

Beat the Tory War of Attrition with the UNITED WORKERS' OFFENSIVE

THE TORIES are out to grind the NUM down in a war of attrition which they are quite willing to see go on into the winter. In their war they are prepared to use every weapon to divide the miners, isolate them from other workers, and terrorise them into submission.

They have turned Nottinghamshire into a virtual police state in order to prevent effective picketing. They have used High Court injunctions to make illegal NUM statements that the strike is official, as they have when moves were made to discipline scabs. Their plans have been well laid. It is now known by all that Thatcher allowed pay settlements with other sections of workers to go ahead in an attempt to head off possible joint actions with the miners. Record stocks of coal were built up, substitute energy forms especially nuclear power developed, and the movement of coal ensured by the use of lorries.

The staging of talks last month did present the danger of leaders of the NUM, with or without Arthur Scargill, agreeing to some sort of deal with the NCB behind the backs of the rank and file. Despite the "sugar coating" offer of higher pay for those left with a job, the fact that MacGregor's "New Plan for Coal" entailed the closure of 70-100 pits over the next few years made it inevitable that the NUM would be forced to reject the proposals outright. Militant miners must fight to ensure that there are no more secret negotiations, for they not only present a threat of sell out but divert attention from the necessity of consolidating and spreading the strike.

For if the miners are to win — and a defeat for them would be a dreadful setback for all workers — other sections must be drawn into battle now. Left by themselves to face the full power of the state no matter how magnificent and how heroic their determination, the miners will be slowly worn down. Already over 3,500 miners have been arrested. In the first weeks of the strike they went straight to trial and usually received small fines, but then as trials were delayed the courts began to impose bail conditions which have gradually become more and more onerous.

From stipulating miners could only picket their own place of work, bail conditions have been extended to demanding that miners do not go within a certain distance of any NCB property except their own NCB houses. Recently other conditions have included bans from all of Nottinghamshire and even 8 am to 8 pm curfews. In this way offences which do not carry prison sentences, such as obstruction, can

through the refusal to comply with impossible conditions be made into imprisonable offences. Through this manipulation of the infinitely manipulable law the state hopes to erode the numbers of active pickets, forcing those who refuse to accept house arrest to sit out the strike in a gaol cell.

And if this does not work — and remember it is a long term strategy — the Tories have other strings to their bow such as NCB organised ballots, attempts to starve miners' families, but above all they have police coercion. In scenes instantly recognisable to viewers of TV coverage of the Six Counties, police have adopted many of the methods the army has employed in their struggle with the nationalist masses, including the use of snatch squads. The deployment of police cavalry charges has added another dimension and has shown the correctness of our call for the development of Workers' Defence Corps.

Those who simply chant Saltley

James Marshall



Gates and portray mass picketing as the key to the miners struggle forget that in 1972 miners at Saltley were able to rely on the support of tens of thousands of striking Birmingham engineering workers. It was this extra element that persuaded the police to give up their attempt to keep the depot open: this victory proved decisive in the road to victory. 1972 showed not only the might of the miners but how this might can become irresistible if actively backed by solidarity strikes and joint mass picketing.

Now what was necessary for a miners' victory in 1972 is a thousand times truer today with all the contingency plans developed by the state, the productivity deals introduced by the Labour government which are the basis for the scabbing in Nottinghamshire, and the determination of the Tories to deliver a strategic blow against the working class by defeating the miners.

Many of our trade union leaders

have proved good on rhetoric but bad on actual concrete militant solidarity. The NUR and ASLEF despite their left reformist leadership accepted 30 pieces of silver from the government, a measly 4.9%, rather than put up a meaningful fight alongside the miners. And where the left reformists have proved themselves as militant talking windbags the right has openly revealed their treachery. Bill Sirs has actively connived in the use of strike busting coal, and EEPTU leader Eric Hammond actually sides with the Tories against Arthur Scargill and the NUM and calls for his members in the power stations to cross picket lines. The majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party have been little better — calling on Thatcher to "intervene", as if she hasn't already — and what are we to make of Kinnock's attacks on militant miners? Surely they fly in the face of the sycophantic assertions by centrist *Morning Star* political correspondent Andrew Murray that the "Labour Party" has done "its duty to those who sent them to Parliament" over the miners' strike, and that Labour MPs are "determined to see this fight through to victory" (June 11, 1984).

Of course what militant miners need is not cheerleaders or those who specialise in fostering illusions in Labourism, and certainly not lectures about how their strike must not become political, as Euro industrial organiser Pete Carter declares. No, what is needed is immediate and massive solidarity, up to and including a general strike.

The miners' strike must not be allowed to flag, to interminably drag on in isolation. We must not simply wait for NCB, police, and court attacks and then respond; we must raise the stakes now. Arthur Scargill's warning that the strike might last until next year and the brave determination by miners and their families to see their struggle to victory in no way excuses the rest of the working class from its responsibility to the miners and to itself of joining the miners in united struggle.

Militant miners and militants in other industries must take the lead in fighting to spread the strike. We cannot rely on leaders to do this for us. We must beat the Tory war of attrition against the miners with a united workers' offensive which must include in its aims forcing the TUC to call a general strike. Only this perspective can unleash the bottled up anger and energy of the whole class, can stop in their tracks the thugs in blue, can ensure a miners' victory, and bring the arrogant Iron Lady Thatcher to her knees and have her begging for mercy.



THE LENINIST

Polish Coal

For Leninists the class struggle is international and ultimately indivisible. For this reason we regard it as our basic duty to defend unconditionally every socialist state against the forces of counterrevolution. This proletarian internationalism in no way implies an unthinking 'everything they do is OK' attitude. Detachments of the international army of the working class are not immune from mistakes and even crimes; to pretend that they are is to commit a disservice to our struggle.

It is in this light we supported the suppression of Solidarity. It is also why we voiced our profound criticisms of the leadership of the PUPP for allowing the situation in Poland to drift to the brink of counterrevolution. To have taken any other attitude would be to desert Leninism, and to slip into centrism or into right opportunism. Because of our principled position we feel fully entitled to make the call to the leadership of the Polish state and Party, indeed to the entire working class in Poland, to stop the movement of coal to Britain. If the miners' strike is defeated it will not only represent a setback for workers in Britain but for the working class internationally, not least in Poland.

Stopping the export of coal to Britain would, it is true, have short term economic disadvantages, but in the long run would show clearly to the workers throughout the world that Poland is a gain for all workers and must be defended. To carry on exporting despite the pleas of the NUM, including Arthur Scargill who has been castigated in Britain for his opposition to Solidarity, is against the long term interest of Poland, the socialist community, and the international working class.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Trotskyism

To The Leninist

Having followed your journal closely since its first issue I was interested to see the May issue carry this appraisal of Trotsky:

"True leftism at the time was represented by the Trotskyites, who must be castigated, not for the secretarian politics of 'social fascism', but for their desertion of the world communist movement and passage into the petty bourgeois wilderness. They have subsequently remained as insignificant as when they first emerged, despite the opportunity during the critical vicissitudes of the Second World War, to prove their hollow claim to be the true heirs of Comintern."

On the one hand you say that Trotskyism was the "true leftism at the time" but on the other you say it had a "hollow claim to be the true heirs of Comintern". You can't have it both ways. It is not possible to be the true leftists of the time without being the true heirs to Lenin any more than *The Leninist* not claiming to be both.

The Leninist says the Trotskyites were guilty of "desertion of the world communist movement" but in fact the Trotskyites were viciously expelled, as were members who questioned the expulsions. The position "It is necessary to build the Communist Parties anew" was adopted because of the debacle in Germany which proved Stalin's impotence before Hitler's rise to power.

The Leninist says that Trotskyites "remained as insignificant as when they first emerged." There is something self-deprecatory about this since *The Leninist* has taken wholesale from Trotsky's opposition to popular frontism. Trotsky put forward the position of the workers' united front/workers' militias as the revolutionary alternative to the popular front. Yes, it was early Comintern which had put forward this revolutionary position which Stalin betrayed and that is precisely the point about Trotsky's carrying it forward.

The Leninist has tried to distance itself from Stalin by using substantial parts of the Left Opposition polemic against Stalin but then at the same time distancing itself from Trotsky with a smattering of Stalinist slander. *The Leninist* wants to eclectically incorporate the great revolutionary tradition of Trotskyism while maintaining itself firmly in the Stalinist camp. Instead of pretending that world revolution is not the Trotskyist opposition to Stalin's 'Socialism in One Country' (which you correctly cite as the device of the degeneration of the Comintern) *The Leninist* would be far better to come to grips with the proud history of Trotskyism, particularly in WWII.

You claim adherence to the "Leninist foundations of Comintern as expressed in its first four Congresses". Good. That is the basis of Trotsky's struggle to preserve Leninism from the Stalinist reaction codified in its embracing of 'Socialism in One Country'. So, yes to world revolution but

you will have to break from Stalinism to fight for world revolution. In these years of aggressive imperialist war drive and an inspiring miners challenge to the bourgeoisie, there is tremendous scope for a massive growth of the Bolshevik-Leninist Trotskyism among the Stalinist ranks.

Yours for a reformed Bolshevik international
— Arnold Mintz
London

James Marshall replies:

The fact that our Trotskyite friend automatically takes the description "true leftism" as a compliment says a great deal. For leftism isolates the revolutionaries from the masses, it is characterised by a dogmatic approach to questions by substituting ready made formulas for the concrete study of reality. Marx supported the expulsion of the anarchists from the First International, they were the leftists of the nineteenth century. The Bolsheviks too were occasionally plagued by leftism, for example the Boycottists who elevated the tactics of boycotting electoral work to a principle. Lenin fought, and in the end expelled, this leftist deviation which in the name of revolutionary purity sealed off the party from the broad masses. The early Comintern was also far from immune from leftism. Take a look at Lenin's *Left Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder* to get a glimpse of the concerted struggle he fought against it.

Trotskyism is a leftist reaction to the rightist sins of the world communist movement. It is as much 'true Leninism' as the Boycottists were 'true Bolsheviks'; Trotsky in 1933 declared that the communist parties were dead for revolution and gave up all attempts to change them — this was defeatist desertion of the world proletarian vanguard who were and still are organised overwhelmingly in the communist parties. Revolutionary events since 1933 surely prove his contentions disastrously wrong. It was communist parties that established socialism throughout Eastern Europe, in North Korea, Vietnam, and China, not the Trotskyites.

And what about Trotsky's 'Fourth International'? Well, that was an abortion not a workers' international; far from it organising tens of millions as Trotsky predicted its splinters have degenerated into totally impotent sects on the one hand or, on the other, in an effort to overcome their congenital isolation they have dissolved themselves into left social democracy.

The choice revolutionaries face is not between Trotskyism and 'Stalinism', one might just as well say the choice in the past was between Lassalleism or anarchism, Bernsteinism or Bordigaism: this is illogical, untrue, and total-

ly un-Marxist. Yes, we criticise Stalin; yes, we stand on the theoretical achievements of the early Leninist Comintern; but to deduce from this that we "take wholesale from Trotsky" is patently false. We might agree with some of his criticisms, but then Marx agreed with some of the anarchists' criticisms of rightist elements in the First International. Lenin too recognised much of the validity of the 'Left Wing' communists' attacks on the revolting leaders of the official labour movements in the West. This did not make Marx an anarchist nor Lenin a 'Left Wing' communist; likewise we are not Trotskyites, we are Leninists. It is as simple as that. We certainly want nothing to do with the so-called "great revolutionary traditions of Trotskyism" — for us Trotskyism is impotency and left-liquidationism, something surely proved in WWII when the masses rallied in their tens of millions to the communist parties while the "Fourth International" remained nothing more than an isolated sect which soon splintered under the pressure of reality. Where is the "Stalinist slander" in this?

I Chose the CPGB

Dear comrades,

I first came across *The Leninist* in about 1982 in *Collets*, and bought a copy of No. 3, and then obtained the two back numbers. I was very impressed indeed with what I read, and I am now in possession of all eight issues.

When I picked up that copy of *The Leninist* I had joined and left both the old Party and the NCP! I was completely disillusioned. At the same time as I picked up *The Leninist*, I also picked up *The New Worker* and the *New Communist Review*. I still read *The New Worker*, but did not rejoin the old or the New party straight away.

For me, the turning point was reading John Chamberlain's letter in No. 4, particularly the statement that the biggest political mistake of his life was leaving the old Party.

Eventually I rejoined the old Party, and am now once again getting very involved in the Party, my union, and to me, perhaps one of the most important things, the Trades Council.

I am sure that *The Leninist* has given me that little bit of 'push' which I needed and I am very grateful.

I am always miles behind with my reading, and there's a lot I don't understand. I don't really understand this business about centrism and its origins in the 1920s, and how the NCP is a continuation of that. All I am going on really is a sort of political instinct. I still think there is a lot of good in the NCP, but the fact remains I chose the CPGB.

Yours fraternally,

Robert Goldston
Sussex

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

The Mines

'Our' Industry?

Frank Grafton

LENIN ONCE WROTE in an article entitled *Economic and Political Strikes*, "The stronger the onslaught of the workers, the greater their achievements in improving their standard of living. The 'sympathy of society' and better conditions of life are both results of a high degree of development of the struggle. Whereas the liberals (and the liquidators) tell the workers: 'You are strong when you have the sympathy of "society"' the Marxist tells the workers something different, namely: 'You have the sympathy of "society" when you are strong.'" (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.18, p.85, 1977)

This axiom is still pertinent today in relation to the opportunists in our own Party, who have made concerted attempts to tone down the class nature of the present miners' strike with the intent of assuaging 'public opinion'. Intrinsic to this strategy has been the appeal to patriotic sentiment, which the *Morning Star* editorial made with reference to "Communities in struggle" (May 21 1984) emphasising support for the strike by local business people in the mining areas and which comrade Gordon McLennan made more overtly when he declared: "A victory for the miners will be a victory for the British people. To help the miners is to help Britain." (*Morning Star*, May 19 1984)

The central tenet of the opportunists' propaganda around the miners' strike, however, is the idea that the coal industry is a national asset, in the sense that it is nationalised and therefore supposedly belongs to the British people, that it is the property of the working class, that it is 'our' industry. The opportunists thereby project the Tories' plan to rationalise and to privatise the coal industry as an act of unpatriotic "madness", to which they pose the alternative of "...a firm energy base and major resource for rejuvenating British industry, laying sound foundations for the redevelopment of our wasted manufacturing industries." (*Morning Star* Editorial, May 24 1984)

To simply castigate the Tories and McGregor as "mad" is bad enough in that it hides their true motives as being the profit motive of capitalism. But to pose the task to workers of 'saving' British industry from these 'unpatriotic' butchers without making the defence of living standards our immediate priority and the seizure of state power as our ultimate aim is even worse — is in fact treachery — because it sacrifices the class interests of the workers for the benefit of saving British capitalist industry.

Let us see where patriotism and staying loyal to 'their' industry has got the miners since it became nationalised in 1947.

The issue of pit closures and redundancies did not just emerge recently, but has been a continuous process since the NCB was set up. In fact the worst cuts were made during the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s. From a level of employing over 700,000 miners in over 900 collieries, the NCB rationalised the industry down to the present level of 185,000 miners employed in just 176 pits. Far from simply being the handiwork of only Tory governments, it was the Labour administration of Harold Wilson which oversaw the closure of 191 pits during the period 1965-70, making even the McGregor plan for a further 70 pit closures over the next five years (according to NUM calculations) almost pale by comparison. Further-

more, the miners' union did not oppose this loss of over a half million jobs and was unable to prevent the decline of miners' wages in comparison with other sectors of workers, until it waged militant and uncompromising struggles in 1972 and 1974.

The coal industry like all other nationalised industries was not taken over by the state with the intention of running it in the interests of the British people or of the working class employed in that industry. The intention of the capitalist class was of course to run an industry, which because of very high capital outlay costs had become inefficient and unprofitable under private ownership, but which still provided a necessary resource and service to the rest of the capitalist economy. The degree to which high capital investment with relatively little return is a feature of production industry in the state sector is shown by the Census of Production figures for 1981. Of all industries including manufacturing, mineral extraction, construction, gas, water and electricity, only 15% of both employment and gross output is accounted for by the state sector, yet its share of net capital expenditure (meaning plant, machinery, vehicles and new buildings) amounts to a staggering 38%! It is the attempt to reduce the collective burden of these costs for the capitalist class, which has conditioned the long term strategy of increasing efficiency through increased productivity and which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of jobs being lost in all nationalised enterprises during the past twenty years, including over 300,000 in British Rail and nearly 200,000 in British Steel.

Very little resistance to these drastic cuts has been put up by the trade unions precisely because of the pervading attitudes in the labour movement, which defend the logic of improving 'our' industry's profitability and efficiency above the interest of defending our jobs and living standards. The opportunists in our Party (and reformists in general) further justify this position by peddling the illusion that socialism can be built from within capitalist society by reforms whilst the capitalist state remains intact, and that, moreover, nationalised industries and services represent 'islands of socialism', which will grow and eventually envelop society as a whole. The past forty years show us, however, despite the naive mythology surrounding the Attlee Government, that nationalisation has been utilised by the capitalist class and implemented by both Labour and Tory parties as a manifestation of state monopoly capitalism, and in the case of the welfare state, as a reform intended to ameliorate class antagonisms, which capitalism could well afford during the halcyon days of the 1950s and 1960s, but is increasingly unable to do now.

The Eurocommunists and the *Morning Star* have taken yet another qualitative step in their historic slide to the right in their attitude towards nationalised industries, even when compared to the already revoltingly reformist *British Road to Socialism*. At least in the latter we find formal acknowledgement of the capitalist state's role as being in the interests of monopoly capitalism, although this is still conditioned by the assumption that the state sector is 'naturally' non-capitalist with the casual passing remark that: "There is constant pressure to subordinate the public sector and make it serve the interests of the private sector" (p.6) — as if this had not been the intention all along. But now, any differentiation between 'capitalist nationalisation' and 'socialist nationalisation' is

totally obscured by the opportunists' scramble to capture the mantle of true patriotism. The coal industry is no longer part of state monopoly capitalism, but is simply 'our' industry. The cause of socialism is pushed even further into the background as the task of saving British — not only nationalised, but BRITISH — industry becomes evermore pressingly urgent.

For anybody acquainted with the history of the international labour and socialist movement, this development is nothing new for it is a sign that the growing crisis of capitalism is forcing opportunism to complete its passage into the camp of the bourgeoisie in the guise of social chauvinism and open class treachery. The fact that Chater and McLennan are following in the footsteps of Hyndman and Kautsky does not make the liquidation of the Communist Party any less tragic and certainly not a farce. It is a very serious threat, which all pro-Party communists must organise against in a disciplined rebellion to overthrow the Eurocommunist leadership.

To defeat opportunism it is imperative we counter the reformist argument that Britain's economic decline is due to incompetent management and incorrect governmental policies, against which the Alternative Economic Strategy is posed as a solution. It is because Britain is an imperialist country and is driven by the demand for profit above all else that billions of pounds of capital are exported in search of more intensely exploited labour in Latin America and the Far East. This is not simply a 'policy' of capitalism which can be reversed, any more than increasing industrial productivity with machines can be historically reversed. Parasitism and decay are fundamental features of imperialism and can not be overcome except through the overthrow of the system itself.

The reformist solution offered by the AES, of 'workers democracy' (where trade unions share the responsibility of implementing management decisions for increasing profitability), of planning agreements and of import controls (through which workers in Britain are diverted from confronting capitalism at home as the true cause of job losses and low wages, to blaming other workers in Japan and South Korea) is more a means of harnessing the co-operation of the organised working class in promoting Britain's competitiveness with other capitalist (and socialist) countries. In this respect the class collaborationism during the Second World War in this country when even the Communist Party supported co-operation with the capitalists at every level — from shop floor to the corridors of Whitehall — is the real blueprint for the architects of the AES.

With over three million workers already on the dole and the attempt by the Tory government in the current miners' strike to open the way forward for a brutal offensive against trade unionism and living standards in general, the question still arises however: How can the working class combat this rising capitalist onslaught?

The workers' experience of nationalisation under capitalism has shown that this is not the answer to saving jobs and maintaining wage levels by itself, and is definitely nothing to do with building socialism. But it does have an advantage in one respect. In the face of an industry going bankrupt, as happened with Rolls Royce and shipbuilding, it forces the capitalist class as a whole to take responsibility for its continuation. It provides a focal point, and an increasingly political focal point, around which workers can wage a

struggle for the government of the day to guarantee jobs and wages. The success of this still rests with the strength and determination of the workers however. It is in this context that we support continued state responsibility for industries and services such as National Health, which are under threat of privatisation. Privatisation can only mean one thing — even greater cuts in the pursuit of productivity and profitability and even greater pressure to drive down wages. Our only consideration in defending nationalisation here is the defence of jobs, living standards, and free availability of welfare services for all workers.

A positive development to the limited gains and excessive losses wrought by state intervention in industry over the past fifteen years has been the response of rank and file trade union organisations. Critical reports such as those by the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards combine and trades councils in Newcastle, Coventry, Liverpool and N. Tyneside are still limited in that they propose a more left version of the AES still tied to the fortunes of a Labour government, but they raise the important demand of "Production for social needs, not profits." This must be our starting point, for then our demands of the system are based on working class interests and not what capitalism can afford.

A second positive development has been the attempts by workers to implement workers' control in order to combat closures and redundancies, such as the numerous occupations throughout the 1970s, of which the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in was the most celebrated example. The important point is not whether such experiments end in nationalisation, a private takeover or the setting up of a co-operative, all of which can be accommodated within the capitalist system and do not necessarily challenge it. The important point is that the issue of workers' control and the setting up of factory committees (which transcend shop steward committees in that they strive to represent all unionised and non-unionised workers) begin to challenge the capitalists' control of working conditions and production. This can become the basis of a spreading political movement as was the case in Russia in 1917 and to a lesser extent in Britain during 1917 — 1921 when the local shop stewards in Scotland set up bodies like the Clyde Workers' Committee with the following declared objectives:

1. To obtain an ever-increasing control over workshop conditions.
2. To regulate the terms upon which the workers shall be employed.
3. To organise the workers upon a class basis and to maintain the Class Struggle, until the overthrow of the Wages System, the freedom of the workers, and the establishment of industrial democracy have been obtained.

We might add that such workers control should apply to both nationalised and privately owned industry.

Yet workers' control should not be construed to mean building socialism in the factories and the localities now. It must be seen as a demand around which the working class can begin to demand of capitalism what it needs, begin to challenge the system and go beyond it. Ultimately, even this is not enough, for a positive answer to the question "Is it our industry?" is not determined by nationalisation or even workers' control of industry. The determining factor is whether the working class has state power.

"...how it is possible for an intelligent civil servant to treat Moscow as the repository of his idealism beggars belief." (*The Times*, April 17 1984)

Bettaney: The More the Better

William Hughes

THE BOURGEOISIE confesses itself baffled and deeply disturbed by the whole Bettaney affair. But while it raises uncomfortable questions for the ruling class, it confronts our Party also with issues vital to the success of the British revolution. It has given us a small insight into the way the security services operate in Britain. More importantly however it has posed point blank the issue of Soviet defencism. So what should be our attitude to ex-MI5 agent Michael Bettaney and his 'crime'?

Bettaney first became disenchanted with the British state's policies during his three year stint in Northern Ireland. What confirmed and politicised these doubts, however, was the accelerating anti-Soviet war drive of the Western powers. Abroad, as Bettaney himself pointed out, this means that "by subversive actions and other more sinister and immoral methods these special services aim not merely to remove the Soviet Government and Party, but also to destroy the entire fabric of society in the USSR and in other socialist countries." At home it means targeting anyone, no matter how seemingly innocuous, who they perceive of as standing in the way of their gory anti-socialist crusade.

It is perfectly legal for any British citizen to have their telephones tapped and mail opened by the Special Branch, Customs and Excise, regular police units, and, of course, the Secret Service. There has been a shaking of heads at some of the Secret Service's more shady 'grey area' operations, which have expanded greatly since 1979. Yet although the bourgeoisie and its liberal critics may raise their eyebrows at some of MI5's more crude 'manners', the new context of exacerbated class conflict at home and internationally deem it necessary. The rules applying to the issuing of warrants for surveillance are conveniently bent and there are sufficient loopholes in the system anyway to allow MI5, in practice, to keep tabs on anyone, anywhere, at any time.

These information gathering services are highly centralised and highly efficient. The raw material collected from say, phone taps is relayed from the central monitoring office of the GPO in Ebery Bridge Road, Chelsea (known affectionately as 'Tinkerbelle') to MI5's new London office where it is transcribed and passed on to the appropriate department for analysis. 'Tinkerbelle' actually has the capacity to tap around 1,000 phones simultaneously.

In addition to such sources of 'raw' intelligence, MI5 has the entire information service of the bourgeois state to draw on. For example, the DHSS computer in Newcastle contains a constantly updated list of the 'vital statistics' of every Briton who is in work and paying national insurance contributions or out of work and claiming benefit — that is, practically all of us. Similarly, the national police computer, with the names and addresses of the country's 30.5 million car owners, or the more specialised local computers, such as in the Lothian and Borders force, can provide the intelligence services with a 'localised' and specific body of data on a 'free text retrieved' service.

At the heart of the system, this vast amount of information, carefully sorted, is used to compile the MI5's comprehensive list of all those who are considered, in whatever way, to pose a threat to the state. *The Guardian* of

April 18 reported that around 500,000 people would have personal files stored on them on the first floor of MI5's Mayfair headquarters. These files would contain photos and typed records of their political beliefs and affiliations, friends, families, jobs, applicable crimes, and simply allegations and unfounded suspicions about them:

"It is not entirely clear who the 500,000 are... (but) it is known to involve records of all 65,000 positively vetted civil servants and 15,000 members of the Communist Party."

The largest single target of F Branch of MI5 (which deals with domestic surveillance) remains the CP — they would have a personal file on every Party member and those they broadly define as 'sympathisers'. Within F branch we get an entire subdivision all to ourselves (F1), along with Irish 'terrorism' (F5), and Trade Unions (F2). Surveillance of the Party would not only be carried out by indirect observation but also by quite systematic infiltration. Thus it is unlikely that our Party, including its upper echelons, has not been thoroughly infiltrated by MI5. We do not state this in order to scaremonger; we are not guilty of the same type of James Bondism that constitutes *Straight Left's* world view. We state it because it is simply a fact.

Consequently, the approach to internal party security is not merely a 'detail' but a measure of the seriousness with which we approach our task of making revolution. Typically, our

Party leaders, instead of acting to counter the inevitable attentions of MI5 have simply whined 'why us?' For instance, the official reaction of the Party to the 1982 disclosure by author Nigel West that Party official comrade Betty Reid had unwittingly employed an MI5 agent, Betty Gordon, was a wheedling, "But we have nothing to hide". Clearly, if we do not, we should have.

The Leninist is the only tendency which takes the security and therefore the survival of our organisation seriously; the only trend that stands consistently and unconditionally for the defence of the Soviet Union; and is thus the only group in the CP that unreservedly condones the actions of ex-MI5 agent, Michael Bettaney. The *Morning Star* of April 17, instead of refuting the hysterical anti-Soviet wail of the bourgeois press, simply offered an 'impartial' report. Likewise, for *Straight Left*, the great self proclaimed 'pro-Soviets' of our party, Michael Bettaney does not even warrant a mention. Presumably, defending Bettaney might jeopardise their unprincipled links with the left social democrats who constitute their 'advisory' panel — after all, the man was a traitor... wasn't he?

We applaud traitors to British imperialism. Bettaney was a 'patriot' of the Soviet Union and therefore of the working class in Britain and throughout the world. The bourgeoisie has been reduced to seeking 'psychological' explanations of this brave man's actions. Ex-colleagues are

wheeled out to provide insights into the 'twisted mind' of Bettaney the 'odd cove'. Miranda Ingram, who worked with Bettaney in the K Branch counterespionage department of MI5 bemoans the "obsessive aura of secrecy" that pervades the security services and which means that unease about particular aspects of policy, because there is no outlet for "critical self questioning", can often "seek a clandestine outlet" (*New Society*, May 31 1984).

Ingram misses the point. It was not the atmosphere in which Bettaney worked that transformed him, it was the nature of the work itself. It may seem a little obvious to state that the state's secret services need to be secret — especially so as their work largely consists in doing the 'dirty work' of capitalism. Ingram's and all liberal critics' intentions are clear however — to advise the imperialist bourgeois state on how to arrange its security affairs more efficiently. Without reform Ingram gravely warns "there may be more Michael Bettaney s".

Quite frankly, as far as we are concerned, the more the better.

"...in the struggle for peace and social progress there are those who are ready to sacrifice not merely their liberty but even their lives. As my last political act I call on comrades everywhere to renew their determination and redouble their efforts in the pursuit of a victory that is historically inevitable." (Michael Bettaney, April 1984).

Merseyside CP

Less militant than Militant

Tony Coughlin

LIVERPOOL has been a bastion for Militant for quite a time. One of its MPs, Terry Fields, is a supporter of Militant, and the group can legitimately claim some working class support.

At the moment, Militant seems to desire a plausible excuse to move to the right. Notwithstanding that, the local Communist Party has been unable to provide any genuine communist alternative.

Our Eurocommunist comrades have in fact excelled themselves in providing an example of their ideology in practice. Local CP Secretary John Blevin wrote to local groups calling for a real broad mass campaign to protect services and jobs. Party member Brian Brierly, writing in the *Morning Star*, sketched out the Euro blueprint calling for the need for "broadening out the campaign to save the city by involving all sections of the population." Rejecting the concept of the working class as the motive force in the campaign and replacing it with community groups, the Euros hold up local clergy as pillars of the struggle.

Canvassing God as a possible voter they have praised "the excellent statements" local clergy have made.

To justify this they proclaim that church leaders are good "on issues such as peace, their input in many cases puts that of the labour movement to shame." (*Morning Star* May 3 1984.)

As well as 'spiritual' friends, our Euros search for more down to earth companions, criticising the Labour Council for failing to discuss with as "broad an alliance as possible". Recently comrade Blevin even attempted to use the miners' strike to justify broadening "the struggle to involve the whole community in Liverpool" against

Thatcher. All this talk is aimed at creating an alliance with the so-called 'anti-Thatcherite' Tories, the SDP, and the Liberals. Merseyside CP poses friendship with those who were actually responsible for the desolation of Liverpool.

The Euros' idea for a 'broad alliance' is ironically shared by the New Communist Party. Although not yet ready to embrace the Tory wets, they are treading the same path. Readers of *The New Worker* are told: "Only unity on a broad basis will force the Tories to retreat on this issue." (May 11 1984)

So for the CP and the NCP the working class, which has the least to lose and most to gain from a specifically anti-capitalist offensive, should instead place its trust in a motley collection of vicars, Liberals, Tory wets, the Chamber of Commerce, and even the local evening paper.

The Communist Party in Merseyside has firmly placed itself to the right of Militant on the question of the deficit budget. Traditionally, communists have opposed placing the burden of the capitalist crisis onto the working class. Regrettably this cannot now be said of our Party.

Comrade Gordon McLennan, speaking in Liverpool, suggested a "limited rate increase". Jim Ferguson, CP member and NUT Executive Committee member, showing he has more in common with the Tories than his own members, proposed at a joint shop steward committee meeting a motion which called for a rate increase if necessary to save jobs. This, if implemented, would result in a 70% rate increase, thus firmly putting the cost of the capitalist crisis on the backs of Liverpool's working class.

Instead of propagating how right-wing the Labour Group is, including Militant, Merseyside CP has created

phantom images of 'ultra-leftism' to cover its own rightism.

When examining Militant's record in Liverpool, numerous points emerge on which to attack it. Its left sloganising covers a pale left reformist group.

Militant supporters were jubilant over their success in the May 1984 elections and equally pleased with the poor showing of CP candidates. In Abercrombie the Party's vote fell from 111 to 92, while it stayed at 63 in Arundel. In both cases Labour increased its vote. The Party continued to poll poorly in Dingle (30 votes), where the Labour Party took a seat from the Liberals.

Militant spokespersons like Tony Altman may attack our Party for "splitting the vote", but we Marxist-Leninists uphold our Party's right to contest elections. Liquidationist propositions about the need not to fight Labour, whether from Militant or from Straight Leftists, can only contribute to the demise of the Communist Party as the vanguard party. We call for standing against Labour on a genuine communist platform, one seeking to win class conscious workers away from reformism to revolution.

Militant supporters have expended considerable energy in creating myths about Kinnoek and the leadership of the Labour Party. They may dream of Kinnoek and the Labour bureaucracy cavalry racing to save Liverpool; we don't. In place of Militant's championing of the labour bureaucracy, we put the interests of the working class and the aim of socialist revolution.

In fact, for all the hot air there is little real difference between Militant and the Euros. Militant may be to the left of the Euros on some issues, but even that leaves much to be desired. Both groups wish to straightjacket the working class in a reformist social democratic inspired parliamentary road.

THE LENINIST

Theoretical Supplement

1939 — a critique

Richard Hardy

John Attfield and Stephen Williams (editors) *1939: The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War* Lawrence & Wishart, London 1984, pbk, pp190, £4.95.

In treating with this book we must be aware that it represents part of Eurocommunism's rewrite of history in an attempt at present self-justification. The Party's whole history is up for such reassessment by the Eurocommunists, of course, though especial interest and importance attaches to the period of the Popular Front and the subsequent World War. Without question this is because the class collaboration associated with the centrism of those times may be utilised by our Party's petty bourgeois radicals by way of introduction of their own brand of class collaboration in the 1980s, and its propagation more widely in the Party.

Bouncing back from the narrow sectarianism of our Party's Third Period when, in common with all Comintern affiliates, social democrats were labelled with the oxymoron 'social fascists', the success of fascism in Germany drove centrism wildly into the embrace of social democracy and liberalism. Too late had those leading the Comintern, above all the Soviet Party, become aware of the disastrous consequences of abandoning the united front tactic of its infant days. However, instead of this Leninist tactic the Comintern, and our own Party, adopted a posture of allying with the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the bourgeoisie who could be considered in some ill-defined way as antifascist.

From 1935 the floodgates of opportunism were opened wide in the CPGB. The inception of the idea of the Popular Front against fascism allowed centrists to argue that their primary concern, which was defence of the Soviet Union, could now encompass full collaboration with class forces nominally opposed to fascism. Since under a bourgeois democratic dictatorship like Britain this must include by definition majority opinion within the bourgeoisie itself, the theoretical limit to the Popular Front rested within the bourgeoisie. Thus was class collaboration born within the communist movement, on the backs of the centrists' concern for the Soviet Union, the world revolutionary centre.

There were forerunners of the official change in the Comintern line to Popular Frontism at its Seventh Congress in 1935. These included leaders of our own Party who were beginning to introduce the idea some time before. Despite this the Comin-

tern's ever loyal R Palme Dutt stuck doggedly to the existing Comintern position, though there were signs from Moscow even before 1935 that the change was coming. In June 1934 Dutt stated in *Fascism and Social Revolution* (p170) 'As capitalism develops to more and more Fascist forms, Social Democracy, which is the shadow of capitalism, necessarily goes through a corresponding process of adaption. This process of "fascisation" of Social Democracy shows itself in the increasing support of open forms of dictatorship ... With the complete victory of the Fascist dictatorship, this process of adaption does not come to an end, but on the contrary reaches even more extreme forms.' The significance of Dutt's intransigence in 1934 was magnified five years later, and is something to which we shall return.

The inadequate characterisation of fascism given by the new Secretary General of Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov, in his speeches to its Seventh World Congress in August 1935 was accepted as satisfactory and completely endorsed. To define fascism as simply 'an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary circles of finance capital' was intended solely to facilitate the promotion of the accompanying Popular Front against fascism. It served that purpose: there is no record of any dissentient voice in the world communist movement. Throughout the late 1930s the Popular Front tactic was tried with greater or lesser degrees of success (that is, success relative to the purposes of class collaboration which it served). In Britain, the CPGB was consistently unable to persuade the Labour Party to allow it into closer collaboration than already existed on a local level. Our Party did not have the pull in the working class that was exerted by the French Communist Party, for example, which was able to join with the social democrats and came up with the goods in the form of the Franco-Soviet Pact for mutual assistance signed in 1935 (though not ratified until 1936).

In order to oppose fascism, however, the CPGB saw its duty in also toppling the National Government in conjunction with the Labour Party. Fighting the fascist danger in Britain was seen as fighting the National Government, its reactionary measures, and thus the offensive of capital that this represented. It is into this tradition that the Euros are currently trying to lock. Although the aim of the Soviet Party, in having communist parties adhere to the Popular Front idea, was to isolate the fascist regimes and render an attack from them less likely, there is

not even this attempted justification in the Euros' revival of what they understand by the Popular Front.

In extending the idea of the Popular Front away from the centrist position of using it to deflect fascist regimes from attacking the Soviet Union, the Euros lay bare their own more right wing opportunism. As befits new Fabians, our Party's Euros have developed this centrist deviation of Marxism-Leninism a further stage to the right. It is noteworthy that Dave Priscott's article 'Popular Front Revisited' in the October 1983 *Marxism Today* preceded (in terms of publication dates, at least) by only a short period the book under review (1939...). Comrade Priscott has a contribution in 1939... which illustrates his purported naivety during 1939 in not supporting the Party's initial support for Britain's declaration of war on Nazi Germany; a mistake which his *Marxism Today* article seeks to remedy in its own way.

War Front

The Popular Front period in our Party had prepared it in fact for nothing so much as the course it took on a British declaration of war. If fascism was the main enemy, then why not support every means to defeat it? What did it matter if the Communist Party teamed up in this endeavour with parties of the class enemy such as the Conservatives? Had the Party not opposed the National Government mainly because of the danger of its siding with Germany in an attack on the Soviet Union? If all this were true then communists must surely assist what looked like a manifestation of the Popular Front: a bourgeois democracy at war with and possibly defeating a fascist regime. Thus ran the argument at the time which was unchallenged in the Party: until mid-September 1939 when the texts of Soviet radio broadcasts about the war became available. The Soviet Union categorised the war as 'imperialist and predatory on both sides'. R Palme Dutt immediately raised the question in the Party's Political Bureau but was left in a minority of one. For a further two weeks the Party leadership resisted any change, and it was only when an emissary from the Comintern arrived to confront it that the Political Bureau did succumb and change to opposition to the war. What that opposition amounted to we shall come to later.

Everything in the immediate past, then, had prepared the Party for the step it took on September 2, 1939 when it issued a call to workers to support the war as one fought for the victory of democracy over fascism. Continuing

its prewar stance, and as a move to strengthen the war effectiveness of British imperialism, the Party called for the removal of Chamberlain and the men of Munich. It was this that was termed the Party's 'struggle on two fronts'.

From Cable Street to the British Battalion in the Spanish Civil War, it seemed every Party experience suggested that its internationalist duty was the defeat of fascism. The trouble was, it was only expediency on the part of Stalin and the Soviet Party that had determined the Popular Front policy in the first place. Once the imperialists were at each others' throats, bourgeois democratic dictatorships and bourgeois fascist dictatorships, the essence remained the same for the Soviet Party: keep them away from us. Thus the duty of the other communist parties around the world was not to make revolution. Far from it. Their task was to keep imperialist attack on living socialism an expensive if not impossible option. While the Nazis were engaged in fighting the British and French imperialists they were less likely to turn around and jointly attack the Soviet Union. Indeed, if the Nazis could be mollified then the closer imperialist danger than France or Britain could be fended off for a while, not to say contained.

In order that the Soviet, and thus Comintern, view should prevail it was essential that the CPGB should cease its policy of support for the war. To achieve this required all the weight of authority that Comintern could muster. After Harry Pollitt, the Party's General Secretary since 1929, and JR Campbell had been put in their place by the Comintern representative, the Central Committee meeting on October 2, 1939 adopted the position of opposition to the imperialist war.

What Civil War?

Pollitt and Campbell nevertheless continued to cling stubbornly to their former positions of support for the imperialist war. Although both issued forms of recantation the following month (November 1939), it is clear from reading Pollitt's at least that he never gave up belief in the necessity of supporting British imperialism in its war against Nazi Germany. In 1939 he was on his own, stripped of Party responsibilities, so he went off and wrote his early biography, perhaps characteristically entitled *Serving My Time*. There is an interesting aspect to Pollitt's centrism in that given his head in a Party that had not been centrist then he might well have developed in the manner of our Party's Eurocommunists. That is why, as is suggested by Monty Johnstone in

to imperialism and a signal victory for the working class over the bourgeoisie.' (Georgi Dimitrov on May Day 1940.) Even in the case of France, which was under German occupation, the Comintern was equivocal: 'All the people ... languish under the double yoke of reaction and foreign occupation. And it is against the forces of reaction that the people must launch out in the first place... The government of Vichy spells disaster for the country.' (Maurice Thorez in *The Communist International* No 9 1940.)

Mystifying though this might appear, the explanation lies in the shifting of Comintern more and more into a vehicle for Soviet foreign policy objectives. Suffice it to say that in 1939 it suited the foreign policy objectives of the Soviet state, incorrectly seen by some as part and parcel of the primary *raison d'être* of the world's communist parties, to stave off the Nazi German threat by foul means as well as fair. The foul means included sending back those German communists who had taken refuge in the Soviet Union.

A central question faced in 1939 and subsequently by the world communist movement is one of how to operate the originally Leninist tactic of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems. In 1939 this meant the socialist Soviet Union (plus Mongolia) versus the (capitalist) rest of the world. Since the Revolution it has been the duty of the Soviet state to defend the gains of socialism in that country, until such time as sufficient revolutions occur elsewhere that the threat from imperialism ceases. That is the essence of the policy of peaceful coexistence, a tactical delay against imperialist intervention and counterrevolutionary force from outside living socialism. The brilliance of Lenin in firmly establishing peaceful coexistence as a communist tactic is absolutely no excuse for abandoning its concomitant: further revolutions to take more countries out of the imperialist chain. Without this latter living socialism was, is, and will be endangered. Stalin's crimes against individuals, though they be many thousands, pale markedly in comparison to the great danger his distortions of Leninism — undermining the foundations of Leninism — bring to the world communist movement. By equating the duties of communist parties primarily with the requirements of the Soviet state he took away the only safeguard to that state's existence in the long term: further revolutions to weaken, then destroy, imperialism.

That was the reason Comintern simply spoke about the need for peace in 1939. And why it did not call on the French Communist Party to organise effectively, that is with arms, against the German occupation or even 'the government of Vichy' in 1940. Nothing had to be done to suggest to the Nazis that communists anywhere would provide the slightest pretext for an attack on the Soviet Union. This is no criticism of the Soviet-German Pact, nor of the Soviet state's attempt at alliances with imperialist countries other than Germany beforehand. That was the inescapable duty of the custodians of the world revolutionary centre; it is a duty which remains to this day. Where the centrists fell down, and where they continue to fall down, is in not calling for and promoting revolutions around the world. Revolutionaries want revolution or they are not revolutionaries.

Full Steam Sideways

Whether Party leaders in Britain were aware of it or not, and sensible money must be on not, the Comintern policy of not threatening German imperialism, the perceived greater danger to living socialism, meant no support for British imperialism. Once this was accepted, however, it was full steam up and nowhere to go. Revolutionary rhetoric had to fill the yawning hole of expectation generated by anything so daring as the Party's about face on what appeared to petty bourgeois radicals to be a straightforward

antifascist war, albeit waged by another imperialist country. Petty bourgeois radicals had to wait a while; the Party's immediate task was to ensure its members had plenty to do without getting into too much difficulty with the British state. The strand it was able to use from the skein spewed forth from Comintern was peace. After all, who wants to die? Peace pays dividends, right?

Marking time in Britain was all the peace talk was good for. In no sense was the Party's opposition to the war from October 1939 to June 1941 'revolutionary defeatism', since the absence of the accompanying chorus of turning the imperialist war into a civil war left the Party conductor waving his baton to empty air. The hard talk of October 1939 to June 1941 was rhetoric, designed to fool no one so much as Party members and petty bourgeois pacifists. It was sadly not designed to fit a Leninist party, create Leninists, or recruit from the working class in a healthy Leninist manner. In fact we would say it was not Leninist at all, but centrist.

Thus in this 1939-1941 period our Party was characterised by empty phrasemongering in which 'Marxism is stripped of its revolutionary spirit; everything is recognised in Marxism except the revolutionary methods, and the education of the masses in this direction.' (Lenin on 'Socialism and War', *Collected Works*, vol 21, pp311-312.)

Looking at the Party's immediate pronouncements following the change to opposing the war in October 1939, we indeed find that 'This war is a fight between imperialist powers over profits, colonies and world domination' (*Manifesto of the Central Committee* October 7 1939) and 'The Communist Party, the political party of the working class ... is today leading the independent struggle of the working people against the war and against the war Government for the victory of the working class and Socialism' (*Central Committee Statement* November 23 1939). However, in each case such assertions were completely devalued by the blinkered centrist vision of the Party leadership. For example, the tempering was given, as 'The immediate issue is the ending of hostilities and the calling of a peace conference' (October 7). The Party never went further than such calls to 'end the war', clothed in more or less rhetorically militant tones as the vagaries of the war suggested the Soviet Union might or might not be attacked.

In *Socialism and War* Lenin is unequivocal that in their anti-war agitation communists 'must explain to the masses that they have no other road of salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of their "own" governments, whose difficulties in the present war must be taken advantage of precisely for that purpose' (*CW* vol 21 p315). And not only that, but most crucially of all he says 'Whoever wants a lasting and democratic peace must stand for civil war against the governments and the bourgeoisie.' (*Ibid* p316). Compare this with the extracts cited earlier from Dutt's *Why This War?*, which managed to huff and puff about 'damned and doomed policies and leadership of defeat and division' and 'the victory of the people against the warmakers' who included the Labour leaders, while going no further than calling for a new government compelled to an 'immediate ending of the war'.

Although Lawrence and Wishart first published Lenin's *War and the Workers* (now known as *War and Revolution*) in 1940 and reprinted his *The War and the Second International and Socialism and War* the same year, the reality of Lenin's teachings on war were unheeded in the Party. Ted Bramley mentions in 1939... a delegate conference on 'Labour and the War' organised by *Labour Monthly* and held in London on February 25 1940. Regardless of the fact that of the 878 delegates from 379 working class

organisations, 'official figures admitted that 304 of the delegates were from Communist Party groups or the Young Communist League' (David Childs *Journal of Contemporary History* vol 12 1977), the conference could only bring itself to call upon 'the working class ... and all who do not profit from war, to oppose its continuance... form a mighty alliance of opposition to the war government and all warmongers.' And it was not as though *Labour Monthly's* influence was waning, indeed quite the opposite: by April 1940 it had doubled its August 1939 circulation of 7,500, and was reaching 20,000 readers by December 1940. It was an indication that its fulminating against the war, though vacant rhetoric, struck a chord amongst militants. The Party's position, however, prevented this development from proceeding in a healthy, Leninist direction. In accord with Comintern policy, Party members' militancy was to be contained and Leninism kept under wraps.

Throughout 1940 the Party's opposition remained, though the constancy of its leaders' resolve to maintain that opposition is questionable. The arrival of the Churchill government in May 1940 has been considered by opportunists as indicating a more antifascist resolve on the part of British imperialism and its Tory and Labour backers. What it did represent was a realisation by British imperialism that it was going to have to really fight it out with German imperialism, the phoney war was over, and the real war was galloping westwards. Out of the saddle goes Munichite Chamberlain, in comes the very experienced imperialist, Churchill. When France caved in in June 1940 our Party's leaders really started to palpitate; after all, their pacifist calls could not possibly stop bombs falling or tanks rolling over Britain, just as in France. Do not forget that the Party had no perspective of converting the imperialist war to civil war: the Comintern line was not intended for that at all. It was this panic in the Party leadership which produced a statement from the Political Bureau in June 1940 centring on the external fascist danger and the need for a People's Government which would arm the factory workers. At the same time, though unconfirmed by Party sources, it is suggested by government documents from the time (and quoted in 1939...) that Central Committee member William Gallacher contacted the Foreign Office with the suggestion that he or other Party leaders could approach Soviet leaders to persuade them to change their view of the war; there is no record of anyone from the Party doing this, however.

The wobble over the Comintern line, still blaring forth for all it was worth to keep the vile imperialists away from established socialism, was in process of being corrected (that is, brought right back on line) when Ivor Montagu's book *The Traitor Class* came out. Unfortunately for him, his book expressed the wobble at its peak of oscillation, and he was promptly sat upon by William Rust for his pains. Montagu was too concerned with the stronger 'defence of the country' and those who would be 'a traitor to the interest of the people and the independence of the nation'. Rust, editor of the *Daily Worker*, derided Montagu's illusions about the possibility of the ruling class waging a people's war against fascism; this no doubt placed Rust more in line with Comintern, in common with Dutt.

As the summer of 1940 wore on and the immediate likelihood of a German invasion of Britain receded, Party leaders felt confident that a call for a national manifestation would build a united platform around the Party's position. Late in September 1940 the *Daily Worker* launched this call in the form of a proposed People's Convention the following January.

The Peoples' Convention

The three or so months in which preparations were made for the People's

Convention saw more vigorous words issuing from the Party designed to rally the militants who could be expected to convince their workmates of the need to be represented at it. Certainly statements about gathering class conflicts in industry were to a degree borne out by the facts. Figures from the Department of Employment and Productivity released in 1971 showed an interesting trend in the number of workers directly involved in disputes and services: the fact that strikes increased in 1939 compared with 1938, and did not even markedly decline in 1940 shows a degree of resistance to the wave of patriotic hysteria, and is in marked contrast to the early period of WWI.

Number of Workers Directly Involved in Disputes

Year	Number of workers
1938	211,000
1939	246,000
1940	225,000
1941	297,000
1942	349,000
1943	454,000

In fact it was against Party policy that the frequency of strikes increased as the war went on since, as we shall see, the Party was supporting the war after June 1941.

The agitation for the People's Convention was certainly agitating the ruling class. After the *Daily Worker* had been hammering away on the Convention throughout the autumn of 1940 and into winter, the War Cabinet made a decision in the December to ban the paper. Previous discussions in the Cabinet had concluded that there was no definite evidence of Party activity seriously affecting war industry output; but now the successful mobilisation by the *Daily Worker* presented some dangers to this happy state of affairs. Not too much danger, apparently, since the ban did not become operative until after the Convention.

Despite Dutt's assertion in the January 1941 People's Convention Number of *Labour Monthly* that 'the representatives gathered in this first assembly are only the forerunners of the far wider numbers awakening to the struggle it was in fact to be the last of its kind for the duration of the war. Whilst drumming up support for the Convention the Party leadership must have been aware that it was only marking time. The workers, fed up with wartime speedup, inadequate rations, and living constantly with the threat of death or injury from enemy action, not to mention wartime restrictions affecting every aspect of life, wanted the leadership of the Party. The leadership it gave was not revolutionary; however, instead, the Six Points of the Convention (all were presented at trade union and other working class movement bodies as the epitome of working class action: Did it not go beyond economic demands and carry workers forward into political action? If it did, then it only carried them into the realms of reform and not revolution.

The degree of contention at the Convention cannot have been high: it has not been remarked on in later studies. This lack of debate produced an inevitable result in the finalised points (now eight) in the Programme agreed at the Convention. The Programme expressed the Convention's resolve to fight for: higher living standards, better air raid shelters, trade union and democratic rights, nationalisation of the banks and large industries, national self-determination for colonial peoples, friendship with the USSR, a People's Government, and a People's Peace. As a take off point for revolution in Britain it was a dead duck.

The People's Government was envisaged as having its primary duty and task in securing the earliest possible peace. Dutt argued that a British government which held no menace for Germany would cause the devil of a problem for Hitler, as he would then be unable to persuade German workers to carry on fighting.

The People's Convention was attended by 2,234 delegates who represented 1,304 organisations, which in turn had a total membership of 1.2 million. This was no mean feat. In fact just over half the delegates (representing over one million workers) were from the trade unions, including shop stewards' bodies. Interestingly, nearly equal numbers of delegates came from political parties (Communist Party and Labour Party) and political organisations as came from nationally spread People's Convention and Vigilance Committees, in all totalling 23% of delegates. The level of preparation can thus be considered to have been high, coupled with some strength of popular representation. Unfortunately, the opportunities it might have presented were not grasped. The National Committee was elected by the Convention 'with full responsibility to conduct the campaign' to realise its programme: having stood 'adjourned' the People's Convention and its National Committee soon became a mere memory.

Winning Britain's War

Nine days after the People's Convention, on January 21 1941, the *Daily Worker* was banned under defence regulations. This was considered sufficient disablement of the Party's work by the bourgeoisie since the Party itself was never banned. Neither the bourgeoisie nor the Party had long to wait facing each other as warmakers and opponents of the war, since the long feared German attack on the Soviet Union was launched on June 22 1941, and the Comintern view of the Party's role here was immediately changed.

Now Dutt's hour was over and his star began to wane. While he had expedited the policy of opposition to the war, now it was the return of full-blown (or fly-blown) support for an anti-fascist war. The only trouble was, of course, that it was no such thing as far as the British bourgeoisie was concerned. The Party could now boast respectable 'revolutionaries' who wanted to get stuck into German fascism (that is, German imperialism). Of course it was all for the best possible of reasons for centrists: defence of the Soviet Union. That is what differentiates them from the current Euro-hankering after a similar accommodation with anti-Thatcher bourgeois elements.

The class collaboration after the Nazi German invasion of the USSR was only to be expected. The whole period of opposition to the war was characterised by the Party line being held only by posing unrealistic and unrealisable aims for the working class movement on the premise that if it was kept busy doing something there was less likelihood of the Leninist position on war popping up unexpectedly. The Party leadership must have given a collective sigh of relief when they were able to return to support for this (imperialist) war against (imperialist) fascism.

The tenor of the Party's pro-war propaganda no doubt helped the Churchill government to lift the ban on the *Daily Worker* in August 1942. A whole section of Pollitt's report to the Party's National Conference in May 1942, headed 'Unity of the Nation against Fascism', dwelt with relish on the great growth in national unity behind the government. It decried any who while 'apparently voicing demands which have already been made popular' were actually at 'work for national disruption and hail as victories every defeat of the Government.' Since it had to be the case, had it not, that such disunity could only lead to the triumph of fascism, therefore every 'sectional interest' which led workers to put their class first would be firmly resisted by the Party. The Party was as keen as mustard to show that it could do its bit in mobilising the ranks of labour for the war effort. Nothing and nobody, whether 'pro-fascist' ILPers or Trotskyists, could be allowed to endanger the prospect of victory.

National unity and the British-Soviet Alliance: this was the way to win.

What class conscious worker wanted to be called pro-fascist? Or indeed could see the point in adhering to the sterile liquidationism of the Trotskyists? The lack of a firm Leninist tradition certainly made itself felt with a vengeance after June 1941. It was all hands to the pumps and salvage British imperialism dressed up in the clothes of antifascism. The industrial strife that there was after this last change of line could never by itself, illustrating a general truth, lead the working class towards revolution. For that purpose the Communist Party came into existence in the first place. Its galloping centrism, meant that it was completely unequal to the tasks presented and to the challenge facing the working class in time of imperialist war.

The Euros and 1939

Inspiration indeed comes to our Party's Euros from the experience in the Second World War. Not only does it provide a window into the schisms that were then usually invisible, but the period provides evidence of their own conception, which had been presumed previously to be immaculate if not inspired. Harry Pollitt's famous 'socialist gleam' must now be viewed more as a prenatal twinkle of Eurocommunism, and not as some modern centrists would have it as its putative prophylactic.

A major argument put forward in 1939... concerns the central question for Leninists of the attitude to be taken to one's 'own' bourgeoisie in case of imperialist war. The question is there posed in terms that consider the unequal positions of the working class in Britain and the working class in Germany. It is suggested that since German fascism's crushing of the labour movement prevented the 'development of any effective popular anti-war movement', then, as working class organisations were only functioning on the British side, it should have been perfectly all right to support British imperialism in its war with German imperialism. This idea considers that it is only a balanced (should it be evenly balanced?) lack of support for antagonistic bourgeoisies that is desirable. If one side of the balance is missing, as was the case with the German working class movement, then it is perfectly permissible for the other working class movement to support its 'own' bourgeoisie. The logical continuation of this line of reasoning, as if that was not bad enough, is to say that if any belligerent imperialism is not actively denied the support of its working class the working class movement in an opposing belligerent imperialist country is free to support its bourgeoisie and put the idea of revolution behind it. This is a complete negation of Leninism. The centrists of our Party in the Second World War at least operated under the explanation (but not excuse) that everything they did was basically to support the Soviet Union. Today the reason that the issue is raised by the Euros is certainly not to support the USSR; this time their balance point is shifted way over to the right. For our Party's Euros, defence of one's 'own' bourgeoisie is correct and leads them to laud Pollitt's stand against the centrist Comintern in 1939. The fact that as personified in Pollitt the class collaboration which he spouted was not attuned to the Comintern (nor after 1943 in the world communist movement) merely means he was a forerunner of Eurocommunism, its precursor. It also shows quite strongly how centrism acts as the transmission belt to the right, in that the Euros have discovered and are able to utilise Pollitt in this way. Pollitt's lionisation by the Euros is quite justified and shows up the centrist Straight Leftists who have idolised him for so long as ignorant about their own Party and their opportunist position within it.

Contrary to what is claimed by comrade Johnstone in 1939... the Party at no time saw the Second World

War in terms of the First. He and others on the extreme right of our Party who participated in the conference on which 1939... is based successfully circumscribed the area of discussion with no demur from any other participant. Nowhere is there mention made of the Leninist position of the working class movement and its party in time of imperialist war. Nowhere is there any suggestion that the imperialist war had to be converted to civil war if proletarian revolution were to be advanced, and that this must be advocated of any Communist Party worthy of the name.

Our Party in 1939 seemed oblivious to its revolutionary duty. Its leaders were content to propagate the pronouncements of Comintern especially when they veered toward class collaboration and recalled the lessons so well learned in the Popular Front period. There is no suggestion that any contributor to the book under review is aware of the basic flaw in the Party's relations with Comintern: the refusal to consider, debate, or criticise in a Leninist manner what were mistaken and wrongly formulated demands on parties in capitalist countries, not for non-participation in an antifascist war or for failing to support it wholeheartedly from the beginning, but precisely because parties did support their 'own' bourgeoisies' war efforts and did not see their duty plainly in making revolution.

For its own purposes, and in its view the method by which the Soviet state would survive, the Soviet Party ensured that Comintern instructed communist parties well in their centrist duty of first and foremost defending the socialist Soviet Union. In effect it was their only duty. Stalin's abolition of Comintern in 1943 to appease wartime ally Churchill and British and US imperialism shows how little he regarded it once it had fulfilled its role of whipping the centrist communist parties into line as required by Soviet circumstances.

The Euros glory in this misuse of the International of the world's communist movement. For them it shows the dangers of bureaucratic centralism, which they transliterate as 'democratic centralism', if it is in hands other than their own. As many in our Party know to their cost, the Euros are not averse to utilising Stalin's methods even if they excoriate him.

To suggest as contributors to this book do that the war became transformed vis-à-vis Britain and Germany once the USSR had joined in is a colossal misapprehension that has been promoted persistently ever since. Even if the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany was an antifascist struggle, which it was, there was nothing in the conflict between Britain and Germany that had changed it from what it had been from the outset: an inter-imperialist war. The reason that Comintern, and thus our Party, recharacterised the nature of the whole war, whether between imperialist states or not, was to provide further cover for the shift to the right that was occurring in the world communist movement. It manifested itself in our Party in a wholesale effusiveness towards its new 'antifascist' allies amongst the bourgeoisie, not excepting the bloody imperialist, Churchill. Stalin, no mean hypocrite apart from his other traits, had the gall to say in 1946 that the war had been antifascist from the start, that is, from September 1939. Opportunism really starts to slide rightwards given half a chance: the usefulness of 1939... is in what it shows us of the transmission belt to the right that centrism represents.

Harry Pollitt may not have broken with centrism, though at the time he was hammering on its right wall; today's Euros point to him as a pioneer of the trek to the right that was further accelerated after 1956, when centrism could no longer hold the ring in the world communist movement. In this sense Pollitt was a part of the strong tradition of liquidationism in our Party, a tradition that the Euros are more than ready to honour. Pollitt was

more than ready to lead the Party to the right of the world communist movement, and the Euros in control of the Party are prepared to do the same. They share the distinction down the years of yearning to liquidate the Party by leading it intact down the path of total class collaboration and prostration before the class enemy.

Even if today's centrists consider they have a greater theoretical legacy bequeathed to them from R.Palme Dutt than Harry Pollitt (a somewhat unlikely thought, given their workerist tendency to disparage scholarship), it is a legacy fraught with covenants with dissolution. Their insistence on the pacifist tailism which leads the Party nowhere is only matched by their adoration for Britain's bourgeois workers' party, the Labour Party. By using Dutt they try to impress their centrist liquidationism on healthy pro-Party elements. Instead of openly countering Eurocommunism they prefer to rely on jesuitical gibberish culled from those frightful Soviet pamphlets and hardnosed, closed manipulation meetings; determining just when to fly off to the social chauvinists or, alternatively, rely on right opportunists who run the erstwhile Party paper, the *Morning Star*, in a coalition of the damned which runs screaming from the working class Party's realities into the nirvana of trade union bureaucracy. Dutt may have given birth to them, but would he like them now that they are grown up; the congenital lurch to the right in the face of threats of expulsion, or even open ideological debate, is a dead giveaway, however.

The class collaboration, pacifism, Labourism, and sidetracking ideological poverty exhibited by our Party to varying degrees as the fancy took the Comintern to call the tune have left their strong imprints in the characters of the presentday Party's opportunist liquidators. The equation of 'Thatcherism' with fascism, à la Eurocommunism, lends a baneful novelty to the close collaboration with Churchillian imperialism ostensibly 'fighting fascism' which wartime centrism so enjoyed. Basking in the warm glow of bourgeois approval is not for Leninists, never has been, and never will be. Our duty is to look at the Party's history with a steady, un sentimental, unjaundiced eye and call down the years for the reckoning of all the opportunist mistakes and misfortunes which has been the lot of British communism. The recovery of the Leninist heritage of the world communist movement entails Leninists in our Party playing their full part. It entails a ruthless willingness to cast aside illusions about a beneficent imperialism intent on smashing fascism, whether in Germany or Argentina, for other than fully comprehensible bourgeois ends. It entails utter castigation of the illusion that imperialism can or will be other than a rapacious and bloody warmonger that no amount of peace campaigning will mollify, let alone defeat. And it entails defence of the socialist countries, the footholds of living socialism cut from agonized capitalist flesh, by the only means available to the rest of the world's working class: to make more revolutions and yank out link after rotten link from an ever-weakening imperialist chain. Such is the great task that faces an unflinching Leninist Party. It is just such a task that has been so far unprepared for amongst the British contingent of the world's working class.

For Leninists, the events and non-events of 1939 and during the rest of the Second World War are very important. Our Party's history has proud moments and ignominious ones. What marks it out for distinction, however, is its connection with Lenin, Lenin's Soviet Party, and the Comintern of Lenin. The errors and deviations soberly accounted for, we can expect many difficulties in raising the Leninist banner anew. Nonetheless history, warts and all, compels it. Our Party shall live down 1939, and gather itself again for its only role: vanguard of our class, and revolutionary executioner of the bourgeoisie.

TURKEY SOLIDARITY

Chris Stevenson

Turkey's working people have had the fascist heel on their necks since September 12, 1980. During all that time the Communist Party of Great Britain has failed to give adequate commitment to solidarity work in this country. Rather has our Party been bent on undermining the efforts of the main solidarity organisation in Britain, the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT), because it is supported by the *İşçinin Sesi* (Worker's Voice) wing of the Communist Party of Turkey (CPT).

The CDDRT was set up by Turkish organisations, including the Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain (UTPB) and the Union of Turkish Workers (UTW), in late 1978 to develop solidarity here around the gross attacks on democratic rights which were increasing during the then revolutionary situation in Turkey. The initial impetus for its formation was the prosecution of the *Urun* publishers for publishing the Third Programme of the CPT, under the anticommunist Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code. The CDDRT managed to send a three man delegation to the *Urun* trial; it included George Bolton of the NUM and John Bowden of the Haldane Society. Both are longstanding members of our Party; comrade Bolton is the current National Chairman and comrade Bowden is a member of the London District Committee.

In early 1979, faced with an escalation of the fascist terror in Turkey (1000 had been murdered in 1978) the CDDRT decided to hold its first March Against Fascism In Turkey. This activity was well supported at meetings along its 200 mile route from Leeds to London; its sponsors included our own Party. The attack by police and heavily armed troops on the occupied *Tariş* works in İzmir early in 1980, leading to the capture and imprisonment of thousands of workers, led the CDDRT to organise protests which included one of many vigils outside Turkish legations in London.

The murder of Kemal Türkler, president of the Metal-Workers' Union, and the massacre of 50 persons by fascists in Çorum in midsummer of 1980, followed by the military invasion of the left-led Black Sea town of Fatsa, gave rise to serious fears of a full blown fascist takeover. These fears were fully justified when leading generals staged a fascist coup on September 12, 1980 and constituted themselves a ruling junta.

Before 1980 closed, the CDDRT held pickets and public meetings, sent speakers to trade union and student union meetings, and launched its *Newsletter* (later called *Turkey Newsletter*), all with the intent of raising solidarity with Turkey's working people. Pickets, rallies, and meetings were stepped up in 1981 in preparation for a second Leeds to London March Against Fascism, which was held in the second week of March. This time, given the greater oppression in Turkey and CDDRT's experience, the March Against Fascism received a much wider sponsorship than in 1979. Meetings in Manchester and Sheffield were addressed by CPGB leaders, in the latter by the late Gordon Ashberry; a concluding rally in Hyde Park was addressed by Alan Sapper of the ACTT and Alf Lomas MEP.

At the first Congress of the CDDRT in June 1981 our Party's International Department Head, Gerry Pocock, was elected to the General Council (the governing body) of the CDDRT, together with another Party member, John Bowden. The CPGB was affiliated to the CDDRT and was represented at the Congress. 28 Labour MPs were now sponsors of the CDDRT and two were on its General Council.

From the July 1981 issue the CDDRT *Newsletter* published monthly updates on the oppressive regime together with a continuing high level of agitation. Through summer 1981 the CDDRT initiated and planned an International

Day Against Fascism on September 13 to commemorate the first anniversary of the fascist coup. In the event Lawrence Daly, Ernie Roberts MP, and Bob Wright spoke to a very full Camden Centre for an afternoon rally. CDDRT held an equally successful Solidarity Concert at the same place in the evening. Both events received front page treatment in the *Morning Star*, which later carried an interview with the main attractions at the Concert, Melike Demirağ and Şanar Yurdapan. Two weeks later CDDRT activists carried off another success: a packed meeting at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton.

The CDDRT organised for its National Conference in London throughout autumn 1981: it was held in mid-December, and laid down guidelines for a Solidarity Week and an international Conference, both in the first half of 1982. The CPGB was represented at this National Conference, though its contribution to the success of the CDDRT's public events continued to be negligible. In the midst of organising these events, the CDDRT did not fail to respond to the needs of those beyond Turkey. Obviously the continuing Turkish occupation of north Cyprus was, and is, of direct concern: so CDDRT developed links with AKEL and the organisers of the annual Cyprus demonstrations, and publicised the whole question. Additionally, the Tory government banned Yılmaz Güney, Turkey's leading filmmaker, from entering Britain, the CDDRT sprang into action and instituted a Yılmaz Güney Campaign to reverse the decision. Although unsuccessful in this object, this Campaign has led to a great deal of interest from elements otherwise not politically involved.

As part of its autumn 1982 campaign, the CDDRT held meetings at the TUC Congress in Brighton which was addressed by the TUC President) and at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool. John Bowden chaired the TUC meeting. A commemoration of the second anniversary of the fascist coup succeeded a picket of the Turkish Embassy.

On November 7, 1982, coinciding with a referendum on the new fascist constitution in Turkey, an afternoon rally filled the Rio Cinema in London: CDDRT brought an MP, an MEP, and John Bowden to address the enthusiastic audience, and followed up with a benefit showing of a Yılmaz Güney film.

1983 opened with the CDDRT having increased its sponsors greatly since its first Congress: it now had 58 MPs, 9 MEPs, 19 Constituency Labour Parties, 12 trades councils (plus GLATC), 15 trade unions at all levels (including NUM, NUPE and T&GWU nationally), LPYS, NOLS, Haldane Society, 6 students unions, the CPGB, and a string of prominent individuals (including Bruce Kent, Andrew Rothstein, and E P Thompson), as its sponsors.

All through the time since the fascist coup the CDDRT had had to put up with not only the lack of enthusiasm from the CPGB but a continuous minor irritant: the Turkey Solidarity Campaign (TSC). TSC represents a recruiting organ for three parties: the Socialist League (SL) — formerly the International Marxist Group, the Socialist Workers' Party, and the Workers' Socialist League — now part of the Socialist Organiser Alliance. The



latter certainly was able to recruit a handful of Turkish individuals living in Britain; the others had less tangible benefits. From late in 1982, however, a different irritant appeared on the scene: a gradually rising, though always small, number of individuals of Turkish origin who adhere to the opportunist (*Atılım*) wing of the Communist Party of Turkey.

Although the Young Communist League agreed unanimously at its 1983 Congress to affiliate to the CDDRT it never sent the fee required for affiliation. Turning from reluctant and faint verbal support to direct opposition, our Party's leaders had decided in early 1983 to do their damndest to destroy the CDDRT and give succour to an opportunist implant. The first concrete application of this turn was the attempt by comrade Bowden, still a member of the CDDRT General Council with Gerry Pocock, to sabotage the Stop The Trials meeting in Conway Hall in mid-April. Comrade Bowden, who was scheduled to speak at the meeting, withdrew at the last minute under the excuse that the main Turkish speaker Aydın Meriç was not who CDDRT stated him to be, that is, the last Assistant General Secretary of DİSK (Turkey's Revolutionary Confederation of Trade Unions, whose other leading officers were on trial for their lives by the fascist junta). However, the attempted sabotage palpably did not succeed as the very large meeting testified. And indeed one of the speakers, Tony Benn MP, persisted in taking part most enthusiastically despite having received an anonymous letter making similar objections to Aydın Meriç.

Our Party put forward no nominations for the CDDRT's new General Council elected at its second Congress in mid-May 1983. This was hardly surprising, however, as it had connived at further damaging Turkey solidarity work after the Conway Hall affair. This was pointedly clear on May 1, 1983 when the CPGB celebrated the day of proletarian internationalism by having several of its members, including comrade Bowden and trade union bureaucrats, affix their names to a launch statement of the Solidarity Committee for Trade Union Rights and

Democracy in Turkey (SCTURDT) — front organisation for the *Atılım* opportunists of the CPT. Despite persistent claims to the contrary, it is well established that these Turkish opportunists did not even come to Britain direct from Turkey. Their true origin was a little to the west of that country. The SCTURDT appears as a purely artificial creation in that it was set up to undermine the CDDRT and promote the *Atılım* opportunists. Clearly the ideological successes of the *İşçinin Sesi* wing of the CPT causes more than a little fluttering in the dovescotes of world opportunism, though there is more than a little irony in a coalition of *Atılım* centrists and CPGB Euros bent on destroying a broad solidarity organisation.

The involvement of the *İşçinin Sesi* wing in the CDDRT has never been hidden. The successes of the CDDRT in widening its appeal has continued over its six years' existence despite the attempts at undermining it by jealous Trotskyites and frantic opportunists. It sent a delegation to Turkey last autumn composed of two Labour MPs and a Labour exminister and held excellent TUC and Labour Party Conference meetings. Of special interest, given these attacks on its integrity, was a truly International Conference held at London's County Hall at the end of October. The CDDRT joined with the National Coordinating Committee of Cypriots in a series of actions — one all night — over the Cyprus question only a few months ago.

Its whole history describes the CDDRT as an organisation which has attempted to build and consolidate broad solidarity between workers in Britain and Turkey. It has done this with the consistent backing of the *İşçinin Sesi* wing of the CPT and many others. It has achieved all this in the face of the implacable opposition of our Party's leadership, who as always have been more concerned to pursue their narrow opportunist aims than building solidarity. The workers and peoples of Turkey can be assured that we the Leninists of the CPGB are doing all in our power to expose and remove these opportunists who besmirch the name of communism.

The Revolutionary Communist Party

Prepared to defend workers' power?

James Marshall

WHAT ARE WE to make of a revolutionary group which in the midst of the most important working class struggle since 1926 expends so much of its energy demanding a national strike ballot when a national strike has already been called and over 80% of miners are on strike. "We have" states Fran Eden "no alternative but to go on a vigorous campaign to win a ballot" (*the next step*, May 1984).

It is true that a number of revolutionary groups have gone overboard in rejecting ballots *per se*, thus bowing to the spontaneity of militant miners who have rightly damned as hypocrisy those who excuse scabbing under the cover of demands for a national ballot. Of course ballots must not be rejected out of hand, we must consider all tactics; but in the light of Fleet Street backed campaigns for a national ballot, attempts to force the miners back to work by starving them and their families, and an unprecedented mobilisation of police force, it is monstrous to respond with calls for a national ballot as a central demand — no matter how prettily they are dressed up in anti-bureaucratic garb. What is needed now that the strike is on, now that the battle is raging, is not excuses for blacklegging but the spreading of the strike.

A ballot at the right time, say in the face of High Court seizure of NUM assets, could play a role. It would be foolish to write one off, but other tactics are just as legitimate and more immediate including picketing out, threats of disciplinary action against scabs, and naked intimidation: that is, methods of proletarian dictatorship. Above all, revolutionaries must look to spreading the strike, ensuring that as many other sections of the working class as possible are drawn into a general offensive, that leadership pledges of solidarity are carried out in practice, that a militant rank and file movement is developed which can ensure that there is no sell out by the leadership, and that demands that the TUC must call a general strike are to be more than handing a stick with which the TUC traitors will beat us. While we have concentrated our propaganda on these questions, sought to give revolutionary perspective and organisational form through the creation of Miners' Support Committees and Workers' Defence Corps, the RCP has concentrated on a national ballot.

This is no momentary wobble by its leadership, it is a direct and inevitable result of the flawed political and ideological foundations of the RCP. On a whole range of question the RCP does not defend the working class but indulges in dilettante petty bourgeois moralising.

The USSR and the other Socialist Countries

It is a fundamental axiom that communists can never advance the interests of the working class if they cannot defend the gains already made. This applies from the smallest everyday matters like pay and conditions of work to the world gains of the working class, especially those made by October 1917.

For us it is an objective fact that the Soviet Union is the world's revolutionary centre. It is the country where the proletarian class struggle has assumed its highest expression, where capitalism was vanquished and a workers' state established. Whatever bureaucratic deformations developed since 1917, whatever mistakes and even crimes that have been committed,

we unconditionally defend the USSR.

So what does the self confessed Trotskyite RCP think about the Soviet Union? It does of course pay lip service to the October Revolution, what revolutionary group does not? But what does it think about the Soviet Union today when it stands threatened by imperialism's war drive, when so many in the workers' movement have succumbed to the anti-Soviet hysteria of the new Cold War?

Well, on the social structure and class nature of its state the RCP seems to have written a great deal but clearly stated nothing. We were promised a book on the USSR by Frank Richards, the RCP's leading theoretician, as long ago as May 1983. But since that promised publication date no explanation has been forthcoming as to why it has not seen the light of day. Could it be that the RCP leadership is riven with differences on the question and fears a split if the issue is openly and fully debated?

What the RCP does say about the USSR and the other socialist countries has to be culled from the numerous but short, and very unsatisfactory, book reviews and gleaned from innuendo in other articles in the RCP's monthly paper *the next step*. Looking through our yellowing back copies of *the next step* we find this: "planning does not exist in the Soviet Union... It is a decrepit system that has little future... the Soviet state today upholds a system that cannot progress at all. We only defend it against imperialist attack because its collapse would strengthen imperialism" (June 1981). From this it is clear that the RCP does not consider that there are any gains from October 1917 left to defend. And although they tell us it is not a capitalist and not a socialist state they fail to tell what they actually think it is except some unsubstantiated mumbo jumbo about "bureaucratic despotism" or "bureaucratic oppression".

So how are we to take the RCP's declarations that they defend the USSR. Well, in an amazingly stupid review of the book *The Revolution in Afghanistan* by comrade Emine Engin, Andy Clarkson starkly proclaims that: "The Soviet Union is an enemy of the working class". It seems clear that the RCP is attempting to straddle the bankrupt theoretical positions of both Leon Trotsky and the state capitalism of Tony Cliff's SWP, where the RCP had its origins. But in their efforts to have what is for them the best of both the RCP is forced to deny the most elementary truths about the world.

Defending the USSR

Not only is the USSR described as "decrepit" (although its record since 1917 indicates to us otherwise), its planning, however imperfect, dismissed as "non-existent" and its class nature defined mysteriously as "bureaucratic despotism", but the imperialist threat against it is shabbily sidestepped in the following fashion: "The arms race is widely perceived as an East-West matter. Yet though East-West conflict does exist, they are secondary to those within the imperialist camp." Of course it is true that the war drive emanates from imperialism's crisis, but to suggest as the RCP does that today its main thrust is simply inter-imperialist is to deny the reality of NATO and Japanese arming against the Soviet Union — the reality of Cruise, and above all the reality of Pershing II — a first strike weapon which the US is deploying in Europe against the Soviet Union, and not against Europe, as some in the RCP



The world as the RCP would like to see it?

are prepared to believe. And what about Reagan's 'Star Wars' plan? Would the RCP suggest this weapon system is designed to defeat the imperialist rivals of the US or to win WWII against the USSR?

Because of their petty bourgeois attempt to manoeuvre the socialist countries off the centre stage of world politics the RCP's defence of the USSR is not even worth the paper it is printed on; in fact it joins the chorus of anti-Sovietism.

As a result over Afghanistan the RCP not only dismisses the 1978 April Revolution as a "coup" but refuses to support the Afghan Army and its Red Army allies against the forces of counterrevolution and calls for the overthrow of the PDPA government. Over Poland it was the same story of attempting to stand in between the forces of revolution and counterrevolution, all the while urging the overthrow of the existing socialist regime.

The RCP is no Leninist party, which begins from a world view of the proletarian struggle, recognising its interconnections and the need to defend its gains. In truth the RCP is Anglo-centric, opposed to British imperialism, yes, but unable to see the world struggle as a whole. Because of this they are unable to defend existing gains and fall into the trap of almost automatically tailing those who are in conflict with British imperialism. While this 'honour' is not extended to the Soviet Union, the Argentinian fascist junta that butchered tens of thousands of progressives was described as leading a national liberation struggle during the Falklands/Malvinas War. Less revolting, but ultimately just as dangerous for the working class, the same tailism is visible over Ireland where the RCP have appointed themselves as the uncritical cheerleaders of the petty bourgeois revolutionary movements fighting British imperialism. Such positions are travesties of proletarian internationalism which demands a strictly proletarian line in every country without exception. Yes, the main enemy is at home, but the communist struggle is above all international and not simply anti-British imperialist.

The Working Class Movement

In its Programme the RCP rejects such basic gains of the working class as the closed shop. This is because, like the miners' strike, the USSR and the other socialist countries, it is bureaucratically disfigured and thus does not match up to the RCP's petty bourgeois standards of democracy. Unless reality meets their exacting standards, the RCP leadership require workers to discard their hard won gains and start afresh.

Thus it comes as no surprise that in the May 1984 edition of *the next step*

Frank Richards writes that while the establishment of the Communist Party of Great Britain "marked a step forward" the CPGB from its beginning "confined its struggle for leadership to the philosophical plane. In practical terms, the Labour Party would lead and the CPGB would act as a pressure group on it. All that the CPGB could offer the working class was the vague promise of 'much more influence on future legislation.'"

This glib dismissal of the CPGB of the early 1920s as a pressure group flies in the face of reality, ignores the Party's role in establishing councils of action, the National Minority Movement, the revolutionary lead it gave workers in struggle, and what is more illustrates perfectly the RCP's contempt for the past, its contempt for the traditions and gains of the working class — all is lost and destroyed, all must be rebuilt to the recipe and in the image of the arrogant leadership of the RCP. So it is consistent that the vain RCP casually discards the early CPGB and its Leninist united front tactics towards the Labour Party which whatever its faults are rich with lessons for today. It seems that the RCP thinks workers' organisations, including the vanguard party, ought to emerge ready made from the heads of the likes of Frank Richards, not from the bloody, sweaty, untidy reality of the class struggle. With this virginal outlook on the class struggle it is hardly surprising that for the RCP, today's CPGB and world communist movement is declared irrelevant — despite the fact that it contains the world vanguard of the working class.

It is this petty bourgeois non-Marxist outlook which leads the RCP to their disdainful attitude towards the world communist movement and their attacks on the gains of the working class from the closed shop to the USSR.

We Leninists of the CPGB recognise the appalling ill health of our own Party. We are also fully aware of the problems that beset the world communist movement. But to dismiss the struggle in the communist movement is to stand aside from the organised mass vanguard of the working class and to fall into the trap of sectarianism.

We must always be on guard against abandoning the mass of class conscious workers and becoming a sect like the RCP but we must of course be equally aware that to forget the idea of revolution is just as great a sin. We Leninists seek to chart a course between these two mistakes. It is this dialectical contradiction that the communist movement must pass through if our goal of revolution is to be realised. The theory of Leninism enables us to avoid the Scylla of sectarianism as exemplified by the RCP and the Charybdis of Labourite social democracy and reformism that today is sucking in so many.

