. This vagueness is exploited by proponents of the third line. If you are to provide a convincing defence of the Leninist position you will have to answer the questions:

a) Under what circumstances can a situation of dual power arise in a bourgeois democracy?

b) Is this more likely to occur than the winning of an electoral majority by a government seriously committed to socialism?

Unless these are answered convincingly you will not have won your case against those who advocate entry into the Labour Party.

(4) The Falklands War. This attacks the idiotic positions of the Trotskyist left with their tailing behind the Argentine Fascists, but the article still betrays a certain amount of uncertainty and inconsistency. You adopt the classic Leninist position as set out by Stalin in his pamphlet on the *National Question*. You say that the Falklanders are a distinct geographical and cultural population and thus have the right to self determination. One may not agree with what they choose

(any more than Lenin approved of the Norwegians of choosing a new monarchy) but we must recognise it nonetheless. On the other hand you are against British Imperialism and in favour of it withdrawing from overseas possessions. This is a long term and respectable position held by the labour movement in Britain. Unfortunately in the case of the Falklands war these two come into conflict.

The right of the Falklanders to self determination could only be ensured by the military defeat of the Argentine occupation forces and their return to British administration. There was no chance of their being able on their own account to expel the invaders, nor was there any chance of the UN doing anything. One has to criticise Foot's absurdly optimistic assessment of the capabilities of the UN. In these circumstances the conduct of the British government was that most likely to ensure self determination for the islanders. Thatcher's position was one of the impeccable Wilsonian democracy.

If one's own state is upholding the principle of self determination what is one to do?

There is obviously no point in pretending that it is not doing so. Nor should we have any truck with opposition to the war on pacifist grounds. Your position of revolutionary defeatism looks like a fig-leaf to cover the embarrassment of communists faced with a contradictory situation.

You admit that in Britain the probability of revolutionary defeatism having any practical result was very small indeed.

First we have to ask what could have happened, then we can decide what we should say on the matter.

- 1) Whichever government won would be strengthened.
- 2) The government that lost would be weakened and might fall.
- 3) Nationalism would be strengthened in the victor and weakened in the vanquished.
- 4) These phenomena would be more pronounced the longer the war went on and the bloodier it was.
- 5) It would take a long period of indecisive total war to lead to the revolutionary overthrow of a government whose forces had not yet been defeated in the field.

Two possible positions could be advanced in propaganda.

- a) Support the task force but agitate for land redistribution in the Falklands, expropriation of the large estates and real powers of self government for the Falklands council. This is the position based upon a recognition of the rights of self determination.
- b) Explain that the Falklanders rights, whilst clearly being violated by the Argentine Fascists were a secondary matter. The more important question was the effect of the war in Britain and the Argentine and in the field of international affairs. Here it had to be said that the revolutionary cause was best served by a war that was as fierce as possible. The fiercer the war the

greater the repercussion in the defeated country. What mattered was that there should be a war, not who won. In either case a right wing government would be destabilised. Just as importantly, the system of international alliances developed by the USA was being thrown into confusion. The attempt to build a coherent block of reactionary states was meeting with a setback. On the other side, the isolation of Cuba was being weakened and the USSR and China were, for the first time in years able to combine in condemning Britain.

Please get in touch with me so that I can have a chance to discuss some of the issues you raise. I would be willing to place your magazine in the local left bookshop. Do you have any contacts in Scotland? I enclose money for a subscription.

W.P. Cockshott  
Edinburgh

Frank Grafton replies

Thank you for your letter, in which you made some stimulating criticisms and observations concerning *The Leninist* No. 3. We greatly welcome such detailed responses from our readers, and apologise for any delay in answering them. It is perhaps easiest if we answer your points in the order you make them.

Firstly, are we sympathetic to the general line put forward by Yurukoglu? The answer is yes, as we have closely followed events inside the Communist Party of Turkey and Turkey in general, and have found their general lessons to be of relevance to the world communist movement as a whole. Might we take the opportunity here to state categorically that *The Leninist* is organisationally and politically independent of the *Iscinin Sesi* movement, as rumours have recently been circulating inside the CPGB to the contrary.

Secondly, your criticisms of the economics article indicates that you have carried out your own research. We accept that this article has shortcomings, as we have only just begun to advance our position on the capitalist crisis and have yet to refine it. We have published three separate economics articles in Issues 2,3 and 4, whose main weakness is that they do not interlock with each other in serial form. The presentation of our economic analysis would therefore benefit by being restructured and integrated into a single, expanded pamphlet, perhaps entitled *The General Crisis of Imperialism*. We actually did deal with some of the specific points you mention, such as inflation, trade and international finance in *The Leninist* No. 2. But because our priority is to draw conclusions concerning the character of the period since the late 'sixties, as generally one of relative over-production and credit expansion, we avoided going into the specific details of the present recession and government policy etc. Hence "the timeless qua-

lity". But of more important significance is the implication of our analysis, that the present period will eventually give way to a 'general crisis', in which revolutionary situations will develop world-wide. Obviously, we would seek any improvements and additions to the analysis, so long as they complemented and did not detract from this general perspective.

Thirdly, you advance the three 'options' in attitude towards elections, as if their validity was to be proven academically, by argument alone. We adhere to the position of using parliament as a platform for propaganda, because it is the most important political stage in capitalist society during 'peaceful times'. We look to building a mass Communist Party with strong roots in the working class. In the present situation in Britain, this means winning the support of the most class conscious section of the working class via all channels of political and social activity. The communist parties of France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal could not have maintained their mass working class character without contesting parliamentary elections. The fact however, that opportunism in the world communist movement strives to win elections in alliance with social democracy and to enter reformist governments, is a different question altogether, and we recognise that this is leading many communist parties into political crisis and bankruptcy. It is important therefore, that Leninism draws the correct lessons from Chile and the present coalition in France. For us, the parliamentary road to socialism in the present world situation is generally a closed door, and is in reality a road to bloody and tragic defeat.

Your question concerning the circumstances in which soviet power may arise cannot be specifically answered. We can only say that revolutionary situations will force the working class to 'invent' forms of organisation pertinent to the stage of struggle, as was the case in 1920 and 1926 in Britain, when councils of action emerged. For us, the strategy of soviet power is a principle, which cannot take immediate practical form, but must be fought for ideologically inside the Party and the working class vanguard as a whole, using parliament as a platform for this purpose.

The policy of 'principled abstentionism' upheld by the anarchists and left communists is a formula for sterile sectarian isolation from mass working class politics. The fact that most groups on the left today including the Trotskyites, claim to adhere to Lenin's tactics on elections, has little effect on their existence as sects, because the modern basis of their petit bourgeois sectarianism lies in their historical isolation from the world communist movement. Whenever these groups enter other mass organisations such as social democratic parties and radical 'green' movements, they merely show their ability to leap from ultra-leftism to reformism.

Lastly, on the question of the Falklands War, you claim that our position is contradictory, because we supported the Falklanders' rights, as well as calling for the defeat of British imperialism. This is no more contradictory than Lenin's call for the defeat of all imperialist belligerents in the First World War, des-

pite the fact that Britain was 'defending' Belgium's independence, Germany was 'defending' Alsace Lorraine's right to secede from France, and Italy was busy 'liberating' the Alpine Provinces under Austro-Hungarian tyranny etc etc.

Our attitude towards Britain and Argentina was not conditioned by what each country's ruling class said, otherwise both would demand to be called liberators! Our analysis was based on the fact that Argentina was not a 'tin-pot banana republic', but that the fascist junta there represented the expansionist interests of domestic finance capital. On the other hand, we argued that the facade of the British ruling class defending the rights of 1800 Falklanders should be exposed as hypocrisy, when it was blatantly obvious they had no genuine consideration for the rights of the native inhabitants of Diego Garcia, never mind the rights of 3 million unemployed in Britain, or the rights of the black and nationalist populations in Brixton and Northern Ireland respectively. We therefore disagree with your insinuation that the British task force and Margaret Thatcher were defending the rights of the Falklanders as their primary motive. They were attempting to salvage the honour and class interests of British imperialism as a rapidly declining world power. The possibility of a humiliating defeat or even the acceptance of the Argentinian claim to sovereignty would have had disastrous repercussions for Britain's presence in N. Ireland, Gibraltar, and Hong Kong etc, as well as on its standing with other imperialist powers.

The importance of adopting the right of self-determination, is that it is possible to unite workers internationally against their own bourgeoisies. Of course the self-determination of 1800 Falklanders was secondary to the effect of the war in Britain and Argentina, but on what other platform could workers in both countries unite together in opposition to Galtieri and Thatcher. Even more important was the impossibility of revolution in Argentina, so long as the workers' movement there supported their own ruling class.

In your last proposal, you suggest that the interests of the revolution in Argentina and Britain would have been served by "as fierce a war as possible". Of course you are right. Revolution never occurs unless society sinks into the deepest chasm of crisis. But then what are you suggesting? Should we stand on street corners shouting for imperialist governments to increase unemployment or to declare World War III? How do you make the Falklands war



more fierce, except by cynically indulging in a campaign to whip up jingoism and war fever? This is the sort of crackpot conspiracy, which dull-witted amateur communists invent, whereby undercover 'reds' manipulate naive workers into going on strike etc. We are not suggesting this is what you are saying, but this is how it could be construed. Our view is that the general laws of capitalism propel that system into ever deeper crisis, without communists plotting to manufacture them. The role of communists is to organise the class struggle which naturally springs from that process and to give it conscious class guidance, to show to the working class that only socialist revolution is the real solution to the tyranny of capitalist exploitation, unemployment, oppression and war.

We hope that you continue to read *The Leninist* and correspond with us, and that maybe you will seriously consider joining the Communist Party of Great Britain as a genuine communist and revolutionary.

## Hackney and the Election

Dear Comrades,  
The run up to the General Election saw the feuding tendencies of Hackney Communist Party in a whirlpool. In recent general elections the Party has only stood one candidate, Monty Goldman, in Hackney North. In this election the Euro-communists felt the need to offer their revisionism to the voters in both of the two new constituencies. However, their policies were not universally accepted inside the local Party branches. In order to impose their factional interest on the Party two Borough Aggregates were held, one for Hackney North where comrade Goldman has been the Party candidate since 1962, and the other in Hackney South.

The aggregate in Hackney North saw comrade Monty Goldman nearly being replaced by Euro-communist, comrade Les Skeats. This unfortunate situation came about because of the position of the *Straight Left* liquidationists at the meeting, they were unwilling to stand a candidate against the sitting Labour MP, Ernie Roberts. Only when it looked like comrade Goldman may have been about to be defeated did left pressure force the liquidationists to come over with extremely reluctant support.

The Euros planned their assault on the left elements well, a concerted campaign of character assassination, full of petty-bourgeois invective, was launched against comrade Goldman. His approach at the front door during campaigns came under severe attack, apparently comrade Goldman puts his communism across too 'vociferously' for the Euros, he has not 'assimilated' the sweet talking, liberal, soft sell technique; all in all not one objective criticism was made of comrade Goldman. Fortunately for him, because

of the polarisation of the meeting, the *Straight Leftists* were forced to close ranks with the left in order to prevent a Euro triumph.

As for the sparsely attended aggregate for South Hackney, only 15 comrades turned up, it was over before it began. With the minimum of discussion the Euro majority duly nominated and elected their local guru, comrade David Green, as the Party candidate.

As the election approached, Hackney had two candidates who personified different trends in the Party. Under such conditions the local Party polarised even more. Both candidates clashed over Party policy, but unfortunately neither had any valid communist alternative. Local *Straight Left* sympathisers excelled themselves in calling for the withdrawal of the Party candidate in the South, claiming that the local Labour Party man was a 'good left-winger'. Their more determined supporters called for comrade Goldman to stand down, proclaiming the real question was 'working class unity' and to 'get the Tories out'. But their unprincipled liquidationism only alienated them from those communists willing to fight social democracy and uphold the Communist Party banner.

After the election the divisions became more aggravated. From the voting figures it was apparent that some Party members refused on ideological grounds to vote for Party candidates. Unfortunately, not a few Party members on the left supported this liquidationist position out of a deep hatred for the Euro-communist comrade Dave Green. Comrade Green may be a revisionist but he stood as a Communist Party candidate. On that basis, it is vital to vote for him. A refusal to support a Party candidate encourages the cancer of liquidationism to spread. Comrades on the left should participate in electoral work on the basis of unity in action, using the opportunity this provides to assess and criticise the Party's position in the light of concrete experience.

Due to agitation from the left, an aggregate was organised to discuss the implications of the election. Overall, the election was a major blow to the Euros strategy, and as a result an air of despondency hung over the revisionist camp. The left comrades easily dominated the aggregate, openly challenging the Party's electoral strategy. During the meeting the left became more and more assertive, forcing the Euros onto the retreat. Borough Secretary Graham Sharp expounded the petty-bourgeois notion of the necessity for an alliance with the Ecology Party, the Liberals, and other bourgeois parties, and the need for proportional representation. *Straight Left* supporters showed their tailism of the Labour Party by flatly rejecting PR crying that with it there would never have been a Labour Government. They failed to consider how it might possibly benefit communists and their revolutionary propaganda, enabling them to take

the fight into the enemy camp. propaganda, enabling them to take the fight into the enemy camp.

The election reinforced the divisions in the Party. Both the Euros and *Straight Left* are set upon a course of liquidating the Party into the Labour Party and the bourgeois camp. Those comrades who are willing to rally to a pro-Party position and the traditions of Marxism-Leninism can still salvage the situation and build our Party in order to deliver the decisive body blow to the rotting capitalist system.

Down with all forms of liquidationism!  
Stand candidates on a principled communist platform, not an opportunist one!

John Kelly  
Hackney

## A Straight Perhaps?

Dear *The Leninist*

Hearing that you had reports of the Hackney C.P., London C.P. and Y.C.L. congresses in your recent issue, I decided to purchase a copy. I was surprised to find myself quoted on page 21 and indirectly judged as having various opinions. I'm not going to discuss inner-party questions in the non-Party and factional press, but I shall pass a few comments which I challenge you to print and answer.

You represent a sterile form of ultra-leftism which takes the communist movement back beyond the famous Congress of the middle 'thirties. You are calling on people to join the Communist Party to wage factional struggle in pursuit of this sterile ultra-leftism.

For decades the world communist movement has recognised that there are different roads to socialism based on different national conditions. General and inescapable laws also apply, i.e. assumption of state power by the working class. Your criticism of the original *BRS* is a criticism of the entire world communist movement of the early 'forties and 'fifties. *Pravda* in fact printed the extracts from the *British Road to Socialism* in 1951, calling it 'a creative development of Marxism-Leninism'. *Pravda* in my opinion is not a revisionist journal. You cannot win support amongst the British working class or the members of the Communist Party spouting slogans so far removed from reality as to say that Britain has no unique circumstances. Every country has.

The Labour Party is unique. What other Social Democratic Party has a majority of the organised working class affiliated to it. What is your analysis of that inescapable fact? It cannot be ignored and no serious socialist would ignore its existence.

Our problems in the Party are immense. If you were seriously concerned about the problems of the Party, you would not be collecting money for the

publication of a factional journal, but assisting the Party in its struggle. Saving the *Morning Star* is the main issue. Directing Party branches toward dealing with the main problems facing the factories and housing estates in their locality is another. Building factory organisation and stimulating inner-Party life with an emphasis on political education are further issues to face. I'm not stepping outside democratic centralism in stating this as these problems have been freely aired. Why dissolve the British left even further? Why set up yet another splinter group responsible not to the Party but to itself?

That brings me to another point, John Chamberlain (who I've known for 11 years). They won't admit you John, because they cannot be sure that you don't owe allegiance to someone else. They cannot be sure that your allegiance is to *The Leninist* and not to the Communist Party. I saw you selling it only yesterday.

I suggest that those connected with *The Leninist* drop its publication, re-think their political ideas and come back into the mainstream of the British left. I suggest that they rejoin the Communist Party not as zombies but as thinking communists ready to fight against the capitalist offensive.

Incidentally, before you quote me as being a supporter of anybody, I suggest that you wait until I declare myself. You'll know what I think when I tell you. Until then I am only a perhaps.

Glen Baker  
Hackney

*Michael McGeehan* replies:

Of course we welcome comrade Baker's letter and will gladly clarify for him the important points he has raised.

It is however, a little sad when someone who has been in the Party as long as he, should use such terms as "ultra-leftism", "splinter group" and "factional" to describe *The Leninist* without substantiating such accusations with political argument. Also it is quite evident that the comrade has either not read all issues of *The Leninist* or he has a very poor memory, for many of the points he raises are dealt with in Issues 1 to 3, in particular we refer him to our *Founding Statement* in No. 1. Nevertheless we will try to elucidate matters for him.

Of the inner-party questions he raises with us, the most prominent is that of factionalism. What is the actual situation in our Party today? The comrade cannot be unaware that the *Morning Star* is a factional newspaper, especially having recently declared itself 'autonomous' of the Party E.C. He must also be aware that *Marxism Today* is the factional publication of the Euro-communists, who now dominate the E.C. itself. Furthermore, it would be even more surprising if the comrade did not know of the Party faction grouped around *Straight Left*. He is therefore correct in stating "our problems in the Party are

immense"; the Party is dominated by several varieties of opportunism, it is hence ideologically extremely weak — as comrade Baker obviously recognised when he spoke of the "consistent undermining of Marxism-Leninism within our Party" (*Comment* April 16 1977).

Does the comrade really believe that these "immense" problems can be resolved simply by selling more *Morning Stars* and working in the localities? After all comrade, we have been doing that for years, and the results — declining membership and degeneration of activity — are well known. Our main task is ideologically defeating opportunism in our Party.

It is precisely because of the absence of real open ideological struggle and democratic centralism within our Party, that the only avenue for genuine Leninist ideas is in a separate publication. Yes, we are led to the same conclusions as that well-known 'factional' group the Bolsheviks were, when the columns of *Iskra* were closed to them by the Mensheviks; they proceeded to produce their own "factional journal" — *Vperyod* in 1904. Unless comrade Baker can suggest a better method of struggle against the opportunist factions in our Party, we will continue using the tactics of Lenin.

As for *The Leninist* being "yet another splinter group"; we are the exact opposite. We are resolutely opposed to the formation of sects, and as we have already stated (see *The Leninist* No.3) — all genuine communists should be in the Communist Party.

But it should be obvious to him by now that the principled politics of *The Leninist* are winning increasing numbers of Party members. It should also be obvious to him, if he has read all issues of our journal, that we are totally committed to fighting the opportunist cancer eating into our Party and to reforging it in the Bolshevik mould. And we shall only cease publication of *The Leninist* when a genuine democratic centralist regime is established in the Party. The fact that John Chamberlain has been bureaucratically barred because of disagreements with the E.C. faction, despite his declared willingness to comply with the conditions of membership, indicates that such a situation does not yet exist.

It is interesting that the comrade emphasises the importance of political education. We wholeheartedly support this view. Furthermore assuming comrade Baker considers himself a follower of Lenin, he no doubt considers the *development of Marxist-Leninist theory* to be of prime importance. It is only in *The Leninist* that you can find Marxist-Leninist analyses of such questions as: the world economic crisis; the Labour Party and the British working class; problems of the world communist movement; and in particular the crisis within our Party. For as "thinking communists" we believe it our responsibility to tackle these theoretical questions. The solutions are certainly not

to be found in the theoretical poverty of *Marxism Today*.

Speaking of theoretical poverty, the clumsy ideas of *Straight Left* seem to have some influence over the comrade, particularly on the Labour Party question. Certainly, no serious socialist would ignore the existence of the Labour Party and its hold over masses of workers, but we must correctly characterise it, understand the role it plays, and only then can we develop the most appropriate tactics with which to win the working class away from social-democracy and to communism. Though comrade Baker correctly describes it as a "social democratic party", he then infers that because it has "a majority of the organised working class affiliated to it" it is somehow unique. This sounds very much like the liquidationist position of *Straight Left*, that the Labour Party is 'the mass party of the working class'; but perhaps he would like to clarify his position. For our part, we assert that this view is a grotesque distortion, and concur with Lenin when he said: "... whether or not a party is a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics" (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol 31, p257). Lenin therefore concluded that the Labour Party was a "thoroughly bourgeois party" i.e. it was a bourgeois workers party. Yes, and it is essentially no different from the S.D.P. in W. Germany nor the Socialist Party in France in that fundamental respect (see the review by Michael McGeehan in *The Leninist* No.2).

Comrade Baker may have broken from *Straight Left* organisationally but unfortunately appears not to have completely broken with their politics.

He is, however, quite correct in stating that there are "general and inescapable laws" of revolution such as "... the assumption of state power by the working class". But beyond lip service where is that "inescapable law" to be found in the *BRS*? And concerning the "different national conditions" he refers to, are they in Britain 'our historic democratic traditions' and our professional army 'loyal to Parliament' etc? Another inescapable law he has surely heard of is Marx's principle of smashing the old state machine — but where is that idea to be found in the *BRS*? We ask the comrade, is the *BRS* revisionist or not? And is there any real difference between the five editions of the *BRS*?

Finally, the world communist movement, the CPSU and the *BRS*. We would very much like to issue a challenge to comrade Baker. Why did *Pravda* in 1951, call the *BRS* "a creative development of Marxism-Leninism"? We await his explanations with great interest.

Note: We have adopted the policy of changing names, addresses, and certain details in letters published in *The Leninist* where we think political security would be jeopardised.

# Back Issues of *The Leninist*

For prices and postage see inside front cover.

## Number One

Founding Statement of The Leninist:  
The Communist Party, the Crisis and  
its Crisis  
The Road from Thatcherism, or the  
Road from Marxism? (A critique of  
the AES)  
Ireland and the Opportunists  
What's Happening in Poland?

## Number Two

After the Congress  
The Polish Crisis  
The Paradox of Afghanistan  
The Economic Crisis and its  
Political Effects in Britain (Part One)  
Liberation and the Class Struggle:  
The Real Link for Women  
Reviews:  
The Labour Party: A Force for  
Revolution or Reaction?  
The Irish Working Class: Past  
and Future  
Austrian Lessons

## Number Three

A Call to All Communists  
The Economic Crisis and its  
Political Effects in Britain  
(Part Two)  
Should We Stand in the Elections?  
Lessons of the Falklands War  
Millerandism to Mitterandism  
Reviews:  
Women's Freedom and Sweet  
Revolution  
Whose Revolution in Ethiopia?  
Letters

## Number Four

The Party Crisis and the Morning  
Star Crunch  
Some Thoughts on the British  
Road to Socialism  
The General Crisis and the World  
Balance of Forces  
Answering the Call: the Workers  
Party and Proletarian  
Reviews:  
Poland  
Turkey  
A Survey of the Party  
Letters

## Books Received

R.Yurukoglu, *The Situation and Our Tasks 1983*,  
Iscinin Sesi Publications, 1983, pbk. pp.95 £1.50

South African Communist Party, *The African  
Communist* No93 and No94 Inkululeko Public-  
ations, 1983, pbk. pp.112

Pete Ayrton (Ed) *World View 1983*, Pluto Press,  
London 1982, pbk. pp.500, £6.95

*Le Communiste*, *Le Communiste* Nos. 300-4,  
Paris, 3F

Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible socialism*,  
George Allen and Unwin, London 1983, pbk.  
pp.224,

Leslie Evans, *China After Mao*, Monad, New York  
1978, pbk. pp.191, £3.50

Daniel Guerin, *Fascism and Big Business*, Monad,  
New York 1979, pbk. pp.318 £4.50

*Line of March*, *Line of March* Nos. 12, 13, 14,  
Oakland September 1982-April 1983, \$3.50, \$5.00

David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent  
Labour Party*, Manchester, Manchester 1983, hdk.  
pp.522, £35.00

Ian Britain, *Fabianism and Culture*, Cambridge  
hdk. pp.344, £19.50

Jenny Beale, *Women as Trade Unionists*, Pluto Press,  
London 1982, pbk. pp.112, £2.50

R.Armstrong and J Shenk, *El Salvador the Face of  
Revolution*, Pluto Press, London 1982, pbk. pp.283,  
£3.50

J. Eaton and C. Gill, *The Trade Union Directory*,  
Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.328, £7.95

Martin Kitchen, *Fascism*, Macmillan, London  
pbk. pp.106.

Tony Benn, Emin Bozarslan, and Aydin Meric,  
*Stop the Trials in Turkey*, CDDRT, 1983, pbk.  
pp.34, £0.40

Organisation of Iranian Peoples' Fedaiian (Maj)  
*International KAR* No.5 April 1983 pp.18

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,  
*PFLP Bulletin* Nos.64-6 pp.47

Communist Labour Party of the United States  
of North America, *Rally Comrades*, Chicago  
1983 \$ 1.