

# *The* **Leninist**

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

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# The *Leninist*

Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement

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## 1 The Fight for the Party has Only Just Begun

### *Editorial Statement*

The Communist Party's 38th Congress was truly historic. Despite desperate attempts by the Eurocommunists to prevent us reporting the Congress we are proud to announce their failure. As a result we provide full coverage of the proceedings of the Congress, all its trends, all the wheeling and all the dealing, all the opposition and all the oppression. But above all we look at the way forward for the Party. The path of conciliation, liquidationist tailism of Labourism, and attempts to beat the Euro bureaucrats at their own game, are all bankrupt. A new dynamic outward looking approach is desperately needed. In the face of the Eurocommunist gerrymandered Congress victory we must not retreat but learn to fight in an entirely new way. For the fight for the Party has only just begun!

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A review article of the pamphlet *The Crisis in Our Communist Party. Cause Effect and Cure*, by 'Charlie Woods'. This pamphlet is the first attempt to cobble together a platform by the centrist Straight Leftists.

As such we welcome it because it gives us the ideal target to deal with and expose one of the most dangerous forms of liquidationism at present threatening our Party's very existence. We show that for all their pretensions of being the 'hard left' of the Communist Party, Straight Leftism is nothing but a cover for pro-Labourite reformism.

## 45 Letters

In this edition we include a letter from Channel 4's *A Week in Politics* asking us for an "off the record" chat; we also have a reader's view on the Communist Party's Women's Conference; the fight against Straight Leftism; The London District Committee's delegation to the Six Counties; the state of the Party and the way forward; and a reply from comrade Glen Baker defending his letter published in our last edition.

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# The fight for the Party has only just begun

The staging of the Communist Party's 38th Congress, the most important since its foundation, signifies a major victory for Eurocommunism and liquidationism. Rather than being some aberration, this tragic event is the logical outcome and culmination of that inward growing cancer we call opportunism. If left unopposed, it will in the very near future completely destroy our Party as the living embodiment of the revolutionary working class tradition in Britain.

How could this situation come about, after events such as this year's Annual General Meeting of the PPS have already shown that the majority of Party activists and in essence, the core of the Party itself, are in unequivocal opposition to the Eurocommunist clique now factionally monopolising the Executive and Political Committees? Why has this opposition to Eurocommunism and liquidationism failed to forge a genuine platform and fightback for pro-Partyism? These are questions all comrades, wishing to safeguard and rebuild the Party on a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist basis, should be asking themselves and which *The Leninist* in turn will attempt to honestly answer.

One noticeable feature of this Congress was the enforced restriction of visitors to those who could obtain tickets through the 'right' channels. Any Party member turning up on the door with a stamped up card was turned away with the false excuse that the visitors' gallery was full.

Why was this? Correspondents from the bourgeois press, *Channel Four*, the Trotskyite *Newsline* and the 'pro-Soviet' *New Worker* were all allowed in, so why not the ordinary Party member? Our conclusion is that the Eurocommunists did not want any in depth analysis and discussion in the aftermath of this Congress. They knew that the non-Party press had already dismissed the Party as 'finished' long ago and were merely there to enjoy the feast. They also knew that the *Morning Star* would give it superficial and inadequate coverage, confining itself to reporting snippets from the official speeches and reports, and that *Straight Left* would shun public discussion altogether.

We believe the intention of the Eurocommunists was to prevent *The Leninist* receiving the 'inside' story, having believed their own propaganda that we are an 'outside body'. Chairman Halverson expressed these fears in his opening remarks to the Congress that, "There may be some who hope to sensationally report on the proceedings and discussions of this Congress." Well, we can now report that their efforts have been thwarted and their presumption disproved. *The Leninist* is revealing the proceedings of the Congress, not for the delectation of our class enemies who are already rubbing their hands with glee, but for the purpose of conducting an open ideological

struggle against liquidationism publicly, in front of the working class masses. This is the only way to organise a pro-Party rebellion inside the Party and to draw militant class conscious workers outside the Party into our struggle. This is the only means we have of fighting back the wave of demoralisation and defeatism now spreading through our ranks.

Firstly, let us look at the balance of forces present at the Congress and the way it was run by the Congress committees, all of which were staffed by Eurocommunist majorities loyal to the General Secretary Gordon McLennan.

The Congress delegates were sharply polarised into effectively two camps which according to the vote on the composite Poland amendment (Document 26), consisted of a 143 delegate majority in favour of the Eurocommunist leadership and a 101 delegate minority against, with an extremely narrow middle-ground of 12 delegates. In no way was the opposition homogeneous however, as it contained both the tightly knit faction around *Straight Left* and the more vaguely organised and ineffective pro-Chater-Costello centrist faction centred around the London District delegation, as well as supporters of *The Leninist*.

An indication of how the Eurocommunists secured a majority can be gleaned from the figures for average dues paying membership, now standing at the appalling level of 41% nationally. This gives the *broadest* definition of activists as a proportion of Party membership. Yet of the largest districts with over 1,000 members, only London is above the national average with 66.5%. It is therefore no coincidence that London District is the largest organised centre of opposition to the Eurocommunist dominated Executive Committee. What is more shocking is that all the other major Districts of Scotland, Midlands, North West, Wales and Yorkshire are around, but mainly below 30% average dues paying membership! Scotland, the largest District with over a quarter of Congress delegates, the historical bedrock of communism in Britain, has been reduced down to the truly disturbing level of 27.9%!

The significance of these figures is that the majority of Party membership has become a conservative and inactive layer of deadwood on which the Party machine at National and District level increasingly relies to bureaucratically block the political opposition of activists. Stories of how the Eurocommunist leadership, especially in Scotland, manipulated meetings to elect delegates, declaring them null and void if the 'wrong' candidate was elected or looked like winning and reconvening 'packed' meetings, were circulated quite freely at the Congress as a number of aggrieved Party members took their charges of gerrymandering to the Credentials Committee. None were upheld of course.

A further battle had to be fought on the floor of the

Congress simply to give consultative status to comrades Gill, Guy and Rubner, while comrade Terry Marsland was denied this on the pretext that she was only an Assistant General Secretary of her union while the other three comrades were *General Secretaries*. This petty minded wrangling by the Credentials Committee was merely to disguise their attempt to keep such influential opponents of the Eurocommunists out of the Congress and to prevent them speaking.

The Eurocommunists' control of the majority of District organisations and the Executive Committee enabled them not only to secure a majority of loyal delegates, but also to manipulate the procedure of the Congress via the Congress committees. As a consequence, Congress was subjected to the most outrageous methods of political control verging on corruption.

To guarantee factional stage-management of the whole affair, all non-Euro stewards were replaced by Eurocommunists after the Arrangements Committee had secured the resignation of the non-Euro steward Don O'Hanrahan and Tellers were appointed, whereas they are normally elected. Consequently, the Congress regime became totally insufferable as stewards assumed the role of virtually policing delegates. No longer were they acting to serve and aid the delegates but to control and monitor their movements and actions. Delegates entering the Congress hall were subjected to five security checks involving the scrutiny of Party and delegate cards in the most officious manner, and cross-examination with such pettifogging questions as: 'What is the address of your branch secretary?' Delegates underwent this process a further three times to get to the toilets, sometimes with the added bonus of an escort to discourage the distribution of illicit literature and the convening of clandestine meetings in the cubicles.

The fact that Congress Chairman Ron Halverson and stewards constantly badgered delegates into remaining in their seats during sessions and that even facilities for coffee were only available to *stewards* on the first two days, point to a premeditated attempt to minimise the opportunity for delegates from different Party Districts to freely fraternise. These 'security' measures were continued relentlessly for the four days duration even after the leadership had become quite secure in its own mind of a safe majority, and despite the fact that stewards had become quite familiar with those who were delegates.

Worse was yet to come however. This goonish clowning by stewards went beyond farce to become quite sinister, when they were given instructions by the Arrangements Committee Chairwoman Jean Freeman to search delegates and their bags for the *Congress Truth* newssheets being surreptitiously circulated by Straight Leftist delegates. This was not only a monstrous infringement of 'civil liberties', as one delegate protested, *but of communist morality!*

This in our view was no way to conduct a Party Congress, for it is here more than at any other time that communists should have maximum opportunity to freely debate and to have access to all views and ideological tendencies within the Party. But then of course the intention of the Eurocommunists was precisely the opposite and they achieved this by whipping up an atmosphere of intimidation and bludgeoning any dissent into submission. Let us substantiate our accusation of this stifling of debate with some observations of Congress proceedings which the Eurocommunists will no doubt attempt to cover up.

The Resolutions Committee committed the grossest violations of inner-Party democracy. Its first report (Document 3), which the London District unsuccessfully challenged by calling for "full and free debate",

withdrew 96 of the 268 Branch and District Resolutions including a critical one by London District on "The Nature of the Party". Even more indicative of the general accusation of gerrymandering was the fact that 232 of the 350 amendments to the EC Resolution on the General Election were also withdrawn. The objective of all this was clearly revealed by the Resolution Committee's subsequent refusal to allow the opposition to composite resolutions on Peace, Poland and the crisis in the Party, and moreover by its attempt to purposefully misrepresent the opposition's views. The Peace issue was a particular example of cynical manipulation by the Resolutions Committee. At the composite meeting, the opposition constituted the majority and were duly assigned the task of drawing up a composite resolution. The Eurocommunist minority who had previously refused to submit any material from their branches to a joint resolution proceeded to composite an amendment to the opposition's resolution. Then lo and behold, the Resolutions Committee intervened to make the opposition resolution the amendment and the Eurocommunist amendment the resolution, the purpose being to give the Eurocommunist resolution five of the seven speeches allocated to the debate.

Further tactics used by the platform to stifle debate and to restrict the opposition's speaking-time included such methods as allowing only one speaker to move amendments and oppose resolutions (an oppositionist more often than not); giving twenty to thirty minutes for speakers moving resolutions and reports (usually Eurocommunists) and only seven minutes to those against, as was even the case with the editor of the *Morning Star*; and not calling the majority of delegates who had put slips in to speak — in fact only 36 out of a hundred or more wishing to speak, participated in the debate on the main EC resolution. In the case of the controversial issue of Poland, the platform sprung it on the Congress at 5.00pm on Sunday with no warning, thus effectively guillotining it. These methods were not used because of insufficient time but to curtail and distort the debate in favour of the Eurocommunists, because at one stage Congress was actually running ahead of schedule and so the Chairman and platform subsequently took up the slack by dragging out their own speeches and procedural lambasting of the opposition.

Furthermore, the resolutions and amendments were often formulated to defuse any real debate on the floor of the Congress and to confine the real arguments to the committee stage. The Eurocommunist pretender to the *Morning Star* editorship Chris Myant for example, drew up a resolution on Ireland and attempted to even omit in the face of a storm of protests (including that of the fraternal delegate from the CPI) the "British intent to withdrawal". Rather than debating out his position, and no doubt that of the Eurocommunists, in Congress however, comrade Myant very reluctantly acceded to the demand to have it included, as the certainty of securing a majority for the Eurocommunists on this issue could not be assured.

But it was the closed session which summed up the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of the Eurocommunists' claim to favour genuine inner-Party democracy. Comrade Halverson announced that thirty delegates had indicated they wished to speak, but he then made a mockery of the proceedings by only giving them two minutes each. Yet when fifty eight delegates lined up, as is their every right, Chairman Halverson reduced their time even further to a ludicrous one minute! 'Just a minute' democracy may be adequate for the namesake comedy radio programme, but hardly gives time for some Welsh comrades to state their name and branch, never mind anybody who stutters, and more

importantly, does not give the debate the scope, depth and seriousness it demands. Further farcical analogies with the aforesaid programme emerged when delegates had the microphone cut off for 'repetition' — no one nominee to the EC could be mentioned more than twice — or for mentioning such prohibitive words as 'alternative list' or for even protesting at the way the Congress was being conducted. Some comrades remarked on the resemblance of the closed session to a theatrical audition, where the hopeful candidates queue up to render their first note, only to be shunted off stage by the director's resounding command "Next!"

But the greatest violation of the democratic procedure occurred when the Chairman ordered the Chief Steward to physically obstruct any other delegates wishing to speak and join the fifty eight in line, on the bureaucratic pretext of having to clear the hall by 6.00pm.

For an event as important as the Party Congress, being held only once every two years, the Party *must* have sufficient time to conduct its affairs freely and fully, or else it can never hope to resolve differences in a comradely fashion. This the Eurocommunists ignored, not because they do not realise the grave consequences of deepening divisions and antagonising the Party, by railroading their opponents through intimidation, gerrymandering and stifling of debate, but because they have consciously decided to completely overthrow all remnants of democratic centralism and open debate by imposing a factional and bureaucratic centralist dictatorship over the Party as a whole.

This strategy has long been promoted by the most rabid and aggressively provocative elements in the Eurocommunist camp such as Jon Bloomfield and ex-hatchet-man of the YCL Tom Bell, as a means of purging the Party of 'Stalinists' and of sending them off packing to the New Communist Party — and effective political exile. But when the leading Eurocommunist Dave Cook curiously rediscovered a 'positive' attitude towards "our Leninist heritage" (*Focus*, August 1983), betraying his understanding of "Leninist" as being synonymous with ideological subordination to the Party centre, and likewise, when *Marxism Today* Editor Martin Jacques described the inner-Party fight against the "sectarian opposition" as having been "far too weak" (*Focus*, November 1983), it was increasingly evident that the Eurocommunist leadership itself was beginning to adopt this same attitude. This found its fullest expression in General Secretary Gordon McLennan's speeches to Congress where he announced, "Certainly the Party leadership, for a very long time in our Party, has not used disciplinary action to deal with such problems (meaning the opposition — *TL*). But when comrades refuse to exercise self-discipline, the rules of the Party have to be applied". And in reference to the Straight Leftists circulating *Congress Truth*, he stated ominously "The people who produce this don't deserve the proud honour and title of members of the Communist Party." (The Chairwoman of the Arrangements Committee Jean Freeman later told the Congress that reports on those responsible for *Congress Truth* and the *Alternative Recommended List* would be submitted to the newly elected EC with a recommendation of "swift action".)

The Eurocommunists had also stated that they would not tolerate any member of the EC or PC voicing differences in the Party press and they excluded comrade Mick Costello from the recommended list to the EC specifically because he infringed that factional ruling during the pre-Congress discussion and the Congress itself. Furthermore, comrades on the recommended list were interviewed by the EPC, as to whether they agreed with the 'alternative list', to which an

affirmative answer would have undoubtedly resulted in them being dropped from the official list. If a member of the EC represents the viewpoint of a particular trend in the Party, and there should be no question that any substantial trend in the Party has to be represented on the EC if it is not to be bureaucratically excluded from Party life, then that comrade must be heard by the Party as a whole. Nearly all leading oppositionists were excluded from the EC, purely for their views, and even comrades such as Malcolm Pitt, who is President of the Kent miners and still works as a miner, were ousted from the recommended list and supplanted by the likes of Euro-feminist Tricia Davis. Comrade Mike Hicks was one of the few leading oppositionists to be put back on (after having once been taken off in favour of another Euro-feminist Brenda Kirsch), only because of the wave of objections to the EPC, including some from McLennan loyalists such as London District Secretary Bill Dunn, and moreover because comrade Hicks himself placated the Eurocommunists in his speeches to Congress. But in general, by excluding the majority of vocal dissenters from the EC, the Eurocommunists have transformed the Party's highest committee into a factional body, which no longer has the support of the majority of Party activists and which cannot operate with the moral authority of the Party, *as it no longer represents it as a whole*.

Did the opposition at the Congress put forward a coherent and genuine pro-Party alternative to the Eurocommunist liquidators? In our opinion they did not.

The opposition's amendments and resolutions at the Congress were in the main jointly composed by the two largest oppositional trends, namely *Straight Left* and the pro-Chater-Costello centrist faction. This apparent unity around the issues of Peace and Poland etc. being more an expression of superficial ideological agreement, essentially disguised two totally different political strategies. *Straight Left's* position has for the past four years elevated the question of entering the Labour Party to one of *principle*, towards which its whole factional organisation and ideological perspective is subordinated, whereas the Chater-Costello faction has recently set itself and the *Morning Star* on a tailist course behind the industrial trade unions, defining them incorrectly as the "vanguard of the working class", hence denying the Communist Party that role. Therefore the ability of these two trends to share any longterm political platform is extremely limited as both are orientated out of the Communist Party, but through separate doors.

*Straight Left* was able to strengthen its position in relation to the pro-Chater-Costello centrist faction by purposefully promoting the illusion of 'political unity'. They not only went out of their way to compose joint amendments with the other faction, but also withdrew their critical amendment on the Management Committee during the *Morning Star* debate and generally toned down any differences to ensure the opposition voted as one. Yet by taking the initiative in circulating a twice daily newssheet called *Congress Truth* and engineering the promised alternative list of *Straight Left* and Chater-Costello nominees to the EC elections, they were able to project themselves as the most visible and effective opposition to the Eurocommunists, much to the chagrin of the pro-Chater-Costello faction. The intention of *Straight Left* was of course to draw supporters of the 'soft left' to their own position, and to discount the accusations of the pro-Chater-Costello faction of being 'sectarian' and an inferior force in the opposition. They subsequently claimed to have an actual majority of oppositionist delegates at the Congress and turned the tables by accusing the 'soft left' of being the "incurable splitters" for not voting for the Straight Leftists on the 'alternative list'. All in all, the pro-Chater-Costello

faction found itself completely out-manoeuvred and ineffective in comparison.

The pro-Chater-Costello faction turned out to be very much built on sand, as its leaders, exposing themselves to be men of straw, retreated unceremoniously before the onslaught of the Eurocommunists. Comrade Chater did not even try to fight, but appeased the McLennan leadership during the *Morning Star* debate with a cringingly apologetic speech, pleading with them not to "go down the road of confrontation we see both in this resolution and in the attempt to remove the editor and deputy editor from the EC", while comrade Hicks went even further, proclaiming there to be "no fundamental differences" between his own position and that of the Eurocommunists! Comrade Chater invoked more than a few embarrassed wincing among his supporters on the left of the Party, as he gave the performance not of a fiery pro-Party leader raring to do battle with liquidationism, but of a rather pathetic damp squib. Since having been almost completely ousted from the Party machine, the Chater-Costello faction at the *Morning Star* has issued further statements, in which the Communist Party is increasingly only mentioned in the same breath as "all other organisations of the labour, trade union and democratic movement", confirming the schism between the Party and the paper. They have declared they will "continue to implement loyally the decisions of the annual general meetings of the People's Press Printing Society", (*Morning Star*, November 16 1983), meaning in other words, they do not accept the Congress resolution on the PPS to be binding, and look increasingly set to cast themselves and the *Morning Star* adrift into the sea of the broad labour movement.

Why then, was pro-Partyism not truly represented and fought for as a political platform by the vast majority of those opposed to the Eurocommunists at the Congress?

There is no question that a majority of Party activists are anxious about the Party's future and have expressed the desire to form a pro-Party opposition to overthrow the Eurocommunist liquidators. But the predominant ideological outlook of comrades on the left of the Party prevents them from recognising that Eurocommunism is not the only liquidationist trend. A view quite commonly heard is that comrades Chater and Costello are latter-day Plekhanov's — not Bolsheviks but pro-Party Mensheviks — whom the 'Bolsheviks' on the left of the Party should support as they are "fighting to preserve the class basis of this Party" (P. Lysandrou, *Discussion 38*, No 2). Yet this view remains totally blind to the fact that rather than defending the class basis of our Party or even the Party itself, comrade Chater is attempting to broaden the working class, or more specifically the trade union base of the *Morning Star* at the expense of its relationship with the Communist Party. Why else would he call the Party "an outside body" to the PPS? It is quite obvious to anybody who opens their eyes that comrade Chater is not playing the role of a pro-Party Menshevik, but is doing the exact opposite, of *undermining Partyism, and acting as a form of liquidationism*. Furthermore, the characterisation by this view of *Straight Left* as 'left sectarian', when that group is rightist orientated and seeking to submerge independent communist activity into the Labour Party is also ludicrously inaccurate, and again simply fails to recognise and thus disguises *yet another form of liquidationism*.

Contrary to the claim by many comrades on the left of the Party to be 'the Bolshevik wing', the most pervasive ideology dominating the majority of even the healthiest and most 'pro-Party in spirit' activists in opposition to the Eurocommunists is *centrism*. Whereas Bolshevism or Leninism has the clear revolutionary perspective of

building a revolutionary proletarian movement to literally "smash the bourgeois state machine", combining scientific Marxist principle with flexible tactics, centrism uses revolutionary rhetoric to hide its truly conservative nature of adapting to what exists rather than striving to *change* what exists, especially in relation to opportunism in the working class in its own country and the world communist movement internationally. For centrism, defending the Party and defending 'Marxism-Leninism' is more a question of defending the past, defending 'orthodoxy' and defending 'theory' as dry dogma divorced from the needs of revolutionary action, rather than upholding the tried and proven principles of Leninist organisation necessary for carrying out successful revolutions in all countries of the world. It is no surprise therefore that centrism often finds itself defending 'yesterday's revisionism', as today's Marxist theory.

The reason why the three major centrist trends which have emerged in our Party during the last fifteen years, namely the NCP, *Straight Left* and the pro-Chater-Costello faction have all pursued liquidationist courses out of the Party is their inability to develop and fight for a revolutionary perspective and programme as an alternative to the *BRS inside the Party*. All of them supported the 1951, 1952 and 1957 editions simply because the Soviet Party gave it its blessing and the pro-Chater-Costello faction today even supports a 'positive interpretation' of the 1978 version, as this was the subjective ideological justification for comrades Chater and Costello's growing but belated split from the Eurocommunists in the aftermath of the 35th Congress in 1978 and 1979. Therefore the factor determining whether centrism supports a Party programme is quite clearly *not its revolutionary content*, but the question of *political expediency*. This explains why comrades who reviled the *BRS* as revisionist in 1977 can now turn around and support 'yesterday's revisionism'. Once such expediency disappears, however, then the justification for supporting the programme and *for remaining in the Party* evaporates. This was the case for the NCP in 1977 and is increasingly so for *Straight Left*, as it constantly weighs the advantages of staying in a Party straightjacketed by Eurocommunism against infiltrating the Labour Party. For the pro-Chater-Costello faction, the 'positive interpretation' of the 1978 *BRS* is an attempt to hide the fact that comrades Chater and Costello supported that document to the letter, until they too discovered that its implementation would not be expedient for them, with the same liquidationist conclusion.

It is still possible that centrism in our Party can stop short of following either *Straight Left* or the *Morning Star* out of the Party and be drawn into a pro-Party fightback, simply because of its orthodox tradition. This factor was decisive in the 1945 reformation of the CPUSA after Earl Browder had dissolved it into an educational sect. Yet centrism's ability to carry that struggle through to the stage of developing a Leninist programme is still blocked by its ideological inclination to conciliate with opportunism. Let us illustrate this point by looking at the opposition's amendments and support for resolutions as an expression of its centrist outlook.

The opposition Peace amendment differentiated itself from the Eurocommunist resolution by emphasising, quite correctly, that the struggle for world peace is a *class issue*, that: "The danger of war arises... from the dynamics of capitalist society" and that "the fight for the maintenance of peace and the fight for the defence of Socialism are inextricably intertwined". Yet the amendment exuded centrism by its omission of any call to *transform* the peace movement from one

embedded in pacifism and reformism, to one wedded to the revolutionary struggle for socialism in Britain and the world. Rather than posing revolution as a concrete task for the peace movement under the leadership of the Communist Party, its vague generalisation that "peace can only be finally guaranteed by the world-wide achievements and strengthening of socialism" effectively consigned this Marxist-Leninist obligation to the far-off future. It contained no polemic against pacifism except for a mild rebuke concerning the failure of peace organisations other than the BPA to support anti-imperialist struggles, and a call to boycott END. On the contrary, the aims of this amendment rather than challenging pacifism, embraced it by confining communist policy to the campaign for "nuclear disarmament and a non-aligned foreign policy for Britain" and "against NATO membership".

The opposition amendment on Poland reflected the usual conservative and orthodox attitude of centrism towards the crises, which have periodically surfaced in Eastern Europe. The objective of the amendment was to simply defend the implementation of martial law, without fully confronting the reasons for the crisis in the first place, as being a lack of socialist democracy and the Party's divorce from the working class masses. It glossed over the issue of the PUWP's culpability in the historical process leading up to the events of August 1980 with only a passing reference to "past mistakes" and completely ducked the question, as to whether the working class needs trade unions independent of the state (though *not* of the Party) under socialism. While *Solidarnosc* is now unquestionably counter-revolutionary, it was able to threaten socialism in Poland by winning ten million workers to its banner, precisely because it fulfilled their demand for a trade union to defend their living standards, after the official unions controlled by the Party and acting as agents of state policy failed to carry out that role. Martial law dealt a heavy but not fatal blow to the plans of counter-revolution, but at the same time, represented a major retreat by the Party from the task of re-establishing its political credibility with the working class. The position of centrism in our Party fails to really counter the arguments of the Eurocommunists, by propagating "official optimism" about the PUWP's contemporary efforts to "consolidate socialism" and sowing the illusion that the fundamental problems in Poland are being resolved, whereas in reality, counter-revolution continues to be a threat, having merely been temporarily suppressed.

The emergency resolution on Ireland, and the resolutions on Women and Law and Order were all composited and moved by the Eurocommunists, yet the opposition did not pose any alternative positions on these issues and so all were passed virtually unanimously. This illustrated to us the ideological poverty of centrism in our Party and its inability to even differentiate itself from the putrid opportunism of the Eurocommunists 'across the board'.

The centrists essentially pushed the line of our fraternal Party in Ireland, the CPI, and therefore insisted against the wishes of Eurocommunist 'Ireland expert' Chris Myant, that the 'British Intent of Withdrawal' be incorporated. But to vote for a document which says "Congress unreservedly condemns the Republican paramilitary actions in Ireland and Britain" degrades our Party's proud anti-imperialist tradition into utter and vile hypocrisy, especially as they also voted for a Declaration on Southern Africa, saluting "the heroic actions of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC". Such fickle solidarity with a national liberation movement eight thousand miles away is not worth two pence when the same principle

cannot be applied to essentially the same struggle on our doorstep. The centrists in our Party such as *Straight Left* even had the bravado to support the Argentine fascist junta against British imperialism in the so-called 'national liberation' of the Malvinas, their only consistency being the fact that that too happened eight thousand miles away. Yet they cannot bring themselves to support a genuine national liberation movement in Ireland, which is rapidly becoming the mass Party of the nationalist population in the North, simply because they fear such a policy will compromise their respectability in the 'normal' politics of Britain. This is nothing but opportunism of the most cowardly sort.

The statement in the Women's resolution that "Women's liberation must be an integral part of our pursuit of socialism... that only a socialist society can provide the framework for women's advance to true equality" and the fact that the term "feminism" was not referred to once, thinly disguised the thoroughly reformist feminist content of this document. The erosion of women's position in Britain was repeatedly put down to Tory and government "policies" rather than the basic law of capitalist development, the term "capitalism" being used only *once* throughout merely to characterise the economic recession. Furthermore, the strong implication of men being 'the problem' hung very close to the surface. While not disagreeing with the need to encourage and promote greater participation by women in Party life, as the resolution resolves to do, the centrist opposition's inability to polemicise against feminism of all varieties (including 'socialist' ones) means they voted for a veritable Trojan Horse of Eurofeminism, in which dozens of Tricia Davises and Brenda Kirsches will be smuggled onto higher Party committees and advisories. This resolution will undoubtedly be turned into a garotte for tightening the Eurocommunist stranglehold in general.

If these resolutions were not bad enough, they pale into insignificance alongside the treacherous abomination unanimously passed under the heading "Law, Order and Policing". Instead of posing the task of only relying on the resources of the working class for its own protection and defence — something considered quite orthodox even by the Second International before 1914 — this appalling resolution "calls for policing to be brought under democratic control and *be at the service of the community*" (our emphasis-TL). To talk of providing "protection for our personal and social property" and combatting "sexual violence and racist attack" through the agency of the capitalist state, when it is precisely the capitalist state which is in the frontline of the assault on working class property, organisation and personal being, is not only spinning utopian illusions, but is downright reaction and class treachery. Witness the racist attacks by police on Blacks and Irish, witness their frenzied batoning of pickets and demonstrators, and their brutal ejection of workers from factory and hospital occupations. 'Crime' is not our class enemy; it is the capitalist state against which the working class must primarily *arm itself* to fight. Yet the centrists are completely hand in glove with the Eurocommunists on this issue, for was it not at the last London District Congress that a leading Straight Leftist successfully proposed a similar resolution outlining an "alternative law and order strategy"?

Finally, let us look at how the centrists propose to resolve the crisis of the Party and to overthrow the Eurocommunists. We expressed the view when *The Leninist* was first published, that the left of the Party must wage an *open ideological struggle* against opportunism and liquidationism and draw new forces from the working class to strengthen the revolutionary wing in that

struggle. That was Lenin's method in defeating Menshevism and establishing Bolshevik hegemony over the Party as a whole.

Both *Straight Left* and the pro-Chater-Costello faction have fundamental ideological disagreements with the Eurocommunists and both project a different view from the Eurocommunists publicly to the working class, via their publications *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star*. But neither link this public difference in strategy and tactics directly to the waging of an inner-Party struggle. Hence both, rather than drawing class conscious workers into the Party, orientate their comrades out of the Party.

The pro-Chater-Costello faction dishonestly presents its own 'positive interpretation' of the *BRS* as orthodox, claiming that it is the Eurocommunists who have deviated from the 1978 programme. Instead of polemicising against the Eurocommunists and other trends, they virtuously proclaim their position as if it were the accepted view handed down from Mount Sinai. The *Morning Star* subsequently published a series of articles on the AES by comrade Ron Bellamy, knowing full well that it differed fundamentally from the Eurocommunist Party leadership, yet nowhere did the editor or the author acknowledge that fact. Comrades Chater and Costello have used their ideological differences, not to wage a struggle for the Party, but as a false flag to disguise the liquidationist nature of their course out of the Party.

The publication of the 'Charlie Woods' pamphlet and *Congress Truth*, on the other hand, were important and qualitatively new developments in the way *Straight Left* operates in the Party. Previously they have confined themselves to building the *Straight Left* newspaper as a plank for moving into the Labour Party at some later date, but always avoiding public expression of inner-Party debate and even denying any relation to the Communist Party. But because the *Straight Left*ists separate inner-Party struggle from their activities in the working class movement by erecting a Chinese Wall between the two, further intensification of the inner-Party struggle will only facilitate their tendency to move out of the Party altogether and to dissolve themselves in the broad movement.

The fundamental weakness of *Straight Left*, the pro-Chater-Costello faction and the earlier, Sid French faction from which they all derive their tendency to split rather than to continue the fight inside the Party, is their over preoccupation with the official Party structure. As soon as Sid French was threatened with expulsion and reorganisation of Surrey District, he was incapable of continuing the inner-Party struggle by any other means. From his point of view, he had to split to keep his organisation and followers together. The same can be said for the pro-Chater-Costello faction with its base in the *Morning Star* and the London District Committee; and although the *Straight Left*ists have relied more on factional organisation, they too are completely infatuated with the "1979", "1981", "1983", and now the "1985 plan to win the next Party Congress". They do not seem to have the mental flexibility to realise that if Gordon McLennan looked like losing a Congress, he would implement a widespread and thorough-going purge on the basis of the information he has already compiled about all factional activity. He would have done that last summer, if he felt he could not have won the 38th Congress by any other means. The question is however, what are the pro-Chater-Costello faction and *Straight Left* going to do when he does carry out expulsions in the coming two years and deprives them of their ability to be officially represented at the 39th Congress?

To summarise the 38th Congress, it stands as an

important milestone in the Party's decline and disintegration, because that process is now set to become a landslide. Not only will the Eurocommunists now strive to dissolve the remaining traces of Marxism Leninism and purge all those who oppose them, but both *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star* also threaten to take activists out of the Party. Moreover, many activists will be swept by the wave of demoralisation now enveloping us and either leave as individuals for the Labour Party or private life, or retreat into broad trade union and peace work etc. Consequently, Party activity and membership could take a sharp dive within a very short period, leaving the Party to become a Eurocommunist rump seeking a neo-Fabian role as "Think Tank of the Left". In our opinion, the historical significance of this Congress is the fact that all three major tendencies around *Marxism Today*, *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star* exude liquidationism in different forms. As the famous 5th Congress of the RSDLP adopted the name "Unity" Congress, so the 38th Congress of the CPGB will go down in the annals as the "Liquidationist" Congress.

Despite the severe setback of the 38th Congress, there is undoubtedly a basis among activists for a pro-Party fightback. The influence of *The Leninist* as a pro-Party tendency, although still small compared to the other longer established tendencies, has grown continuously since it was first published two years ago, and has been the most consistent in warning of the dangers of liquidationism.

In our Founding Statement in November 1981, we said;

"The Party today is a seething mass of bourgeois and petty bourgeois tendencies — feminism, pacifism, economism, liberalism, anti-Sovietism, nationalism — all the offspring of opportunism. What this leads to if not checked is the dissolving of the Party organisationally, for as opportunism has dissolved the Party ideologically, it is only one more step, and a logical one, to liquidate the Party organisationally. At the moment this will not mean winding up the Party — no, it means obliterating its independent work, its independent position in front of the masses, submerging it into the 'broad' movement...The result is that voices are raised, and are becoming increasingly vocal in the call for the ending of independent Party activity, for the submerging of the Party in the flood-tide of Bennisism". (*The Leninist* No.1)

Implicit in this was a warning not only of Eurocommunism, but also of *Straight Left*, and since then, we warned on the occasion of the rift between the EC and Management Committee "...of the liquidationist dangers of supporting any of the three major organised factions in the Party, namely the Eurocommunists, *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star*". (Statement of *The Leninist* 19 June 1983). Our increasing influence in this respect is undoubtedly reflected in the number of letters submitted to the 38th pre-Congress discussion which adopted the language of pro-Partyism and condemned liquidationism — a phenomenon virtually absent from the 37th pre-Congress discussion and is an influence that has indirectly spread beyond those comrades who may be considered supporters of *The Leninist*.

The task of all pro-Party forces today, is to keep all Party activists in the Party and to win them to a genuine struggle against liquidationism. This will be a difficult problem, due to the efforts of the Eurocommunists to impose a bureaucratic centralist dictatorship and to generate a witch-hunt as well as the threat by the *Morning Star* and *Straight Left* to take activists out of the Party. All pro-Party comrades must firstly, oppose all expulsions and exclusions from Party membership by factionally motivated cliques, including the Eurocommunist Executive Committee. This will be a decisive test for the pro-Party opposition, for in the event of such



expulsions including those of Straight Leftists, Leninists and pro-Chater-Costello comrades, it must refuse to recognise such acts and if necessary, endeavour to organise any excluded comrade in the fight against liquidationism. Our Leninist comrades in the Communist Party of Turkey have a saying for this as they too experienced unconstitutional expulsions by the Mensheviks: "If they throw you out of the door, climb in through the window; if they kick you out of the window, then we will climb down the chimney". The meaning of this is that we will fight at all costs to remain within *our* Party, whether the opportunists and liquidators officially recognise our presence or not. Secondly, we must learn the lessons of the futile split by the NCP, and oppose all such liquidationist actions which weaken and disperse our forces.

On what platform can pro-Partyism be united?

This is an important question, as ideological unity within the Party shattered long ago, not only between pro-Partyism and liquidationism, but also between different pro-Party trends as well. We have openly stated our disagreements with other comrades, yet we do not expect to resolve disunity overnight. This can only be achieved over a long period of working together for pro-Partyism, but with comradely debate within the pro-Party wing of the Party life. Therefore the basis for a pro-Partyism cannot be too ideologically specific as to exclude pro-Party comrades who do not hold a particular view. Pro-Partyism must be forged on something more basic to the principle of communist organisation, which is acceptable to all comrades who consider themselves pro-Party communists and which provides the foundation and framework for rebuilding a genuine vanguard Communist Party.

In issue No.5, *The Leninist* advanced three fundamental conditions, upon which it is prepared to conduct a joint pro-Party struggle with any comrade or Party trend, including those in the pro-Chater-Costello faction and even *Straight Left*, assuming of course they forgo their present liquidationist course out of the Party. These three points are firstly, proletarian internationalism which means above all combating anti-Sovietism and supporting the Socialist countries as 'the apple of our eye'; secondly, struggling to re-establish democratic centralism as against the present bureaucratic centralist factional regime now dominating the Party, combining "unity in action" with complete access by all trends to the Party's ruling committees and publications; and thirdly, working to establish the Party's revolutionary vanguard role in the working class through *independent communist activity* and combating all forms of tailism towards the Labour Party, trade unions and other democratic organisations. Of course we are open to further suggestions and negotiations, but for us, these three points are fundamental and beyond compromise.

It is on this basis that a pro-Party bloc can be formed and the fightback against Eurocommunism and liquidationism be organised. Furthermore, the struggle for the *Morning Star* is approaching its decisive stage, and it is the task of pro-Partyism to fight to transform our paper into a weapon for pro-Partyism — against the liquidationist plans of the Eurocommunists and comrades Chater and Costello. If however, the *Morning Star* is taken over by the Eurocommunists or it completes its present course out of the Party, then the need for a new pro-Party paper will present itself, in order for us to continue the struggle against liquidationism.

Comrades, the hour has come. The Party is in danger and our failure to act now in the spirit of pro-Partyism will only strengthen the forces of liquidationism.

**Open the fight against liquidationism on all fronts! No to Splits!**

## Postscript

The EC of January 14-15 saw the expulsion of comrades Bruce Allen, Barbara O'Hare and Brian Topping for their preparation of the Alternative Recommended list at Congress and Charlie Woods for his continued insistence that he was solely responsible for the pamphlet *The Crisis in Our Communist Party*. The EC also promised to deal with those who produced *Congress Truth* at their next meeting. What should be the attitude of pro-Party forces to these moves? Some elements in the opposition declare that the Straight Leftists "got what they had coming". This is both wrong and dangerous, a violation of the most elementary working class motto-unity is strength. For the EC also passed, with six against, a resolution demanding that comrades Tony Chater and David Whitfield resign their positions as Editor and Deputy Editor of the *Morning Star* in favour of the Euros Chris Myant and Frank Chalmers.

These moves are a unity and are a factional attack on all non-Euro sections in the Party who *in total* represent a clear majority of Party activists — for the Euros are attempting to create a 'pure' Eurocommunist Party. In the face of this there must be unity. That is why we say: No to all factional expulsions and no recognition of them! For Party discipline under the Eurocommunists is bureaucratic factional discipline that genuine communists have a revolutionary duty to organise disciplined rebellion against. ■

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## *The Leninist* £10,000 Development Fund

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Since we began publication of *The Leninist* in November 1981 it has earned a justifiable reputation of providing the highest level of communist theory.

The impact of *The Leninist* while being undeniable has been limited by our lack of resources. Despite the great sacrifices of our supporters we have only been able to produce six editions in two years.

The situation in our Communist Party, especially the strategic advances made by liquidationism demands that we expand our activities.

The looming new general crisis of capitalism and the consequent threat of thermonuclear war demands that we firmly link our struggle in the Party with the mass of class conscious workers, fuse the inner-Party struggle with the struggle to provide the working class with a fighting alternative to Labourism and austerity. We must direct our energies outwards to our class, break from sterile conspiracy and manoeuvre, begin the task of reasserting the vanguard role of the Communist Party.

It is to facilitate this perspective that we are launching our £10,000 Development Fund. We aim to raise this sum by September 1984, this will enable us to purchase a phototype setter which will greatly reduce production costs and make it possible for us to produce books, pamphlets, and papers.

Our typesetting equipment will be put to the service of all pro-Party forces, our success in raising £10,000 will be a victory for all pro-Party forces, a leap forward in the struggle against Eurocommunism and all forms of liquidationism. For this reason all those committed to our Party, committed to reasserting its vanguard role, should donate to our fund.

**Send donations to *The Leninist* (Special Appeal) BCM Box 928, London WC1 3XX, or take out a regular weekly or monthly standing order payable to *The Leninist* (Special Appeal) Co-op Bank 1, Islington High Street, London N1 9TR, Account number 504 26278-60, Bank sorting code 08-90-33**

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# The crisis of capitalism in Turkey and the differences in the Communist Party\*

William Hughes

Comrades with their ears to the ground will have possibly noticed the subject of Turkey cropping up more frequently in Party circles and publications of late. Unfortunately however instead of informed debate on this very important topic for revolutionaries there has been a mixture of mis-information, prejudice and simple pig-ignorance which has been a pathetic sight to behold. For instance, a recent General Council meeting of the Young Communist League (September 3 1983) was treated to a near farcical interpretation of events inside the communist movement in Turkey. The minutes of the YCL Executive Committee (equivalent of the Party's Political Committee) of August 14 1983, reported to this General Council meeting, noted that a 'bilateral' had been held with the "Turkish" YCL (!) and that this nonexistent organisation had warned gravely of the activities of the of the 'ultra-left' of Turkey here in Britain which were endangering the lives of the CP and YCL of Turkey.

Likewise, self proclaimed 'expert' on Turkey comrade Chris Myant in an article in the *Morning Star* of June 29 1983, described the *Worker's Voice* wing of the Party as "A break-away from the Turkish (sic) Communist Party..."\*\* This article of comrade Myant's was shamefully trying to split Turkey solidarity work in this country by promoting the new two month old Solidarity Committee for Trade Union Rights and Democracy in Turkey (SCTURDT) at the expense of the much respected, widely supported 5 year old veteran of Turkey solidarity work in Britain, the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey. Although comrade Myant informed his readers quite correctly that the CPT Leninists were involved in the CDDRT, he hypocritically failed to mention that this SCTURDT miniscule hotch-potch was in fact set up by members of the opposing opportunist wing of the CPT, precisely to undermine through purely organisational methods the work of the CPT Leninists in solidarity with the people of Turkey.

Building on this unpromising start comrade Myant, reviewing Turkish political economist B. Berberoğlu's book *Turkey in Crisis*, suggested that Berberoğlu's conclusion that a revolutionary situation still exists in

present-day Turkey and that consequently the immediate task is social revolution, is "parallel to that of the *Worker's Voice* group" (*Morning Star* August 19 1983). Despite the fact that we carried a review of Berberoğlu's book by comrade Ayla Antepi of the *Worker's Voice*/Leninist wing of the CPT in *The Leninist*, No.4 which effectively refuted comrade Myant's ignorant nonsense, the *Morning Star* has carried no correction of this untrue statement and indeed many comrades in the Party still falsely ascribe this view to the Leninists of the CPT.

Evidently comrade Myant never lets facts get in the way of a good Menshevik story, but this article is for comrades who are interested in what is really happening

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\* Since the bulk of this article was written two events have taken place which have had in their different ways an important effect on the politics of Turkey. In early November 1983 the CPT Mensheviks announced that they had had the Party's "Fifth Congress" and that this congress had adopted a new Party programme which amongst other things definitively characterised the regime in Turkey as fully fascist. In our article we deal with the previous Party programme and the pronouncements of the Mensheviks declaring that the regime was not fascist. Also we were too early to take into account the fact that since the election victory of Özal's Motherland Party the junta, the NSC, has dissolved itself. The *İscin Sesi* wing of the CPT consider that this indicates that Turkey may possibly follow the constitutionalist road away from fascism — as Spain did after Franco, although they also do not deny that the imposition of a vicious, more terroristic, form of fascism is far from impossible. True to their tailism, the Mensheviks to date maintain a determined silence, no doubt worried that to even speculate would deliver the deathblow to their ever so carefully constructed and now, alas for them, out of date "Fourth Programme".

\*\*The fact that comrade Myant refers to the Communist Party of Turkey as the "Turkish Communist Party", is not merely a case of carelessness by our 'expert' on Turkey, but an important political mistake. The state of Turkey is inhabited not only by Turks but also by a number of other nationalities, including Kurds who make up around 25% of the population. In Turkey the advocacy of 'separatism' and the use of the Kurdish language are illegal, the government even denies the very existence of the Kurdish people. The right to self determination for the Kurds is a central question in the politics of Turkey, ignorant 'experts' who 'forget' this are in danger of slipping into support for Turkish chauvinism, something unfortunately prevalent in the Menshevik wing of the CPT which comrade Myant tries to promote.

inside the communist movement of Turkey, not in rumour and misinformation.

The recent *sham* 'elections' stage-managed by the fascist junta to legitimise its rule and the regime's growing revanchist and provocative stance, as evidenced by the recent declaration of 'independence' by the annexed Turkish section of Cyprus, demands that communists are clear and unambiguous in their evaluation of events. This article is necessarily limited and can only give a sketchy outline of the issues involved, and so comrades who wish to investigate in more depth the generally applicable and vitally important lessons to be learned from our comrades' experience in Turkey can do no better than read the extensive English series of *Işcinin Sesi* books and the monthly publication of the Union of Turkish Progressives, *Turkey Today*.

## 1. The development of Capitalism in Turkey

Turkey's independent road of capitalist development was blocked from its earliest days. Turkish capitalism has since assumed a 'distorted' character — that is, developments in its capitalist economy have been largely dependent on imperialism throughout its history. For example, the predominantly rural society of the Ottoman Empire was dominated by the West, first by indirect economic pressure from the 17th century to the mid 19th century and subsequently through direct economic controls and military occupation of large parts of Ottoman territory at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

The empire of the Ottomans had begun to be gripped by critical economic and political problems during the 18th century and 19th century. Internally, the system was rocked by peasant uprisings against the despotic regime and by wars of national liberation, especially in the Balkans. More importantly, the external threat to the stability of the empire came from Europe's completion of the transformation from feudalism to capitalism. The capitalist West now expanded vigorously into the Mediterranean and beyond in pursuit of raw materials and new markets. The growing trade between Ottoman Turkey and Western Europe from the late 18th century onwards thus had disastrously negative effects on the local, small-scale Ottoman industry, which operating under strict regulations and with rising costs unable to be offset by economies of scale, was totally unable to compete with the cheap European manufactured goods flooding the empire.

This import penetration precipitated a dramatic decline in traditional Ottoman industry and an increasing dependence of the empire on Europe. While originally in the 19th century Britain had confined its smothering of native Ottoman industry to textiles, this phenomenon spread over the next few decades until by the late 1800's the whole of Ottoman industry was on the verge of collapse. Dominated by the dictates of the developing European capitalist economies, Ottoman Turkey's indigenous manufacturing sector was strangled 'at birth' as it were and the empire subsequently became the supplier of raw materials to 'stoke the furnaces' of industrial development in the West.

Ottoman Turkey was, then a *colonising semi-colony*. This contradiction of native industry coupled with the continued territorial haemorrhaging of the empire, drastically curtailed the state's ability to raise public

revenue. The only long term solution to this problem was judged to be foreign loans, so that by 1877 the nominal public debt was £170,997,980 with Britain and France between themselves accounting for something like 70% of that total. No longer able to service this gargantuan foreign debt, the empire was declared 'bankrupt' and a European-controlled organisation, the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA), was established in 1881, ostensibly to attempt to collect payments on loans. This OPDA organisation, however, rapidly became the 'agent' of European companies seeking investment opportunities in Turkey and actually facilitated the even greater penetration of Ottoman Turkey by European capital.

Discontent with the despotic Ottoman state began to stir in the early 20th century amongst the military. Despite attempts at repression, secret societies were formed in Army Headquarters throughout the empire. The most dynamic of these became the Committees of Union and Progress or the romantically named 'Young Turks.' Eventually, on June 4 1908, the army headed by Major Ahmed Niyazi marched on Istanbul demanding the restoration of the 1876 Constitution. Politically isolated and unable to rely on the loyalty of other troops, Sultan Abdul-Hamid II abdicated on July 23.

The leading force in this 1908 Young Turks Revolution, the Committee of Union and Progress, declared itself the Party of Union and Progress (PUP) in April 1907 and took power in the elections three years later. This essentially petty bourgeois, nationalist party attempted to forge a Turkish bourgeoisie out of the raw material of the *esnaf* (artisans) and the *tuccar* (merchants) of the towns. However, the PUP's total inability to prevent imperialist occupation during World War I and the massive losses of territory following the Balkan wars (1912-13), set the stage for the emergence of Mustafa Kemal to seize the leadership of the liberation forces.

The rise to hegemony of Kemal over the national liberation forces was connected with the 'squeezing' of the Turkish bourgeoisie exclusively into the narrow borders of Anatolia as a result of the defeats following World War I. The dependent nature of Turkey during the 19th century had stunted any possibility of an indigenous large-scale industrial development. The dominant economic interest in Ottoman Turkey during this period, those of the big landowners in the countryside and of a comprador capitalist class in the urban centres such as Izmir and Istanbul, tied directly to the interest of foreign capital had a deadening effect on the development of the Turkish industrial infrastructure. This comprador class effectively reinforced the dependent and 'distorted' nature of the Ottoman economy firstly by saddling it with debts to the West and by strengthening its role as primarily that of a raw material supplier to the expanding Western economies. The interests of the small number of 'ethnic' Turkish firms were thus in sharp contradiction to those of both the imperialist countries and the collaborating bourgeoisie. The rapidly deteriorating position of Ottoman Turkey provided the opportunity for the further penetration of foreign capital and a relative strengthening of the position of the comprador bourgeoisie. Thus the aspirations to national hegemony of this ethnic Turkish bourgeoisie began increasingly to find their expression in the nationalist movement.

The War of National Liberation launched against the occupying forces of Britain, France, Italy and Greece and their internal agents thus took place under the dominance of the Turkish bourgeoisie. In any case this was achieved under conditions where neither the Soviet Republic nor imperialist Europe were in favour of Turkey

being wiped off the map. However, a mistake that has often been made, including by sections of the new Communist Party of Turkey (founded in 1920), has been to *overestimate* the progressive, anti-imperialist role played by the bourgeois Kemal and his forces. The CPT has consistently displayed liquidation throughout its history but the first instance of this phenomena arose in the differing attitudes towards Kemal.

As early as the First Congress of the Comintern, (June-July 1924) the Party had definitively split into two camps. Some comrades in Turkey overestimated the progressive nature of Kemalism and had according to Manuisky proposed to "support the development of internal capital against foreign capital" and thus dissolve the independent platform of the Party in front of the masses — Manuisky branded this tendency as "Stravism" (E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924-1926* p 640).

Similarly at the 1926 CPT Conference held in exile in Moscow, it was noted that the Central Committee in Turkey had fallen prey to "some Menshevik-liquidationist deviations" implying a "passivity" or tendency to tail the Kemal regime.

"One section considered that capitalist development in Turkey was of an anti-imperialist nature, and that, in this period, the bourgeoisie represented not only its own class interests, but the interests of all the classes in Turkey. According to this view... There must be no revolutionary assault on the capitalist system. Hence the party should not be a vanguard masses party, but a working group." (Fahri-Comintern International Press Information Bulletin, 1923-Quoted in *Turkey Today* No. 61-62 Feb-March 1983).

Conference resolved to rectify this liquidationist fault and an 'External Bureau' of the Central Committee was set up in Vienna to maintain links with those illegal groups functioning in Turkey. Yet, overall, the Party was in a mess. Those communists in Turkey who had escaped 'passivity' and tailism to Kemalism appear to have fallen into a form of *left* liquidationism akin to the stance of Bogdanov's boycottists:

"They deserted the workers in the Kemalist trade unions leading the struggle for trade union unity and defended the need to split the movement. They made mistakes of an anarchistic nature, showing signs and inclinations of sectarianism." (*Ibid*)

These liquidationist tendencies were exacerbated after the Party's Congress in 1932 and for the whole following period up to 1973 the CPT literally ceased to exist, a situation almost without precedent in the world communist movement.

After the formation of Kemal's new political party in 1922, and his election as the first President of the Republic, the road was open for independent, national capitalist development under the guidance and control of the state. Yet from the very beginning the Kemalist leadership of this bourgeois 'revolution' showed a willingness to conciliate and collaborate with imperialism.

A young Turkish Marxist, speaking in 1928, succinctly described the course of events following the War of Liberation, the declaration of the republic in 1923, and the Kemalists' gradual reconciliation with imperialism:

"After the victory against the imperialists, the Kemalists established their own rule. They took advantage of political power to establish at least a minimum economic foundation of their rule, at the expense of non-Turks and the agents of imperialism, the comprador bourgeoisie... We witness an extraordinary increase in taxation and the growing use of state funds for the purpose of establishing their economic rule and for industrial development. We see the application of

monopolistic methods and the mobilisation of capital in the country. This development continued for several years and brought the Turkish national bourgeoisie closer to its perpetual rival, the comprador bourgeoisie.

"This stage of development ended one and a half years ago. Kemalism has reached a point where it can develop no further. The bourgeoisie must increase the speed of accumulation. However, the efforts of the national bourgeoisie to safeguard independent development through its former methods have failed. Now they are forced to import capital on an increasing scale. Kemalism must bring imperialism into partnership for the exploitation of the working masses." (*Ibid*)

Thus, while the Izmir Economic Congress (Feb 17-March 4 1923) marked the beginning of the active role of the new Kemal state in the formulation of economic policy to guide the post-independence development of Turkey, the Kemal regime never truly 'broke the back' of the comprador class. The accelerating state intervention in the Turkish economy throughout the 1920's was designed to facilitate capital accumulation by the local bourgeoisie. The Soviet expert on eastern affairs, Gurko Kryazhin, described Kemal's supporters as "a potential bourgeoisie, carrying out primitive accumulation through the agency of the state apparatus." (E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924-1926* Vol. III, p.639). Yet the initial tardiness of the process of capital accumulation and the effects of the world economic recession in the late 1920's and early 1930's induced the state to take an even more interventionist approach to the economy. Foreign trade began to be more directly regulated, even though it is important to remember that a large part of it remained in private, comprador hands. A protectionist customs policy was thrown up behind which the Kemal leadership began to move towards a policy of 'national' industrial development.

Firstly, a widespread nationalisation took place, with the takeover of the main railways, utilities, transportation and port facilities in the early 1930's. This and subsequent nationalisation induced the state to take a more systematic approach to its industrialisation policy and paved the way, along with the inspiration and direct assistance of the Soviet Union, for the First and Second Five Year Industrial Development Plans during the 1930s. Both the First Plan, which was concerned with the production of consumer goods through the development of import-substituting industry, and the Second, which was primarily aimed at producing capital goods, were costly affairs. However, although Turkey had to secure foreign loans for the successful completion of the Second Plan, the bulk of the capital expenditure of 450 million Turkish Lira (TL) was raised locally through the newly created Sumer and Eti state banks.

The state's Sumer and Eti banks were mainly responsible for the coordination of industrialisation in the 1930's:

"The Sumer Bank owned dozens of factories, workshops and power plants, and participated to a considerable degree in semi-private enterprises." (Z.Y. Hershlag, *Turkey: The Challenge of Growth* p.72)

By the end of this period, according to I. Bilen, the Turkish bourgeoisie had exhausted any vestigial ability it had to further increase the exploitation of the working class and a process of reconciliation and reintegration with world imperialism began:

"The bourgeoisie sidled up to imperialist capitals, at first warily, but much later and particularly after the Second World War, in leaps and bounds... The American imperialists strolled in with their Truman 'doctrine' and Marshall 'plan'. Later they squatted on our land with their bases. They drew Turkey into their economic, political, cultural and military web. It was during this period particularly that the collaborating bourgeoisie grew fat. This bourgeoisie together with its partner the big landlords became the supports of imperialism

in our country." (Quoted in R. Yürükoglu, *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism*, p.35)

Thus, after 1950 the state embarked on a process of wholesale denationalisation — but now, obviously within the framework created by state capitalism — and the removal of restrictions in the flow of capital in or out of Turkey. The 1950's were noticeable for three features: first, the unprecedented growth in business activity in Turkey as foreign investment swelled to 1.2 billion T.L. during the period 1951-1963; secondly, Turkey's growing external debt as the quotas on imports were dropped and she was forced to increase her imports from donor countries as a condition of 'aid'. Turkey's foreign debt, 775 million TL in 1950, soared to over 5 billion TL in 1960 (*Turkey in Crisis*, p.72). And thirdly, as one might expect, the number of workers increased substantially during this period, by around 113% between 1948 and 1958. More significantly the number of unionised workers shot up by some 405%, largely in response to the increasingly unbearable burden of the 'double yoke' of exploitation by domestic and foreign capital. R. Yürükoglu estimated that the mass of surplus value in Turkish manufacturing of 419,062,000 TL in 1950, jumped to 3,365,847,000 TL by 1959; in other words, an increase of some 703%. (*Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism*, p.154).

By 1960, the growing contradictions in the economy had engendered mass unrest in the cities. The ruling Democratic Party's only response was repression, but increasingly the situation was becoming harder and harder to contain. Eventually, on May 27 1960, 38 officers and at their core ultra-nationalists under Turkeş (who later organised and led the fascist party, Milli Hareket Partisi (NAP)) led a coup which deposed Prime Minister Menderes and his flagging DP regime. For the working class, the most significant aspect of this *coup d'état* was the new constitution that it ushered in on May 1961. This permitted the foundation of a legally constituted socialist party — the petty bourgeois reformist TIP (Workers Party of Turkey) in February 1961 and the increased right to take industrial action. But the generals, overall, continued the same basic policies that had given rise to the previous crisis. Denationalisation continued apace and foreign investment in the 1960's grew even more rapidly than during the previous period.

Similarly, the position of the working class under the regime if anything deteriorated. Although during the 1960's the size of the working class actually doubled and there were several hundred successful strikes and demonstrations, the domination of the workers' movement by the yellow CIA trade union centre Türk-İş effectively disabled any real attempt to defend workers living standards. Consequently, average wages remained well below the level of subsistence, while at the same time the mass of surplus value grew enormously by over 225% between 1963-1968 (*Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism* p.154). A useful index for the ever increasing burden of exploitation borne on the backs of the workers is the horrific increase in industrial accidents during the period. Turkey had one of the highest rates of accidents at work in the world and some 96.7% of the workplaces in the country were in practice exempt from any health or safety regulations.

Despite the misleadership of Türk-İş, union membership more than doubled in the first half of the decade and increasingly workers struggles began to demand a qualitatively different union structure. Finally, in 1965 several unions broke away, and in 1967 the class struggle was raised to a qualitatively higher plane with the formation of the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, DISK).

With this new development, the proletariat's militancy was given freer rein, indicated by the fact that the rate of exploitation was actually *depressed* between 1968-1970 from 443% to 331%. After the Istanbul and Kocaeli strikes (June 15-16 1970), when an unprecedented number of workers, some 100,000, struck in protest at the attempts of the reactionary government of Demirel to restrict trade union rights, the Turkish bourgeoisie was prompted to move to resolve the crisis. The generals staged a coup on March 12 1971, detaining thousands of activists. Martial law was extended to the eight most industrialised areas where DISK was strongest and the three rural areas where there were large Kurdish populations.

In parallel with events in other medium level developed capitalist countries the military in Turkey: "Given its important position in the economy, alongside the rising Turkish monopoly bourgeoisie, had a substantial stake in the maintenance of economic and social stability" (B. Berberoğlu *Turkey in Crisis* p.107).

The 1970's are noticeable for two inter-related phenomena. Firstly the almost daily growing coalescence of the monopolies and the state, to the point that the state became "the managerial committee" of finance capital. Secondly, the 1970's saw the continued deterioration of the position of the working class and a rapidly maturing revolutionary situation develop in the country as a whole.

A measure of the severity of Turkey's crisis was depth of the industrial slump. By the latter half of 1977, 50% of plant capacity in manufacturing industry was idle. Unemployment rose to 20% of the employable population, the highest in any OECD country, with mass lay-offs becoming commonplace.

Inflation, which between 1970 and 1976 averaged 15-20%, jumped to over 40% in 1977. (*Ibid*) According to OECD figures, wholesale prices showed a 50% increase in the summer of 1978 compared to 1977, and continued to show an average *monthly* rate of 5% (*Ibid*). Prophetically, Halit Narin, president of the Confederation of Employers Union of Turkey, (TISK), claimed:

"Another year of this inflation and the regime will collapse" (*Turkey Today*, No.44, March 1978).

Evidently the West agreed. West German Chancellor Schmidt at the January 1979 Guadeloupe summit meeting of the leaders of the US, Britain, France and Federal Germany launched an international 'Save Turkey' operation estimated to involve a £500 million loan immediately and double this in 1980. At the same time, a consortium of seven foreign banks were engaged in rescheduling Turkey's massive foreign debts in "one of the largest such operations in financial history, involving some 6 million dollars." (*Financial Times*, February 26 1979.)

The rescue package was tied to the usual IMF provision of austerity measures. Firstly, it was insisted, there should be a declaration of economic development, despite the fact that growth had already fallen from 7% to 2% in 1978. The economy seemed well on the way to 'deceleration' without the admonitions of the IMF. Imports had been severely curtailed and exports (primarily agricultural and textile goods) were drastically affected by the rising protectionism in its main European markets as the effects of the recession began to bite.

The IMF (predictably) insisted on a wage freeze, a 20-30% devaluation of the Turkish Lira, which had already been devalued 15 times during the period 1972-77 (the last devaluation being of the order of 30%) and large allocations to the private sector from the state budget.

The OECD and foreign bank 'aid' was tied to these conditions and also more generally opening Turkey to foreign direct investment and allowing a greater

reliance on and exposure to normal market forces.

In human terms, this recession was rapidly leading to a situation of social explosion. For instance, a study of the cost of living index and real wages mirrors the political and economic history of this period.

Table 1: The Cost of Living Index and Real Wages for the Period 1970-81

Year	Average Salary (T.L.)	Cost of Living Index	Real Salary	Ratio of Real Salary to Average Salary
1970	1.087	100.0	1.087	100.0
1971	1.076	121.8	883	81.2
1972	1.076	140.5	766	70.4
1973	1.061	162.6	653	60.0
1974	1.355	187.7	722	66.4
1975	1.680	224.7	748	68.8
1976	1.771	260.2	681	62.6
1977	3.471	318.8	1.097	100.2
1978	5.223	488.7	1.069	98.3
1979	7.332	791.7	926	85.1
1980	9.415	1.594.0	591	54.3
1981	11.298	2.231.6	506	47.0

Source: *Cumhuriyet* (January 2 1982)

There was a steady rise in the years 1968, 1969, and 1970 of militant trade unionism which climaxed on June 15-16 1970 in a 100,000 strong march in Istanbul against government plans to merge DISK with the yellow Türk-İş. Real wages peaked in 1977, but then began to decline as DISK, weakened by internal strife, failed to keep wages abreast of hyper-inflation. With the 1980-81 period, austerity measures were imposed 'at the end of a bayonet'. Real wages plunged to levels below those of 1963, less than half the levels of 1977. But, neither the appearance of a relative 'peak' in 1976/1977, nor the real wages figures reflected the true situation. Since 1972, price indices assumed rents in Turkey to be constant. But rents increased by 100%-200%. Thus real wages arrived at using Turkish price indices were rather suspect. Comparing the official average wage with the estimated minimum required to survive, R. Yürükoğlu declares:

"In our country 'average' wages are, as yet, nowhere near the value of unskilled labour-power, nowhere near the minimum wage... The working class of Turkey is living below the poverty line to the extent that even its self-reproduction is threatened." (*Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism*). (See Tables 2 and 3.)

Table 2: Gap Between Minimum Wage and Value of Unskilled Labour-Power

Year	Current Minimum wage (Gross, TL/day)	Value of Unskilled Labour-Power, or Required Minimum Wage (Gross, TL/day)	Required Minimum Wage as Multiple of Current Minimum Wage
1972	23.50	72 TL	3 times
1975	40 (1974)	180TL	4.5 times
1976	60	200TL	3.3 times
1977	60 (1976)	300TL	5 times
1978	110	650TL	6 times
1978	110 (1978)	800TL	7 times

Source: R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism*, 1979, p.62

Table 3: Average Wages as a Percentage of the Value of Unskilled Labour Power

Year	1 The Required Minimum Wage, or Value of Unskilled Labour-Power (Gross TL/day)	2 Average Wages (Gross TL/day)	3 2 as percentage of 1
1972	72	43.88	60.9%
1976	200	115.30	57.7%
1977	300	153.0	51.0%

Source: R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism* 1979, p.67

Workers' struggles, which began to intensify in the latter part of the 1970's with the unprecedented recession, began to go beyond narrow economic demands. Consequently, fascist attacks began to intensify. From January to mid-December 1978 over 1,000 people were murdered by fascist commandos.

In response, the workers' struggles grew and intensified. On January 5 1979 all trade unions affiliated to DISK were joined by tens of thousands of working people in five minutes' silence to protest against the fascist massacre in Kahramanmaraş. Nearly one million people took part in this action. As May Day 1979 approached, the martial law commanders imposed a ban on all May Day meetings, demonstrations, and marches in the 19 provinces under martial law. However, in defiance of this ban and the massive display of force by the authorities, May Day demonstrations were held in all these 19 provinces, in a total of 43 cities and towns.

As the crisis matured, the struggles of the working class began more and more to take on a consciously *anti-capitalist* stance:

"This crisis, which arises from the capitalist system, from the ruling class policy of subservience to imperialism, is permanent and continuous... The only way out of the crisis is through expelling imperialism and putting an end to rule of the monopolies." (Maden-İş, (the metal worker's union) quoted from *Turkey Today* No.48, Autumn 1979)

In short, one could say that the classic Leninist criteria for a revolutionary situation existed in Turkey. Lenin enumerated three symptoms that show the existence of a revolutionary situation. Firstly, when the suffering and want of oppressed classes have grown more acute than 'usual' and consequently they do not want to live on in the old way. Secondly, when there is a crisis in the policy of the ruling class and they are no longer able to rule in the old way. (For instance, the instability of the old bourgeois order was illustrated by the rapid succession of coalition governments during the 1970's and 1980's, as well as two coups. There were actually 12 administrations in 8 years.) And thirdly when, as a result of the above, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be 'robbed' in 'peace time'. (See V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.21 pp.213-217)

Viewed in this light, the objective situation in Turkey — the inability of the ruling class to rule in the old way, the disintegration of state institutions, and the rising

militancy and confidence of the working class — conforms to this classic model and offered immense possibilities for revolutionary forces.

## 2. The Party and the Origins of the Split

Yet if a revolutionary situation existed, what about the revolutionary party — the Communist Party? Where was it while the working class increasingly challenged the bourgeois state, searching for a way out of the crisis!

As we have already indicated, the CPT as a party ceased to exist for a whole period from 1932 up to 1973. Official Party propaganda lays the blame for a large part of this liquidation at the door of Yakup Demir, one of the 'leaders' of the 'Party' of this time, and all the credit for the 1973 revitalisation of the Party organisation goes to the Party's current 'chairman', I. Bilen\*. However, a soon to be published pamphlet (in English) by H. Erdal, a prominent ex-member of the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the 'official' CPT who has recently defected to the Leninist wing, explodes this myth. Comrade Erdal points out that in the period 1951-60, during which time Demir was in prison, there was no attempt to reorganise the Party. The only structure that existed was a small group of old Party members, employees of a socialist country, whose job it was to broadcast general anti-imperialist radio propaganda into Turkey. This group included the 'great architect' of the 1973 advance, I. Bilen.

In 1962, Demir was released from prison, left Turkey and established a 'Bureau Abroad' consisting largely of former Party members. Demir himself adopted the title of 'First Secretary of the Bureau Abroad of the C.C. of the CPT' — a rather grandiose title for what was simply a show-case organisation. However, during the period 1961-65 differences began to emerge on this 'Bureau' around three questions. Firstly, why should the 'Party's' radio station, which was operating safely from a socialist country, not even *mention* the CPT? Why did it limit itself to only broadcasting general anti-imperialist propaganda? Why could the radio station not become a weapon to reforge the actual Party in Turkey? Secondly, many felt the time had come to abandon tailism towards Kemal-Ataturkism. And thirdly, there was considerable disagreement over the thesis of a non-capitalist road of development for Turkey.

These differences were resolved organisationally in 1965 when Demir and the Party's future General Secretary, I. Bilen (presumably with the support or at least tolerance of the leaders of the socialist countries), simply closed the Bureau and expelled all its members. Demir saved any potential embarrassment by merely changing his title to 'First Secretary of the Central Committee'.

The subsequent period was one of confusion where 'Party' initiatives were largely left to individual choice and where there was no centralised structure of any kind. In short, the Party reached a qualitatively new stage in its history of liquidation, essentially because there was no perspective of reforming the CPT as a *real* Party coming from any leading quarter. For the moment at least, the interests of socialism were felt to be served best by broad anti-imperialist (ie anti-NATO, anti-US) propaganda. This situation continued until May 24 1973, when a 'Political Bureau' meeting set about the revitalisation and reorganisation of the

Party. The former leader Demir was held up as the sole scapegoat for the period of liquidation and I. Bilen (even though he had held the same opportunist positions as Demir on most major issues) was hailed as the architect of this 1973 'Leap Forward'.

During this 1973 advance the Party adopted a new constitution and a new (Third) programme and set about the task of reconstituting itself as some sort of coherent organisation. Again, Comrade Erdal cites as one of the main reasons for this positive development the relatively democratic atmosphere existing in Turkey at the time which raised some people's hopes of the CPT being legalised. Soviet-Turkish relations throughout the 1960's reflected the relative relaxation in the Cold War between East and West. Previous to the increase in 'detente' between the US and the USSR during this period, Turkey's leaders had regarded its Western alliance as its main prop. With the lessening of Cold War tension the US military presence in the region became far weaker.

Also the Soviet Union had systematically 'courted' the favours of Turkey throughout the 1960's and so the possibility arises that the reformation of the CPT had less to do with local considerations, and more to do with the changing dynamics of the world situation. This idea would seem to be borne out to a certain extent by the fact that although the Party in essence had been reformed, the leadership's cavalier attitude to the norms and principles of inner-Party life continued. For instance, at the time of the 1976 May Day demonstrations in Turkey — the largest in the capitalist world — the CPT actually consisted of under 50 persons. Yet at the 1977 conference of the Party (by which time there were 120 members) where a broad range of people were co-opted onto the Central Committee these membership figures were withheld from this (presumably) highest body. The CPT was presented, even to elements of its own leadership, as an organisation which was far bigger numerically and in terms of influence than it actually was.

At the time of the 1973 'Leap Forward' as I have already mentioned the Party adopted a new (Third) Programme. This is an eclectic and self-contradictory document, including Leninist and opportunist views on *every* question. It contains within it the embryo of the split in the CPT between its revolutionary and opportunist wings. By the time of the 1978 Plenum, the radically different approaches to the revolution in Turkey, and thus to the organisation of the Party, had become far sharper and the opportunist leadership's behaviour more autocratic. By now the leadership had dropped *all* organisational questions. Between 1973 and 1980 not a single provincial or regional committee was established by the Politburo and no ties were established with those already existing. The committees themselves were forced to establish channels of communication with the Politburo and suddenly, in 1978, these ties were simply broken. A similar blase and adventurist attitude was adopted towards Veli Dursun-Yürükoğlu, a Central Committee member and later the leader of the Leninist wing of the Party.

The nucleus of what was to become the Leninist wing of the Party was originally centred in England. This committee was the third largest in the Party and was responsible for the production and distribution of the paper *İşçinin Sesi* (*Worker's Voice*) inside the Turkish community in Britain. Comrade Dursun-Yürükoğlu was the successful leader of this group and his standing

\* The November 29 1983 edition of *Hürriyet* reported the death on November 18 of I. Bilen.

with the Party was considerable. His *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism*, had been discussed and agreed upon at the highest levels of the Party. Indeed, at the 1977 conference of the party *İşçinin Sesi* was praised for the work it was doing and after 1978 it was proposed that Dursun, on the suggestion of İ. Bilen, be given responsibility by the Politburo for ideological work through editorship of *Atılım* (*Leap Forward*), the party's central organ. Immediately, the production of *İşçinin Sesi* was suspended and Dursun left England in August 1978 to take up this new responsibility. But with no explanation he was literally left 'cooling his heels', isolated from any Party contact, in a European capital for four months without any notion of what was happening or why. Eventually Dursun returned to England where he published an expanded version of *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism*. Although there was nothing new in this edition, all the essential ideas contained in the book, including the idea that a revolutionary situation existed in Turkey, having been discussed to the very highest levels of the party — Dursun was severely criticised and censored. It was originally proposed that Dursun/Yürükoğlu be co-opted onto the Politburo in recognition of the quality of the work he had done — however, with the 1978 Plenum approaching there was a 180 degree turn on the part of the leadership. Dursun and comrade Demir who defended his views were expelled from the Central Committee.

In April 1979 *İşçinin Sesi* recommenced publication with its 96th issue. Although at this stage its tone was not openly polemical, the fact that it continued to defend and propagate the views contained in *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism* was an implicit criticism in itself of the leadership's new course. During this period however, the leadership moved to expel all oppositionists not only from leading positions but from the Party itself. The number of people thus removed actually amounted to a majority of the Party. The report of the subsequent Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPT spoke of the "sectarian and adventurist" *İşçinin Sesi* movement which had been expelled because of "open revolt against the Party".

The reason for this bureaucratic purge had something to do with the dynamics of inner-Party struggle but perhaps more with the development of political events in the country as a whole and the Soviet Union's attitude to them.

The watchword of the Soviet Union's approach to such countries as Turkey was 'caution'.

"The policy of disruption by encouragement of revolutionary or separatist elements was pursued only in extreme circumstances and as a last resort. The Soviet Union deplored the instability, anarchy and terror which prevailed in Turkey until recently." (Dawisha & Dawisha, eds. *The Soviet Union and the Middle East Politics and Perspectives*).

Sadly, the anarchy so glibly referred to here is, of course, the revolutionary situation existing in Turkey, a phenomenon examined in detail in *Turkey-Weak Link of Imperialism*. That our Soviet comrades 'deplored' this situation as it interfered with their advocacy of a cosy middle 'national democratic' course is a weakness and one we must criticise if we are serious as world revolutionaries.

The possibility of the reactionary bourgeoisie of Turkey granting 'progressive' parties democratic freedoms also proved to be totally unrealistic.

By 1978, there were few left who could seriously envisage the CPT being legalised. The social-democratic (RPP) government of Bülent Ecevit (laughably referred to in the *Morning Star* of November 8, 1983, as a 'Turkish Progressive') had consistently undermined the

power of the left, while leaving the right largely intact. One thousand people died in political terror in 1978 and the fascist N.A.P. was heavily implicated in many cases. Yet it was not until November 1978 that Ecevit denounced it by name and even then he began "consultation" with its leaders on a "means of ending the violence". (D.Tonge, *Inflation Unemployment, Mounting Debts and Political Violence. Will the military take over? New Statesman*, 6 April 1978).

When imposing martial law in December 1978 Ecevit declared that its purpose was to curb 'anarchy' and political violence. In the four months that followed there were 1,534 violent incidents in which 313 people were killed and 1,088 wounded. The corresponding figures for the first four months of 1978 were: 1,098 violent incidents, 131 deaths and 788 wounded! As to the prospect of the abrogation of Articles 141 and 142 of the Constitution, which outlawed the CPT and any organisation 'based on class or class interests', all hope of that disappeared definitely in early 1978. In a cabinet meeting in April 1978, Ecevit angrily repudiated the claims of a group of six 'independent' Justice Party members that he planned to legalise the CPT — indeed he seemed to regard such charges as a slur on his reputation as a 'democrat'. (*Turkey Today* no.42/43.)

Up to this point in 1978 the leadership of the CPT and of the socialist countries seriously believed that Ecevit could be persuaded to legalise the CPT — which itself would have been construed as a friendly overture and a move towards the Soviet Union. Consequently, the CPT 'officials' had limited their actions to those of a left pressure group on Ecevit's RPP. It attempted to take a 'balanced' evaluation of the RPP's term in office — supporting the 'smallest positive step' while opposing its 'tendency' (!) to cooperate with reaction. Thus the task they set for the CPT was to draw the RPP into "democratic unity of action for current aims..."

The Leninists of the CPT on the other hand, correctly regarded Ecevit's connivance with the NAP and his crackdown on 'anarchy' as proof of the reactionary nature of his administration:

"Not strong enough to impose their own rule the fascists are having their policies implemented by Ecevit. In return the fascists by their votes permit the Ecevit government to remain in power while they gather forces... Either way the fascists win." (*Turkey Today*, no.42-43, April/May 1979).

The end of the utopian vision of a legal CPT for some meant the disappearance of the whole *raison d'être* for the CPT as a Party and the renewed prospect of liquidation. The form this liquidation took was a position analogous to that of the Menshevik liquidators in the period of reaction in Russia after 1907. Their 'report' asserts that:

"Developments peculiar to state monopoly capitalism are beginning to manifest themselves. This process is, however, far from matured". The "present regime (i.e. Demirel's — W.H.) is gradually assuming the character of a semi-dictatorial regime increasing the fascist danger" and "a situation has taken shape in our country which may turn into a revolutionary situation." (Report of the CC of the CPT reported in *İşçinin Sesi* August 11, 1980)

This perspective of a mounting fascist threat and a revolutionary situation would not seem to leave much possibility of drawing the avowedly reactionary RPP into 'unity of action'. Thus a compromise 'middle course' was proposed — that of a merger with the two petit-bourgeois socialist parties, the Worker's Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Socialist Worker's Party of Turkey (TSİP), into a mass, legal 'United Worker's Party' (BİP). Incongruously, at the same time that the opportunists were proposing to dissolve the Party into an amorphous 'legal' worker's party, the "officials'" report noted:



"The reactionary government has already restricted democratic rights and freedoms with a whole series of repressive laws... very few legal democratic organisations remain and... the number of political prisoners has reached 20,000." (*Ibid*)

Thus in a period of growing reaction the opportunist CPT leadership proposed limiting their actions to the increasingly narrow field of 'legality' and particularly dissolving the Party along much the same lines as the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP had done under a roughly comparable situation. The *İşçinin Sesi* movement presented the only *organised, ideological obstruction* to this second liquidation. Thus the organisational split within the Party dates from the realisation of the impracticality of a legal CPT. The Mensheviks proposed, in practice, dissolving the Party into mass legal work, even though the confines of bourgeois 'legality' were getting tighter and tighter.

The CPT Leninists, on the other hand, raised the concept of a clandestine revolutionary party, seriously preparing for revolution and power.

### 3. The differences in the Party

The central question that stems from the general economic level of Turkey is the character of the revolution in Turkey itself. As we have seen, the Mensheviks view Turkey as a semi-colonial country with industry playing an important but not dominant role. They consider the revolution "will be against the triumvirate of imperialism, the collaborating bourgeoisie and landlords", it will be a "democratic, anti-imperialist, *anti-feudal* people's revolution." (*CPT Programme*, p.44, our emphasis.)

Again the embryo of the differing positions of the two wings of the CPT are contained in the Programme. Capitalism is presented in some passages as growing rapidly to be dominant in agriculture, even to the point of the emergence of agricultural monopolies. For example:

"The broad peasant masses are suffering under the exploitation and oppression of heavy taxation, landowners, users, banks and domestic and foreign monopolies. *The process of differentiation in the countryside has gained speed.*" (*CPT Programme*, pp 40-41, our emphasis.)

Similarly, the programme demands an end "to the plunder of foreign and domestic monopolies." (*Ibid*, p.40)

Yet, in other sections, Turkey is presented as a semi-feudal country. There are frequent references in the programme to "anti-feudal transformations" and to "landlords and rentiers". (p19) Elsewhere it is stated that, "Capitalism penetrated into agriculture and the country long ago. However, the speed at which capitalist relations are spreading is not high." It is even stated that, "Natural primitive economy survives here and there." (p35)

The CPT Leninists unequivocally defend the view of Turkey as a primarily capitalist country, where capitalist relations of production predominate even in agriculture:

"Turkey is not a semi-feudal country... exaggerating the pre-capitalist remnants would lead the revolutionary movement into a quagmire. This is due to the fact that this question is directly related to the character of our revolution." (*Turkey — Weak Link...* pp36-37)

A useful indicator of the speed and extent of capitalist penetration into agriculture in Turkey is the actual levels of rural unemployment, and the consequent flow of people into the cities. Since the 1950's rural land has

become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few big capitalist farmers, estimated to be no more than around 350 and with close connections with foreign and domestic monopolies. This 'process of differentiation' caused some 600,000 dispossessed and landless peasants to migrate to the *gecekondu* (shanty towns) in search of work. This exodus had the effect of doubling the urban population in less than 15 years, from 10.8 million in 1965 to 21.3 million in 1979. (*Turkey Today*, March 1979, no 44.)

By underestimating the level of capitalist development in the country, the Mensheviks of the CPT fundamentally distort and confuse the struggle of the working people of Turkey and give the impression that the revolution will in essence be bourgeois-democratic, aimed at the reactionary feudal big landowners. The Leninists, on the other hand, recognise that Turkey in reality is not a "semi-feudal" country and consequently the revolution is "... anti-imperialist, anti-monopolist, anti-fascist... Its aim is not to clear the way for capitalism but to grow into socialism through an uninterrupted process." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Third Programme and Our Tasks*)

Leaving aside the character of the revolution for a moment, the two wings of the CPT, as one might expect, differ considerably on the method of actually achieving it. As we have already discussed, the opportunist wing of the CPT for a long period of time prior to the 1980 fascist coup pursued a line of 'pressurising' the RPP to enact progressive legislation. In essence, this unrealistic 'pie-in-the-sky' approach was extended to the realisation of the revolution itself. The rationale behind this approach was explained by I. Bilen in the report to the 1977 CPT Conference:

"The flexible policy that the CPT has been applying towards the RPP is correct. Lenin advised the communists to take advantage of the smallest opportunities, the waverings of the bourgeoisie, to force it to take steps forward in the interests of the revolutionary movement." (I. Bilen, *Report*, p38)

And where, exactly, "Lenin advised" revolutionary Marxists to act as a radical ginger group on the liberal bourgeoisie is not indicated. However, the logical outcome of this tailist policy is expressed in the programme, when the initial task is posed of "democratic transformations aimed at overthrowing the anti-popular regime in Turkey, (and to) carry out a democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal people's revolution, with the participation of the working class, peasantry and middle strata." (*CPT Programme*, p44)

This is an important opportunist formulation, as it only envisages a participatory, not hegemonic role for the working class in this revolution. The Mensheviks' revoltingly reformist schema for revolution in Turkey, has, if anything, degenerated even further since the programme was written. The *Morning Star* report of the Mensheviks' sham 'Congress' reports that this opportunist rump masquerading as the CPT set themselves the task of replacing the junta by "a government of national democratic forces" (*Morning Star*, November 2 1983). Presumably, this 'national democratic government' would not only include Ecevit of the reactionary RPP who paved the way for the fascist takeover by consistently terrorising the working class and its organisations, but also such 'democratic' figures as Demirel of the thoroughly bourgeois Justice Party, who is now condemning the 'undemocratic' junta. 'National' bourgeois 'democracy' is impossible in Turkey. Even Demirel recognises that increasingly the choice facing Turkey is "Fascism or Communism". (Quoted in *Turkey Today* no.65, Sept. Oct 1983). As a bourgeois politician, of course, he is incapable of understanding that it is not the junta that is posing this choice, but the objective reality itself of Turkey's economic development and its

position in the world imperialist system. There is no middle road. 'Communists' who join a vowedly bourgeois reactionaries in misleading the people of Turkey with impossible empty dreams of bourgeois democracy deserve nothing but contempt and vilification from the international workers' movement.

The vile tailism of the Mensheviks is displayed for all to see in the formulation that the initial task of 'democratic transformations' will only be 'aimed at' paving the way for revolution. For example, the programme goes on:

"The realisation of radical social-economic and political transformations will create the possibilities for the people to proceed to an advanced democratic order... and from there to socialism." (*CPT Programme*, p.45.)

In other words, there will be a 'stage of transformations' before the revolution in which the working class and working people will 'participate', but which the liberal bourgeoisie, represented by the RPP, will lead. This of course is a resurrection of the Menshevik scheme of revolution.

The Leninists of the CPT do not intend to relegate the role of the working class to that of 'voting fodder' for the RPP's 'revolution'. Comrade Yürükoğlu's speech to commemorate the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Turkey discussed the concept of working class hegemony in the period leading to the revolution and, naturally, in the revolution itself.

The essence of 'hegemony', comrade Yürükoğlu points out, is ideological, a question not of brute strength but of political strength. For the working class to secure hegemony through its Party of the revolution is a practical necessity for the revolution's very survival. Only the working class and its 'general staff', the communists, are the *consistent* revolutionary forces. The task of securing hegemony therefore carries with it the burden of ensuring the success of the revolution as a whole. Hegemony in the practical sense thus requires that the broad masses are shown in a graphic and real way the inconsistencies and vacillatory nature of the other political forces which are co-operating with the revolutionary proletariat.

This 'expose' of non-proletarian forces takes place on the political terrain of slogans and positions. To secure hegemony, the working class party must not only advance the most correct slogans and calls — the ones that *most suit* the real situation — and then simply smugly defend this 'correctness' in a dry academic way. Simply being 'correct' does not ensure hegemony. No, the right to *lead* must be fought for by concretely applying this 'correctness' to the struggle itself, by imparting the correct positions to the masses on the basis of their own experience.

The Mensheviks' perspective of a broad amorphous 'national democratic' front in practice surrenders hegemony to the bourgeoisie, for as comrade Yürükoğlu points out, "politics know no vacuum". *Someone* will *always* lead. The eventual practical implications of surrendering hegemony to any section of the thoroughly reactionary Turkish bourgeoisie would be drowning of the working class and its organisations in blood. The sham of democracy that gloves the mailed fist of bourgeois rule in the main imperialist countries is a *socio-economic impossibility* in Turkey. There is no middle road:

"... hegemony means the organisation of force. From the point of view of the working class, hegemony means winning the active majority of the people for the aims of the working class and its Party, the Communist Party. This is achieved by advancing with the most correct ideas, fighting with every kind of weapon, and preserving one's distinct character and independence from all other organisations." (R. Yürükoğlu, *The Situation and Our Tasks 1983*, p.55)

As comrade Joseph Wright pointed out when reviewing Halliday and Molyneux's book, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, the only way to ensure that national democratic revolutions are not overturned and negated by the 'progressive' national bourgeoisie is "the independent organisation of the proletariat with the aim of establishing their dictatorship. Tailing the bourgeoisie or petty-bourgeoisie can only in the end lead the working class to defeat... The workers must pursue their *own* aims, must never be diverted by incantations for 'anti-imperialist national unity'." (*The Leninist*, No.3)

Thus, although national democratic revolutions in medium level or underdeveloped countries dominated by imperialism involve other strata and classes than the working class, unless the working class *lead* then the anti-imperialist, 'democratic' bourgeoisie will end up attacking workers and communists. Kemal, of course was a good example of this, as is the 'progressive' Khomeini in Iran today.

The lessons of uninterrupted revolution learned afresh by our Turkish comrades has relevance the world over, and can ensure the success of revolutions in all medium level and underdeveloped countries. The aim of the revolutions in all these countries including Turkey, "is not to clear the way for capitalism but to grow into socialism through an uninterrupted process." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Third Programme and our Tasks*, p.19).

### 3.1. Medium Level Capitalist Development

It has become almost commonplace now to hear of Turkey as a medium level developed capitalist country. For example, Cam Matheson in the *Morning Star* of October 27 writes of Turkey as a "medium developed, but economically unstable..." country. The fact that this writer appears in the *Morning Star* under the auspices of the Menshevik splinter campaign, SCTURDT, undoubtedly means that his evaluation mirrors that of the opportunist wing of the Communist Party of Turkey (CPT). If this is so it means that the Mensheviks have shifted on this question, at least in terms of rhetoric. Yet although revolutionaries and opportunists may sometimes use the same terminology, in reality they mean very different things.

For example, do the opportunists of the CPT recognise that Turkey's medium level of development *necessarily* means it is "economically unstable..."? Do they recognise that Turkey's integration into the world imperialist system and the striving on the part of the system itself to become imperialist precludes the notion of any form of stable bourgeois democracy being possible in the country? Do they recognise that Turkey's "medium" development and the fact that it is "economically unstable" are not merely unconnected coincidences? And what is their operative conclusion for Turkey and, indeed, all medium developed capitalist countries? Do they now recognise that their perspective of a "national bourgeois democracy" is completely utopian and reactionary? As we said, revolutionaries and opportunists may sometimes use the same words, but it is the task of opportunism to rip any revolutionary meaning or intent out of Marxism and leave a wizened husk, denuded of any revolutionary content.

One of the most important books recently produced in the world communist movement, *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism* by R. Yürükoğlu, examines precisely this question of the medium level of capitalist development and prophetically how there is no middle way for

the working class movement of Turkey — either the revolutionary situation could be resolved positively by revolution or negatively by the barbaric rule of finance capital expressed through fascism. As we know now, the opportunity was temporarily lost in Turkey, but this makes it all the more urgent that the *general lessons* contained in this book are not ignored.

Comrade Yürükoğlu describes the process by which finance capital emerged in Turkey. As we have shown in the previous section, the Turkish bourgeoisie greatly accelerated the accumulation of capital by the direct intervention of the state to facilitate the process. The big capital thus created passed to the stage of monopoly without ever being passed through the stage of free competition. The dynamics of the inner laws of monopoly combined with the role the large banks played in the Turkish economy meant the inevitable emergence of finance capital. The forcibly accelerated nature of the state induced capital accumulation meant that when finance capital emerged it did not rest on a developed economic basis. This general economic backwardness that persists, this medium level of capitalist development, means that these countries (including Turkey) remain dependent on the imperialist system:

"Domestic finance capital is dependent on imperialism. It operates as an appendage, a part, a 'rank and file organisation', or 'local branch' of imperialism." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey — Weak Link...* p.31)

With finance capital comes the striving to expand outwards, regardless of the general level of development of the country. But:

"In general, this door is closed for the countries at a transition stage." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey — Weak Link...* p.32)

The "door is closed" precisely because of the domination of the world market by the major imperialist powers and consequently the working class of medium level developed capitalist countries bear a "double yoke" of capitalist exploitation. They are forced to provide not only the superprofits for their 'own' domestic finance capital, but also for international imperialism. Thus a byproduct of Turkish finance capital's inability to expand outwards is the appallingly high rate of exploitation of the working class and working people of Turkey.

The rate of exploitation in the manufacturing industry of Turkey is thus 2-3 times greater than in the United States.

The lower rates of exploitation operating in America do not exist because the American bourgeoisie is somehow more 'civilised' or 'humane' than their Turkish class brothers. No, the vicious rates of exploitation imposed on the working class by the bourgeoisie in Turkey exist because, obviously, unlike the USA, finance capital does not have the opportunity to expand abroad in any meaningful way. There is no imperialist 'cushion' to soften the burden borne by the working people of Turkey. The profound economic and social crisis that grip medium level developed capitalist countries like Turkey cannot be off-loaded onto other countries by the export of capital and it is this inability that makes such intermediate countries 'weak links' in the imperialist chain.

The contradictory and random nature of the Third Programme of the CPT is perhaps best illustrated by the section on the level of economic development of Turkey.

The programme itself includes a number of misleading phrases that over emphasise the number of feudal remnants and landowners as opposed to large capitalist farmers. For instance there is talk of the "collaborating bourgeoisie and landowners", "big capital and landlords", "anti-feudal transformations" and even of "the beginning of the industrialisation of

Turkey." Also, however, in agreement with the CPT Leninists, Turkey is also evaluated as being a capitalist country, with frequent references to "domestic monopolies", "holdings" and the power of a "financial oligarchy."

These same two seemingly contradictory evaluations were expressed again in I. Bilen's Conference report to the 1977 Conference. Here Bilen spoke of the dependence of domestic banks on domestic and foreign monopolies and also about holdings and finance families, that is, "finance capital" and the "finance oligarchy". Similarly, the section on those "landlords and farmers connected with the banks" refers to big capitalist farmers connected with, or forming a part of, the finance oligarchy. Thus, the monopolists and finance-capital as a whole is considered in this section of the report to be the "power to be overthrown." (I. Bilen, *C.C Report to 1977 Party Conference*). All these views agree in essence with the views of the Leninist wing expressed in *Turkey — Weak Link...*

However, later in the same report, it is stated that although the "industrial sector plays a dynamic role in the economy of the country..." it only produces "27%" of the GNP. (*Ibid*, p.23) This 27% figure includes in its calculations the "share" of the service sector even though this does not contribute directly to production. Not pointing this out leads to greatly underestimating the share of industry in production. The *İşçinin Sesi* movement correctly assesses the part played by various sectors in production on the basis of those sectors that are genuinely 'productive'. Thus in 1977 they estimate industrial production in Turkey accounted for 65.67% of gross national product. (*Turkey — Weak Link...*, p.35).

Similarly, the report is confused as to exactly what it is the task of revolutionaries to overthrow. Firstly, the enemy is seen to be "the collaborating bourgeoisie and the big farmers and landlords who are merging and ruling together with it..." (Report, p.14) and later in the report "the collaborating big bourgeoisie (which) is in the process of merging with foreign multinational monopolies and imperialist capitals." (*Ibid*, p.18)

The opportunist "reason" for the obscurities in the programme and Conference report are hinted at in a series of articles by Ahmet Saydan in *New Age*. In one it is stated that:

"The contradiction between the industrial bourgeoisie and the ruling big commercial bourgeoisie and the landlords is constant and to some degree irreconcilable." (February 1974)

Similarly, reference is made in one article to the changing relationship between sections of Turkish capitalism and the world system as whole:

"One of the major characteristics of these new developments... is the tendency of the comprador bourgeoisie and collaborators toward holdings and monopolisation... No longer content only with trade and the marketing in Turkey of the products of America, West Germany and capitalist states and international monopolies, these holdings are moving towards industrial production." (*Ibid*, February 1976)

Essentially then, Saydan advances the position that the force that dominated the economy certainly during the period 1974-1976 was "the big intermediary commercial bourgeoisie" and thus Turkey was essentially a "semi-colonial country". (*Ibid*, June 1975) And so, in accordance with the position of the "official" CPT, a course of encouraging the growth of contradictions in the ruling class can be pursued — in this case implicitly those between the native "industrial bourgeoisie" and the "comprador bourgeoisie" acting in the interests of foreign capital.

Comrade Yürükoğlu effectively destroys this utopian perspective when he notes:

"What we see in the transition stage countries today is the

subjection of domestic monopolies to imperialism, their merging with imperialism into a single mechanism of exploitation in order to be able to exploit their own country." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey — Weak Link...*, p.31)

Thus it is an entirely false dichotomy to make between the 'progressive' indigenous bourgeoisie and 'reactionary' foreign imperialism. For example, the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus in 1974 or the incursion into Iraq in the last week of May 1983 are presented by the CPT Mensheviks simply as further evidence of the 'subservience' of certain sections of the Turkish bourgeoisie to the interests of US imperialism. Again, Cam Matheson is merely echoing the view of the CPT opportunists when he writes, rather absurdly, of "The Turkish generals' *undignified and total surrender to US strategies...*" (*Morning Star*, October 27 1983, our emphasis.)

This of course is a gross underestimation of the general economic level of Turkey and also of the level of the maturation of Turkey's 'own' finance capital. As the Leninists of the CPT point out, such events as Turkey's invasion of northern Cyprus represent an embryonic striving to become imperialist on the part of Turkey itself, not evidence of the comprador nature of Turkey's ruling elite:

"The phenomena of finance capital, whatever the general level of a given country brings with it the striving to expand outwards. And this striving has appeared in the medium level developed capitalist countries..." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Turkey — Weak Link...*, p.9)

The invasion and continued occupation of Cyprus thus represents "its colonisation by Turkish finance capital." (*Turkey Today*, No.64, July/August 1983). The scale of the economic penetration of northern Cyprus has been enormous and has included the setting up of new enterprises and branches of Turkish banks, the whole or partial takeover of existing enterprises and import/export regulations designed to restructure northern Cyprus's economy to meet the needs of Turkey's trade. Immediately following the occupation there was a staggering jump in the rate of capitalist development in northern Cyprus itself: 30% of total investment in Cyprus, 26% of the means to produce the gross national income and 32% of total labour capacity in industrial production shifted to northern Cyprus. Comparing this with northern Cyprus's overall share in Cypriot Gross National Product before the occupation — 18.3% in 1963, around 15.3% in 1964, 11.14% between 1967 and 1974, and in 1974 on the eve of the invasion some 12.94% — one can get an idea of the greatly accelerated rate of capitalist development. There has almost been a 100% increase in the number of enterprises and people employed.

Similarly, it is a little problematic to see Turkey's intervention in Iraq as simply 'engineered' by the 'US and NATO', as the CPT Mensheviks would have us believe all Turkey's acts of aggression are. The recovery of the 'lost provinces' of Mosul and Kirkuk in northern Iraq would not only provide the Turkish generals with a strong wave of chauvinist sympathy, but would also solve Turkey's serious fuel shortages and help relieve its gigantic oil bills. An OECD report noted that 40% of Turkey's import bill was accounted for by oil alone and that this percentage was expected to rise by 50% by 1988 (*Turkey Today*, No.64, July/August 1983). The *Financial Times* of May 17 1983 warned gravely that "the government's hopes, and fears, ride... with the domestic oil sector," and so Turkey's revanchism may have sound economic reasons underlying it. As to the supposed total subservience of the Turkish bourgeoisie to the interests of US imperialism, the relationship between the two includes a large measure of cooperation. For example, the *New Statesman* observed that the

US/Turkish defence council "go far beyond the original conception of the Rapid Deployment Force as a deterrent against Soviet attack, and encourage instead Turkey's own revanchist claims in Iran and Iraq" and that Turkey's annexation of the northern Kurdish provinces of Iraq was one of the "contingency plans" in case of the collapse of a war-weary Iraq. (Claudia Wright — *Young Turks manoeuvre to invade Iraq*, *New Statesman*, May 14 1982)

The CPT Mensheviks' hopeless search for a 'progressive wing' of the junta is one that is made to look ludicrous by reality itself. The opportunists' calls to the 'Head of State', the 'Atatürkist' Evren (leaving aside for a moment the thoroughly reactionary and bourgeois nature of 'Kemal-Atatürkism'), who they claim is being 'held hostage' by the reactionary and fascist 'elements' in the junta would be screamingly funny if the struggle against fascism were not such a deadly serious business. For example, what are communists to make of this crass piece of woeful ululation coming from the opportunists' radio station:

"Our country is being mortgaged to the World Bank and the IMF... Our poor land of Atatürk's day! Who would have thought that your borders would have shrunk to encompass only the walls of Atatürk's Mausoleum at the hands of these collaborating traitors" (*Voice of the TKP*, May 20 1981, cited in *Turkey Today*, Summer 1981, No.56)

In point of fact, the fascist Evren and his junta can far more justly claim to be descendants of the reactionary Kemal-Atatürk than the opportunists of the CPT can; however, the main point to note about this particularly incondite piece of nationalist rhetoric is that the idea is conveyed that somehow 'national interests' are being betrayed. This same idea was expressed slightly less theatrically earlier in the same year:

"The plans of the American imperialists and the NATO ringleaders which they try to conceal by lies about the Soviet threat are clear. They want to *use* our country for their own hegemonic aims in the Middle East. We ask, is it honourable to die for the sake of American interests?" (*Voice of the TKP*, April 21 1981 — cited in *Ibid*)

No more 'honourable' than it is to die for the sake of the *Turkish* bourgeoisie, answer the Leninists of the CPT. As we have shown, to simply bewail the Turkish fascists' subservience to US imperialism fundamentally distorts and misdirects the struggle against the fascist regime and leads the working class movement into the dead end of trying to discover the 'progressive' 'national' wing of the fascist elite. For example, the ideological stable mates of the CPT opportunists in this country, our very own centrist liquidationists, *Straight Left*, presented the fascist generals in Argentina at the time of the Malvinas war as Latin American 'freedom fighters'.

Indeed, if you travel one Friday night to a well-known centrist watering hole you may chance upon a bevy of 'rising' (and risen) 'intellectuals', imbibing the heady wines of their egos and generally 70" proofing their arguments against reason. If you are *very* lucky, one may even deign to speak to you in which case you will be treated to a turgid rehash of the CPT Menshevik's position of the pursuit of 'national democracy' as far as developing countries are concerned. The Leninists, you will be told, are simply 'ultra-leftists'. Like the opportunists of the CPT, for these pub-room 'Lenin' communist principles are as expendable as the leaves of Autumn. They are prepared to tail any 'national progressive' force rather than set about the real task of the workers' party, to organise the proletariat independently to seize state power.

The national bourgeoisie of the medium level developed capitalist countries have exhausted their limited progressive potential and have become thoroughly

reactionary. It is not the tasks of the communist parties of these countries to admonish them for not being *true patriots*. It is our task in these countries, as the CPT Leninists point out, to overthrow them through revolution.

## 3.2. The September 1980 Coup

The September 12 1980 coup came as no real surprise. The army had issued several ultimatums to the hapless political parties. Nor was it a new experience for Turkey — it was the third time in 20 years that the Turkish military had moved into the political arena, the last time being in 1971 when it was again Demirel who was ousted. The coup, however deepened the rifts between the two wings of the CPT, most immediately and practically around the issue of how to evaluate the military's intervention. Was it "fascist" or not?

The initial view of the Menshevik wing was given by Kerim Seyran in his explicitly named pamphlet *Why we do not Consider the Reactionary Dictatorship in Turkey to be Fascist*. He states, obviously, that the amount of blood spilled by a particular regime is no criteria for calling it 'fascist'. The essential point to be borne in mind is the *class essence* of the regime and the class essence of fascism is defined in the classic Dimitrov formulation of the dictatorship of "the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance-capital", *not* finance-capital as a whole. This is an important definition as "from it is understood which classes can enter into the struggle against the regime on the side of the working class..." (pp.4-5) Dimitrov, it is argued, "distinguished between non-fascist representatives of finance-capital and its fascist sections" and thus he characterised fascism in Germany as "the dictatorship of Thyssen-Krupp capital". (*Ibid.*, p.7)

Thus the Plenum of the Central Committee of the 'official' CPT in 1981 did not characterise the regime as fascist due to the fact that "the dictatorship in Turkey represents the *general* interests of the monopolies and imperialism. (*Ibid.*, p.4 — emphasis in original) Fascism then, according to the 'official' CPT, was represented by the Nationalist Action Party, and not the junta. "... which represents the most reactionary forces, the junta or the NAP? Our answer to this question is clear. We say the NAP." (*Ibid.*, p.11)

The Fifth Congress of the Comintern (1924) marked a qualitative step back in the quest for theoretical clarity on the question of fascism. With the supposed remorseless decline of capitalist society it was claimed that more and more ordinary bourgeois parties would inevitably take on a fascist character. This was particularly true of the social-democrats:

"Fascism and social-democracy are the two sides of the same instrument of capitalist dictatorship." (Cited in Martin Kitchen, *Fascism*, pp.4-5)

This formula laid the basis for the hopelessly sectarian theory of 'social fascism' elaborated at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern which was to have such disastrous effects on the power and influence of the world communist movement. It was not until the Seventh Congress (1935) that Dimitrov finally buried the theory of 'social fascism' and fascism of the 'Third Period'. It was argued that:

"The accession to power of fascism is not an ordinary succession of one bourgeois government by another, but a substitution of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie — bourgeois democracy — by another form — open terroristic dictatorship." (*Ibid.*, p.8)

The CPT Leninists, while not rejecting Dimitrov's definition in this report to the Seventh Congress, find it "inadequate":

"... in regard to the general theoretical approach to fascism, the general theoretical evaluation of fascism, there is a virtual desert... There is a classic definition: 'The open dictatorship... of the most... section of finance-capital.' It does not tell us much. This 'most' is not a scientific category... This is a description." (Second Conference of the Leninists of the CPT, p.20)

The Second Conference of the Leninists of the CPT thus defined fascism as:

"... counter-revolution of the imperialist stage... Fascism is finance-capital's striving to save the regime under a dictatorship resting on open violence." (*Ibid.*, p.20)

This Leninist definition attempts to place fascism in its specific historical place in relation to other open dictatorships by defining it as "counter-revolution of the imperialist stage".

By specifying "counter-revolution", the definition is attempting to bring out the connection between fascism and a revolutionary situation. It thus undoubtedly avoids the inadequacy that previous definitions of fascism in the world communist movement have made. In every case, it is true that there is a direct correlation between economic crisis and the rise of fascism. It is not an automatic response of capitalism every time the system moves into crisis — fascism is a response to a large and organised working class which has made revolutionary demands on the ruling class and the established order. However, fascism is only possible when the working class has *already* suffered defeats such as in Italy in 1920 or in Germany between 1918-23. Thus, the CPT Leninists refer to the general strategic defeats that led to the victory of reaction on September 12:

"When the revolutionary forces failed to benefit from the situation created by the Izmir uprising in order to pull themselves together, this tendency (ie. 'bourgeois' and 'petty-bourgeois' moods), which had been developing for some time, combined with the results of the tactical defeat of May Day 1980 and the impasse of stage-by-stage strikes which were being pursued for the sake of sectional interests. Demoralization spread throughout the revolutionary front... All this paved the way for and facilitated the emergence of the fascist dictatorship." (*The September 12 Fascist Coup Resolutions of the Co-ordinating Committee of the CPT*, p.12)

The CPT Leninists lay the blame for these defeats of the working class squarely on the shoulders of the opportunist wing of the party. "The opportunist leaders of the CPT stand guilty before history in all these negative developments and in the coming of the 12 September coup." (*Ibid.*) The Leninists' definition retains links with 'the most' criterion in the original Comintern definition:

"Fascism is finance-capital's striving to save the regime under a dictatorship resting on open violence. As such it is spearheaded by the finance-capital group, the group interests of which most closely coincide with the objective demands of rescuing capitalism. In other words, the fascist dictatorship is 'led' by the finance-capital group..." (*Struggle for the Future*, p.52).

However, the fact that this group acts out of its own self-interest:

"... does not alter the fact that these are the objective requirements of saving, not only that particular group, or even finance-capital alone, but capitalism as a whole." (*Ibid.*)

The idea that fascism signifies a 'striving to save the regime' precludes the idea, prevalent in the world communist movement, and certainly the view of the opportunists of the CPT, that fascism is essentially the instrument *only* of the most reactionary sections of finance capital, and consequently to view the whole

bourgeoisie — middle/big, non-monopoly — outside this clique as a force which can fight against this dictatorship. Thus the Menshevik CPT leadership initially pursued a course largely of pressure group politics designed to 'find and take advantage of the junta's internal contradictions.'

It set itself the task not, as the Leninists advocated, of overthrowing the junta through an 'Advanced Peoples Democratic Revolution', but the blockheadedly limited aim of preventing things from getting worse. For instance, in the face of repressive anti-union legislation it proposed that:

"All workers and trade unionists can unite around the demands that there be no new laws and that the former laws remain unchanged..." (*Voice of the TKP*, February 17 1983).

Similarly, in its foreign policy, the 'official' CPT pursued a course of encouraging any friendly overture made to the socialist countries and condemning any made to the US or the NATO bloc countries. It was claimed that "in its policy towards the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries" the junta was not "tied to the aggressive line of US imperialism." (*Ibid*)

All of which makes the opportunists recent total turn-about on the question all the more surprising! On July 24 1983, with little or no ideological justification for the change in line, the opportunist radio station *The Voice of the TKP* read a statement that introduced the dramatically new position. The junta, it was claimed, had now reached a qualitative stage in its "degeneration" and its process of "merging" with "international monopoly" where it could now correctly be referred to as "fascist".

It is really too early to present definite reasons for the turnabout, but a number of possibilities are worth considering. By evaluating the junta as fascist the Mensheviks of the CPT move a step towards breaking their self-imposed political isolation — every other major revolutionary/socialist group in Turkey has judged the junta to be fascist and cooperate in political alliances on that basis. But possibly and potentially far more importantly is the attitude of the Soviet leadership. Their searching for some sort of accord with Turkey's generals has been drastically undermined by some of the junta's more recent actions.

The Turkish incursion into neighbouring Iraq in the last week of May 1983; its threatening position on Afghanistan; and Reagan's support for Turkey's 'battle' against 'terrorism' in the area, must militate against any accommodation with the Turkish regime in its present form. Thus the Menshevik U-turn could possibly be seen as further evidence of their subservience to Soviet foreign policy, rather than theoretical considerations. However it is really too early to make definitive statements on this subject until further data is available.

Stemming from its different evaluation of the nature of fascism in general the *Işçinin Sesi* movement advanced a very different approach to the regime. As early as January 1980, the Leninists had advanced the slogan 'We will smash fascism in its lair'. This deliberately evoked images of the 'Grey Wolves', the paramilitary wing of the NAP, whose 'lair' is monopoly capital, both foreign and domestic.

But: "Fascism in Turkey" as Yürükoğlu pointed out, "is not restricted to the NAP. The NAP is the present day striking force of fascism." (*Turkey — Weak Link...*, p.118) As finance capital is, by pursuing its own interests, representing the interests of Turkish capitalism as a whole by imposing fascism, the only logical perspective to follow is, not a return to 'bourgeois democracy', but revolution.

### 3.3. The National Question

"If we do not want to betray Socialism, we *must* support *every* rebellion against our main enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states, providing it is not the rebellion of a reactionary class. By refusing to support rebellion of annexed territories we objectively become annexationists. Precisely in the era of imperialism which is the era of the incipient social revolution, the proletariat makes special efforts to support the rebellion of annexed territories today, in order that tomorrow, or simultaneously with the rebellion, it may attack the bourgeoisie of the 'Great' power which is weakened by that rebellion." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.22, p.333).

The demand for self-determination is a cross-class *democratic* demand. However, the national question is important for the proletariat. The rebellion of an oppressed country can be a weapon the working class of the *oppressor* nation uses against its 'own' bourgeoisie. Conversely, if the proletariat fails to make common cause with an oppressed people, this chauvinism becomes a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie to defeat not only the struggles of the people it oppresses beyond its borders, but also those of its 'own' working people.

The most obvious and pungent indicator of the swelling influence of opportunism is social chauvinism. In our own party, one of the most repulsive symptoms of this is the treacherously chauvinistic attitude to the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination. Similarly, the opportunist programme of the CPT betrays its *Turkish* nationalism in the section dealing with the Kurdish question.

Most of Kurdistan is divided by four states — Iraq, Iran, Syria and the largest part being in Turkey, where Kurds account for something like 1/4 of the total population. The Kurdish people's history has been a bloody one. The most important and brutal event in their recent history was the self-defensive uprising of Kurds in Dersim (1937-38). This revolt was brutally put down with thousands massacred and Dersim effectively laid waste. This atrocity smothered the Kurdish national movement for the whole period up to the turbulent 1960's.

"From 1938 to the 1960's Kurdish people suffered national oppression silently. Thousands were moved from Turkish Kurdistan and scattered in many diverse parts of the country. History was re-written. The existence of a Kurdish nation was 'scientifically' refuted. The word 'Kurd' was eliminated from the official language." (Süleyman Sakalı, *Turkey Today*, April-May 1979, No.45-46, p.12)

The Kurdish people's national rights, culture and language have been ruthlessly stamped out by the Turkish oppressor state. For example it is actually a crime to publish, write or read a book in Kurdish.

Successive Turkish governments have been at pains to ignore or crush the national aspirations of the Kurdish people. The 'progressive' Bulent Ecevit was speaking for all of Turkey's bourgeois rulers both past and present when he said:

"The term Turkish does not denote a race, an ethnic group or an ethnic unit. It is a term which denotes our nation as a whole. We reject any ethnic distinctions as a dividing element with the integral whole." (Quoted in *Turkey Today*, April-May 1979, No.45-46)

The chauvinism generated by the bourgeoisie of Turkey against the Kurdish people created a smoke-screen under which they divert attention away from the country's chronic economic and social problems and also use the excuse of 'the threat of Kurdish

nationalism' to attack all progressive or revolutionary forces. Underlying this 'Great Turkish Chauvinism' are also, however, sound economic motivations. As we have seen, the mobility of the bourgeoisie of Turkey to expand beyond its borders in any meaningful way has forced it to turn inwards and intensify the already back-breaking rates of exploitation of its own working people. The material richness of the Kurds homeland has meant that the bourgeoisie of Turkey increasingly turned east in its rapacious frenzy to save its system.

With the 1960's and 1970's the profound social upheavals that the contradictions in the medium-level developed capitalist economy were producing, the Kurdish question began to assume a more prominent role. This resurgent national consciousness of the Kurds also stirred a class consciousness as imperialism and the collaborating monopoly bourgeoisie of Turkey were perceived as being the enemy of the working people of both Kurdistan and Turkey. Thus the objective importance of the working class of Turkey making common cause with the oppressed people of Kurdistan is paramount for the very success of the revolution. The fascists were totally unequivocal in their attitude to the struggle of the people of Kurdistan.

"Those aspiring to impair the unity of the country (i.e. Kurdish nationalists) will be exterminated." (From Prime Minister Ulu's first public speech, quoted in *Turkey Today* Autumn 1980, No. 53)

Unfortunately the opportunists of the CPT are far less unambiguous in their approach to the question. The fact that Turkish Kurdistan had become an *internal colony* of Turkey is *not even mentioned* in the programme of the CPT. Indeed the terms, 'oppressor nation,' 'oppressed nation' and 'Turkish Kurdistan' are never used! The programme correctly evaluates the tasks of the communists of a 'national minority' (NB, *not an 'oppressed nation'*) to "propagate the close solidarity of international working people," but totally fails to describe the duties of the communists of the oppressor nation, i.e. Turkey! In contrast, Lenin shows that there are *two* sides to the equation:

"Socialists cannot achieve their great aim without fighting against all oppression of all Nations. They must, therefore unequivocally demand that the social-democratic (i.e. Communist—WH) parties of the *oppressor* countries... should recognise and champion the *oppressed* nation's right to self-determination, in the specifically political sense of the term i.e. the right to political secession. The socialist of a ruling or colonial nation who does not stand for that right is a chauvinist... In their turn, the socialists of the *oppressed* nation must unflinchingly fight for complete unity of the *workers* of the oppressed and oppressor nationalities..." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol 26, p.316-7).

The opportunist programme claims to be "loyal to the Leninist principles concerning the right of nations to self-determination." (*CPT Programme* p.53). Yet it goes on to claim that "the recognition of the rights of these nations does not always imply the necessity to demand and conduct propaganda for their secession." (*Ibid*)

This attitude makes the right of secession dependent on the 'benevolence' of the oppressor state whether it deigns to grant a measure of 'local autonomy' to a nation it oppresses. The opportunists of the CPT claim that there is no contradiction between "the right of self-determination" and the "right (!) to remain an integral part of the democratic state..." (*CPT Programme* p.53).

Lenin's point of view, on the contrary, was that:

"...the recognition of self-determination is sincere when the socialist of *every* nation demand the right of secession, for nations oppressed by their own nations..." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol 22, p 167).

And that:

"... if that right is recognised only for *some* nations, then you are defending the privileges of certain nations, ie you are a nationalist and imperialist, not a socialist..." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol 21, pp.291-2).

The programme is imbued with *Turkish* nationalism, for while it points to the duties of the communists of the *oppressed* nation, it totally ignores the tasks of communists of the *oppressor* country, to defend the right to secede for oppressed nations. Such a chauvinistic position offers no possibility of winning the national movement to fight at the side of the working class of Turkey against their common enemy. It does, however reach out to the liberal bourgeoisie.

The Mensheviks of the CPT belittle the whole Kurdish question by referring to them as a 'national minority'. A 'minority' of which 'nation' exactly? The Kurds are hardly a minority in Kurdistan! The Leninists, on the other hand, recognise that the Kurdish question has a fundamental bearing on the course and *character* of the revolution in Turkey and they do not abdicate their duties as communists of an oppressor nation to Turkey's internal colony, Kurdistan:

"Looking at it from the point of view of the concrete conditions in Turkey:

1. There is no other way of uniting the Kurdish people's struggle against national oppression with the struggle of the proletariat against imperialism and their collaborators than by defending the right of the Kurdish people to secede without beating around the bush.

"2. The defence of the Kurdish people's right of separation is an essential condition for the achievement of the organisational unity of the Turkish and Kurdish proletariat. For this unity cannot be achieved without the education of the Turkish proletariat in an internationalist spirit. And unless this unity is achieved, the Turkish proletariat cannot achieve success alone." (Süleyman Sakalı, *İşçinin Sesi*, No: 97-98)

The Mensheviks of the CPT fail to make common cause with the struggle of the Kurdish people. For this reason alone they have objectively failed the working class and working people of Turkey as a whole.

### 3.4. The Question of the State

While opportunists of both the centrist and Euro-communist varieties refer pompously and hypocritically to 'general and inescapable laws' of revolution one law at least that you will find neither adhering to is the fundamental principle that Marx deduced from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 — that the proletariat cannot take and mould the bourgeois state and its institutions in its own image. That the bourgeois state must be *smashed* and replaced by *the state power of the working class*. The Leninists on the other hand declare:

"Revolution means the overthrow of the superstructure of the old order. The revolution of the working class in particular means above all the destruction and smashing of the state... *Anything else*, whatever name it is given, *cannot be revolution...* (it) can be no more than an 'evolutionary' line." (R. Yürükoğlu, *The Third Programme and Our Tasks*, p.43, our emphasis)

In fact, declaring openly that at the stage of Advanced People's Democratic Revolution the state will be smashed and that among the achievements of the revolution will be the dispersal of the army and the police forces is in itself part of the struggle for working class hegemony in the revolution.

Having already surrendered hegemony to the bourgeoisie in the struggle for democracy, the CPT Mensheviks have no such theoretical problems and dilemmas to grapple with. Their government of

'national' bourgeois 'democracy' will not, obviously, set itself the task of smashing the bourgeois state, as, in reality, it will be the bourgeois state!

The opportunists can present this perspective as 'progressive' because of their gross underestimation of the level of Turkey's economic development, discussed in an earlier section of this article. Starting from their premise that Turkey is a 'semi-colonial', even a 'semi-feudal' country, the 'official' wing stand by the view that in general the state is in the hands of "the collaborating bourgeoisie and big landowners" (I. Bilen, *Report*, p31). Thus they maintain the capture of the state by the 'genuinely national' bourgeoisie would be in historical terms a progressive phenomena.

### 3.5. The Question of Parliament

Krushchev's report to the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU gave the 'rubber-stamp' of approval to developments that were anyway proceeding apace in the world communist movement. The communist parties of the world, under the impetus and dominance of rightward shifting centrism were increasingly adapting themselves to 'national conditions' and pursuing the vision of a parliamentary road to socialism. In advanced Western bourgeois democracies the idea of a 'peaceful parliamentary road to socialism' may seem feasible. After all, here in Britain the counter-revolutionary terror of the bourgeoisie is cloaked in a formal democracy which dupes workers and fosters illusions, even among many in the Communist Party, who perceive an innate sense of 'fairplay' and a 'love of democracy' in the British ruling class. In Turkey however there are no such niceties. Stable bourgeois democracy *has never and can never* exist in that country and today the bourgeoisie rules nakedly and without restraint through fascism. Illusions of parliament as an instrument of change for the working class to use in countries like Britain are understandable — wrong, but understandable. But in Turkey surely only those with at best the most tenuous grasp on reality could envisage a parliamentary road to socialism. Yet in the relevant section from the Third Programme we read:

"This development (the shift in the world balance of forces in favour of socialism—W.H.) ... strengthens the basis of the revolutionary movement. It is increasing the possibilities of conducting a parliamentary struggle, for democratic rights, prospects of ending parliaments role as an instrument which operates in the interests of the reactionary, collaborating bourgeoisie, the landlords and the militarist clique, and transferring it into an instrument which acts on behalf of the working class and the people are opening before us." (*CPT Programme* p33)

In reiterating the concept of peaceful co-existence to the 20th Party Congress in 1956 as "a fundamental principle of Soviet foreign policy" Krushchev stated that although the material basis for wars remained "the situation has changed radically. Now there is a world camp of... peace forces which have not only the moral but also the material means to prevent aggression." (Quoted in *Current Soviet Policies II*, Editor — Gruliov, p.37)

Fundamentally then it is argued that the character of the epoch has changed. The forces of socialism and national liberation have so far out-stripped the power of imperialism, that they cannot only prevent world war, but also a civil war that the bourgeoisie may launch in a particular country to crush any revolutionary advance. This of course greatly over-estimates the power of socialism in the world today.

"... the established proletarian dictatorship are only *partial victories*. Not until such time as the system of world economic and political relations weighs in favour of the socialist countries and their worldwide allies, will a definite, complete and not merely partial victory have been achieved." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Living Socialism*, pp.86-87)

Thus the CPT Leninists, conclude that to talk of a parliamentary "democratic road to socialism in a country with the socio-economic framework of Turkey and within the present overall world balance of forces between socialism and imperialism is to ... deceive the working class with empty dreams... (to) infect them with parliamentarism." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Third Programme and Our Tasks*, p.46)

### 3.6. The Question of the Army

Of all the institutions of the bourgeois state the Mensheviks of the CPT show the most touching solicitude for the army. They argue, absurdly, that:

"Since the army was established in the course of the war of liberation against the imperialists who occupied the country, its duty is to fight against imperialism and the collaborators and to defend the sovereignty of the country and the democratic rights of the people." (*CPT Programme*, p38).

The programme proposes to transform the army into a 'people's army without smashing it as an institution, but by 'purging the reactionaries and fascists,' (*Ibid*), even now, after the coup, for them the Turkish army is not reactionary in itself, but is being 'led astray' or even 'deceived'! This perspective is fully in line with the reformist peaceful roads to socialism that many of the world's Communist Parties have been pursuing at least since the mid-50's.

The situation in Turkey acquires an additional twist, however, due to the fact that, as the CPT Leninists point out, the army is not simply the *indirect representative* of the interests of finance capital, but is actually a *section of finance capital itself* — "finance capital in uniform" in fact, and the junta is "the direct administrator of a Turkey-scale military industrial complex, OYAK" (*Statement of the Coordinating Committee of the CPT* — November 29 — quoted in *Turkey Today* Jan/Feb, 1981 No.54)

David Tonge notes that:

"Turkey's military government controls one of the country's largest holding companies but has been encouraging this to keep a low profile... But for OYAK, the Armed Forces Mutual Assistance Fund, to stay tucked beneath the parapets is a hard task as it has become a far-reaching conglomerate, employing 20,000 people in the 20-odd companies which it fully or largely owns.

"OYAK's interests range from car and tyre plants to petrochemicals and cement works. Its profits are expected to be about TL 900m (£4.2m) this year. Sabancı and Koç lead the few Turkish groups which will outsell it.

"For a body established in 1961, OYAK's growth is striking. But it is unique in Turkey in being financed by an 8% deduction from the wages of the country's 80,000 officers." (*Financial Times*, December 20, 1980)

Its sister organisations — the Foundation for Strengthening the Air Force, the Foundation for Strengthening the Army and the Foundation for Strengthening the Navy — were established after the Cyprus invasion in order to attract public donations for the establishment of a national arms industry and to purchase weapons. All now have assets, running into billions of Turkish Lira.

Appealing to the army in the name of the 'national interest' or even the 'people' is thus rather idiotic as Berberoglu observes:



"... the generals had an added interest in preserving the ... status quo and repressing brutally the peoples forces: since the early 1960's, the armed forces had themselves, through the establishment of the Army Mutual Assistance Association (OYAK); merged as one of the largest industrial and commercial interests in Turkey." (*Turkey in Crisis*, p107)

In truth what the Mensheviks are doing when they praise the 'national' army or look to it for salvation is turning their eyes hopefully to *the armed section of Turkish finance capital* — the very agent that imposed fascism in the first place!

Leaving aside the Turkish army's organic ties to finance capital, it must be a *basic platform of all communist parties in all countries* that the bourgeois army is shattered and replaced by the *armed people* in the form of workers' militias or a standing people's army.

"No communist party as long as it adheres to Marxism-Leninism, can propose or contemplate 'liberating' a bourgeois army from the hands of the ruling class... A serious communist can foresee only the dispersal of the bourgeois army and the establishment of a peoples' army in its place."  
(R. Yürükoğlu, *Third Programme and Our Tasks*, p52)

## 4. Conclusion: The Message of Turkey

Turkey, according to David Tonge in an extremely interesting *Financial Times* article, is "an IMF success story". But it is not quite smiles and handshakes all round for the international imperialist bourgeoisie, as he notes, "the strains show." On the positive side for the bourgeoisie is the fact that Turkey's current account deficit has been slashed by around four fifths and economic growth has resumed, although in a shaky and unstable way. Similarly, the runaway inflation that has plagued the system and peaked in 1980 at a breathtaking 130%, has been effectively curbed and is down to a more manageable one quarter of that record figure. And what has been the reason for this "remarkable... turn-round"? Well, a "robust (!) use of all the IMF conventional weapons to crush demand", the "key factor" of which is, of course, "wage restraint". Prophetically, when the IMF austerity package was first introduced into Turkey on January 24 1980, the country's then opposition leader observed that "It cannot be applied without bayonets." "The message from Turkey", concludes David Tonge, is that this vicious austerity onslaught on the working class of Turkey "received a major, probably essential, boost from the 1980 military coup." (August 11 1983)

It is a 'message' that revolutionaries in all countries would also do well to heed, for Turkey's medium level of capitalist development means that events in that country have contained general lessons for both underdeveloped capitalist and imperialist countries. In general terms, one can say that Turkey's crisis, and indeed the crises of all medium level developed capitalist countries are a prelude to the approaching general crisis of capitalism — a general crisis which will see revolutionary situations develop not only in intermediate countries such as Turkey, but also in imperialist centres such as Britain. The fact that a spokesman for the bourgeoisie regards the barbaric imposition of fascism in Turkey in 1980 as "probably essential" in saving the system gives us a fair idea of how the bourgeoisie attempt to resolve their problems.

Thus, while the prospect of imperialist Britain becoming a 'weak link' of the imperialist chain is one that all revolutionaries should prepare for with enthusiasm, we must learn the lessons taught in Turkey

or else we will also face the danger of our revolution being crushed.

In much the same way as the revolutions of 1905, February and October 1917 taught generally applicable lessons in a sharp and graphic fashion, so too has Turkey. Like Russia's bourgeoisie, the Turkish ruling class are unable to off-load their crisis, to expand outwards to avoid civil war at home. This weakness meant that neither of the proletariats of either Russia or Turkey could be pacified by reforms or the charade of bourgeois democracy. The bourgeoisie of neither country could afford it. The relative weaknesses of both ruling classes precluded the possibility of the creation of a labour aristocracy as the main vehicle for introducing bourgeois ideas into the working class.

This inability to 'bourgeoisify' worker's consciousness meant that the chronic crises in both countries posed the question of revolution or counter-revolution in a totally unambiguous way. History has presented us so far this century with two classic, crystal clear, examples of the general laws of revolution — Russia and now Turkey. Future generations will not forgive us if we do not draw the correct conclusions from these two countries.

1903 saw the emergence of Bolshevism as a distinct political trend — 1983 will see the programmatic renaissance of Bolshevism in the world communist movement. Comrade Yürükoğlu, speaking at a meeting held in Cologne to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Turkey, announced that "the Fourth Programme of the Communist Party of Turkey is ready. I declare the discussion open with this meeting" (Reported in *Turkey Today* September/October 1983 No.65). The Fourth Programme will represent the conclusions of the debates that have been raging within the CPT. It is a crystallisation of the positions that the CPT Leninists have arrived at in their struggle against opportunism. In practice, the programme will represent the resolution of these debates. All communists should study this document carefully, for the roots of the schism within the CPT do not lie only in the soil of Turkey, but also in the development of the world communist movement as a whole.

Events in Turkey have not then been simply the 'back-yard' squabbings of revolutionaries of various hues. The re-emerging general crisis of world imperialism poses the task for revolutionaries in *all communist parties to generalise* the Turkish experience, to sharpen the differentiation between Leninism and opportunism on *all issues*. Vital to this task as the CPT Leninists have shown will be the struggle for a new programme.

The crisis in Turkey is continuous. Although the revolutionary situation has been *temporarily suppressed* by the imposition of the open terroristic dictatorship of the Turkish monopoly bourgeoisie, the cracks in the fascist monolith are beginning to show. The savage austerity measures imposed at the end of a bayonet have slashed the already depressed living standards of the workers of Turkey and have made life for many simply intolerable. It is only a question of time before the crisis returns openly in a far more virulent form and the revolutionary situation re-emerges. This time the subjective factor, especially the readiness of the Communist Party, will not lag behind. Turkey remains a *weak link of imperialism*. There is no way out of its crisis other than the road of social revolution. The emergence of the CPT Leninists and their growing political maturity ensures that the country's crisis in the end will be resolved positively, and that Turkey will become a strong link in the chain of world revolution. ■

Below we reproduce extracts from two speeches made by comrade R. Yürükoğlu (editor of *İşçinin Sesi*). The first was made at a meeting held in Cologne on September 10 1983 to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Turkey. At this meeting Yürükoğlu announced the launch of the discussion around the first draft of the Fourth Programme of the CPT, a programme which has great significance not only for communists in Turkey but for all in the world communist movement. The second speech was made in London's County Hall to the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey's International Conference which was held in October 1983. This speech is a powerful call for the unity of all forces seeking to promote solidarity with the peoples of Turkey and a plea to overcome the extension of differences between political groups in Turkey into the field of solidarity work.

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## Appendix 1

### The Fourth Programme Is the Start of a Victorious Future

#### R. Yürükoğlu

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The Communist Party of Turkey was born under the direct influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution, at a time when a new epoch was opened in the world.

The First Congress held in Baku on September 10 1920 under the leadership of comrade Mustafa Suphi, united the communist groups both within the country and abroad, and adopted the First Programme of our party.

In 1932, the Fourth and *last congress* of the party was convened. Finding the Second Programme sectarian (and it was also characterised as such in the "Introduction" to the Third Programme, which appeared in 1973), it decided that it should be changed. Again according to the "Introduction" to the 1973 programme, this decision could not be implemented for a full 41 years due to "the rejection of all proposals for the updating of the programme and constitution by opportunists who remained in the leadership of the party for a long time". *Forty-one years!* Even this fact alone suffices to clearly express the breadth and depth of the struggle being waged in the CPT today, to indicate the cancer with which we are faced. Leaving this aside, it is still not possible to fully understand the situation. A leadership which is said to be opportunist does not want to change a programme which is said to be sectarian. It resists this for 41 years, and today's opportunists now call this leadership opportunist.

By the 1950's, the party had taken a complete holiday from work,

arriving in the 1970's bereft of an organisation, programme and rules. The effort to reorganise which began at this time, imposed the need to write a new programme as well. The writing of the Third Programme, which was based primarily on the framework set out in the writings of comrade Yakup Demir, was completed in 1973.

In 1974, it was approved by the party organisations. This programme was the product, first and foremost, of comrades Yakup Demir and I. Bilen.

Unlike the First Programme neither of the other two programmes was approved by a congress. No congress has been convened in our party since 1932. The Third Programme was itself an eclectic and opportunist programme.

It was with such an inheritance that the communists who dedicated themselves to the cause of freeing the party from the grasp of opportunism, launched their open, organised and disciplined struggle in 1979. The First Conference of the Leninist organisations of the CPT, convened in 1980, resolved on the preparation of a Fourth Programme which would correctly reflect Marxism and the situation in Turkey, and on its submission to the Fifth Congress which it was necessary to convene.

The Second Conference of Leninist organisations of the CPT, convened in 1981, repeated this demand.

The Fourth Programme will be the programme of a stage at which: state monopoly capitalism has taken

shape in Turkey; the ruling class has more and more based itself on the need to become imperialist; expansionist tendencies have begun to play a determining role; and capitalism is at an impasse because it cannot achieve these aims; a stage at which the socio-economic problems can only be solved through revolution.

Comrades! I am really happy that, on September 10 1983, the 63rd anniversary of the founding of our party, I am able to make an announcement that will please you all. We have kept our word. The Fourth Programme of the Communist Party of Turkey is ready. I declare the discussion opened with this meeting.

Comrades, you will find very little that is "brand new" in the Fourth Programme. By this I mean that all the topics and views in it are ones which *İşçinin Sesi* has researched and developed, and in regard to which it has arrived at certain conclusions, over the years. This is confirmation of the fact that, throughout these years, we have worked in a *planned* manner towards a programme which would most correctly reflect theory, the world and our country. In the programme, all the comrades will find the results of the practical and theoretical work which they themselves have carried out over the years.

In other respects, however, the *Fourth Programme* is a *brand new* programme for the communist and workers' movement in Turkey (although we have been developing and stating all the ideas in it for

years). Moreover, in the manner of its approach to many topics, it is also a new and different programme within the world communist movement. There is not a single sentence which is a cliché of the type we have met with countless times, or which has been repeated from memory without any question being asked, or has been set down without its logic being understood.

The Fourth Programme will sharply and clearly distinguish the genuine communist line within the revolutionary movement of Turkey from all other trends. The approach to every topic is marked by the lack of "official optimism" and exaggeration, but with an unshakeable communist optimism which does not conceal the difficulties.

The Fourth Programme has adopted as the backbone of all its views, the idea of *world revolution* which is now completely forgotten, and discusses with great clarity the question of which tasks devolve upon which forces in the achievement of this aim.

The Fourth Programme is the *only* programme which states that state-monopoly capitalism has been the determining phenomenon in Turkey since the 1970's and that the country is at the stage of becoming imperialist. Unable to achieve this aim because of such factors as the general backwardness of the country, and the existence of powerful imperialist states, the bourgeoisie of Turkey is constantly intensifying its exploitation within the country and, in order to ensure this, constantly producing totalitarian, fascist and fascist regimes. The dilemma of either fascism or revolution is reflected in every sphere of social life, and third roads are all transitory.

In regard to the question of the revolutionary stage facing the country, the revolutionary movement in Turkey has been dominated by the meaninglessness, confusion and total incomprehensibility prevalent for many years due to the profound influence of international opportunism. Many parties and movements have declared the revolutionary step facing their countries to be "essentially bourgeois-democratic", while almost all the rest have done the same, but perhaps in a more covert and less honest manner, by calling the non-monopoly bourgeoisie to unity with the popular classes. With its propositions on this question, the Fourth Programme has distinguished itself once again, and in a manner reflecting the truth, from all other trends. The *advanced democratic people's revolution*, the name given in the programme, is the political

revolution of the proletariat, not a revolution bourgeois in its essence. Its task is to overthrow the main enemy, imperialism and the domestic finance oligarchy, not to clear the way for capitalism. The stage of the social revolution facing us in a Turkey dominated by state-monopoly capitalism and in which the domestic finance oligarchy has established its control over the state, is socialism. In such a country, the struggle for democracy has long since gone beyond anti-feudalism, and become part of the higher stage of transition from capitalism to socialism.

Another important idea contained in the Fourth Programme, is the idea that in this epoch, which is the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, every type of power established under the real, not merely ideological, leadership of the proletariat is a type of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For this reason, the Fourth Programme has, in various respects, accorded great significance to the idea of the *hegemony of the proletariat* in the revolution in Turkey. By declaring proletarian hegemony and proletarian dictatorship to be, not matters of subjective choice, but an objectively and historically necessary crossroads, the Fourth Programme speaks out against all opportunist, revisionist and Euro-communist views.

The word "front" does not occur in the Fourth Programme. This shows, not that our party belittles the vital importance of the idea of unity among the revolutionary forces, but that it is opposed to stereotypes and clichés. Unity in the struggle is necessary but it may take on various forms as this struggle develops. Tactical questions must not be raised to the level of strategy, much less to that of principle. The world communist movement has fallen into this mistake from time to time, and emerged damaged from it.

The Fourth Programme is one which categorically connects the question of democracy in Turkey to the question of revolution. If, since it became capitalist, Turkey has never experienced anything other than a democracy which is false, even in the bourgeois meaning of the term, the reason for this is not that our bourgeoisie is made up of "bad" people, but that the capitalism of Turkey is unable to provide the opportunity for any form of democracy. Democracy in Turkey is a question of revolution...

So "sectarian" on this matter, the programme nevertheless includes a comprehensive treatment of the question of democracy. In this way, it has in every respect squeezed into a

corner the false leftists who talk of nothing else but democracy.

These democratic demands constitute, not socialism, but democracy. Why does not a single leftist trend, the opportunist wing of our party first and foremost, think about these demands when they talk about democracy? It is very striking, is it not? Everyone is shouting: democracy, democracy! Here is the meaning and framework of democracy. This is democracy. Why don't they want it?

They do not want it because some of them are openly bourgeois tailists, while others, because they have adopted and are using without question certain views floating around in the communist movement, do not know how the struggle for democracy must be waged by communists.

Under capitalism, *all* the important demands of political democracy are only partially implemented. Taking this truth as their starting point, the opportunists in our party, restrict democratic demands to those which can be met within the capitalist system. Under the influence of the "common sense" of this approach, never mind that it is opportunist and collaborationist, many movements are also following the same path. The Fourth Programme, however, has seen this truth as the concrete material basis for *subordinating* the struggle for democracy to the goal of revolution, and has tried to present democratic demands in a revolutionary rather than a reformist manner, one which breaks down the boundaries set by bourgeois legality.

The Fourth Programme will impart a new dimension to the revolutionary movement in Turkey, with its understanding of socialism as the first stage of communism, of classes and the class struggle in the period of socialism, and of democracy under socialism.

Comrade, it is now necessary that this draft programme be subjected to the most intensive discussion. The ideas in it are the result of the collective struggle of the party. They must also be based on collective thought at the stage of becoming a binding document.

We will work on it intensively in order for it to become the most perfect document possible.

The discussion of the programme will follow the following procedure. In the first stage, the document will be discussed in all the party organs, and views will be submitted in writing to higher bodies. When the results of this work begin to emerge, in the second stage, a discussion will be opened in the mass organisations

by an announcement from the centre. The results of this discussion will also be submitted to the centre. At this stage, the programme will be made available to public opinion as a whole. At the third stage, the programme will be revised in the light of all the views which have been forthcoming. A comprehensive index of the proposals (subject, accepted

and rejected proposals, etc.) will be prepared. At the fourth stage, a new draft will be published along with the index of proposals, and the party committees will be asked to approve it. The programme will become binding for the committees which approve it from the time they do so, while the views of those committees which do not approve it, will be

submitted to the Fifth Congress. As the fifth stage, the programme will be discussed for the last time and decided upon at the Fifth Congress of the CPT.

The Fourth Programme of the Communist Party of Turkey will be the beginning of the new and victorious future of the working class, of communism, in Turkey. ■

## Appendix 2 The People of Turkey Deserve Democracy *R. Yürükoğlu*

Esteemed colleagues,

As we all probably know, Turkey is a country in which monopolies, financial groups have taken shape on the basis of a very widespread small production, and have seized the state structure. At the same time, it is a country which is exploited in every way and dominated militarily by imperialism, first and foremost United States imperialism. In the context of under-developed countries, Turkey is a medium developed capitalist country.

This reality of our country, coupled with its geopolitical-strategic position of utmost importance, has dictated severe conditions for our people. Our society has always been in convulsions of economic-social-political crisis and has never experienced democracy; it has continuously been faced with oppressive, totalitarian regimes.

Our people are demanding democracy and, although not without retreats and periods of silence, are waging a struggle for this goal, a struggle which is advancing and raising all the same. The fact that, since the middle of the 1960s, Turkey is one of the countries in Europe having the highest degree of social confrontation, confirms this.

The progressive forces have tremendous strength in Turkey. First of all, objectively, they represent the interests of the people as a whole. And then subjectively, they have (in the past) activated and were able to mobilise large crowds, the size of which cannot be overemphasised.

But, it must be pointed out that they failed to mobilise the majority of the masses they objectively represent, and, among the various factors responsible for this failure, the extreme disunity and lack of co-ordinated activity in the revolutionary movement has played a very important role.

Under these circumstances, fascism came to our country on September 12 1980. A very difficult period was faced then and is being faced now.

In every country in Europe, men of every persuasion, peace supporters, humanists, democrats, communists, are carrying out work in this field. And through such work, the fascist character of the September 12 regime has been established among European progressive public opinion. Significant support has been gathered for the working class and labouring masses of our country.

Recently, however, certain chronic weaknesses of the revolutionary movement of Turkey began to creep into the solidarity campaigns, as well. If we do not overcome these weaknesses, there is a danger that the entire revolutionary movement will be discredited before progressive public opinion in Europe, and that it will lose its support.

In a manner which reflects the divisions in the revolutionary movement of our country, every tendency, in proportion to its strength, tends to organise a solidarity campaign or a committee of its own.

We must decisively put an end to this very dangerous trend and expose and put a halt to those who insist upon this line. As progressives with differing political views, we should and must be able to work together in the solidarity movement. There is no other choice. No one has the right to divide the solidarity movement because of differences in political views.

We must broaden the solidarity movement to such an extent that every progressive can find satisfaction from the positive work he performs in it. In order to achieve this goal, in my opinion, work needs to be carried out on two levels:

a) We must unite the various campaigns that exist in a country, in a single solidarity campaign. We must find the concrete ways to achieve that unity in the conditions of each country. Regular meetings between campaigns, forming joint co-ordinating committees or establishing straightforward unity. These are some of the ways which

immediately come to mind. But whichever way is chosen, all activities must be co-ordinated immediately and the confusion which has arisen on this issue in the progressive media in Europe must be eliminated.

b) We must achieve a single campaign all over Europe. For this purpose, as an initial step, a co-ordinating body, having periodical meetings and attended by every committee with equal representation, could be formed.

Now, the next point I want to raise may not seem to be directly related to the solidarity movement. However, its consequences do affect the success of the campaign very deeply.

As the progressive forces of Turkey working in the solidarity movement, we must grasp the fact that, without gaining the hearts and minds of the Turkish workers in Europe, without drawing them into activity, not only do we fail to achieve our other aims, but we also fail to create a strong solidarity movement.

Our strength in the solidarity movement lies primarily in the support we receive from the Turkish labourers in Europe.

We must become more involved in their problems in Europe. Instead of abstract and global politics, we must concentrate more on their immediate problems, on the community politics which arise from these issues.

I warmly greet all those who give support to our people in these hard days for peace, democracy and freedom, especially our European friends.

If, in the name of all the revolutionary forces of Turkey, I could give a message to these people, I think my words would carry the feelings of the great majority of our progressive movement: Turkey will become neither a Dominican Republic, a Lebanon, nor a Grenada. The days are not far away when we will be able to show our hospitality to you in our country, and again ask for your help to overcome the problems of that day. ■

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# On Democratic Centralism

Rebecca Sachs

“The other day I was looking at the journal called ‘The Leninist’. It is produced, I gather, by comrades who have conveniently chosen to forget everything Lenin ever wrote about Party discipline.” (Paul Nicholls, *Focus*, No.12, October 1983).

Comrade Nicholls in this quote expresses a point of view that is currently being used by opportunists of all shades in the Party to stifle open discussion. During this period, when the crisis in the Party is maturing and the need for open and principled revolt on the part of the revolutionary forces in the Party and YCL is becoming desperately necessary, it is opportune to look at what precisely Lenin *did* say about discipline and inner-Party democracy.

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## 1. The Bolsheviks and Democratic Centralism

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At the beginning of this century the Russian revolutionary movement suffered from a complete lack of organisation. The movement at this time was neither homogenous nor professional. Groups of revolutionaries were so isolated from each other that a number of groups may have been functioning in one area without contact with each other.

This lack of organisation had two weakening effects. In the first place the socialist movement suffered from inordinate regionalism. Secondly, this weak structure made it easy for the Tsarist police to victimise active members. Between the years 1895-1902, the average period that a Social-Democratic group could hope to survive without being discovered by the police was three months.

Thus the activity of the revolutionary movement in Russia at this time not only lacked cohesion, it also lacked continuity. It was therefore imperative that a form of organisation be developed that would guarantee protection from the repressive arm of the state. Meanwhile, the struggle between the revolutionary movement and the police resembled, as Lenin observed, “that conducted by a mass of peasants armed with clubs, against modern troops.” (CW, Vol.5, p.442)

Lenin was himself a victim of the organisational failings of the movement, as part of a Social-Democratic group in 1895 he was arrested and spent the next five years in prison and in exile. When Lenin returned from exile he set about the task of developing principles of party organisation to combat this crippling weakness. He used the pages of *Iskra*, which had been launched in 1900 to help transform the RSDLP from a fiction to a reality, to formulate his ideas about the type of organisation needed to make the revolutionary

movement effective for its tasks. Thus, between 1900 and 1903 Lenin, in the columns of *Iskra*, developed, in essence, his theory of organisation.

In March 1902 Lenin published a booklet which marked a definitive stage in communist history. *What is to be Done?* is a succinct and coherent aperçu of Lenin's ideas on organisation, on how to create the tool by means of which to carry through a plan for revolution.

*What is to be Done?* was written during a period of severe Tsarist repression when it was obviously impossible to create and develop open mass parties. The pamphlet therefore emphasises the temporary need for an undemocratic and hierarchical Party structure. Lenin advocated that the revolutionary organisation must take on three essential features: it must limit itself to a modest size; must be largely clandestine; and must be mainly composed of professional revolutionaries.

Lenin made clear the connection between these three characteristics. Essential to the very survival of the revolutionary organisation in conditions of illegality is that it remains undiscovered by the ruling authorities. This furtive existence necessarily means that membership must be kept small and this in turn means that members must be people who are prepared to lead an existence determined by secrecy.

The Party's totally clandestine existence meant that it was impossible to introduce internal Party democracy without making the Party vulnerable to the police. This was to be a major point of controversy at the 1903 Congress where the seeds of major divisions appeared.

Lenin's view was that “the broad democratic principle” presupposes the two following conditions: first, full publicity, and secondly, election to all offices.” (CW, Vol.5 p.477. Despite this Lenin always emphasised the need for ideological clarity, open ideological struggle against revisionism, and unity around a revolutionary programme. Lack of Party democracy was never used as an excuse to suppress ideological debate.

So Lenin did not believe in organisation for the organisation's sake. No matter how effective the Party's organisation it was meaningless unless it

related to the tasks of the class, to the proletariat's goal of revolution, the Party exists to organise the political struggle of the proletarian vanguard.

That this is true is demonstrated by Lenin's response to the 1905 revolution. The year 1905 witnessed a massive working class upsurge in Russia. The masses had gone forward into revolution on their own initiative and tens of thousands of young workers were now looking towards revolutionary socialism, it was now essential that the Party opened itself up to the masses. Within a month of Bloody Sunday Lenin had perceived this necessity:

"Now the open propaganda of democratic ideas and demands, no longer persecuted by the weakened government, has spread so widely that we must learn to adjust ourselves to this entirely new scope of the movement." (CW, Vol. 8, p.216)

Lenin encountered opposition to his proposals from a number of Bolshevik cadres who had been working in the vexatious conditions of clandestinity. These cadres were reluctant to see change in the nature of their organisation, and at the April 1905 Bolshevik congress they even pompously quoted *What is to be Done?* at Lenin to prove their point. As Lenin pointed out, *What is to be Done?* was written to guide Bolshevik organisation in conditions of severe repression, in 1905 different tasks were now facing them, if they did not recruit the masses the Bolsheviks would stagnate. This does not mean to say, as some opportunists have suggested, that Lenin repudiated or revised *What is to be Done?* but rather, by the correct implementation of the principles contained in that document, he had laid the basis for his mass recruitment policy by having forged an organisation of politically homogenous professional revolutionaries.

Both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks made efforts to bring larger numbers of recruits into the Party. Just before the revolution in January 1905, the Bolshevik organisation had 8,400 members altogether. By the spring of 1906 the total membership of the RSDLP was 48,000 of whom 34,000 were Bolsheviks and 14,000 Mensheviks. At the 1907 London congress the RSDLP had 84,000 members, of whom 46,000 were Bolsheviks and 38,000 Mensheviks.

This was the first time the Party had reached mass proportions and naturally this changed its nature. The 1905 revolution had resulted in an atmosphere of relative political freedom, and this enabled the Party to spread its propaganda and influence to an extent that had been unheard of up to that time.

This did not mean that the secret apparatus of the Party was disbanded but rather that new legal Party organisations were created. The Party continued to speak and act as the vanguard. Lenin demanded the creation of hundreds of new Party organisations to organise socialist workers, but he did not argue for bringing large numbers of non-Social-Democratic youth into the Party proper. Lenin saw this period as an opportunity to democratise the Party:

"The new form of organisation, or rather the new form of the basic organisational nucleus of the workers' party, must be definitely much broader than the old circles. Apart from this, the new nucleus will most likely have to be less rigid, more 'free', more 'loose' organisation." (CW, Vol.10, p.34)

This period of relative freedom did not, however, last very long. By 1908 the forces of reaction had triumphed in Russia. This period of reaction had profound effects on the working class movement. Lenin described it as "the period of disorganisation and disintegration" and as "the period of absolute stagnation, of dead calm, hangings and suicides." (CW, Vol.17, pp.275-332) Lenin left Russia for his second period of exile in December

1907. Krupskaya describes the state of Party morale during this period:

"During the years of reaction the number of political emigrants from Russia increased tremendously. People fled abroad to escape the savage persecutions of the Tsarist regime, people with frayed and shattered nerves without prospects for the future, without a penny to their name, and without any help from Russia... We had more than enough squabbling and bickering." (N.K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p.168).

After 1907 both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks suffered the effects of the period of reaction but the fact that the Mensheviks had no real disciplined organisation, and the liquidationist way in which they had opened their Party doors to all workers, ensured that their collapse was more severe than that of the Bolsheviks. They became little more than a set of groups divided amongst themselves.

This downturn in the working class struggle also had its demoralising effects on the Bolsheviks resulting in internal divisions and conflicts. Three oppositionist tendencies came into existence, the Otzovists and the Ultimatumists on the left and the Conciliators on the right. The Party was threatened with liquidation so Lenin emphasised the need for increased centralism in the operation of democratic centralism in the Bolshevik wing.

measures and had few outlets for its propaganda Lenin advocated using the Duma for revolutionary purposes. The Ultimatumists and the Otzovists, led by Bogdanov, foolishly denounced this proposal as opportunist and accused Lenin of "deviating towards Menshevism" and of setting up a "Party Tsarism" (R.V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia*, p.18). Bogdanov and his followers elevated the 1905 tactic of boycotting the Duma to a principle and thus risked diminishing the Party into nothing more than a sect. Lenin was ruthless in his attacks upon these left liquidationists and in July 1909 he expelled Bogdanov, previously one of his closest collaborators. To be an effective Party in such conditions centralism was vital.

These conditions prevailed until 1917, with the war years accentuating the problem. The internationalist position of the Bolsheviks meant that they were persecuted to an even greater degree and consequently many Party leaders were in exile. The Party was so weak in Russia that, for example, the Petersburg committee was even unable to produce a leaflet in January 1917 to commemorate Bloody Sunday. As a result of this weakness the Bolsheviks did not play a leading role in the February 1917 revolution.

As long as Lenin was in exile, the Party's leaders in Russia, including Stalin and Kamenev by now, failed to sufficiently differentiate themselves politically from the opportunist Mensheviks and SR's who were deferring to the bourgeoisie to set up a Provisional government.

Lenin, at this time was still in exile, exasperated by the obstructions being placed in the way of his attempts to get back home. He was in direct opposition to what the leading Bolsheviks in Russia were doing: "he who says that the workers must support the new government in the interests of the struggle against Tsarist reaction... is a traitor to the workers..." (CW, Vol. 23, p.305), in addition, "the immediate tasks of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia" was "to find the surest road to the next stage of the revolution, or to the second revolution, which must transfer political power from the government of landlords and capitalists... to a government of the workers and poorest peasants." (*Ibid.*, p.340). This was in total opposition to what the Bolshevik leaders in Russia were saying and doing.

The overall view taken by the Bolshevik leaders in Russia, was irresolute and they even toyed with the idea of unification with the Mensheviks. This outlook was the result of the belief they shared with the right wing socialists, that toppling the Tsar was the first victory which must be consolidated before going on to the socialist revolution: "The... revolution must be only a bourgeois revolution" commented the Bolshevik Olminsky, for example. (L.D. Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, 1934, pp.335) This was the stagist theory of revolution which Lenin had slammed the Mensheviks for in 1905.

Lenin's rejection of stagism reached its logical conclusion in his *Letters from Afar* and he consolidated these ideas on his return from exile, in his *April Theses*. Lenin saw that "the specific feature of the present situation in Russia" consisted in the fact that they were passing from the first phase of the revolution — "which ... placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie" — to its second phase, "which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants". (*CW.*, Vol.24, p.22) Lenin denounced, as he had done in 1905, what he called "those 'old Bolsheviks' who more than once already have played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulas senselessly learned by rote." (*Ibid.*, p.44.)

After putting forward his *April Theses* Lenin found himself almost completely politically isolated in the leading circles of the Party, Alexandra Kollontai noted on April 4 that, "I was the only one to stand up for Lenin's view against a whole series of hesitant Bolsheviks". Lenin was forced to fight *openly* against the majority of the Party leadership. After suffering a number of defeats Lenin scored his first victory on April 14 at the conference of the Bolshevik organisations in Petrograd and at last Lenin succeeded in getting his views endorsed by 37 votes to 3. In opposition to Lenin, Kamenev declared that "it is too early to say that bourgeois democracy has exhausted all of its possibilities", and stressed the need for cooperation between the petty-bourgeoisie and the working class (Daniels, *Conscience*, p.44). Also at this conference it was decided to consider the whole question at a national conference on April 24.

Lenin won a decisive victory at the national conference on all the issues he had disagreements with the 'old Bolsheviks'. The opposition to Lenin was now reduced to a strong minority but the possibility of excluding this minority from the executive organs of the Party was never even suggested. At this time the Bolsheviks guaranteed a more or less proportional representation of different tendencies when they elected their leading bodies and the election of the Central Committee at this national conference was no exception. Lenin even made a public statement to ensure that Kamenev was elected declaring that it would be "very valuable" for the Party if the leader of the right wing was represented on the CC.

During the period after this conference the workers became increasingly revolutionary, there were frequent demonstrations against government policy and the Party's slogan of "All power to the Soviets" was instantly popular. This slogan, however, created a contradiction because the Menshevik and SR dominated soviets had no wish to challenge the Provisional Government. This was demonstrated by the fact that on June 9 the right wing majority in the soviets banned a Bolshevik-organised demonstration in Petrograd, demanding the resignation of the government. The Party protested but nevertheless called off the demonstration. This created discontent in the Party and the Bolshevik leadership failed to keep the temperature down resulting in a million people demonstrating in Petrograd in July. The Bolshevik

Party was blamed for this semi-spontaneous event and the Provisional Government, with the support of the soviet majority, launched a campaign of repression against the Bolsheviks.

Within a number of weeks the Bolshevik organisation temporarily returned to a semi-underground existence and Lenin took refuge in Finland. Lenin was quick to understand the situation and to see the need for a change in strategy. By July 10 Lenin had scrapped the strategy of a peaceful development of the revolution:

"All hopes for a peaceful development of the Russian revolution have vanished for good. This is the objective situation: either complete victory for the military dictatorship, or victory for the workers' armed uprising" (*CW.*, Vol. 25, p179)

By the end of August the proletariat were becoming increasingly revolutionised, as a consequence of this the Bolsheviks now gained a majority on the soviets of Petrograd and Moscow. In addition a powerful movement of discontent began to sweep over the countryside and the army.

With the country in such a mood Lenin initiated an offensive in the Party with two letters written between September 12-14 to the CC urging the Party to begin real and practical preparations for armed insurrection. The CC was somewhat stunned by these letters and their reaction was to burn them and to "take measures to prevent any demonstrations in the barracks and factories" (I Deutscher, *Stalin*, p.159). These actions were taken because the CC did not believe that they could sustain a revolution outside of the two capitals.

Realising that the CC was effectively refusing to prepare for a rising Lenin resorted to an exceptional procedure which he was to employ several times in this period. He wrote letters addressed to wider levels of the Party, closer to the rank and file, short-circuiting the CC. Lenin continued his campaign in an article in late September warning:

"there is not the slightest doubt that if the Bolsheviks allowed themselves to be caught in the trap of constitutional illusions... (they) would most certainly be miserable traitors to the proletarian cause." Lenin could not have expressed himself more strongly than in a postscript not intended for publication:

"What, then, is to be done? We must *aussprechen was ist*, 'state the facts', admit the truth that there is a tendency, or an opinion, in our CC and among the leaders of our Party which... is opposed to taking power immediately, is opposed to an immediate insurrection." And he went on to say that "that tendency, or opinion, must be overcome. Otherwise, the Bolsheviks will cover themselves with eternal shame and destroy themselves as a Party." (*CW.*, Vol.26, p.82)

Soon after Lenin offered his resignation from the CC "reserving for myself freedom to campaign among the rank and file of the Party and at the Party Congress. For it is my profound conviction that if we... let the present moment pass we shall ruin the revolution" (*CW.*, Vol.26, p.84). Lenin felt that the situation was so dire he had to shock the Party with the threat of resignation and risk returning to Russia and on October 7 he returned to Petrograd disguised as a mechanic.

On October 10 Lenin met his opponents on the CC for the first time since July. After some debate Lenin succeeded in passing a resolution which stated that the time for insurrection was ripe and that the Party must prepare practically for this event. Many members of the CC were absent and the resolution was passed by 10 votes to 2.

However, this was not the end of the matter, two CC members, Kamenev and Zinoviev, did not regard the passing of the resolution as the final decision and on October 15 the Bolshevik Committee in Moscow refused

to set up a military revolutionary committee. Therefore, on October 16 the Party leadership and a number of important Party bodies met once more. Two resolutions were put before the meeting. The first was Lenin's, calling on all organisations and all workers and soldiers to make all-round, energetic preparations for an armed uprising". The second was Zinoviev's "while work of reconnaissance and preparation must not cease, no action is permissible before the Bolshevik fraction in the Congress of Soviets has been consulted" (CW, Vol.26, pp.193-4). Lenin finally won by 19 votes to 2, with 4 abstentions.

On October 19 Kamenev and Zinoviev made a final attempt to counter Lenin's plans. On this day Kamenev published a statement in Maxim Gorky's Left-Menshevik, anti-Bolshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn*, in which he declared his and Zinoviev's opposition to the Bolshevik leadership's plans for insurrection.

Lenin was outraged at the publication of Kamenev's 'strikebreaking' letter. The next day he declared to the CC: "If that is tolerated, the Party will become impossible, the Party will be destroyed... There can and must be only one answer to that: an immediate decision of the CC" to expel Kamenev and Zinoviev (CW, Vol.26, pp.225-6). However, the Party did not expel the 'strikebreakers' and events moved rapidly, proving Lenin to be correct.

On the night of October 24-25 the Provisional Government moved again to shut down the Bolshevik papers. That night at last the revolutionary forces moved into decisive battle.

In general this period is characterised by a lack of discipline and cohesion. Much of this was due to the fact that Bolshevik militants now found themselves in a situation where they were under extreme pressure from the revolutionised masses. For example, during the July days, at the start of the evening of July 3 the secretary of the Bolshevik Committee in the massive Putilov works, disregarding the orders he had been given to calm down the workers, was carried away by the fervid atmosphere amongst the workers and called them into action.

The Bolshevik central organisation was straining to cope with the tremendous increase in the Party's activities and membership. This weakness resulted in the regional and local organisations having a considerable amount of discretion in deciding their policy. For example, right down to the beginning of autumn 1917 a number of remoter local sections maintained committees in which Bolsheviks and Mensheviks sat side by side.

Although the Bolshevik organisation was relatively weak at this point, the Party did maintain a degree of unity which contrasted with the other socialist parties which were increasingly schismatic. This unity was due, for the most part, to the Bolsheviks revolutionary policies and the leader who fought for them, Lenin, being in coincidence with the revolutionary situation. Yet after his victory Lenin did not seek to exclude his opponents and this is demonstrated clearly by the fact that when, just days before the revolution, the Bolsheviks decided to form a political bureau, Lenin had supported the election of Kamenev and Zinoviev, the two leaders of the rightist opposition.

After the revolution came the task of building socialism which was, as Lenin put it, "something new, unprecedented in history and cannot be studied from books" (CW, Vol.26, p.459). It was especially difficult because the main builders, the Bolsheviks, had experience only in activity aimed to destroy the old order. "It is a million times easier to defeat the resistance of counter-revolution than to succeed in the sphere of organisation" (V.I. Lenin CW, Vol.27, p.430).

Despite the massive problems of organising the country, the Party congresses, from the revolution until 1922-3, were organised in the best spirit of democratic centralism: "He (Lenin) held the Party congress to be the highest authority, where all things personal had to be cast aside, where nothing was to be concealed, and everything was to be open and above board" (N.K. Krupskaya *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p.89). Lenin encouraged open discussion and free criticism of the Party leadership even if this included criticism of himself, which it frequently did.

The Party's Left-Communist faction came into existence over the question of signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. These Left-Communists, led by Bukharin, believed that to sign a peace treaty with the Austro-German imperialists would weaken the struggle for world revolution especially the prospects in Germany. Lenin, on the other hand, argued that the greatest service they could play to world revolution would be to consolidate the Russian revolution.

When the signing of the treaty went ahead, Radek, one of the Left-Communists' spokesmen said that this implied that the government had "decided to renounce the policy of the attack on imperialism" (E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-23*, Vol.3, p.71). However this group dissolved of its own accord when the German revolution proved that the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty had not prevented the German proletariat from rising against their oppressors.

It was not until the end of the civil war, when the government was made painfully aware of the chaos that prevailed, that new oppositionist trends appeared. The situation of the regime was disastrous, Lenin described the condition of the country at the time of the Kronstadt rising: "our proletariat has been largely declassed" owing to the "terrible crisis" and "extreme want and hardship", and "the crisis in peasant farming.. is coming to a head" (CW, Vol.32, pp 178-274). There were 50,000 peasants in open revolt in Tambov province alone and big strikes had broken out in February in Moscow and Petrograd, and then there was the Kronstadt rebellion. The international situation was threatening as well: peace had not yet been signed with Poland and some White forces remained not far from Russia, ready to resume the civil war should the opportunity arise.

In these conditions there was a downturn in morale which led to the RCP losing its unity as a number of groups formed, two in particular attracting a fair number of discontented Party members: the Democratic Centralism group and, in particular the Workers' Opposition. Despite the fact that Lenin regarded the Workers' Opposition and other such groups as intolerably romantic, the Party leadership issued 250,000 copies of a pamphlet by A. Kollontai putting the case for the Workers' Opposition, and Pravda also published their platform.

The 10th Party congress saw Lenin attack all opposition trends, and in particular, the Workers' Opposition. Lenin was anxious to express the need for unity once more:

"We have passed through an exceptional year, we have allowed ourselves the luxury of discussions and disputes within the Party. This was an amazing luxury for a party shouldering unprecedented responsibilities and surrounded by mighty and powerful enemies uniting the whole capitalist world" (CW, Vol.32, p.168). The Workers' Opposition was especially criticised and finally threatened with expulsion.

Nevertheless, a number of the principal members of the Workers' Opposition were elected to the CC with



Lenin's support and some of their demands in connection with developing democracy and workers' initiatives were accepted in principle by the leadership who agreed to examine them in detail. Lenin expressed his "comradely confidence" in the leadership of the Opposition and described their election to the CC as "the Party's greatest expression of confidence" (CW, Vol. 32, p.260).

Lenin was determined however that during this period no factions should operate. Therefore, he put down two resolutions which effectively made factionalism an expellable offence. It must be stressed, however, that these actions were not definitive. Lenin emphasised that these decisions were necessary during those extreme conditions, and should not be seen as anything more than a reponse to a particular situation.

In addition it must be remembered that Lenin did not at any stage deny any opposition the right to defend its views right down to the 10th Congress, and he was always willing to argue and debate with them. In doing this Lenin was acting in accordance with the view that he had expressed at the 7th Party Congress, that he accepted the legitimacy of trends in the Party and he regarded the representation of these trends in Party bodies as normal (CW, Vol.27, pp.111,124). This is why he called for an opposition presence on the CC on two occasions — the Left-Communists in 1918 and the Workers' Opposition in 1921.

Lenin also expressed the view in 1920 that tendencies had a legitimate inclination to form themselves into groups and that these groups had certain rights such as election to the Party's leading bodies and the implementation of proportional representation of all such groups for election to congresses and conferences (CW, Vol.31, p.427). These attitudes spring from Lenin's belief that ideological struggle was an essential component part of Party life. Only through discussion of differences could the Party, and indeed the world communist movement, forge a real and genuine unity.

Lenin's use of democratic centralism, the discipline which he created, should demonstrate conclusively that it is not a tablet of stone, not a dogmatic discipline — quite the opposite. Lenin used democratic centralism as a tool for revolution which is why, at different periods in the history of the Bolsheviks he emphasised centralism as opposed to democracy and vice versa. Not to realise this, to describe the periods when Lenin emphasised centralism, for example, as Lenin's periods of 'sectarianism' is not to understand the essence of this discipline. Lenin was not inconsistent in his application of democratic centralism, his use of organisation always served the interests of the revolution. Organisation, or democratic centralism, is not a thing in itself, it is a tool to perform the tasks of socialist revolution and the transition to communism. This section has demonstrated how the Bolsheviks came to develop democratic centralism and has given examples of the variety of its implementation, let us now look at our Communist Party in the light of this.

## 2. Does our Communist Party have Democratic Centralism?

What then, is the essence of democratic centralism?

**"Democratic centralism is a fundamental organisational principle which comprises the dialectical unity of democracy and centralism. Centralism is required to form an organisation which strikes simultaneously as one fist; democracy is required to ensure that the blows are**

**struck on the correct principles. Democratic centralism is a vital mechanism which enables unity of will on the correct principles and subsequently imposes unity in action through the submission of the minority to the majority."** (C. Silahdar, *Party Discipline*, p.15, our emphasis)

Is the Party centralised around the correct principles? Is the BRS a revolutionary programme? Lenin had this warning to give with regard to a programme:

"It is quite natural for social democracy, as the party of the revolutionary proletariat, to be concerned for its *Programme*, to take such pains to establish well in advance its ultimate aim, the complete emancipation of the working people, and jealously guard this aim against any attempts to whittle it down. For the same reasons social democracy is so dogmatically strict and firmly doctrinaire in keeping its ultimate goal clear of all minor, immediate economic and political aims. He who goes *all out*, who fights for complete victory, must alert himself to the danger of having his hands tied by minor gains, of being led astray and made to forget that which is still comparatively remote, but without which all minor gains are hollow vanities." (V.I. Lenin, CW, Vol.8, original emphasis)

James Marshall (*The Leninist*, No.4), consequently drew this conclusion about the BRS:

"There can be no question that the BRS represents merely a 'watering down' of a principled programmatic position. It stands as a monument to the complete subordination of principles to the "hollow vanities" of immediate economic and political expediency. In other words it is reformist." (For a detailed analysis of the BRS see J. Marshall *Some Thoughts on the BRS*. *The Leninist*, No.4)

The introduction of the 1978 BRS marked a further step along the road to the social-democratisation of the Party. For although there was nothing *fundamentally* different from previous BRS's the 1978 version contained concepts which even further diluted the role of the Party and the working class into the broad reformist milieu. With this programme the Party took one more step down the liquidationist path.

As the Party consistently shed its Marxist-Leninist heritage the organisation inevitably became increasingly bureaucratically centralist. In the present Party regime power is increasingly concentrated in the PC which is in turn effectively bureaucratically dominated by the full timers. Ironically, this situation is outlined in detail in the Eurocommunist *Alternative Proposals on Inner-Party Democracy in 1979*:

"The Political Committee largely determines the composition and shape of the Executive Committee's agendas: It is almost always PC members who give the reports to the EC. PC members have copies of the main reports in advance, but other members of the EC do not, which places them at a disadvantage. While individual PC members should and do express their disagreement in the EC, "moral pressure" not to do so is still sometimes felt. There can be very little change to what the PC proposes in the EC because normally all that is presented is a long verbal report not susceptible to detailed amendment.

"Further, the PC is not fully accountable to the EC in practice. EC members do not receive minutes of PC meetings. The *Weekly Letter* cannot be considered an adequate record of the business of the PC and the verbal account of PC activity given at EC meetings is normally only sketchy." (Minority Report, p.54)

Thus, this hierarchical structure of control within the EC means that the EC is little more than a rubber stamp for the political initiatives of what is meant to be its sub-committee, the PC.

The leadership of the Party has become self-perpetuating and nepotistic. At congresses the vast majority of candidates on the final recommended list from the Elections Preparations Committee (EPC) were

initially nominated by the retiring EC, which had in turn drawn up its list on the basis of a recommended list from the PC.

The inordinate amount of control enjoyed by the PC/EC does not stop here. The retiring PC/EC has enormous influence on the EPC. There are four members of the retiring EC on the EPC one of which normally chairs it. Again the Minority Report ironically points out the special advantages of these members:

"... their participation in previous discussions, their cohesion in support of the EC/PC list, which they present to the EPC, their prestige, experience and knowledge...

"In effect, the present system enables the leadership to be self-perpetuating and to exercise great power in 'promoting' comrades onto the EC." (*Ibid*, p.57)

The PC/EC also ensure that most of the important political arguments take place in the PC/EC dominated committees with the controversial branch resolutions either being converted into amendments whereby their movers enjoy no right of reply or they are referred to the new EC.

In this way the leadership exclude oppositionists from all leading committees and from full representation of their views at Congress. The distortion of democratic centralism in this bureaucratic manner effectively does away with all open debate and criticism, it is a totally un-Leninist way of operating:

"... in the view of the Central Committee, it is essential to give all party members the widest possible freedom to criticise the central bodies and to attack them; the Central Committee sees nothing terrible in such attacks, provided they are not accompanied by a boycott, by standing aloof from positive work or by cutting off financial resources." (*CW*, Vol.34, p.223)

It is well known that Lenin on many occasions insisted on oppositionists being represented on leading bodies most notably the Left Communists in 1918 and the Workers' Opposition in 1921. This principled position finds no such parallel in our Party where opposition forces have been consistently denied representation on leading bodies. Take for example Sid French and comrade Fergus Nicholson both people who have represented considerable minorities, a fact that has never been reflected by the composition of leading bodies. No, the leadership consider the Party as their private domain and consequently the criteria for gaining leading positions rests on acceptance of the outlook of the leadership. The leadership regards those in the Party who have differences to have no rights.

Similarly the leadership excludes communists from membership if they disagree with their views. A case in point is comrade John Chamberlain (*Letters, The Leninist*, No.4), an ex-member of the Party and the NCP who whilst acknowledging that he had disagreements with the leadership also made it clear that he would act according to unity in action. This comrade was nevertheless refused membership by the EC.

The fact that communists are excluded from leading bodies, from Party publications and from membership even though they are committed to unity in action, is an attempt to totally stifle opposition. This is not democratic centralism which promotes the right to hold and express differing views and to elect and be elected, but bureaucratic centralism where the Party leadership regards the Party as their private property.

If comrades with differing views are considered legitimate members of the Party then they must be considered eligible for leading committees. The fact is that the Euros have very little rank and file support and their view has tended to be that if they could control the Party machine and maintain the membership figures at the same time then so much the better.

For these perpetrators of bureaucratic centralism, the

only objective of discipline is to contain the opposition not to fight for the destruction of the capitalist state. For example, what should be the attitude of the 42% of delegates at the 1981 Congress who voted against the leadership's abject fawning before imperialism on the question of Afghanistan? To be a disciplined communist demands that those comrades who defend proletarian internationalism and are not prepared to cheer on religious reactionaries of either the Afghan or Polish varieties while they destroy living socialism rebel against these betrayals. Unity around reformism and a reformist programme can only in reality be enforced by bureaucratic methods and is thus in itself a form of communist indiscipline:

"This kind of discipline turns the party into a piece of private property. Opportunists identify discipline with centralism, reducing discipline to vulgar centralism and robbing it of its ideological essence." (C. Silahar, *Party Discipline*, p.27)

These opportunists' ideological ancestors had a similar attitude to inner-Party discipline. In 1904, the Mensheviks took control of *Iskra*. During this time inner-Party debate and criticism was prevented and they refused to publish articles by Lenin and banned his books. The Bolsheviks were left with no choice but to establish their own publishing houses because their right to ideological debate and struggle had been withdrawn. The Bolsheviks had no access to the new *Iskra*.

This unprincipled approach by the Mensheviks has some obvious parallels in the present Party situation. *Marxism Today* is an overtly factional journal masquerading under the pretext of the CPGB's "theoretical and discussion journal". In fact no genuine inner-Party debate takes place in the pages of *Marxism Today*. The privilege of debate is reserved only for those bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements who will deign to talk to 'acceptable' (to the bourgeoisie that is) communists.

The treatment of Party organs in this way, as though they are the "private property" of a clique demonstrates a total lack of principles and is the prime cause of the existence of factions. If those controlling the Party organs refuse to open them up to the Party as a whole then groups inevitably establish their own publications, hence the development of *Straight Left* and *The Leninist*.

While the establishment of groups is inevitable under the unhealthy Party regime the opportunists including *Straight Left* and the Eurocommunists seem to regard their factionalism as something akin to masturbation, they all do it but will not admit to it. In the Leninist sense the indiscipline is being perpetrated by the controlling clique not by those who have to resort to publishing independently. In fact it is the duty of disciplined communists to rebel against opportunism. Unlike the compulsive factionalist mentality of *Straight Left*, *The Leninist* looks towards the ending of our existence as a group by fighting for real democratic centralism.

As has been indicated already the Eurocommunists ironically also regarded the party regime as bureaucratic:

"Part of our heritage is those bureaucratic, anti-democratic, distorting practices which have come to be known as Stalinism." (Minority Report, p.47) This was written during the period of Eurocommunist ascendancy after the NCP split at the 1977 Congress. They were quietly confident that they would inherit the Party and were assertive that now the 'Stalinists' had left it was time to get rid of 'Stalinism'.

The Minority Report makes it clear what the Euros want to replace these 'Stalinist' practices with. Under the veneer of 'increased democracy' everywhere what the Euros are effectively arguing for is much more

restrictive than even the present regime. It is in the section entitled "For the open discussion of politics within the Party" that this becomes most obvious, for what the Euros want is democracy, yes, but only for Euros:

"The concept of unity appropriate to the new *British Road* is one which recognises, as a normal and desirable state of affairs, *the existence of different positions and trends within the Party* — positions and trends which are nevertheless committed to the Party's strategy and concept of politics." (*Ibid.*, p.51, our emphasis). In other words all opposition must be "within the framework of the Party's overall strategy..." (*Ibid.*, p.52)

This concept of total freedom of debate for those who agree with the BRS is repeated again and again and is more restrictive than the right-opportunist Majority Report which states:

"The differing tendencies within our Party are between comrades who are united on our revolutionary aims *but differ on the strategy required to win socialism*, and between comrades who support our strategy but interpret it in different ways. There are also sectional differences in the Party. These different views, strongly held and sharply contested, are not in any way related to class or economic interests and they should not be a barrier to united work for the aims and policy of the Party." (*Ibid.*, p.12)

The Euros desire for freedom of debate amongst themselves was an attempt to unleash their more 'dynamic' theory on the Party and to do away with the more traditional dead-headism of the right-opportunists. The Euros have no genuine concern for democracy. It merely suited their interests in 1977-9 to fight to dismantle the more restrictive aspects of the bureaucratic control inherited from the past. Their aim was not to unite around a revolutionary theory but to make the CP acceptable to petty bourgeois radicalism. To see that this is true one need look no further than the epitome of Eurocommunism — *Marxism Today*. This revisionist journal opens its pages to any number of reactionary platitudes — only genuine revolutionary views are excluded.

The Euros report was not accepted by the Party Congress because the right-opportunists recognised that these changes would diminish their control of the leadership. However, if we look at the YCL 1979 Congress and beyond, it provides a useful example of the logical conclusions of the Euros ideas on discipline. It is interesting to note that the YCL has always tended to act as a barometer of the Party and 1979 was no exception.

### 3. The YCL — A Case Study

The YCL's 1979 Congress was the Eurocommunists' *coup de grace*. There were approximately 80 Euro delegates to 30 on the left which was largely dominated by Straight Leftists from branches like East Kilbride, Camden and Harrow.

This Congress marked the routing of the left and the Euros decided to introduce a new constitution. In the *Background Paper from the Executive Committee* on the YCL draft new constitution, the crux of why a new constitution was needed is not really examined it is merely hinted at:

"...developments among young people in the recent period have focused more on the nature of youth rebellion..."  
"The ideological development of the League has necessarily

entailed a coming to terms with Stalinist ideas and practice. The battle for the rejection of these ideas and practice has now been largely fought through..." (*Background Paper*, p.1)

In other words the Euros had won the battle against what they call 'Stalinism' and what we call centrism and were going to create a constitution that befitted their ideology — this is precisely what they did. They dropped 'Leninism', and Point d of Article 1 of the new 'democratic' constitution enshrines support for the BRS, as the *Background Paper* points out:

"...an acceptance of the League's strategy *Our Future* is a requirement of membership. As with the BRS clause support is referred to in general strategic terms rather than for the whole document word for word." (*Background Paper*, p.2) This question of 'support' sounds a little ambiguous but the Euro-communist comrade Tom Bell (then General Secretary) was only too willing to spell it out in his speech to Congress:

"...the minimum that a communist organisation has the right to expect of its members is that they agree with its central strategic perspectives — if they don't then frankly there is no point in their being a member." (*Report of the Executive Committee on the Draft New Constitution* — Tom Bell, p.8)

This clause was thus the instrument to be used against any last vestiges of 'Stalinism':

"Our Future hasn't just dropped from the sky. It is the result of over a decade of internal debate and struggle, as well as experience in mass youth action. Now is the time to say we have made a final decision on the basic kind of League we want, and the direction we should go in. Acceptance of this is from now on a condition of membership." (Tom Bell's speech, p.8)

Views outside the confines of Eurocommunism were thus not to be tolerated and would be dealt with, not by ideological debate, but with discipline. This development mirrored what the Euro *Minority Report* advocated and shows the Euro 'democrats' up for what they are.

As a logical consequence of these developments Article 5 of the new constitution dropped 'democratic centralism' and replaced it with Euro-communist 'internal democracy'. This took the form of a 'paternalistic' hierarchy whereby the membership were 'persuaded' of the correctness of leadership positions rather than directed. The need for directives was not seen as necessary as the atmosphere seemed to be that they were 'all Euros together' and if they needed to stamp down the odd 'Stalinist' then the 'support' clause would see to that.

As we have indicated the mood of the '79 Congress was one of cock-a-hoop victory. Comrade Tom Bell, the main spokesperson of the Euro triumph, declared:

"These young communists who could not accept the fundamental direction of League policy, who in reality based their politics on Stalin's vulgarised distortion of Marxism, have been generally defeated." (*Ibid.*, p.5)

But how did you defeat them comrade Bell? The bitter irony is that this defeat was achieved by the distorted use of 'democratic centralism', not by any ideological 'struggle' as comrade Bell implied. Monsterously underplaying his use of the bureaucratic method comrade Bell declared:

"During the period mentioned it was necessary to involve our rules from time to time to protect the League from some of the more unprincipled activity that sometimes occurred." (*Ibid.*, p.5)

All in the garden now seemed rosy, the Euros did not have to worry about 'bashing the Stalinists' any longer and could get on with their own, inner-factional debate:

"Although this kind of problem hasn't disappeared, it no longer dominates the League. Future inner YCL discussion will often be contentious and passionate but it will be among young communists, who, while holding disagreements, share common ground in the fundamental principles of the League." (*Ibid.*, p.5)

Hand in hand with the demise of 'democratic centralism' came the introduction of a federalistic

structure. Ostensibly this was to make things 'more democratic' and 'less centralised'. In reality they envisaged that regional aggregates would be stage-managed to enable continued Euro domination and the rapid promotion of inexperienced comrades who could be moulded by the leadership:

"If the League is opening itself up and bringing in new activists we want to create channels through which they can quickly become involved in our leading bodies." (*Ibid.*, p.6)

Another way of ensuring that the membership was largely inexperienced was the lowering of the age limit, which incidentally affected the centrists particularly badly. Promotion to leading bodies was invariably a question of patronage by the leadership. Comrade Nina Temple (Bell's successor) would discover 'someone really good' and lo and behold months or even weeks later some novice would appear on the General Council. Comrade Doug Chalmers, as National Organiser as well as General Secretary was very fond of this particular method and was not above reminding people who they owed their position to if they showed signs of beginning to develop a mind of their own.

Between 1979 and 1983 a state of Eurocommunist anarchy prevailed in the YCL. This was the era of Euro pre-eminence where anything could happen except genuine communist politics. These were the days when rolling joints and finishing homework were the order of the day on the General Council; when pictures of Marx and Lenin were thrown out of local Party offices by rebellious (sic) YCLers; when 'Stalinist' branches had their meetings consistently banned and broken up; when it was demanded that the hammer and sickle be removed from all things YCL; and when *Challenge* became a down-market *NME* (*New Musical Express*). Needless to say, discipline amongst the Euros in these heady days was non-existent.

The dominant group in this Euro heaven were the radical feminists. This group of incredibly untalented 'wimin' would make you laugh if they did not make you cry first. They largely ran the Euro show because the Euro men were scared of offending them by being too male and having ideas of their own. All discussion on women was limited to sexuality — fundamental issues such as how to conceive a female baby and the morality of using a man just to conceive were the basis of many debates. These reactionaries 'glorified' women and motherhood and insisted on 'reclaiming women's crafts'.

The personification of this trend took shape in comrade Nicky Bown. In 1982 this comrade was a protégé of comrade Doug Chalmers (National Organiser at the time.) But alas comrade Chalmers' baby was a Frankenstein monster. At the end of that year when comrade Nina Temple retired of 'old age' comrade Bown stood against comrade Chalmers for General Secretary despite the fact that she had been virtually promised the job of National Organiser by comrades Temple and Chalmers. The basis on which she stood was inevitably enough the fact that she 'was a woman'. The vote in December 1982 was a tie and it was not until the GC met in January 1983 that comrade Chalmers was elected by 11 votes to 7. However comrade Bown was elected as National Organiser and so began the reign of incompetence legend in the YCL.

According to YCL activists this comrade was being paid a full-time wage for coming into the office at lunch time or sometimes not at all and then when she did come in for having seemingly endless 'deep and meaningful' conversations with her invited chums or, at further expense to the Party, over the phone. Like many of her trend comrade Bown was totally unable to take anything beyond what affected *her* and *her individual*

experience. Hence her politics, her obsession with sexuality and size:

"The huge amount of fat young women whose lives are dominated by worrying about how much food they're eating, their size, and hatred for their bodies, would be enough to increase the YCL's membership figures by more than 20 times. In fact, in terms of proportions of the population, it's a bigger issue than unemployment." (*Real Life*, (theoretical and discussion journal of the YCL), No. 5).

Organisational inaptitude was also one of comrade Bown's 'talents'. On one of the rare occasions when she visited any area out of London she arranged a meeting in Birmingham and then failed to turn up because she 'overslept'. Comrade Bown's recard reports were spectacular failures and at one point she threw out the entire young workers file petulantly refusing to explain her behaviour. When anyone dared to criticise her incompetence tears and tantrums were the only answers forthcoming. All this and we only had to pay around £80 a week for six months.

In the end the Euro chaos got too much for the right-opportunists in both the Party and the YCL. At this stage Chalmers and his ilk saw this anarchistic/radical feminist trend which had sprung from Eurocommunism as their main opposition. This group controlled about half the GC and had a majority on most of the collectives. The left was hardly represented at all on the GC or any other committees and were not seen as much of a threat by the leadership. To deal with this opposition the right-opportunist/orthodox Euros reintroduced the principle of 'democratic centralism' into the constitution at the 1983 Congress. They were certainly not provoked by a genuine desire to organise the YCL around Leninist discipline but were motivated by the desire to gain a firm grip of the bureaucratic machinery. This is made patently obvious by the fact that while the outgoing GC recommended the acceptance of 'democratic centralism' into the constitution it recommended rejection of an amendment re-introducing Leninism. This is especially pertinent considering that the reason given for dropping 'Leninism' in 1979 was the fact that we were no longer organised according to 'democratic centralism'.

It is obvious where comrade Chalmers' principal attack was aimed if we look at his pre-Congress article on organisation:

"Only by an open discussion and honest self-criticism of how we are working can we face up to the problems we must overcome." (*Real Life*, No. 4)

He goes on to argue against "submerging our identity in broad movements" advocating rather that we merely work with them "on points of common interest, where they exist." Another focus of his attention is directed against the "nihilistic" tendencies within the YCL and he ended up explaining how the YCL must offer young people the alternative of Marxism.

These examples demonstrate where comrade Chalmers felt his main threat to come from. How wrong could he be. Congress came as a very severe blow to comrade Chalmers who had totally misjudged the climate of the membership. If *he* had reacted against the excesses of the Euros then everyone to the left had certainly had more than enough. Congress represented a considerable shift to the left as a result of this. The severest blow to comrade Chalmers was the election of the General Council — the recommended list of 22 was broken an unprecedented 9 times with a number of left-wingers elected.

Comrade Chalmers now had a much larger problem on his hands than the inner-house squabbling he had been involved in before Congress. The troublesome trend which comrade Chalmers had wanted to defeat, the loopy Euro/feminists, were well and truly trounced at Congress but no doubt he bitterly regretted his

contribution to their demise. He now needed them to stave off the menace from the left and indeed what was left of this hard-core Euro feminist trend happily united with 'boring old Doug' as they previously called him, in an all out factional effort to prevent the left of the YCL from doing anything.

As we mentioned comrade Chalmers may have regretted his part in defeating the loony fringe but we very much doubt if he regrets the reinroduction of what he understands as 'democratic centralism', because he sees this as, 'all power to Doug Chalmers'. A tool that comrade Chalmers has also used is the clause that YCLers must support *Our Future* and the *BRS*. Thus he really has got it both ways in terms of the disciplinary options open to him. In 1979 agreement with the *BRS* and *Our Future* as a condition of membership was introduced as 'democratic centralism' was thrown out, but in 1983 although 'democratic centralism' was reintroduced the support clause remained — the bureaucratic potential of which has not escaped comrade Chalmers.

From 1979 the centrist opposition forces were limited to a low level organisational struggle because of their ideological poverty and inability to effectively challenge the Eurocommunist ideological onslaught. In 1979 the pre-Congress discussion period was actually extended because "very few contributions have been sent in — not enough to produce the first bulletin." After the 1979 Euro victory *Straight Left* who then dominated the opposition attempted to sabotage the YCL and pulled out. Those who were too young to join the Party adopted a policy of isolationism, eg. Camden who did not come out of the mothballs until after the 1983 Congress. A further, more recent example of *Straight Left's* poverty was on the GC meeting of September 3-4 1983 when they voted with the Euros on a resolution describing *The Leninist* as an "anti-Communist Party and anti-YCL journal" and which prohibited any YCLer from "selling" or "promoting this magazine". (GC minutes) Not only did they vote with the Euros on this but they even moved an amendment calling for disciplinary measures to be taken against any YCLer infringing this ruling. Thus *Straight Left* were more than ready to connive with the Euros to use 'democratic centralism' to persecute critics despite their pretensions to anti-opportunist unity espoused in the 'Woods' pamphlet.

The YCL experience has valuable lessons for the Party as it reflects Party experience taken to its extremities. The Euros and *Straight Left* have both demonstrated their willingness to resort to the same bureaucratic centralist practices as the right-opportunists when it comes to defending their factional interests. The struggle for genuine democratic centralism must be a task for pro-Party forces if the Party is to be equipped for its revolutionary tasks.

## 4. The Way Forward

It is an extreme irony that some Euros in the Party, for example comrades Dave Cook and Dave Richards, are 'turning to Lenin' to give authority and justification to their bureaucratic perspectives. The 'democratic centralism' championed by these comrades is diametrically opposed to Leninist discipline, it is designed to exclude oppositionists and to defend their factional interests. The other side to this coin is *Straight Left* who, despite their protestations in the 'Woods' pamphlet that the Party leadership "... has retained the vestiges of democratic centralism not to wage class

struggle, but to persecute critics", have shown themselves in practice, specifically in the YCL, to be just as willing to persecute left critics as the Euros. For both these factions their paramount concern is with their factional interests and not for the good health of the Party.

Unlike these opportunists *The Leninist* is committed unconditionally to the Party, we are committed to the struggle for pro-Partyism and genuine democratic centralism which is a vital requirement if the Party and the class is to be equipped for revolution. Pro-Party forces will have to fight to obtain real democratic centralism, it cannot be requested from Euro-crats or Straight Leftists. Let us now look at the question of what the struggle towards democratic centralism means in the concrete conditions of the Party and Britain today.

The struggle for pro-Partyism is not one which can or will be fought out 'Militant' style behind the closed doors of committee rooms, or by pub room plotting, or by a creeping usurption of the Party machine by closet pro-Partyists. No, the struggle for pro-Partyism is one which must be open, in front of, and involving the working class, and primarily ideological. Obviously, the role the *Morning Star* could potentially play in this battle for pro-Partyism and genuine democratic centralism could be very important. *The Leninist* posed the demand to comrade Tony Chater that the *Morning Star* must be unequivocally a Party paper open to all those in the Party who are committed to fight both the Euro and *Straight Left* varieties of liquidationism. A *Morning Star* committed to this perspective, could become a major weapon to re-establish our Party's commitment to democratic centralism.

Unfortunately, *The Leninist's* offer did not move comrade Chater from his apparent course of making the *Morning Star* the rag of the trade union bureaucracy. However, the task of building a fighting, revolutionary pro-Party paper committed to the fight for genuine democratic centralism is one that remains an historical necessity for the salvation of the Party.

In the present circumstances we must emphasise the democratic aspect of democratic centralism. This is not because *The Leninist* believes in a liberalistic federated concept of the Party but rather because we see this as a necessity to overcome the revisionist and liquidationist forces predominant in the present Party regime. As this article has made clear this regime is far from democratic. The only freedom of ideas that exists at the present time is for reformist ideas. Our struggle must be to fight for freedom of revolutionary ideas. At the moment these ideas are in a small minority in the Party which is all the more reason we should put the emphasis on democracy. This is in fact exactly what Lenin advocated in 1905 when the Mensheviks enjoyed a majority: "perceiving that we were in the minority...we appealed to the Congress to protect the rights of the minority." (CW, Vol.7, p.298). To do otherwise is foolhardy, for example *Straight Left* regarded the reintroduction of 'democratic centralism' at the 1983 YCL Congress as a victory for the left — but it has merely been used as a stick to beat the left with.

Only open ideological struggle within the Party will expose the opportunists:

"The liquidators, at present undermining the Party's foundations in the dark, will be forced out into the blinding light of the sun. There, they will be exposed to the scrutiny of the entire membership. In the open, they can be fought effectively and exterminated. As well as the liquidationists, every other trend will end its troglodyte existence; slander, gossip and rumour will become useless weapons and lose their power. All will have to fight in the open with their ideological view, something that no communist fears — on the contrary, something that every communist welcomes." (Founding Statement, *The Leninist*, No.1)

Unlike the opportunists who ban views they cannot argue against, Leninists will expose opportunist views with the confidence that their position is a correct and principled one for "Honesty in politics is the result of strength; hypocrisy is the result of weakness." (V.I. Lenin, *CW* Vol. 17, p.166)

This ideological struggle will clear the air, Party members will for once be presented with the honest reality of the trends that exist within the Party and be able to judge between them. Instead of information about differences in the Party being transmitted through hearsay, they will be made clear in print and Party members will be in a position then to contribute in an informed way to the future of their Party. This will have the effect of bringing cadres out of the woodwork and developing them.

Without this ideological struggle to rid the Party of all opportunist and liquidationist trends genuine unity is impossible. Party organisation is useless in and of itself, it is inseparable from ideology, Lenin put this very succinctly in a phrase which we have on our banner: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." (*CW*, Vol.5, p.369) As experience in the Party has shown, unity around reformism is bureaucratic unity and cannot last. Therefore it is, as Lenin made clear, a revolutionary duty to rebel against opportunism:

"Could the opportunists be allowed to predominate in the ideological leadership? What would we... do if that happened, would we have to agree with it? No, it would be our duty to take away its right to predominate and give that right to a different body; and if that were not done for any reason, whether a sense of Party discipline or anything else, we would all deserve to be called traitors to the Social-Democratic workers' movement." (*CW*, Vol.7, p.137, our emphasis)

Thus it is axiomatic that there can be no genuine democratic centralism without a revolutionary programme. The struggle for democratic centralism is essentially the struggle to re-establish our Party as the vanguard of the working class seriously preparing for the seizure of state power. As we emphasised, democratic centralism is not a series of fixed and immutable laws. The vanguard Party must be prepared to operate under conditions of severe reaction or illegality where centralism would need to take a far more pronounced role in inner-Party organisation. Under the present conditions of the domination of the Party by opportunism *The Leninist* emphasises the rights of minorities against the bureaucratic smothering of the Euro leadership. Like Lenin our concept of democratic centralism is a dynamic one. What informs our view above all else is the necessity of orientating the working class towards its historical task of revolution and of remoulding the Party to give that class its leadership.

## Postscript: The Congress and the YCL expulsions

The practice of bureaucratic centralism was evident at the last Party Congress where, for example, stewards, hand picked by the leadership, served more as that faction's 'police' to control the delegates than as organisers ensuring the smooth running of events for the benefit and protection of the delegates. It was impossible to move around the Congress hall without being questioned and told to go back to your seat. Bags were constantly searched and delegates found with copies of *Congress Truth* being circulated by *Straight Left*, had them confiscated.

Comrade Halverson in the chair ensured that virtually none of the votes were counted in an attempt to hamper an accurate analysis of the various trends and groups present. This is the Eurocommunist understanding of 'democracy', where delegates are policed, where votes are not counted, where Congress procedure was designed to atomise delegates and where visitor status was available only to a select few. While Party members were excluded from the Congress the leadership was happy to allow in the bourgeois media, *Newsline* and the *New Worker*. It would not be arrogance on our part to regard these measures as an attempt to hamper *The Leninist* from reporting the Congress. The leadership is aware that *The Leninist* has built up an outstanding record amongst many activists of reporting Party meetings accurately, something that, due to bureaucratic centralism the 'Party press' has singularly failed to do.

Bureaucratic centralism has manifested itself in many different forms in the Party and YCL but recently it developed in an extreme form, again in that barometer of the Party — the YCL — where we now have 'police' centralism. In mid-November in Hackney, the General Secretary of the YCL, from here on known as Chalmers of the Yard, ordered the police to be called to exclude 15 YCLers from what he called the AGM of Hackney YCL.

To call the bourgeois state's most loyal arm of repression to exclude communists, 7 of whom were black, from his factional 'AGM' of 4 is scandalous enough but to do so in Hackney, where the barbaric and racist nature of the police is notorious, is almost unbelievable. Most comrades will not need reminding that this is the area where Colin Roach was killed, resulting in an angry campaign by blacks, especially black youth. Comrade Cary Phillips (*The Leninist*, Letters, No.5) pointed out the shameful role of Party Euros in Hackney, specifically a leaflet they issued stating, "The truth is that the police in Hackney are not tackling crime effectively. They are undermining respect for law and order." As comrade Phillips quite correctly commented, "Capitalist instruments of repression have never, nor can they ever, serve the working class." It seems, however, that the Euro-crats have now decided that they can serve theirs.

The scandal does not stop here. Arising from this incident two YCLers, one of whom was a GC member, have been expelled by the GC (December 3-4 1983) — where comrade Chalmers was able to muster a Euro majority — for trying to protect the rights of these YCLers. The irony of this situation is extreme, the sinner against communist morality — Chalmers of the Yard — is not only defended for calling the police on communists but is able to expel two victims of his crime. The anti-communist nature of Eurocommunism stands exposed.

*Straight Left* voted against the expulsions but their sudden desire for unity since the Euro victory at Congress carries little conviction especially when one looks back to the YCL GC of just three months before when they connived with the Euros to proscribe *The Leninist*. In fact *Straight Left's* congenital centrism was clearly demonstrated at this meeting of the GC (December) by the fact that they moved thanks for the chair at the end of the proceedings — he being a Euro who had consistently carved up the whole weekend's meeting.

What the YCL GC meeting clearly illustrates is the confidence of the Euros after Party Congress and their willingness to trample over their own rules in order to crush troublesome opposition — the purge has begun. ■

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While we absolutely oppose the Euro EC's expulsion of comrade Charlie Woods and refuse to recognise it we are in total opposition to the liquiationist views published under his name.

# The 'Charlie Woods' pamphlet and the hypocrisy of Straight Leftism

James Marshall

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## 1. 'Straight Left' have ventured out into the light

In the *Founding Statement of The Leninist* we confidently predicted that open ideological struggle would have the following effect:

"The various trends and shades that exist in the Party today under the surface will be forced into the open." This will mean, "... they will all have to state their views clearly for all to study and judge. The liquidators, at present undermining the Party's foundations in the dark, will be forced out into the blinding light of the sun. There they will be exposed to the scrutiny of the entire membership. In the open they can be fought effectively and exterminated. As well as the liquidationists every other trend will end its troglodyte existence; slander, gossip, and rumour will lose their power. All will have to fight in the open with their ideological view, something that no communist fears — on the contrary, something that every communist welcomes." (*The Leninist*, No 1)

It is in this combative spirit that we welcome the pamphlet published by comrade Woods. Of course this is not the fireside memories and considered reflections of an 83 year old retired miner, as is claimed. (In fact the pamphlet's style, bears a remarkable similarity to that of a certain comrade ....). Comrade Woods is nothing but a fall guy, a convenient prestigious facade; behind which lurks the shady faction around the paper *Straight Left*.

Hip, hip, hurray! At last *Straight Left* have ventured out into the light. After five years of publishing an incondite 'broad labour movement' paper which reads as if communism were illegal, they have plucked up the courage to cobble together a platform outlining their analysis of the crisis of the Party and their cure. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, their 'cure' is poison. For what *Straight Left's* leaders are offering is

fawning prostration before Labourism, and diplomatic internationalism, laced with a liberal dose of liquidationism.

In order to sell this dubious concoction our Straight Leftist quacks coat their remedy in revolutionary rhetoric. And, despite the cynical dismissal of the 'Woods' pamphlet by many non-Straight Leftist centrists, it is an undeniable fact that many honest Party militants have been taken in by this rhetoric, especially its seemingly firm opposition to the revolting record of both the St. John Street and Farrington Road factions. Facile saloon bar dismissals of *Straight Left* and their 'Woods' pamphlet are no way to fight the danger of liquidationism. Indeed some comrades who have rubbished the 'Woods' pamphlet, despite their having broken with *Straight Left* organisationally, show all the signs that they have not broken with its politics, including its extreme liquidationism. Moreover some ex-Straight Leftists are transparently moving to the right, and while refusing to publish their own positions in extensive form, let alone answer the 'purist' *Straight Left*, they buddy buddy with the Chater-Costello Farringdon Road faction, eyes firmly set on their goal of becoming Party functionaries under the 'new order'. Of course such a perspective is possible for 'rising intellectuals', but the Party and the mass of pro-Party forces can have no future with such conciliationist careerism.

No, only by engaging in a rigorous and pitiless ideological struggle, organised in rebellion against opportunism as disciplined communists, can the Party be saved and equipped for the day of reckoning with the bourgeoisie. For it is an incontrovertible fact that one of the essential preconditions for defeating the bourgeoisie is defeating all opportunist manifestations that at present haunt our Party. Unless such a victory, along with the complete routing of liquidationism, is preliminarily gained, there can be no hope for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is because we fully understand this simple truth that we devote so much of our energy to polemic and why we sincerely welcome the 'Woods' pamphlet. Now

*Straight Left* have ventured from their subterranean lair, albeit using a respected 83 year old comrade to provide a cover, the task of exposing them and ruthlessly exterminating them is made a thousand times easier: that is why we say we welcome the 'Woods' pamphlet.

It is for the same reason we *advocate, urge, and demand* that all opportunist trends end their troglodyte existence. Publish, comrades, publish your views, your platforms, so all can judge. Publish or be branded with the epitaph of irrelevancy, doomed not even to secure a footnote in the annals of the reforging of the Communist Party into a Leninist Party. Publish or be damned! Publish and be damned!

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## 2. Cause, Effect and Cure

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Who can doubt that the Communist Party is in crisis. The 'Woods' pamphlet lists a string of examples of its grievous state. The factional battle around the PPPS AGM, the plummeting membership figures, the huge number of 'members' who do not even bother to pay the derisory dues demanded of them by the Party rules, the dwindling sales of the *Morning Star*, the collapse of Party activity and morale, the belligerent contests between communists for trade union positions, etc.

What honest Party member looking at the state of the Party today could be complacent? Certainly this, "crisis situation calls for extraordinary measures, which would not be contemplated at normal times in a healthy, functioning Communist Party." (p3; all quotes unless otherwise stated from the 'Woods' pamphlet). But the cure offered by *Straight Left* is not only based on a flawed analysis and an opportunist outlook, it is liquidationist to the core.

This is something we can fully expose if we examine some of the main planks of the *Straight Left* platform, outlined both in the 'Woods' pamphlet and elsewhere.

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### 2.1. Proletarian Internationalism

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The 'Woods' pamphlet rightly slams the Party leadership for its inglorious abandonment of internationalism, bewails its often rabid anti-Sovietism, and the fact that there are some "for whom hatred of the Soviet Union and the Party leaderships in Eastern Europe is a ruling passion" (p7). 'Woods' also takes a swipe at comrade Tony Chater, who despite proclaiming the 'autonomy' of the PPPS from the roof tops, flagrantly violated the 1982 AGM resolution on Poland, which called for the *Morning Star* to "expose the role of counter-revolution" (p8).

We must also concur with what we presume to be the veiled attack on the New Communist Party (NCP). 'Woods' declares that:

"There are people who have masked their withdrawal from revolutionary politics by unthinking adulation of the Soviet Union and the substitution of the cult of the Soviet October Revolution for struggle towards the

British Socialist Revolution" (p7).

But wait a minute. Surely *Straight Left* displays exactly the same *essential* world view as that of the NCP. Do they not have the same unthinking, tailist approach towards the Soviet Union and the CPSU? Is it not a fact that *Straight Left* has, on every major international issue to confront communists, automatically adopted the same, exactly the same, view as the NCP? And the reason for this is eminently simple. Both the NCP and *Straight Left* have a line of, on 'principle', taking an unthinking stance all because of their mutual diplomatic internationalism.

Proletarian internationalism is a central idea of Marxism-Leninism, and far from requiring the unthinking tailist approach epitomised by diplomatic internationalism, it demands the development and propagation of the highest level of theory on all major tactical and strategic questions faced by the world's working class, whatever country they are operating in. As such, proletarian internationalism means seeing the struggle in your own country as part of and subordinate to the general fight by the working class on a world scale.

So when it comes to important principles it is the duty of communists, all communists, to honestly and unapologetically state their views openly. We cannot remain true to proletarian internationalism, to our duty as communists, if we avoid thinking, if we have a 'they know the conditions best' approach. No Party, no matter what its prestige is automatically correct.

Stating differences, in the spirit of comradeship, *coram populo*, is diametrically opposed to Euro-communist distancing, which is based on prostration before bourgeois prejudice. Communists worthy of the name deliver and accept criticism in the light of the worldwide and interlinked struggle for revolution. So when we have differences over important matters of principle, when we think a fraternal party is mistaken, we will openly voice our criticisms. This is especially vital if a fraternal party is in the grip of opportunism, the fight against opportunism must not be confined to national boundaries; to suggest such a thing is objectively to foster opportunism, and as such to play into the hands of the bourgeoisie.

We make no apology for our open criticism, our open debate and discussion. We believe that our position is fully in line with the theory and practice of Lenin. In his polemic with communists from Britain over the question of the Labour Party, against those who protested that this was a matter for British communists alone, because they knew the conditions best, Lenin replied:

"The old International used the method of referring such questions for decision to the individual parties in the countries concerned. This was a grave error. *We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another*, but in this case we are dealing with the *principles* underlying a Communist Party's *tactics*. This is very important and, in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist point of view." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.31, p.257; our emphasis)

For us the dissolution of the Communist International did not end proletarian internationalism and its importance to the class struggle. No, far from it. It is also still a necessity to state the communist point of view, it is only the undynamic, conservative, or the downright opportunist who fear debate, who consider it unhealthy. But *Straight Left*, as proved by its entire history, not only considers debate in the communist movement unhealthy, but unshamedly advocates that workers should be sealed into national tombs, have no *right* to criticise fraternal parties (except of course the Italian, Chinese, Spanish, Albanian etc.)



This position is vividly illustrated by *Straight Left's* approach to the Polish crisis. It is of course true that our leadership plumbed the depths of opportunism over the question, but *Straight Left* rejects all criticisms of the current PUWP leadership, just as they rejected all criticism of the Kania and Gierek leaderships. 'Woods' disposes of the St. John Street and Farringdon Road factions' criticisms of events in Poland because it displayed "a certain arrogance and contempt in our treatment of brother parties" (p.8). But it is in truth not "arrogance" let alone "contempt" 'Woods' rejects, it is criticism itself. We can see this when 'Woods' manifests the opposite side of his moronic tailism; that is, provincial national communism. For he innocently protests:

"After all, how would our leadership take it if the over two million strong Polish United Workers Party took time off from trying to solve the problems of Socialism to remonstrate with our 16,000-member Party's failure to achieve it at all?" (p8).

Aunt Sally sophistry about our "failure" to achieve socialism aside, we would wholeheartedly welcome the "intervention" of the comrades in Poland. We would be very interested indeed to hear what they have to say about the state of our Party. We do not consider that this would be a diversion from their fighting to build socialism in Poland, for the struggle for socialism is international; it is ultimately indivisible. And what goes for the PUWP goes for every other fraternal party in the world communist movement. Widening the debate, drawing in general experiences, engaging in polemic, no matter how sharp, can only strengthen those forces seeking to rescue our Party from the opportunist and liquidationist dangers that today threaten its very existence. And surely by saving our Party and strengthening the fight for socialism in Britain, surely this will strengthen the fight for socialism internationally. On the other hand *Straight Left's* national centred communism can only objectively aid the forces of reaction; ironically, despite themselves, not only in Britain, but in Poland, the very country they seek to defend.

Even when it comes to international issues which most directly affect the working class in Britain, areas where our ruling class overtly pursue their imperialist interests, the Straight Leftists still display unthinking tailism.

On Ireland they slavishly tail the leadership of the Communist Party of Ireland (see p9). This is despite the fact that these comrades merely call upon British imperialism to "declare its intention to withdraw" from Ireland, refusing to call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops and presence from Irish soil. Not only that but the leaders of the CPI steadfastly take a hostile position to the forces of national liberation, refusing to take, or even refusing to consider taking, an active part in the armed struggle against British imperialism being waged in the Six Counties. Such is the profound opportunism of the CPI leadership that they have even found it expedient to distance themselves from the ANC in South Africa, in order not to be tainted with the 'odious' terrorist actions of the IRA and INLA. To avoid this they actually questioned whether the ANC's bombing "action in Pretoria" might "have been misguided". (*Unity*, May 28, 1983)

Over the Falklands and the war with Argentina, as with Ireland the Straight Leftists tailed the local party with a 'they know the conditions best' and a 'how would we like it if they criticised us', elevating this cretinous insularity to the level of 'principle', designed to show their commitment to 'proletarian internationalism'

(read: diplomatic internationalism).

For us the only principled position to have taken over the Falklands War was to unshrinkingly call for the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie; to boldly take advantage of any weakness of the ruling class during the crisis and to advance any opportunity for its revolutionary overthrow, constantly propagating the idea of ending war in general through revolution (see article by comrade Bill Cobban in *The Leninist*, No.3).

In contrast to this the Communist Party of Argentina (and automatically *Straight Left*) called for workers to actively support the Argentine fascist junta. As if the Argentine bourgeoisie could play a progressive role today! For with the rise of finance capital and the suppression of the revolutionary situation through the imposition of fascism, the Argentinian ruling class have become definitely reactionary. Should these butchers who have massacred over 30,000 progressives, who are responsible for the 'disappeared', and who have tortured and maimed tens of thousands more, should these fascists be described as "freedom-fighting South Americans"? (p9). We say no. Thirty thousand times no! Instead of this revolting course we must openly criticise our fraternal party in Argentina for its terrible position which unhinderedly allowed the working class to be swept by chauvinist hysteria, thereby diverting the revolutionary wave, and delivering the workers to the 'democratic' bourgeois opposition, especially the Peronists.

Which position stands on the foundations of proletarian internationalism? That of Leninists, who consider the proletarian struggle for socialism and communism indivisible, or that of *Straight Left*, with their slavish diplomacy, their tailism, which can neither understand the world, let alone change it?

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## 2.2. 'Straight Left' and Sectarianism

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Sectarianism is based on a dogmatic outlook which substitutes ready made formulae for the concrete study of living reality. As a result of sectarianism the Party becomes a sect, out of touch with life. An example of this problem manifested itself after the failure of the 1905 revolution in Russia. There were those who refused to countenance taking advantage of the possibilities of legal work, especially the use of elections to the Duma. They demanded that everything be thrown into illegal work, in the 'tradition' of Bolshevism. In the early 'twenties many 'left' communists not only denounced work in elections and the use of the bourgeois parliament, but also called for workers to leave trade unions dominated by reactionaries; in fact they proclaimed an 'uncompromisingly pure communist' approach to all tactical questions.

Now opposed to our orthodox definition of sectarianism, and the classic examples of it given above, *Straight Left* have evolved their own hocus-pocus definition. In their hands not only is communist electoral work denounced as "sectarianism" but in fact it seems that all independent Party work is "sectarian". If you do not believe it, read this from 'Woods':

"If we put out a leaflet about a hospital closure or the need for a nursery and at the bottom of the reverse side it says 'published by... Communist Party, of such and such an address 'membership and other enquiries welcome' that is fair enough.

But if we put out a leaflet which talks enough about council housing repairs or school mergers to catch people's interest, and then presents as the main conclusion an invitation to join the Communist Party, that is sectarianism." (p.10)

Our comrades seem to be striving for all they are worth to muddle the term 'sectarianism' which leads to the Party's isolation from the masses, with the right opportunist and Euro theory and practice of reconciling the working class to capitalism, adapting the working class movement and the Party to the interests of the bourgeoisie. The final result of which is the attempt to liquidate the Party, through transforming it into a purely reformist organisation.

But then for all their self-proclaimed revolutionism, as *Straight Left* has the same essential perspective of reconciling the working class to capitalism, through liquidating the Communist Party into the Labourite swamp, we must expect them to fling accusations of 'sectarianism' like confetti at all and sundry in order to facilitate their perspective.

This charge of 'sectarianism' against the Euros and right opportunists is based on a certain peculiar logic. For *Straight Left* the "Labour Party is our party too" (p.27), because for them it is simply the mass party of the working class. From this false position they 'logically' deduce the following proposition. If the Communist Party has the same political positions as the Labour Party on a whole range of issues, then as they are both working class parties, and as the Labour Party is overwhelmingly larger, and what is more the only serious 'working class' alternative to the Tories, then 'logically' it is 'sectarian' to stand candidates in elections, or perhaps even to exist? For 'Woods' maintains that: "we are at best a ginger group in relation to the Labour Party, at worst a splinter group." (p.12.) And to "justify the existence of a small reformist party (like the Communist Party is becoming —J.M.) you also have to become sectarian." (p.18.) It is with such centrist logic that *Straight Left* reaches its predetermined liquidationist conclusions.

Now, we are only too conscious of the slide of the leadership factions of the Communist Party towards social democracy. We are after all fighting an unrelenting and unyielding tooth and nail struggle against it. But it is one thing to admit the bitter truth that the Party leadership have political positions of increasing similarity to the Labour Party, but another to advocate, because of this, that independent communist activity must be ended. Opposed to *Straight Left's* outlandish and extraordinary 'logic' we insist on independent communist activity, insist that the Party stands independently of the Labourites. Only then can the battle be joined and won on the vital question of ensuring that our Party stands on a principled, uncompromising, revolutionary platform. Surely instead of fighting for the Communist Party not to stand in elections, as *Straight Left* does, we must fight for it to return to standing on a truly communist, truly Leninist, platform.

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## 2.3. State and Revolution?

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The 'Woods' pamphlet is peppered throughout with ever so daring r-r-revolutionary statements. It ridicules the idea that: "Socialism could be achieved at the ballot box over a series of elections" (p.11) and the role of force in

deciding revolution is repeated time and time again (eg. p.28). What is more to conjure up an air of conspiracy we are even treated to a rather banal little homily about the dangers of "people expecting to overthrow the system" using the telephone for "private communications", and to further heighten this atmosphere, to pull the wool over the eyes of those new to revolutionary politics, 'Woods' adds with an affected nod and a wink, that the "details of the tasks of a real revolutionary party are not really suitable for public debate." (p.29)

But these pretentious statements are nothing but the posturings of those who are covering their own rightism. If we scratch away the revolutionary veneer we find 'Woods' defending and advocating opportunism. (It is this combination of revolutionary phrasemongering with the defence of opportunism in practice that leads us to characterise *Straight Left* as centrist.) Let us prove our charge of the Straight Leftists defending opportunism. We can certainly do this if we examine what the 'Woods' pamphlet has to say on Chile:

"The Chilean Communists in the Popular Unity government were revolutionaries. They contested and won elections but they knew that changes of social system are always settled by force. It was for them a decisive question to neutralise the armed forces by political means, to deny the army to the forces of fascist putsch.

"They failed, as revolutionaries often do, but their approach was that of revolutionaries and it came near to success." (p.12;our emphasis.)

This amazing centrist claptrap would be laughable if the results had not been so obviously cataclysmic and tragic. There can be no doubt, at least for those who are capable of examining facts with the slightest degree of objectivity, that our fraternal party in Chile participated in the Popular Unity government, not as revolutionaries, but unmistakably as opportunists who were committed to a programme which bore more than a passing resemblance to the revolting *British Road to Socialism* (see the article on the BRS in *The Leninist* No 4, especially section 7.2). Popular Unity was nothing to do with a revolutionary front, united to overthrow the existing state; no, it was a left-reformist alliance, something the leaders of the CPC sought to broaden through the inclusion of the country's main bourgeois party, the Christian Democrats. The CPC's conception of the road to socialism was utterly reformist, they stood firmly opposed to revolution and civil war and far from believing that changes in social systems are always settled by force, the leadership of the CPC had an almost fanatical, though as it proved, fatal commitment to constitutionalism. Popular Unity with the full backing of the CPC agreed, on the election of Allende as President, never to act unconstitutionally. And later to win the 'co-operation' of army chiefs and in order to court the 'democratic' bourgeoisie, all political agitation in the army was banned, something by its very nature which would always and inevitably favour those very forces plotting a fascist coup. It was for similar opportunist reasons that the Popular Unity government allowed squads of soldiers to terrorise and torture workers and peasants who attempted to arm themselves. And they only released weapons to their own militants as an eleventh hour futile gesture, when Pinochet, that much admired and promoted 'constitutionalist' army officer, was visibly putting the final touches to his plans for a fascist coup. Far from "neutralising" the "armed forces by political means to deny the army to the forces of fascist putsch", as 'Woods' astonishingly claims, the outlook, strategy, and tactics of Popular Unity and the CPC inadvertently laid the basis for that coup.

Chile was in a revolutionary situation and this could

only have been resolved in one of two ways, negatively as it was through the imposition of fascism, or positively through the triumph of the working class, and through the proletarian dictatorship *smashing* bourgeois resistance along with their state machine, including the army and parliament. There was, and could be no middle course — something tragically proved in September 1973 with the blood of Chilean workers.

And in case you think that this example is simply an illustration of their dubious version of internationalism, you would be very wrong. *Straight Left*, for all their revolutionary protestations, strive with might and main to concoct trite short cuts to socialism in Britain. In typical opportunist fashion, such schemes are nothing but back door socialism, through trickery, easy as pie, utopian nonsense. The ruthless exposure of all reformist mis-leaders of the working class, the destruction of their influence over the class, the creation of a mass Communist Party, the smashing of the bourgeois state, and the creation of soviets, are all an anathema to the Straight Leftists. We can see this, and get a glimpse of how their devious little centrist minds work, by looking at the following statements by 'Woods':

"a Socialist majority in parliament... would be very helpful in the process of taking power." (p.11; our emphasis.)

"A revolution may be effected by insurrection, civil war, resistance to foreign intervention or none of these. But it is always effected by force. If the capitalist class has force at its disposal and we have not, there will be no revolution, no Socialism. Either we generate our own forces or we neutralise those of capitalism — or both. Then there may not be a shot fired. But the question of force has always to be answered." (p.28; our emphasis.)

These enigmatic constructions are typical of centrism, in common parlance it is known as attempting to 'have your cake and eat it'. On the one hand the question of force is boldly bellowed out, but in order not to commit themselves to an uncompromisingly revolutionary line, which must lead to criticism of fraternal parties and what is more to unremitting struggle against Labourism, the Straight Leftists stealthily 'balance' their 'revolutionary' formulations in order to let themselves off the hook.

Thus we have revolution *not* being "effected by insurrection, civil war, resistance, to foreign intervention" but through some unstated something else. Thus we have the *possibility* of revolution through *neutralising* the capitalist armed forces *without* arming the proletariat. (This no doubt being why the Straight Leftist comrade Nick Wright advocated "community policing" and a "left wing law and order policy" at the last London District Party Congress). It is on the basis of these rather gaudy escape clauses, that these 'revolutionaries' can look towards "a Socialist majority in Parliament."

What sort of 'socialist' majority they are talking about they do not say. Could it be like Mitterand's or maybe the 'socialist' governments in Greece, Spain and Sweden fit the bill? Or even the last Labour Wilson/Callaghan government? If they do it would hardly be out of character. For *Straight Left* is *totally committed* to strengthening the bourgeois party of the working class, the Labour Party, and rescuing it from its present difficulties.

Surprised? Well do not be. Underneath their revolutionism, their 'pro-Sovietism', they have the same essential view of how to win socialism in Britain as the right opportunists and the Eurocommunists, for they are all loyal to one version or another of the parliamentary road, pigs may fly, *British Road to Socialism*.

This is clearly indicated in the 'Woods' pamphlet,

which states unashamedly that the 1967 "new draft of the *British Road to Socialism*" abandoned "the revolutionary positions of earlier versions on many vital issues." (p.17) For 'Woods' and the Straight Leftists it was only with the emergence of the Gollan leadership that the Party "slipped rapidly into opportunism — reformism in politics, economism in industry." (p.18) But was there any essential difference between the 1951, 1952 and 1958 editions of the *BRS* and the 1968 and 1978 editions? The answer to this must be a definitive NO! If the 1968 edition of the *BRS* was revisionist, there can be no doubt that the earlier versions were likewise revisionist.

For all the feigned revulsion from 'Woods' about the 1967 draft (ie the draft for the 1968 edition) "abandoning the revolutionary positions of earlier versions on many vital issues" any objective observer, let alone a committed Marxist-Leninist, reading *all* versions of the *BRS*, must come to the conclusion that there has been an uninterrupted path traversed from the 1951 *BRS* to the present version. All have *exactly the same approach to central questions* such as the state, parliament, and democracy. All deny the need for smashing the bourgeois state and replacing it with new proletarian forms, such as soviets. All deny the need for revolution. For all drafts, all editions, are based on reformism, and a dewy eyed commitment to parliamentary democracy.

The reason that 'Woods' and his Straight Leftist comrades refuse to recognise these self-evident truths, is because this political trend not only sees its origins in the Harry Pollitt tradition, but openly lionises him, as witnessed by 'Woods' praising his leadership as "Leninist" (p.18). As it was the Pollitt leadership that was both the parent and midwife of the *BRS*, 'Woods' must deny the manifest reformism of the 1951 and 1952 editions. Not to do so would not only mean having to admit that the Pollitt leadership was the antecedent of the current revisionist *BRS* but also of today's McLennan Euro leadership. What is more and perhaps of far greater importance, it would create difficulties for *Straight Left's* advocacy of their own centrist version of the reformist road to socialism.

What makes the *Straight Left* reformism different from the current Euro *BRS* is firstly its revolutionary veneer, and secondly its even greater prostration before the bourgeois workers party, the Labour Party. These two strands have been united to form a strategic perspective of tailing the Labour Party and dissolving the Communist Party into it, while monstrously claiming that this liquidationism is based on Lenin. It is of course true that Lenin advocated that the young Communist Party in Britain should apply to affiliate to the Labour Party, but this was a united front tactic, designed to *expose and defeat* the reformist mis-leaders of the working class. In the dishonest hands of the Straight Leftists this tactic has been transformed into a 'principle' of becoming part of the Labour Party, which 'Woods' tell us is "the mass parliamentary expression of the working class movement... a class-based party, based on the class to which we give our loyalty." (pp.26, 27).

This opportunist definition of the Labour Party is not only erroneous, it is downright dangerous, and certainly diametrically opposite to the definition of the party advanced by Lenin himself (a definition accepted by all genuine Marxist-Leninists).

"... The Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.31, p.258)

Lenin not only disagreed with such definitions of the Labour Party as advanced by *Straight Left*, but the view expressed by 'Woods' that: "Unfortunately we have been kept out of affiliation, and driven out of other forms of membership..." and our "exclusion has probably contributed to the development of a sectarian ghetto mentality in our Party." (p.26) Opposed to this sort of awful pessimism, Lenin argued that yes, "the best revolutionary elements" must do their utmost to remain in the Labour Party (the *BSP* was affiliated to the Labour Party) because it enabled them to develop close contacts with the party's "four million members" but he defiantly added: "Let the Thomases and other social-traitors, whom you have called by that name, expel you. That will have an excellent effect upon the mass of the British workers." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.31, p.261)

We have quoted Lenin, not simply to prove that *Straight Left's* 'Leninist' orthodoxy is counterfeit, but to contrast Lenin's tactical use of the united front, with *Straight Left's* Bent Rightism. For by pervertedly elevating a tactic to the level of a principle, they have created a Frankenstein monster, which threatens to destroy our Communist Party. Like Lenin, we consider the question of the Communist Party applying to affiliate to the Labour Party a tactic and nothing more. But most importantly we also consider that under today's conditions, when liquidationism threatens from all sides, that the use of the tactic would be extremely ill advised. Even if the workers' movement was in a state of fluidity, with the present state of the Party, far from increasing our contact with the mass of workers, it could only lead to the communists being dissolved into the social democratic sea. Of course we do not reject the tactic out of hand, we must consider all revolutionary tactics, but this or that tactic being employed is a matter determined in the light of the state of the Party, the class struggle, our programme and strategy; no tactic should be considered an aim in itself.

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### 3. The 'Phoney War' and the Hypocrisy of Straight Leftism

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For 'Woods' the factional battle that raged around the *Morning Star* was something to bemoan and bewail, for it "marks the lowest point yet in the downhill path towards political obscurity for our Party". Not only is the open split between the leadership factions apparently unhealthy, but cretinously the split is lightheartedly dismissed as a "phoney war" (p.18), as no more than two rival "opportunist groups" falling out (p.20). Nowhere is there a serious attempt to openly and clearly outline a perspective for the struggle in order to raise the level of debate and ensure that the outcome is positive. No, all we get is Straight Leftist holier than thouism.

We consider, as does 'Woods', that comrades Chater and Costello's rebellion was based on an opportunist outlook, and it is certainly correct to point out that comrade Costello, was until very "recently an undissenting member" of the "present leadership". (p.19) And we, this time unlike *Straight Left* and front man 'Woods', have from the very beginning warned of the overt liquidationist dangers emanating from the Farringdon Road faction. And that their rebellion was based on the most narrow personal and factional considerations. But this said, their rebellion can,

Pandora like, unleash a hornets' nest of ideas, can set in motion previously somnolent forces, can shake the opportunist tradition and edifice of the Party to its very foundations.

What is more, whether we like it or not (and we certainly do not), the mainstream non-Straight Leftist centrist forces in the Party have fallen in behind the Chater-Costello faction like sheep following the Judas goat. Because of this, because the Chater-Costello faction, for all its undoubted right opportunism, is in flux, we openly offered them our support on the following conditions:

1. **The *Morning Star* should be open to all pro-Party groups and tendencies. It should become an anti-opportunist, pro-Party paper opposed to all forms of liquidationism.**

2. **It must oppose anti-Sovietism and counter-revolution, especially in Poland and Afghanistan, where it is such a great danger. It must adopt a position which, although critical of mistakes, is fundamentally based on unconditional defence of all socialist countries.**

3. **It should commit itself to fighting any hint of tailism towards Labourism.**

4. **It should become a weapon to overthrow the present unhealthy Party regime, seek to replace it with one based on: unity in action, open ideological debate, and proportional representation of all pro-Party forces in Party publications, on leading committees, and at congresses. In other words, genuine democratic centralism (See *The Leninist* No 5.)**

Our offer was a genuine one, motivated by the necessity of openly posing tasks for those presenting themselves as a 'left' alternative to the McLennan leadership. Of equal importance was the need to counterpose a principled position based on pro-Partyism, to the unconditional support offered by so many centrists. Such an approach was designed to lay the basis for a future pro-Party bloc, for it was only by intervening in the real struggle raging in the Party that its foundations could be laid, and opportunism be exposed in practice.

Now while the tendency around *The Leninist* is in its infancy, that around *Straight Left* has a well developed factional organisation, deep roots in the Party structure, especially at a district and borough level, and an experienced command structure, with a relatively politically docile rank and file. Our intervention in the Party debate was of course limited mainly to propaganda, something determined both by our present limited size and influence, and by the fact that for us the struggle for a genuine Communist Party is still at a primeval stage. On the other hand *Straight Left's* position has in essence been a pox on both your houses, refusing even to openly pose tasks for the Chater-Costello faction and those following it\*. This, given their history, is a clear and unmistakable indication of the depth of the crisis affecting *Straight Left* itself.

After his initial "shall I, shan't I" dithering comrade Fergus Nicholson refused to join Sid French in the formation of the New Communist Party in 1977 (no doubt influenced by diplomatic consultation). The split left comrade Nicholson as the most important and prestigious oppositionist. With his already well oiled factional organisation and his swift launching of the 'Against the Split-Against the Draft' line, he soon

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\*Though despite their vehement denunciations of comrade Costello, in the pre-Congress discussion, in the 'Woods' pamphlet, and at Congress, it is rumoured that *Straight Left's* leadership approached him privately, but despite offering some sort of 50:50 deal, they were told, or so we are informed, to "fuck off".

established more or less undisputed hegemony over the remaining centrist opposition. Up to 1979 comrade Nicholson pursued a policy of supporting the McLennan leadership 'against the Eurocommunists'. Through this support it was thought that the Euros would be isolated and destroyed. As we know this course only produced negative results. McLennan continued his drift to the right and the leadership *as a whole* came out with one anti-Soviet and anti-Marxist position after another. As a result of the patent failure of backing McLennan it was decided to alter course, and support was replaced with fierce opposition.

But this about turn also allowed comrade Nicholson's congenital liquidationism to sprout its malevolent claws and spread its dark funereal wings. 1979 saw the lack-lustre launch of *Straight Left* and Straight Leftism. Despite apologetic promises it has continued its well trod incoherent recipe of uninspiring lifts from *Norosti* and *Orbis*, and unthinking tailing of the 'official' line, whether from Congress House, the Kremlin, or Walworth Road. And while *Straight Left's* leading writer has hoped to enhance the importance of his mundane musings by taking a name that would be associated in his loyalists' minds with the greats of communism, 'Harry Steel' (Harry from Pollitt, and Steel from Stalin, the 'man of steel') and other writers have assiduously avoided openly and clearly voicing opinions about the growing crisis in the Communist Party itself. Instead they pretend to be, of all things, a product of the 'broad labour movement'. But their real sin has been their desire for the Communist Party to share their penchant for the Labour Party, to share their Labourphilia, to even liquidate the Party as a token of faith in Labourism.

Not finding a ready response to their perspective, instead finding their hegemony over the left of the Party slipping away, it seems that the Straight Leftists developed a policy of themselves building links in the 'broad movement'. This was decided upon both to increase their 'bargaining power' inside the Communist Party, and to create the conditions from which they could if they so wished easily step from the 'played out' Communist Party into, for them, the greener pastures of the Labour Party.

In our view, their liquidationism is enough to damn *Straight Left* to the everlasting fires of hell. But surely even the three judges of Hades could never come up with a fitting punishment for their other crimes. Not content with what they saw as the 'inevitable' decline of the Communist Party taking its course, the Straight Leftists were instructed by their leadership to give history a helping hand. In the YCL the *Young Workers Bulletin* was callously scuttled, despite, or maybe because, it was in the hands of forces opposed to the Euro leadership. Most activists organised by *Straight Left* (those old enough to be in the Party) left the League, while those who stayed were instructed to adopt a go-it-alone, isolationist, Straight Leftism in one branch, regime. They were encouraged to refuse to take national YCL propaganda, let alone *Challenge*. In the Party itself, selling the *Morning Star* was downgraded until commitment to it was nothing more than formal, and communist participation in local and national elections was not only opposed but actively boycotted in favour of working for the Labour Party.

It is because of this despicable record that we must take the pro-Party protestations of comrade 'Woods' with a large communist pinch of salt. Straight Leftism is a foul ideological position, liquidationist to its rotten core. It must be actively fought and destroyed, for it has no genuine concern for the fate of the Party, it unquestionably only considers its own narrow factional

interests.

While 'Woods' rightly observes that the Party leadership "has retained the vestiges of democratic centralism not to wage class struggle, but to persecute critics." (p.20), he hypocritically declares that there "should be no room for disunity" amongst the anti-opportunist forces. Hypocritically, because the Straight Leftists are just as enthusiastic about using 'democratic centralism' to persecute critics as the Euros. On the YCL General Council they fully and effusively backed moves against the growing influence of *The Leninist*, and not being content to monstrosly brand *The Leninist* as an "anti-League, anti-Party publication", as Euro General Secretary, Tom Bell epigone, and bumbling Santiago Carrillo like aspiring destroyer of the YCL, comrade Doug Chalmers had proposed; they successfully moved that support for *The Leninist* be a disciplinary issue.

So much for their desire for unity against Euro-communism!

So much for their condemnation of the use of 'democratic centralism' to persecute critics!

Is it not a tragedy that at the last meeting of the YCL General Council before the historic 38th Party Congress, these 'anti-opportunist' preferred to persecute Leninists *rather than* fight to overthrow the Eurocommunist YCL leadership, which was increasingly vulnerable? *Instead* of helping to make an invaluable contribution to the anti-opportunist struggle at the forthcoming Party Congress by overthrowing the corrupt leadership of comrade Chalmers, they chose to fight Leninism, to let comrade Chalmers off the hook, to let him fight another day.

But then considering that comrade Chalmers and the Euro leadership had engaged in secret negotiations with leading YCL Straight Leftists before the April '83 YCL Congress on the 're-introduction' of 'democratic centralism' (in order that Chalmers might, or so he said, persecute the ultra-feminist, ultra-loony Eurocommunist wing in the YCL); considering the Straight Leftists proclaimed its 're-introduction' a great victory, their handing comrade Chalmers a stick to beat Leninists should surprise no one.

Their anti-Leninist record in the Party itself is equally revolting. They have taken *the lead* in attempting to exclude applicants to the Party whom they suspect of sympathising with Leninism, all the while throwing the facile accusation that Leninists are 'factionalists' and horror of horrors, want to deepen the differences in the Party between reformism and revolutionism.

This hand in glove Straight Leftist/Eurocommunist cooperation is more than coincidental. Both are liquidationist. Both live in an almost pathological fear of the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism espoused by *The Leninist*. Thus in the face of the principled ideological criticism offered by *The Leninist* they both instinctively reach for the weapon they understand, threats of expulsion and exclusion.

Straight Leftism and Eurocommunism have run out of ideas. The pressure of the growing crisis of capitalism and the demanding conditions of the 'eighties have left Straight Leftism and Eurocommunism equally bankrupt: politically, morally, and intellectually. They are now equally anti-Party, equally fearful of entering into open ideological debate.

The fact that the Straight Leftists have published the 'Woods' pamphlet not only exposes their bankruptcy but illustrates in sharp relief the pressure that is building up in the Party for open ideological debate, for ideological honesty, and for ideological clarity. Something not fought for, or welcomed, by the Straight Leftists, but something that has imposed itself on them, as it will be imposed on all trends and shades at present operating below the surface in the Party. ■

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# Books Received

**Tariq Ali**, *Can Pakistan Survive?*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1983, pbk. pp.237, £2.95

**T. Barry, B. Wood and D. Preusch**, *Dollars and Dictators*, Zed, London 1982, pbk. pp.263, £4.95

**James P. Brady**, *Justice and Politics in People's China*, Academic Press, London 1982, hbk. pp.268, £17.80

**C.K. Chase-Dunn (Ed)**, *Socialist States in the World System*, Sage, Beverly Hills 1982, pbk. pp.304

**Cynthia Cockburn**, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.264, £5.95

**Communist Labour Party of the United States of North America**, *Rally Comrades*, Chicago 1983

**Charles Elwell**, *Tracts Beyond the Times*, Social Affairs Unit, London 1983, pbk. pp.32

**H. Erdal** *Discussions in the CPT 1981-1982, Documents*, İşçinin Sesi Publications, 1983, pbk. pp.90 £1.00

**Michael Farrell**, *Arming the Protestants*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.374, £7.95

**Neil Harding (Ed)**, *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879-1906*, Cambridge, Cambridge 1983, hbk. pp.414, £27.00

**Chris Harman**, *Class Struggles in Eastern Europe 1945-83*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.339 £6.95

**Paul Harrison**, *Inside the Inner City*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1983, pbk. pp.443, £3.95

**Barry Hindess**, *Parliamentary Democracy and Socialist Politics*, RKP, London 1983, pbk. pp. 160, £4.95

**International Leninist Workers Party**, *Lenin's Arguments for a Strong Socialist State against Trotsky's 'Permanent' Counter-Revolution*, ILWP, London, pbk. pp.20

**Le Communiste**, *Le Communiste*, Nos 305-9, Paris, 3F

**Ramy Nima**, *The Wrath of Allah*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.170, £3.95

**Anne Philips**, *Hidden Hands: Women and Economic Politics*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.116, £2.50

**Eric Preston**, *Labour in Crisis*, ILP Publications, Leeds 1983, pp.98

**Ernie Roberts, Chris Smith, and Jeremy Corbyn**, *Human Rights in Turkey*, Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey, London 1983, pbk. pp.32

**E. Rosenhaft**, *Beating the Fascists*, Cambridge, Cambridge 1983, hbk. pp.276, £24.00

**Jack and Ray Simons**, *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*, International Defence and Aid Fund, London 1983, pbk. pp.702, £5.00

**Dan and Ron Smith**, *The Economics of Militarism*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.126, £2.95

**S.A. Smith**, *Red Petrograd*, Cambridge, Cambridge 1983, hbk. pp.347, £25

**South African Communist Party**, *The African Communist*, No.95, Inkululeko Publications 1983, pbk. pp.112

**Bob Sutcliffe**, *Hard Times*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.118, £2.50

**Ernie Trory**, *Poland in the Second World War*, Crabtree, Hove 1983, pbk. pp.120, £2.00

**Margaret Ward**, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.296, £5.95

**Elizabeth Wilson**, *What is to be Done About Violence Against Women?*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1983, pbk. pp.265, £2.50

**Ann M. Wolpe and James Donald**, *Is there anyone here from Education?* Pluto Press, London 1983, pbk. pp.165, £2.95

# LETTERS

## Channel Four

Dear Mr Marshall,

You may be aware that Channel 4's "A Week in Politics" is preparing a report on the direction in which the Communist Party is likely to develop after its Congress in November. We were interested to read your analysis in the September edition of *The Leninist* on what has been happening within the Party. I wonder if you might be good enough to make contact with me at the above number to have a background and off the record conversation about issues. With thanks.

Yours sincerely  
Nigel Duckers

'A Week in Politics'

*Roger Freeman* replies:

(Copies of Channel 4's letter plus our reply have been sent in the form of an appeal not to cooperate with Mr Duckers' programme to: *Marxism Today*, *Focus*, *Morning Star*, and *Straight Left*.)

While *The Leninist* is firmly committed to open ideological struggle, we are completely opposed to cosy "off the record" chats with representatives of the class enemy's media. The place for communists to air their differences is in the columns of the Party press. The fact that the opportunist leadership factions have barred us from them, or limited contributions to a farcically short length is the reason we have been forced to publish independently. The publication of *The Leninist* represents the disciplined rebellion of communists against opportunism and bureaucratic centralism, our aim being nothing less than the complete defeat of all forms of opportunism in our ranks as the vital precondition for the decisive battle with the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie's media is utterly vile, corrupt, money grubbing and gutter scraping; utterly anti-Soviet, anti-working class and anti-communist. In principle communists might be justified in attempting to use the class enemy's media, as communists can use parliament; use it as a platform to advocate revolution and the destruction of the bourgeois order. But in the concrete conditions existing in our

Party today — the domination of the leadership by opportunist factions, the operation of bureaucratic centralism, the closing off of internal channels of debate — it would be incorrect to air our differences on a terrain determined and controlled by our enemies. Who would be using who? We think the inevitable result of *A Week in Politics* report on the Communist Party could only be the weakening of our Party; that is after all why it is being produced. Because of this we not only point blank refuse Mr Nigel Duckers' offer of an "off the record conversation" but sincerely call upon all factions of the Party to boycott this programme. Those who cooperate with Mr Duckers cooperate with the class enemy in their plans to finally snuff out our Party.

Comrades, let us not conduct our ideological and political battles through the bourgeois media. No, instead let us open up the closed factional journals to full, extensive, honest, and open communist debate. Let us open up *Marxism Today*, the *Morning Star*, *Focus*, and *Straight Left*! In the meantime *The Leninist* remains open to all communists and closed to all reactionaries, whether they are chief constables, vicars, pop stars, university professors, or mere TV producers.

## Women's Conference

Dear Comrades,

The Third National Party Women's Conference was held in London on October 1-2. The weekend meeting was attended by thirty five delegates and six visitors, representing most of the Party's district organisations. The agenda was centred on two issues: Women and Peace, and Tory Family Policy.

The political outlook of the main speakers in a sense reflected the political divisions in the Party as a whole. On the one side the petty bourgeois radicals, the Eurocommunists, here represented by comrades Ann Sedley, Jean Coussins and *Marxism Today's* doyen feminist Sally Davison. And in 'opposition' the non-feminists, Mary McIntosh and Jean Turner.

The most glaring fact that came from the conference was the sad truth that at present no force in the Party has developed a position on women based on the

ideological clarity provided by the founders of scientific socialism, Marx, Engels, and Lenin. This failure was embarrassingly and sharply revealed on all issues, on all fronts.

Probably one of the most interesting illustrations of the sad state of the Party on the women question was epitomised by comrade Sally Davison, who naively began her turgid speech to the conference with an assured, "I can take it that we're all feminists here"! Fortunately many replied in the negative, this sent heads spinning in search of the culprits.

I think this whole question of Communist Party women identifying themselves as feminists as if this should be automatic must be ended, unless we do so there can be no hope of the Party developing a communist policy for and on women. Surely if we continue to adhere to the reactionary ideology of feminism our Party will continue its organisational and ideological decay. Essentially there is no difference between the 'sisterhood' espoused by the feminists and the slogan 'all men are brothers'. Marx and Engels quickly exposed the futility of such sloganising as they were unable to distinguish between the workers and the bourgeoisie, thus it concealed the class reality of society. The 'good Christian' slogan which the workers of the early 1840's voiced, encouraged them to tail behind the republican bourgeoisie, already showing the unmistakable signs of discarding its revolutionary claims for the mantle of reaction. Because of this the Communist League unanimously adopted as their slogan 'Workers of all Countries Unite!' and Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*.

If we look at the term 'feminist' in the light of experience we must reach the obvious conclusion that it too is devoid of class content, or more accurately it sows illusions in the ranks of working class women that they have identical or broadly similar interests to those of their middle class and bourgeois 'sisters'. The original feminists were middle class radicals, who wanted liberation for themselves not the working class. This was vividly proved by the split in the suffragette movement during the first imperialist world war, the feminists fell in line to support their class, and violently opposed those women who denounced the war, especially those who rejected pacifism and became communist revolutionaries, such as Sylvia Pankhurst.

Today's use of the term 'socialist feminist' might appear on the surface an attempt to have your cake and eat it, but it is not simply an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable for it, like all brands of feminism, can only lead to the subordination of working class women (who have exactly the same long term interests as the rest of their class, ie communism) to their bourgeois 'sisters'.

I believe that it is vital that the Communist Party breaks with feminism, declare themselves in favour of real women's liberation — something which can only be realised through working class unity and the triumph of communism. This is something *The Leninist* is sure to have a great role to play in.

I send you my comradely greetings.

Yours,

Sarah Halverson

Stockport

## 'Straight Left' danger

Dear comrades,

I feel that I must write to you concerning the 'hard left' of our Party, otherwise known as *Straight Left*. Of all the petty-bourgeois trends that exist in our Party *Straight Left* must surely be one of the most deceptive. Whilst adopting a posture as 'the hard left' and the 'Marxist-Leninist Pro-Soviet' wing of our Party they are in reality nothing more than a 'Pro-Soviet' aberration of Eurocommunism. The reason I say this is related to the political content of *Straight Left*. This turgid and unbelievably conservative 'broad left' newsheet reads like the standard issue regular TUC 'appeal to commonsense' which begs the *ruthless* capitalist state to 'ease up' on cutting pensions, etc. What sort of 'hard line' comrades make demands like 'freeze nuclear arms' (why shouldn't workers expropriate and develop them further in the fight against imperialism). What sort of 'hard line' comrades call for banning plastic bullets in the Six Counties (kill them with real ones?). Yes, *Straight Left*, who instead of agitating on a principled Marxist-Leninist basis, opt for politics which show all the classic signs of typical weak and vacillating social democrats, who when faced with open conflict with the bourgeois state would only appeal to their *commonsense*.

When the various trends in our Party battle for hegemony there is one surety, and that is that *Straight Left* (Senile Right) will line up *four square* with the most abhorrent Eurocommunist, *anti-Soviet* trends in the Party. It only stands to reason because the Straight Leftists, like their orthodox Eurocommunist friends, share common aims: the destruction of the Party, subservience to petty-bourgeois politics like CND, feminism, and so on. *Straight Left* has a common train of thought with the Euros which is alien to Marxism-Leninism, and it is a train of thought that *unites them with opportunism* in order to do battle *against* Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

The Straight Leftists along with the orthodox Eurocommunists *must* be exposed for what they are: anti-Party revisionists who, given free rein, will destroy the CPGB.

Having said that, an appeal *must* also be made to the *Straight Left* rank and file, calling upon them to seriously consider

whether the Party can go forward with the publication of a journal advising us to give up our independent organisation for the mish mash of anti-Soviet, anti-working class Labourism. Making an appeal to them myself as a grass roots Party member I would say: 'Comrades, build the Party, fight Eurocommunism, and above all fight for revolution.' For it is not the rank and file individuals who support *Straight Left* who are deadly (many of whom believe they are acting as good communists) but the ideology of Straight Leftism.

Martin Laing

Birmingham

## Delegation on Ireland

Dear comrades,

Most Party members will be aware of the recent London District delegation to the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, many of the delegates had precious little knowledge of Irish affairs — no doubt the reason that they were so easily led by their noses by the tour organisers.

A delegation of this kind would be positive if it deepened understanding and commitment to anti-imperialist solidarity but our delegation failed in this. I do not think one would be far off the mark to suggest that the whole delegation was staged in order to divert calls from the Party to *do something* about Ireland.

One of the most disturbing features of the delegation was its 'neutrality' on the national liberation war. The delegates were even treated to a meeting with the fascist orientated UDA which is responsible for hundreds of sectarian murders. Their main spokesman, Andy Tyrrie, adopted the rhetoric of a Brownshirt, and lamented the appalling conditions suffered by the Loyalist working class. I have even heard that some naive delegates took his workerist protestations hook, line and sinker. But British imperialism has no illusions in him, for such is the threat Tyrrie poses to imperialism that when on the evidence of a 'super grass' he was charged with possessing a gun — he was granted bail!

Would comrades propose talks with a Webster or a Tyndall on saving jobs? Should we debate with those who terrorize the black population in Britain? Surely not. Then why have discussions with representatives of an organisation which actively assists imperialism by terrorizing the republican population? Are we to believe that the delegation organizers were unaware of the UDA's bloody history and of its links with British fascists? The fact that there was no open rebellion against this meeting with the UDA from the delegates is a clear indication of the depth of the problem we have in our Party on the Irish question.

It would be worthwhile, given the UDA

meeting, to note those organisations the delegation *did not* meet. Most notable was the Workers Party, those apologists for imperialism, who however still receive strong support from the Euro section of our Party. The IRSP was another organisation not on the itinerary; apparently they are considered too 'far out', too 'extreme' for our comrades to bother meeting them. But the IRSP and the INLA are a significant force in the national liberation movement, with a proud and noble record of anti-imperialist actions. So what really lies behind the refusal to meet them? Could it be their socialist ideology, their emphasis on the necessity for a socialist Ireland, their success in winning council seats and wide popular support from sections of the republican population?

Many delegates returned to Britain full of stories of how good CPI members were, how hard working. Now, I would not argue about the dedication of our CPI comrades, but we must question their political line, and certainly note the tiny size of the CPI. According to them they have no functioning branches in Derry, and only one in Belfast. On the political line of the CPI, some of the delegates returned in blissful ignorance of the revisionism espoused by many of the leaders of the Northern Committee of the CPI who even have their own version of the Euro Broad Democratic Alliance. Not unlike our Euros proposal for an anti-Thatcher government based on the non-Thatcherite Tories, the Labourites, and the SDP/Liberals, they have wet dreams of uniting with the rump Workers Party, and the unionist Alliance Party. Some of the Northern Committee have even accused the Dublin leadership of being not a little sympathetic towards the Provisionals. In fact, an unfortunate fact but still a fact, their record most notably during the Hunger Strike totally belies this, and the Nicky Kelly campaign did not even draw any active participation of the CPI.

Unfortunately our delegation returned spouting all the old worn out 'bread and butter' solutions to the Irish question. But fortunately there is a growing tendency in the Party in which I number myself, that looks to working class unity in Ireland through revolutionary struggle; looks to the experience of Connolly and Larkin; looks to the Irish workers solving the national question through their own struggle embracing the anti-imperialist struggle; and looks towards marching with our Irish comrades to the socialist future and the era of close cooperation between our two peoples.

Yours fraternally,

Alex Brown

North London

## Now for the remedy

Dear comrades,

Having read all five copies of *The Leninist*,



its complete adherence to scientific Marxism-Leninism and its courageous decision to take up the battle against Eurocommunism, centrism, Menshevism, and revisionism in general has greatly inspired me. This and the thought of what the Party and its youth organisation is like and what it should be like has prompted me to put pen to paper.

I have been in the Party since November 1979 and the Young Communist League since May 1980; in the course of that time the 'enthusiasm' of my branch of the CP has not quite impressed me. When I first joined the CP no one, not even my branch secretary, came around to see me. I was not made aware of meetings. I later found out my particular branch of the Party was 'rather inactive' (non-existent as far as I could make out).

What, comrades, is this sort of situation going to do for new members of the revolutionary Party, for this situation I later found out was not confined to... branch but was widespread? Will young (or indeed old) militants take us seriously if such a situation continues? I certainly think not. But as all scientific Marxist-Leninists know, the organisational crisis that is presently gripping the Party with vice like ferocity is but a *symptom of the ideological chaos* prevalent in the Party/League. When one considers the hotch-potch of opportunist ideas presently running amok, the many petty-bourgeois, middle class, and anti-working class elements who are at present peddling their poisonous claptrap, through what should be publications continuing the traditions of Lenin and the Bolshevik RSDLP; genuine communists are duty bound to rebel.

What are these middle class trendy, part time hippies, hawking around the Party? To start with we have the revolting influence of CND, diverting the revolutionary potential that certainly exists in the Party/League, diverting us into finding better non-nuclear defences for the poor little colony of Great Britain (quietly 'forgetting' Britain did not use nuclear weapons in Cyprus, Aden, Malaya, or more recently in the Falklands/Malvinas, or at present in Ireland). What a load of nonsense CND and its supporters who at present infest our Party preach. In truth they divert all those people who desperately want peace; real peace, not periods of 'stability' from the task of crushing capitalism before it launches Armageddon.

Everything in the Party/League must be judged on the basis of scientific Marxist-Leninist ideology. From that fulcrum ideas such as feminism, autonomous gay movements, community politics, etc must be flung out of the Party. Take the 'socialist' feminists; do they really believe working class men are to blame for women's exploitation? Do working class men own and control the porn empires? Obviously not. *Capitalist society* itself is the root cause of women's exploitation, not men.

Enough of problems though. Now for the remedy. The main points I would make in the dialogue concerning the rebuilding of the Party are:

1) The Party and all its members must study the *BRS* carefully and ask themselves: does it really correspond to the theory and practice of Marx, Engels, and

Lenin? I personally think not. But it would not be out of place for the more radical elements of the Young Liberals to make it their own. I say reject it now, reject class collaboration!

2) All members must ensure the Party at least has its own propaganda organ, not like the *Morning Star*, but a real pro-Party, anti-opportunist paper.

3) And lastly, but certainly not least, the Party/League must encourage *new* members, bring them into the Party on the basis of their revolutionism, encourage their Marxist-Leninist education as a *top priority* with the organising of real Marxist-Leninist classes, thus strengthening the basis of revolutionary iron discipline.

These anyway, comrades, are the remedies I believe are needed in the Party. I look forward to your opinions and comments.

Yours in comradeship  
Barry Wood

Scotland.

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## Glen Again

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Dear *The Leninist*,

I bought my second copy of *The Leninist* recently upon being verbally told that you were going to reply to my recent letter. I must say that I do not agree with scarcely a word of the reply.

Since you challenge me to elucidate some points, I shall attempt to do so but I must say that I see the journal still as that of a faction with supporters outside the Communist Party.

The Labour Party is distinctly different in that it has the majority of the organised working class affiliated to it. No other European Social Democratic party has such a structure. It is different from the PSOE, PASOK and the SDP of West Germany. The possibility exists, far more than elsewhere, of revolutionaries changing Labour Party policy through work in the Trade Unions. It has happened and no doubt will happen again. We need to struggle for Communists to be representatives of their Trade Unions at Labour Party conferences as a further democratic and progressive step.

The structure of the Labour Party is a particular national circumstance of which I spoke in my previous letter. Not the loyalty of the army to Parliament or the role of Parliament. I have never doubted the possible role of the army or the bloody role of the ruling class.

*Pravda* called the *BRS* of 1951 "a creative development of Marxism-Leninism" because it was. It was a creative application of Marxist theory to British conditions. As I said, one must do this whilst recognising inescapable laws. It recognised that the working class could assume a governmental majority. You will scarcely get people to fight for you if they will not vote for you.

Then of course the struggle begins for state power. This is different story. It is indeed a nasty business. It cannot be predicted exactly what would happen but it is certain that victory can only be attained by maintaining the maximum possible unity.

"The working class simply cannot lay hold of the existing state machine and use it for its own purposes" I believe is a quotation from Marx or Engels. I agree. What difference is there if the working class dismantles the old state machinery from a position of government. You appear to be selective in your quotations or perhaps you have a poor memory.

I am not going to discuss your categorisation of so-called Party groups. You know that Party members should not do so. You again categorise me. You have no foundation to say that I am an ex-supporter of anyone. I am a member of no faction. If I were I think you would be the last I would embrace.

Your letter to Tony Chater is laughable. How can you expect him to take it seriously? You are leading people into the wilderness but I hope those who have followed see the error of their ways.

You talk of centrism in the World Communist Movement. Obviously you are under the influence of the leftist split from the TCP. This centrism looks pretty successful to me.

We won the battle against sectarianism in 1933 and are not going to lose it again now. I repeat: devote your energies to more worthwhile tasks.

Yours fraternally,

G. Baker

Hackney, London

*Michael McGeehan* replies

This is Comrade Baker's second letter to what he terms a factional journal. It manifests classic centrist confusion and contradictions. But so does his contribution to the pre-Congress discussion in that factional publication (for no debate or substantial airing of differences is normally allowed), *Focus*. We consider it also appropriate to comment on this contribution. But before dealing with the main political points, we will try to clear up a few small points he raises.

Firstly, all our supporters are card-carrying members of the Communist Party of Great Britain except those who have been *prevented* from joining by an opportunist leadership.

Secondly, we strive to lead revolutionaries into the revolutionary Party, the Communist Party, not 'into the wilderness'; we are fighting for the Leninist heritage of our Party and against its present headlong slide into 'the wilderness'.

Thirdly, the 'TCP'. We assume he refers to the CPT (Communist Party of Turkey). Yes, we are influenced by the Leninist wing of the CPT, which we recognise as a truly Bolshevik organisation. We are particularly impressed by their publications dealing with problems of the revolu-

tionary movement in Turkey and central questions facing the world communist movement.

Fourthly, his proud boast of being "a member of no faction". We are quite prepared to believe you. However, perhaps one or two comrades, having known you for a number of years, are aware of your past factional record. Your holier-than-thou attitude is not a little hard to swallow.

But to the meat of the matter and let us take the Party first. Comrade Baker states that Party members should not discuss our "categorisation of so-called Party groups". Why on earth not? No Party rule exists which prohibits members from discussing such issues, and Lenin was always in favour of 'categorisation of Party groups'. As a matter of fact, many Party activists have done precisely that in recent pre-Congress editions of *Focus*, including a certain Glen Baker!

In *Focus* No.11, September 1983, he attacked the "right wing influence in our Party" as the direct cause of our decline. Agreed, though we prefer to more scientifically term that influence opportunism.

Comrade Baker offers a string of platitudes on what our Party should be like; it should be "democratic", "give leadership", "spread understanding" and so on. All very profound. He finished his missive with the demand that the attacks of the "right wing must be reversed".

While we recognise that the comrade does genuinely want the Eurocommunist tide reversed, he clearly has no idea of *how* it can be done, of how to conduct the inner-Party struggle. In our reply to his first letter in *The Leninist* No.5 we referred him to our *Founding Statement* in *The Leninist* No. 1 which gives a full explanation of why we publish and *how* an open ideological struggle is an absolute necessity if our Party is to be saved; that statement being solidly based on the Bolshevik principles built by Lenin. He evidently has not bothered to read it. If he seriously wants to reverse the opportunist onslaught we strongly suggest he fill that gap in his knowledge.

Again, on the question of the Labour Party, comrade Baker has obviously not read us, ie. my review article in *The Leninist* No.2 and those by comrade Marshall in Nos. 4 and 5, otherwise he surely would not continue to stubbornly cling to the idea at the root of his whole perspective, that the Labour Party is "the political expression of the workers organised in trade unions". We concur with Lenin that such a formulation is "erroneous", the correct one being that it is — a *bourgeois workers party*. But the comrade clings to his idea like grim death! Basing himself on a false premise he claims that it is the *affiliation* of "the majority of the organised working class" which finally distinguishes the Labour

Party from the PSOE, PASOK and the SDP of West Germany. This is no doubt a significant difference but certainly not a *fundamental* one, and a failure to understand politics because politics is not only about objective economic and social conditions but also about ideas, actions, *tactics*, and *strategy*. This is why we quoted Lenin in our reply to your first letter, comrade, with respect to "the men that lead it and the content of its actions and its political tactics" (V.I. Lenin CW Vol.31, p.257). The Labour Party has in *practice* played a political role in no way fundamentally different from the pro-capitalist German SPD, the PSOE, PASOK or the PSF in France. Just consider how the crumbling support for the Mitterand administration amongst workers in France mirrors the disillusion caused by the Callaghan government here, in its attacks on workers' living standards.

We urge comrade Baker to read Lenin, to think again, then hopefully he will see that Labour Party not as an eternal feature on the political landscape but as one increasingly being shaken by growing tremors of the approaching general crisis of capitalism. Our attitude to whether we fight for affiliation, is purely a *tactical* question, and as such we cannot predict when or if this would ever be appropriate. But what we do know is that socialism will never be won by the sort of back-door methods both comrade Baker and his old *Straight Left* friends propose. It is not the Labour Party legislating in a socialist programme cobbled together on the basis of the bloc votes wielded by communists which should be our aim but a mass vanguard Communist Party that directly challenges for state power. This brings us, of course, to the beloved *BRS*.

We finished our reply to comrade Baker's last letter by challenging him to answer a number of questions around the *BRS*: that "inescapable law," Marx's principle of smashing the old state machine comrade Baker refers to. Where is that idea to be found in the *BRS*? We asked the comrade: is the *BRS* revisionist or not? And is there any real difference between the five editions of the *BRS*?... Why did *Pravda* in 1951 call the *BRS* a "creative development of Marxism-Leninism"? (see *The Leninist* No. 5). He answers the last question with a profound "because it was"! Obviously he supports the 1951 *BRS*, but what about the 1978 version? Does he give any real differences between the five editions? No, he does not. His failure to directly answer these particular questions speaks volumes! However when he does attempt to grapple with our question on the state he reveals characteristic centrist contradictions. For example, he feels duty bound to agree with Marx when he wrote that, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery and wield it for its own purposes." (Marx and Engels, *Selected*

*Works* Preface to 1872 edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, p.32).

He however defends the *BRS*, claiming that the *working class* could *dismantle* the old state machinery *from a position of government!* The 1978 *BRS* talks of a "transformation" of the state, comrade Baker of "dismantling", and Marx of "smashing"; so what is the difference? Is it just a matter of emphasis? No. And looking closely at the letter we can see the fatally flawed thinking of our correspondent. His view is that once the working class has assumed a *governmental majority*, only then "begins the struggle for state power" and this is claimed by comrade Baker to be a "different story". Not even the authors of the 1978 Euro *BRS* put their utopian reformism so crudely! But the central point is that the whole reformist approach of *all* editions of the *BRS* fail to come to terms with the reaction of the old state machine to the election of a left reformist government in a crisis situation. Comrade Baker feels, "It cannot be predicted exactly what would happen..." but we in fact have plenty of evidence of how an army, "... to which the bourgeoisie are connected... by a thousand threads," (*State and Revolution*-Lenin) will not sit idly by and wait for those threads to be cut one by one. The most prominent example of the bloody role of the army was Chile.

The slaughter of tens of thousands of defenceless Chilean workers was indeed "a nasty business". We demand that our revolution be defended by us, by a workers' militia, and that this be constructed during the course of day to day struggle. Perhaps comrade Baker would like to refresh his memory on these questions by a reading of *State and Revolution*; we heartily recommend it.

To conclude. Again and again centrists try to pose as the orthodox, 'hard' Marxist-Leninists in our Party. But when you prod them a bit you find out they do not quite agree with Marx on this, Lenin on that, in fact they end up disagreeing with almost everything they wrote. Comrade Baker has at least had the courage to actually put pen to paper and attempt to answer the genuine Marxism-Leninism espoused by *The Leninist*, in the course of which he displays, all the shallowness and numerous contradictions of centrism. He certainly has not been particularly effective in 'demolishing' our arguments. Maybe other centrists can do better! Instead of gnashing your teeth in your narrow circles why not have a crack yourselves? We dare you!

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

# *The Leninist*

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