

## WE NEED Workers' Defence Corps

Richard Hardy

THE NEED for workers' defence is amply illustrated by miners' experiences. The clashes at Orgreave coke depot in June put to flight many illusions about the impartiality of Britain's police and injected a healthy hatred for the blue scum.

Britain's 51 police forces have during the course of the miners' strike become a more coherent weapon in the state's armoury. Restrained only by the requirements of those illusions which bourgeois democracy encourages in order to help sustain its rule, the bourgeois state has developed what it sees as an adequate response to mass picketing. For the defeats suffered by workers attempting to employ this tactic are clear answers to those who seek merely to emulate Saltley Gates.

Saltley Gates in 1972 was a definite victory for united workers' struggle. Miners were then joined by many thousands of Birmingham engineering workers: the police were so unprepared that their defeat closed the works at Saltley. In the intervening years, that defeat has been learned from by only one side: the capitalist state. Not only were lessons learned on that occasion, but the state has learned from the inner-city riots of 1981 and its war in Ireland's Six Counties, all of which have changed police tactics drastically. The use of snatch squads, riot shields, mounted police, and protected vehicles has raised the stakes and allowed the state's forces to win time and time again.

Now the working class, particularly those sections with experience of the new police tactics such as the miners, have to face the brutal truth behind the brutal methods. Do we just complain at police thuggery, try to stop funding through police committees, and generally appeal to the bourgeois state not to be so nasty; or do we plan our tactics at least as well as and hopefully better than those heading the police offensive on picket lines? Of course it is a loaded question. There is only one answer if we are to win battles at Orgreave or anywhere else where our class faces attack from the class enemy: we must plan our own defence.

Signs of spontaneous workers' defence have indeed been evident in the miners' strike. It is a healthy indication of working class readiness to deliver blow for blow with the state's oppressive forces. All class-conscious partisans and revolutionaries must have been cheered by sights of scabs' damaged vehicles, battered police and police equipment, and the small building set on fire despite the coppers. You can be sure that the miners' strike would have been solidly 100% from the beginning given the strength of feeling of the vast majority of miners on strike — if only police might had been overwhelmed.

However, it is not simply massive numbers that will overwhelm the police sent against our pickets. What must be organised as an urgent, immediate priority is Workers' Defence Corps. Individual workers, outstanding for



NEWS LINE

their class strength of feeling, should be selected from our movement to protect it from the damaging assaults of the police. In the 1926 General Strike the call for such formations, was very prominent especially in the propaganda of our Communist Party. It is now time to resurrect Workers' Defence Corps, and put them into action, for the success of working class struggles depends upon this as an essential element.

Marshalled and disciplined ranks of trained class fighters could have made all the difference at Orgreave and indeed everywhere else in the miners' strike. Such welded bodies of defence made all the difference in 1926 between pickets getting cracked skulls and completely well-ordered (from the workers' viewpoint) and effective picketing. Where workers' defence was organised in earnest in 1926 the police left well alone.

In the here and now we must learn from our own great working class history. The opportunists in our Communist Party, however, wish to deny history and dare to suggest that protests about police brutality and

calls for community policing represent the sum of our communist tradition. They are wildly wrong. Such suggestions in fact only serve to illustrate the crass obsequiousness of petty bourgeois law and order. They are not revolutionary. Communists in the tradition of Lenin and indeed our Party in 1926 can and could only reject the concept that we *must* operate within the bounds of bourgeois legality. Our call to revolution can only be effective when the bourgeois state with its collection of laws and law enforcers are utterly defeated: Leninism cannot countenance 'constitutional communists'.

The strike wave that can come crashing down on the bourgeoisie will need to be a strong one. Part of the effort which the working class will then have to expend will come from its defence formations. It is the present need for workers' defence that will produce forerunners of the utmost importance in a revolutionary period and in the socialist revolution.

Necessities of working class life and struggle throw up new forms and methods. The necessity of the moment is to advance the miners' struggle and

develop their strike. For this strike has very great potential towards advancing our class against the class enemy. The need for defence of pickets and demonstrations is clear and is a question that can no longer be ignored by our Communist Party or our class. It is for this reason that Leninists urge the building of Workers' Defence Corps now.

Whether sturdy walking sticks or iron bars (as in 1926) or other means of protecting pickets are utilised is determined by the possibilities and needs of the hour. The absolute need is for such defence to be organised. No doubt present-day class collaborators within our working class movement will put up their hands in horror at such violence, just as they do whenever workers counter the acts of the state's savagery spontaneously. But vigorous action now will give our class the added morale and confidence and weaken the resolve, of the state's forces. Workers' Defence Corps will be the beginning of a real fightback to defend working class interests; it will bode ill for the future of the capitalist class, for it will provide the means of getting it off our backs for all time.



## THE LENINIST

### For A General Strike

Now that government attempts to undermine the miners through encouraging a 'drift back' and promoting a split in the NUM Executive have come to naught, Thatcher will be compelled to up the stakes. Where guile has failed the police, the courts, and even troops will come to the fore.

We must meet Tory attacks by a united workers' offensive which must include amongst its demands that the TUC call a general strike in support of the miners and against the anti-trade union laws.

Arthur Scargill has been correct not to hand over the miners' strike to the TUC; its right wing has after all been visibly itching to sell it out. But not demanding that the TUC call a general strike not only lets the TUC rightists off the hook with a 'they've not asked us for support' but also the solidarity-talking Bucktons, Knapps and Gills; what is more, the mass of the working class are inevitably left on the sidelines. We must go all out to win central sections of the working class to strike back against their own employers by striking with the miners. We must also fight for the TUC to call a general strike, for their capitulation to this demand would catapult the millions who at present merely donate food and money to the miners, and the yet many millions more who are today passive, into the fray of the class war.

A successful general strike would bring victory to the miners, and other sections; as well as this if we made the scrapping of anti-trade union laws a central demand we would certainly see the fall of Thatcher. And as the struggle unfolded the working class would quickly gain a sense of its immense potential strength; as a result the question of which class rules Britain would be squarely posed. This must be our aim. Neither lack of courage or imagination, fear of TUC treachery, nor false friends must divert us from this perspective.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### First Time Buyer

Dear Comrades,  
At the PPPS AGM in Birmingham I bought a copy of *The Leninist* for the first time, and was very impressed. I have been in the Communist Party about 47 years working mainly in the trade union movement, but for a long time I have thought something was going badly wrong.

The dispute between the EC and the PPPS Management Committee has brought it all into the open.

I am a senior citizen now and see other comrades only occasionally, but when I do, I shall pass on your paper.

Could you tell me more about your group — who are the leading members and have you many followers etc. I am interested because a number of my old acquaintances have joined the NCP.

All the best,

Warren Duncan  
Birmingham

**Roger Freeman replies:**  
Unfortunately we cannot reveal the names of our leading supporters nor indeed the names of any of our supporters or sympathisers. But we can tell you that we do not have a mass following at present, but you will be pleased that we are steadily gaining support from Party members and are having increasing success in winning workers to join the Party.

### Criticism and Praise

#### *The Leninist*

I am writing to you to express some observations on your publication and your political line and also to enclose a contribution to your fund.

Firstly I would like to say that those (and I've already had an argument with a Party member expressing the view) who slander your publication as Trotskyite and/or ultra-left are politically ignorant in the extreme. Nevertheless the suspicion of all non-approved or disapproved factions as 'splitters' who unwittingly serve the purpose of imperialism is a well founded fear in the Party. The many such groups and their disastrous effects in Spain 1936 and Chile 1973 for example served in this way.

This cannot and could never serve as justification for stifling of genuine ideological differences amongst comrades as we are seeing at the present time.

It is with these well founded fears in mind that I appreciate particularly your accurate and clarifying analysis of groups such as the RCP whose literature I occasionally buy (and will continue to do so for precisely the 'open ideological struggle' reasons you so clearly state). Whilst acknowledging that this group has a correct stance on the struggle of the Irish people in contrast to our Party and its CPI colleagues it always seemed certain to tend to ultra-leftism especially in view of its immature attitude to existing socialism.

A few words concerning

your main political thesis. That the Party's present course is liquidationist and that the BRS in effect calls for a Labour election victory rather than that communists work for and prepare for a social and political revolution led by our Communist Party is clearly demonstrated. As long as 'a loyal Party member' and even 'Communist' is used in the sense of total approval for the BRS programme then you will be needed to raise the voice of genuine Marxism-Leninism. The prospects of raising such a hue and cry at this time when many comrades' main problem is to prevent damage to their skulls from police truncheons fills many with horror. It is a necessary task and you have begun it, and I hope some of your articles stir others to question where the Party has been going.

The related issue of the *Morning Star* also has its pitfalls. Yes the paper can be sickeningly naive, uncommunist, and liquidationist at times but its survival is a crucial task for the Party and the politically active in Britain. Many of the points raised at the last AGM of the PPPS, where discussions were possible, raised contradictory problems and methods for a paper which is required to survive in a capitalist market state and yet give a socialist angle on the news. Personally I am often unclear whether it is business, legal or policy reasons behind many aspects of the paper.

Some words of criticism now. The following two points are not the only criticisms I have of your articles but serve to illustrate two major disagreements I have with you. Both are from the article "1939 — a critique" by Richard Hardy.

Firstly the definition of fascism by G. Dimitrov as "an open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary circles of finance capital" is completely accurate.

I cannot see how you relate this to the consequence of your syllogism (ie that it served some purpose in the popular front period). That this is an accurate definition but more importantly description of fascism is clearly shown again and again in the history of fascism.

The Nazi Reich was motivated above all by such circles as Goering's chemical interests, Speer's slave labour architecture, the plans to sell off Soviet collective farms, the lorry owners association Chile's crucial role in 1973, the US justification of its presence in Grenada for 'efficiency' and making the economy pay. Reagan recently announced that Cuba's economy does not pay and is an economic disaster (the US plunder of the Cuban economy was worth \$800 million annually under Batista).

Also it is unclear how this accurate definition could be of any use in links with reformist Social Democracy of the Helmut Schmidt, S. Williams, D. Owens, type, since these parties, as does the British Labour Party, repeatedly adhere to monetarist and finance capital orientated politics.

I find that this is an accurate

and tough description of fascism which has stood the test of time and can be used as a yardstick of fascism even today. Of course using this definition and description it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Britain today is in the grip of a proto-fascist administration. Time will tell, and clearly the use of the term 'Thatcherism' is an ideological get out and often a cover for shoddy political theory. Nevertheless it is difficult to conceive how much more needs to happen of the Orgreave type policing before the term should be properly applied to the home of the much vaunted "mother of Parliaments".

You clearly have the iconoclasm of the dedicated revolutionary and perhaps it is your perception of G. Dimitrov as an 'icon' that misleads you here. But Dimitrov, like Marx and Lenin would not recognise themselves in the misrepresentations of many erstwhile followers.

Second illustrative point, and its main essence concerns your defence of the Soviet Union, and occasionally your ignorance thereof. I will state firstly as is proper my own probable bias — as a member of the BSFS I am used to misrepresentation of the Soviet view. However much what you say about diplomatic internationalism is devastatingly accurate (and 'pacifism' particularly can be isolated as an ideological counterrevolutionary weapon by sophisticated capitalist circles — who in Nicaragua for example is going to join a CND type movement if this means waving flowers only at CIA murder gangs), you cannot go unchallenged on such statements as "Soviet pamphlets are frightful".

Again and again I have had my doubts about the line taken in such pamphlets and books eg on Poland, Afghanistan. Yet again and again looked at from hindsight and the unwanted luxury of not having a revolution to defend these pamphlets are by and large accurate, informative and ideologically sound. When I read in *Soviet Weekly* several months ago of CIA funding for subversion in India (certainly a NON socialist country) in the forms of weapons, bribes, training in camps in Pakistan etc, simply because of India's over-independent line on world developments such as the consolidation of the April Revolution in the DR of Afghanistan or the criticism voiced in the UN of the US brutal suppression of Grenada I am sometimes sceptical. Then events catch up and the news has a sickening inevitability about it.

No I must assert that, often against my own first impressions, Soviet pamphlets are usually accurate and sound and rarely overstate the case.

Well some thoughts positive and negative for you to consider. I will conclude by saying that I can give you no greater compliment than that you are worthy of your chosen title *The Leninist*.

Comradely,  
Gary Newman  
Salford, Lancs.

**Joseph Wright replies:**  
Our comrade raises some interesting points in his

# DO KINNOCK AND CO BACK THE MINERS?

Michael McGeehan

"KINNOCK GIVES COMPLETE BACKING TO MINERS' FIGHT" or so the *Morning Star* proudly announced on its front page headline of April 19 1984.

But did he give "complete backing"? Does he support the mass picketing of pits, coke depots, and steel plants? Does he support the militant miners' use of violence against the brutal police? Or perhaps comrade Costello's lead story was just another piece of the *Morning Star's* rose-tinted, uncritical view of the left-reformist Labour and trade union leaders? Let us see.

When the storm of the miners strike was still gathering force back in March, the leader of 'Her Majesty's loyal opposition' was desperately trying to avoid committing himself to support the miners. At that time, underestimating the iron determination of a large section of the NUM, and faced with a barrage of pro-ballot propaganda spewed forth from the bourgeois press, Neil Kinnock finally broke his calculated silence and welcomed the "closer prospect" of a national ballot (*Morning Star*, April 13, 1984). But the wave of media effluent on the ballot issue broke on the rock of the mass of miners' granite determination to fight, leaving the Labour leader floundering quietly, embarrassed in the receding tide of press sewage he had chosen to swim in.

Kinnock quietly, conveniently forgot the filthy mess he had immersed himself in, as did the great bulk of his Labour Party colleagues and trade union backers, not to mention the Editor and journalistic staff of the *Morning Star* and the EC of our Communist Party. It was therefore hardly surprising that just six days after Kinnock's thumbs-up for a national ballot, the *Morning Star* should blaze across its front page his supposed "complete backing" for the miners' struggle.

Of course, having seen which way the wind was blowing, the sly reformist fox proceeded to produce some rather hot, fiery blasts of his own at the Scottish TUC which the opportunist *Morning Star* 'hardliners' dutifully printed without comment or blush. Kinnock can rant and rave about the "malice aforethought and intimidation" by the Thatcher government and the NCB, he can rattle on about Thatcher heading for "dictatorship and despotism" and accuse her of trying to starve the miners "into submission" but the acid test of his 'support' is his positions on the resolution of the strike and on the question of violence.

Apart from all the expected claptrap from the Labour leader denouncing the governments attitude as a "betrayal of the national interest" (a view shared of course by multifarious opportunists within the Communist Party) we find him calling on the government to intervene in the dispute! (*Morning Star* March 17, 1984). Such a call would be merely laughable if it were coming from a saloon bar expert but it comes from a self-styled 'supporter' of the miners, who is the leader of the Labour Party, the mass bourgeois workers party.

But this misleader of the working class showed his palest pink political underbelly when the miners' will-

ingness to reply to police violence broke into the news. Consistently, Kinnock "condemned the use of violence by either side" (*The Guardian* June 20, 1984). That was all he had to say on the question after the bourgeois state's thugs in blue had, armed with batons, riot-shields and helmets, plus horsemen equipped with 3-foot truncheons, brutally smashed the heads of countless pickets, attacked miners whose only defence is their wits, muscle and determination. We say that the miners and the working class in general should take measures to organise Workers' Defence Corps against the police thugs, it is only reformists and their opportunist allies who cringe before bourgeois law, whimper about the violence of both sides and argue against the miners and the working class's right to defence against the state.

The Labour Party's attitude to the police has always been classically reformist and was illustrated par excellence by Shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman, who after wingeing about the "heavy methods" used and expressing a touching concern for the "intolerable dilemma" facing the poor old police, stated moronically that: "The police force is not an arm of the state but the servant of the community, whose confidence they must secure." (*The Times*, April 11, 1984)

It should have been quite apparent to any observer of the struggle that the Parliamentary Labour Party has studiously avoided giving support for a no-holds-barred fight for victory. On the contrary, Labour energy spokesman, Stan Orme (a man described by Straight Leftist *Morning Star* political correspondent Andrew Murray as a "veteran left-winger") has been frantically buzzing about between the NCB and the NUM in order to facilitate conciliation between the two parties. As Mr Orme himself said "The Labour Party has played a considerable role in bringing the two sides together." (*Financial Times*, July 4, 1984). This is, of course precisely the role of Labourites; to dampen down open class war and conciliate workers with capital. This is why Neil Kinnock and his Shadow Cabinet cronies have not given "complete backing" to the miners. It was only due to the rising pressure from the striking miners and Labour Party rank and file activists that Kinnock started huffing and puffing out the hot air in earnest, attempting to disguise his need for respectability with rhetoric. There is however little doubt that the likes of Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn support the miners (the latter having even called for a general strike on June 25) and their forceful calls to the rank and file, such as Benn's declaration that: "No one need wait for permission to begin. Trade unionists in a whole range of industries and services should plan to take industrial action where they work." (*Financial Times* June 26, 1984) contrasts strongly with the TUC-Labour Party liaison committee's anodyne platitudes. But because these left-reformists are bound hand and foot to the Kinnocks and "the next Labour Party government" their calls for militant action are rendered impotent. A case in point was Benn's withdrawal of his proposal for a national demonstration against pit closures (hardly the height of

militancy) at an NEC meeting on June 27, no doubt under pressure from Kinnock, Healey and Callaghan *et al.* Because their party is officially content to merely issue statements repeating the "miners' case" and allow the collection of money the Benns and Skinners cannot in practice mobilise support for the general strike so essential for the miners' total victory.

The response of all opportunist tendencies in the Communist Party has been to tail the NUM and Labour Party leadership in the most pathetic and ridiculous fashion, in the manner of a motley flock of ducklings trailing along behind the first animal they set eyes on after hatching. Thus imprinted, the *Morning Star* faithfully reported and repeated in its editorials, the line of the NUM leadership that the struggle was in part to save 'our industry'. Of course this is precisely what we would expect from the Chater-Costello faction given their orientation to the left of the labour bureaucracy, we certainly do not expect a word of criticism or them to suggest bold initiatives to develop the struggle — perish the thought — Knapp and Todd might get the idea that the *Star* was trying to lead the working class!

But it is not even Chater's editorials which exhibit the lowest form of prostration to the misleaders of the working class, no it is possible to grovel even lower, as Straight Leftist and *Morning Star* political correspondent Andrew Murray ably proves. Both in his normal reportage and in his own little corner entitled 'Westminster Window' (that well-known treat for insomniacs) he regularly regales us with the most incredible sycophancy towards the Labour leaders, particularly Foot and Kinnock. Reading one particular report of the parliamentary debate on the miners in 'Westminster' (yawn) 'Window' (zzzzz) we get the distinct impression that comrade Murray really believes that the speeches delivered by Labour MPs had dealt swingeing blows to the government. In fact we find him stating that "...the Parliamentary Labour Party did its duty to those who sent them to Parliament". (*Morning Star* June 11, 1984) But even more revolting was his review of Michael Foot's ("one of the finest orators in modern-day politics") new book in the form of a friendly chat with the "inveterate peacemaker", you know, the one that supported the Falklands war. Does comrade Murray castigate this treacherous demagogue, this invertebrate pro-imperialist over his support for the Falklands escapade? No, he does not even hint at the question. Instead, Murray confines his criticism to: "of course, he made mistakes, this he would himself concede." One wonders if comrade Murray, who must be on the extreme right of Straight Leftism, is aiming to join good old Michael and Neil in Parliament? Of course, we do not mean as a communist M.P.

Instead of straining to conciliate with the Labour and trade union leaders, to become the faithful rearguard like the Chaters and Murrays of this world, it is the duty of communists to push the struggle forward, to expose the reformists' mealy-mouthed 'support' for the miners, to relentlessly criticise the vacillations and manoeuvres of the left-reformists of all shades, to act as the vanguard of the working class.

letter but for reasons of space we will have to limit our reply. On the questions of fascism we totally reject projections of Thatcher as being "proto-fascist" or "semi-fascist" because it in practice disarms the working class against real fascism and in no way helps in the here and now fight to overthrow the Thatcher bourgeois democratic government.

As to our position on Dimitrov's definition of fascism. We find it inadequate because we consider fascism to be the open terroristic dictatorship of monopoly capital i.e. finance capital as a whole, not merely a part of it. Yes, particular sections of the ruling class on occasions find it more necessary than others to discard the mask of bourgeois democracy, but at the end of the day fascism does not represent a section of that class as against another section, but simply a different form of bourgeois rule necessitated due to the need to resolve a revolutionary situation negatively, i.e. through counterrevolution. We feel that Dimitrov's definition was designed to specifically excuse collaboration with the "less reactionary" sections of finance capital, a course full of dangers, indeed in our review we indicate that in it lay the origins of Eurocommunism.

As to "Soviet pamphlets". We think that on a number of important political questions our Soviet comrades have got it very wrong. We would refer you to *The Leninist* (theoretical journal) No.2. In it we carry two important articles by James Marshall dealing with Poland and Afghanistan; questions you mention — we suggest you read our positions; we would contend that history has proved us right not the Soviet comrades.

RCG

Dear Comrades,  
I would like to congratulate comrade Frank Grafton for his review of the RCG's recently published Manifesto.

The RCG's 'dayschool' on their Manifesto (April 15) was an intimate little gathering of under 100 people convened, it appeared, to allow RCG cadres to pat each other on the back for their ten year history of decline and disintegration.

Their retreat from some of their initially healthy positions has paralleled their retreat into a patently bankrupt ideological *cul-de-sac*. I can only reiterate the call that comrade Grafton made in his article — RCGers who are serious about revolution both in this country and internationally should break from their blinkered disdain for the party that organises the mass of communists in Britain today — the CPGB.

Fraternally,  
John Mills  
London

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

## July's CPGB Executive Committee Meeting

# MYOPIC LIQUIDATIONISM

Roger Freeman

AS THE STAKES in the class war were raised by dockers joining the miners in strike action and as Thatcher's government considered the use of troops in the docks the Euro/McLennan dominated EC illustrated yet again its bankruptcy, and inability to break from tired routine. The class struggle clearly points its finger towards a decisive confrontation with the Tories and the capitalist state but comrade George Bolton in his lacklustre report on the political situation managed only to point to the finger itself.

## Bolton's Report

Comrade Bolton's commitment to reformist parliamentarianism enshrined in the *British Road to Socialism* means that for him victory in the unfolding struggle of the working class — fronted above all by his own members — would merely "help create conditions for defeating the Tory government at a general election well before 1988". And what should replace the Tory government? Well yes, of course, a Labour one. Oh yes, comrade Bolton says that it must carry out the "left politics of the labour movement", but then the opportunists demanded the same from the Attlee, Wilson, and Callaghan governments and that did not stop them being anti-Soviet, strikebreaking, and thoroughly imperialist. Tenacity is one thing but comrade Bolton, you display nothing more than dogged and myopic opportunism.

And those who think that shortsightedness is confined to those factions which dominate the EC — let us allow ourselves a little detour. Let us have a look at comrade Andrew Murray's regular feature in the *Star* and see what this self proclaimed supporter of the 'hard left' in the Party (who incidentally has dissociated himself in writing from the alternative list circulated at the 38th Congress — unlike the majority of Straight Leftists who have refused) has to say about the likely results of today's battles. "The greater likelihood" he writes, is "that a victory for the miners will bring about a sweeping reappraisal of the government's approach, possibly culminating (sic) in Mrs Thatcher's replacement." (*Morning Star* July 16 1984, our emphasis.)

Perhaps we could suggest to comrade Murray that one day he plucks up the courage to scrape some of the encrusted muck of bourgeois tradition from his *Westminster Window*. If he did he might catch a glimpse of the class struggle which rages outside the ever so refined but corrupting walls of parliament. It might then dawn on our comrade that the working class has no interest in simply changing the Tories' "approach", or even electing in some dull general election a Labour government to replace it. In fact comrade Murray, the working class has every interest in sweeping aside the Labour Party and the hallowed institution of parliament that is clearly so dear to your reformist

heart.

But for all his 'hard left' pretensions comrade Murray is no different from the other opportunists in our Party. Yes, they all want to see a victory for the miners. But the energies this releases must be kept within the safe banks of parliamentarianism and directed to changing Tory 'policy', and come a general election into supporting the narrow ambitions of that hater of working class militancy, Neil ('I condemn picket line violence') Kinnock.

But let us get back to the EC and comrade Bolton: for while what he says about the aims of the miners' strike says everything about his myopic parliamentary cretinism, what he says about the miners' strike and the role of our CPGB says everything about his myopic liquidationism. He rightly declares the "full solidarity" of the Party for the miners, but the role of a Communist Party is not only to provide solidarity but tactical and strategic leadership. It was in order to provide this vanguard role that our Party was brought into existence in 1920. And it is on this role that comrade Bolton & Co fall flat on their faces. The decisions from the EC resulting from comrade Bolton's report are at best tailist and at worst actually hamper the healthy growing politicisation and refreshing willingness of workers to use violence to advance their cause.

**"Could the Telecom workers switch off for a couple of hours on a given day, was a national half day Health Service strike possible, or a miners' version of the People's March?"**

## Low Aims

By setting his aims at a "broad democratic alliance" which will force the Tory government "to change policy" comrade Bolton can propose the safest, most conservative tactics in support of the miners. He certainly has no intention of orientating today's struggles in a revolutionary direction. Because of this he timorously asks: "Could the Telecom workers switch off for a couple of hours on a given day, was a national half day Health Service strike possible, or a miners' version of the People's March?" He even suggests that "other initiatives might be considered". Taking up the lead from the fighting militant miners? No, you must be kidding. What comrade Bolton has in mind is local authorities "withdrawing finance from the police" — well at least this does not suffer from doing anything Labourites haven't already tried. But our comrade isn't deterred: he goes on. It "might be worthwhile considering" having some "progressive QC holding a tribunal" on police action against the miners, and even arranging "discussions" with white collar unions about the miners' strike and its consequences, and to cap it all let's have "concerts in aid of the miners".

Let the bourgeoisie tremble, for the spectre of a tribunal hangs over them! Workers unite ... and have "discussions"!

This is miserable. What the working

class needs now is a clear revolutionary lead. Condemnation of police action is all very well, but what about Workers' Defence Corps? Solidarity with the miners is vital, but what about spreading the strikes, forcing the TUC to call a general strike in support of them and against all anti-trade union laws? And with the deep involvement of Party members in the Miners' Support Committees; what about a perspective of transforming them into Councils of Action as seen in 1926?

On these questions silence remains the rule. To proceed along these revolutionary lines is impossible for the right opportunist functionaries and unthinkable for the dilettante petty bourgeois Euros. Opposed to the firm fighting line required of a vanguard party and proposed by the Leninists of the CPGB they offer limp routine solidarity and the parliamentary road which has the appearance of leadership but none of its burdens.

Thus when it comes to the question of why the steel workers refused to support their Triple Alliance allies, why the majority of miners in Notts are still working, comrade Bolton has little but trade union politics to offer. Doesn't he understand that at the root of their lack of solidarity lies the very defence of one's 'own' industry that he himself so determinedly champions? And by identifying workers' interests

not only will four members of the Management Committee who support Chater go, but so will comrade Chater himself. And if this happens how could the Euros be prevented from delivering their *coup de grace* at the 1985 AGM? So what to do? Do a deal with the Straight Leftists? This would risk alienating many and driving them into the arms of the Euros. Split? This would end even more farcically than the NCP (we will be reviewing a Straight Leftist 'samizdat', *For Communist Unity*, which touches on this question, in our next edition).

Having no clear strategy, having no independent politics, having a leadership which described the CPGB as an "outside body" it is no wonder that there is confusion and division in the besieged camp. Fortunately a few have come to realise that the only principled way out is by breaking from the pro-Chater/Costello grouping.

## Marxism Today

The offensive by the EC against Farringdon Road, the continued haemorrhaging of Party membership, above all the liquidationist politics of all opportunist tendencies, means that a large question mark looms ominously over both the *Star* and the Party. Because of this comrade Martin Jacques is determined to take measures that will he hopes ensure that if all else is lost then his *Marxism Today* will survive. Of course he doesn't want to save his journal from the liquidationist flood in order to keep alive the flame of Marxism-Leninism. No, what he has his eye on is making sure that his neo-Fabian 'think tank of the left' has a future even if the Communist Party does not.

In order to force through his proposals comrade Jacques played the threat of resignation card — few members of the EC were prepared to call his bluff. As a result Farleigh Press will now have to print his journal at vastly cheaper rates (in order to survive itself Farleigh has turned to printing *fruit labels*). And Central Books (that hotbed of censors) has found the profitable job of doing *Marxism Today's* steadily increasing subscriptions taken away and given to the distributors of *Punch*. This blow against Central Books was despite the written submission of comrade Reuben Falber, who declared that "its existence is called into question" by such measures. Comrade Jacques won the day 25 votes to 10. With this and the moves towards greater financial autonomy agreed at the previous EC comrade Jacques now has a Eurocommunist life raft in case the struggle to transform the CPGB into a 'pure' Euro party leads to the ship itself going down.

What the growing Party crisis shows is that we have been absolutely right in characterising all the opportunists as liquidationist. The miners' strike, the battle over the *Morning Star*, the moves around *Marxism Today*, the tailism of *Straight Left* all prove it. Now genuine pro-Party comrades should think long and hard, question past loyalties, and ask themselves what our Party and class need today. We think you will come to the conclusions of Leninism.

## The Morning Star

Buoyed up by their two candidates scraping home at June's PPPS AGM, and claiming with some justification that if Glasgow had not been disenfranchised they would have got all their slate home — even if only by a nose — the EC decided to fight for a special meeting of the PPPS.

The fact that only six members of the EC voted against this, fully aware that there is a limit to the use of gerrymander, comrade Chater looks increasingly under siege in a Farringdon Road fortress. A fortress from which perceived fifth columnists (no pun intended) must be ejected. As a result comrades Matthews and Wainwright have been relieved of their lucrative little journalistic sidelines on the *Star*.

Faced with an EC full of confidence the pro-Chater/Costello grouping is faced with a conundrum. Given the same balance of forces at the special meeting of the PPPS as at June's AGM

# THE LENINIST

## Theoretical Supplement

# WORLD WAR III

## The danger of it and how to stop it

James Marshall

THIS MONTH sees the sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. The war to end all wars was how it was projected at the time, but of course as we all know little over twenty years later war again gripped the planet. World War II outstripped World War I in death, destruction, and sheer barbarity. At its close, from London, Moscow, and Washington it was proclaimed as in 1918: 'never again'. And yet in the 1980s international tensions have not only led to a new Cold War, but threaten to melt into a hot one which will unleash unimaginable and unparalleled horrors, which some believe might see the end of the human species and even life on earth.

The spectre of World War III has galvanized millions into action; the streets of cities and towns in almost every country have echoed to cries for peace and disarmament. This yearning for peace has manifested itself in countless ways: from the everyday wall slogan, church prayer, and button badge to the headline making Greenham Common stunt and the chart busting pop song. Not surprisingly, the CND which was all but dead if not buried has, like the proverbial phoenix, risen from the ashes. Federal Germany, the United States, and the Netherlands have all seen their equivalent movements blossom and attract huge numbers.

But despite the scope, determination, and transparent sincerity of the peace movement, not only have relations between the Soviet Union and the socialist community and the NATO powers continued to deteriorate, but what is popularly known as the arms spiral has escalated with spinechilling speed. Ignoring all the mass demonstrations, the compromises offered by the Soviet Union, and the evident political problems in certain European parliaments, the United States has deployed Cruise and Pershing II missiles and is pressing ahead with the supersonic B1 strategic bomber and the awesome MX ICBM. What is more, the US has already shown both its technological ability and its intention of militarising outer space with the successful testing of a ground launched ABM tipped with a miniature homing device which intercepted and destroyed an incoming Minuteman ICBM. This is a vital second string component of Reagan's multibillion dollar Strategic Defence Initiative, the so-called 'Star Wars' programme, which sends shivers of fear down the spines of Soviet leaders.

Only hopeless sectarians would stand aloof from the peace movement. For Leninists the fact that it has mobilised previously passive sections of the population is to be welcomed, as is the increasing politicisation that inevitably follows. But, and it is a big but, we consider that the pacifism that at

present dominates the peace movement is not only wrong but dangerously wrong. It would be a complete abrogation of our responsibilities to keep quiet on this question, to merely slip in behind the marching millions. This is no question of abstract dogma or of theoretical purity as our critics claim; no, it is a matter of life or death for the world's peoples. For unless we stop the war drive soon, then as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow nuclear holocaust will be unleashed.

It is to strengthen the fight to prevent this monstrous scenario that we put forward our thoughts on the danger of a World War III and our central ideas on how to stop it.

### 1. What Is War ?

Before we can deal with the growing danger of a World War III we must specifically answer some fundamental theoretical questions including the question of what is war and where the drive for it comes from. For unless we do this all efforts to understand the drift towards a WWII will flounder on the rocks of subjectivism and myopic 'commonsense'.

The classic definition of war was presented by Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian soldier-philosopher of the Napoleonic era. In his *magnum opus*, *On War*, Clausewitz tells us that war "is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will", that it is "a duel on an extensive scale", and centrally that it is a "continuation of policy by other means". This position on war was fully accepted by the founders of scientific socialism, who deepened Clausewitz's ideas on war by linking them to the existence and struggles of classes. Thus Lenin declared: "War is a continuation of policy by other means." And that "All wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within a state, pursued for a long time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone being changed." (VI Lenin CW Vol 24 p400.)

Because we see the connection between war and politics, because we anchor our understanding of war in the existence and struggle of classes, we are not amongst those who absolutely oppose all wars.

Primitive communist society experienced no war as we understand it today; of course individual acts of violence occurred, even fierce tribal clashes, but no organised, prolonged, extensive bloodbaths — society simply could not afford it. When this society disintegrated the system of private ownership of the means of production made its appearance as the result of the

division of labour in society. This brought with it the emergence of classes and the formation of a state apparatus to defend the interests of the ruling classes. Together with the state, the army came into being. War became a regular function of the state to attain the political and economic ends of the ruling classes.

Through war the ruling class could not only suppress the masses of its own country but extend their domination over other peoples. And with the emergence of capitalism wars expanded in size through the launching of aggressive wars against other countries to rob them of their raw materials and turn them into repositories for lucrative exports, something that was in fact indispensable for the development of capitalism.

So while we aim at the abolition of war we recognise that this can only come about by abolishing the exploitation of man by man and one nation by another. To achieve this obviously requires fierce struggle against the ruling classes who on all past experience are quite prepared to resort to the most bloody methods in order to hang on to their obscene privileges and their supposedly godgiven right to rule. For this reason we consider it a necessity to prepare the workers for a civil war of liberation, something that can take on an international dimension, with wars of intervention as the exploiters gang up to crush the insurgent proletariat. Flowing from this it is clear that Marxists recognise just and unjust wars.

Our attitude to war is not determined by the size or power of a country, whether a war is a 'David and Goliath' affair, or even if a country is fighting a defensive war. We therefore, while supporting wars of national liberation, find it quite permissible to support the 'aggression' of a big country against a small one. What determines our attitude is the class which rules and the policies of that class in the preceding period; this is the method we employ to determine whether a war is just or unjust.

So, looking back over the centuries we find many wars we consider to be just. Obviously when the revolutionary French masses overthrew the reactionary Bourbon monarchy and established their democratic republic this was a just war, as was their settling of accounts through revolutionary war with the reactionary alliance of the crowned heads of feudal and semi-feudal Europe. But Marxists have not only supported overtly revolutionary wars; Marx and Engels sided with the Union against the Confederacy in the US Civil War; they also supported almost every war or move against Tsarist Russia because of the reactionary block it represented in Europe during the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century Russia changed dramatically from the main bastion of reaction to the main bastion of proletarian class power. Because of this, workers throughout the world have a vested interest in defending it without conditions, and supporting it and its revolutionary wars against the machinations of imperialism. Such revolutionary wars can be defensive, such as the civil war against Wrangel and Denikin and the fourteen interventionist powers, but they can easily be transformed into offensive revolutionary wars. This was the case in 1920 when the Red Army pursued the invading Polish forces across the Soviet border into Poland itself. The hope of Lenin and other leaders of the International was to reach Warsaw, and in smashing the army of the semi-fascist dictator and renowned social chauvinist Pilsudski allow the city's proletariat to launch a successful uprising thus merging the forces of the Red Army with the Polish workers into one mighty river which would not only drown reaction in Poland but would greatly enhance the chances of success of the German Revolution.

The Soviet Union's war against Poland, though on a smaller scale, was no different from its war against Nazi Germany, except that the war against Poland failed and that against Nazi Germany succeeded. They were both revolutionary wars which from being defensive became offensive. The victories of the Red Army in 1944 and 1945 created extremely favourable conditions for the creation of the socialist countries in eastern Europe, vividly proving the progressive nature of the war conducted by the Soviet Union. For us the struggle today by the Red Army in Afghanistan is likewise a progressive revolutionary war (notwithstanding our profound criticisms of the murder of Hafizullah Amin and 97 other leaders of the revolutionary Khalq wing of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) — and as such a war that all communists have a duty to support.

So we recognise just wars, wars by progressive classes, and wars of national liberation. We can see the origin of these wars lies in the drive to clear away the stifling old order, the desire for freedom and the necessity for the new.

### 2. Imperialism and War

But very many wars are not progressive; in fact, they are decidedly reactionary, and therefore unjust. This was most decidedly the case with the emergence of decaying, moribund, and parasitic capitalism, that is, imperialism. The monopolisation of capitalist production, along with its concomitant, the supplanting of free competition, the merging of industrial capital with

banking capital, and the formation of finance capital went hand in hand with a shift from the export of commodities to the export of capital, something that was facilitated from the mid-nineteenth century onwards by the seizing of colonies. This imperialist capitalism was inherently reactionary in that it placed crippling fetters on the development of production. What is more, because of its uneven rate of development it not only immensely sharpened the contradictions inside capitalism but ushered in a whole period of wars.

Newly emergent imperialist powers such as Germany at the end of the nineteenth century found themselves in the position of not being able to obtain colonies; the world had already been divided by the likes of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and above all Britain. The fact that Germany had outstripped Britain in heavy industry and technical efficiency by the late nineteenth century meant that the existing division of the world became a barrier to further capital accumulation by German capitalists. As a result there arose sharpening conflicts between the 'have nots' and the 'haves' epitomised by Britain. Smaller powers organised themselves around the bigger ones and sought advantage; there resulted a web of secret treaties linking one power to another in contracts of joint robbery and plunder. The world was visibly sliding to the brink of the inferno. Peaceful solutions were considered, including simply handing Germany Portugal's African colonies — possible because to all intents and purposes Portugal was a vassal of Britain; as well as this it was later suggested by Britain that Germany share in a 50-50 division of the Middle East. But all these attempts to stave off the inevitable failed. The negotiations broke down and world war, which had looked close in 1905 and in 1911, finally broke out in August 1914.

Now, although Germany was defeated by the combined might of Britain and the United States, the "war to end wars" could not bring peace. The millions who had been butchered on the battlefields of Flanders, the Dardanelles, Tannenberg, Ypres, and Verdun died for profit not for peace. Imperialism's wars could only lay the basis for an imperialist peace. The uneven rate of development inherent in capitalism, the unequal nature of the peace of Versailles could only pave the way to war. For an imperialist war is the continuation of the policies of imperialist peace; peace merely registers the changed relation of forces brought about as a result of military operations. Germany may have found itself militarily defeated in 1918 but its industries and technique remained superior to the other European imperialist powers, including Britain. With this vibrant economic pulse Germany embarked on the road to recovery. But no sooner had it taken its first steps than it found its path blocked by the same obstacle that it had experienced before: the division of the world by the great colonial powers, especially the undynamic but very amply endowed British Empire.

The possession of an empire not only offered the British capitalists promise of obtaining that extra slice of profit, but provided a cushion to fall back on in the event of the inability to freely exploit outside markets. This, plus the 'offloading' of the necessity for the destruction of capital on dynamic Germany through its military defeat in 1918 meant that sluggish Britain was able to ride the precipitous 1929 crash and the economic dislocation and devastation of the early 1930s without plunging into turmoil. German imperialism in contrast having brutally suppressed the proletariat's revolutionary attempts of 1918-1919 and 1923 found itself again gripped by crisis in the wake of the 1929 crash, which saw its capital destroyed as opposed to Britain's. The system in desperate self defence spawned the grotesque monster of Nazism as its agent of counterrevolution and redivisionism.

World War II started as simply inter-

imperialist, but with the German attempt to reintroduce capitalism into the Soviet Union through its invasion in 1941 the war assumed a dual character, being on the one hand inter-imperialist and on the other anti-socialist. But while the Soviet Union fought a progressive revolutionary war its imperialist allies, despite all their rhetoric, pursued purely imperialist aims; the entry of the USSR into the war did not and could not change that.

In 1945 as in 1918 Germany and its allies were forced to surrender, but the aftermath of World War II was very different from that of World War I. Despite being on the winning side Britain along with France and the other 'haves' failed to prevent redivision. This was in part due to the effect of the drive by the colonial peoples for national independence plus the greatly enhanced power of the Soviet Union, but despite these factors it was above all the 'johnny come lately' ally of Britain, the United States, which commanded decolonisation — that is, the redivision of the world market and the restructuring of the world economy, something it did in its own interests and in its own image.

The US had of course absolutely no concern for the interests of the colonial peoples; what it wanted was the opening up of markets closed or at least partially closed through empire protectionism. The US like Germany possessed very dynamic capital, but unlike Germany the US found no contorting fetters to accumulation in the latter part of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries. Because of its vast size and population, its massive internal market, and the fact that it was by and large able to dominate both the North and South American continents its expansion proceeded relatively smoothly. But with the dawning of the twentieth century blocks to capital accumulation began to make themselves felt. The US did not or maybe even could not force through a genuine thoroughgoing redivision of the world following 1918. As a result of this, when the 1929 crash occurred it, like Germany, suffered far more acutely than empire cushioned Britain. But the US emerged from the carnage and destruction of World War II with such overwhelming relative strength compared with its allied imperialist 'friends' that it could demand its pound of flesh.

The US became a sort of 'super' imperialist power, its capital penetrating every corner of the capitalist world, all imperialist rivals bending to its will. The twenty year 'American century' saw world capitalism pull out of its protracted general crisis, which had characterised it from 1914 until around 1948. The rate of profit soared and the world economy expanded at an unprecedented rate for an unprecedented period.

Pompous learned professors of economics produced weighty tomes about the Keynesian post capitalist society and the managerial revolution, the whiz-kid sociologists announced the merging of classes into an amorphous but all embracing middle class, and many a 'Marxist' found themselves forced to admit that Marx needed heavy revision if not turning on his head. But for all the profound theorising by the intellectual whores of capital the declining rate of profit wormed its way through the veneer of uninterrupted capitalist growth and prosperity. Boom turned into stagnation, stagnation into depression, and now today depression threatens to produce a stupendous new general crisis which has all the signs of producing a crash that will even dwarf that of 1929. This slide into a new general crisis as in the past exacerbates the contradictions flowing from the uneven rate of development. Thus those in possession of the most dynamic capital — today Japan and Federal Germany — slowly but inexorably find themselves diverging from the established powers, now including not only Britain but also the USA. In these deteriorating economic conditions, in the divergence of interests of the major imperialist powers and the looming

spectre of a new general crisis lies the seeds of a World War III.

### 3. The Slide to a World War III

At its peak US imperialism could, as we have already stated, be described as a 'super' imperialist power. In 1955 the USA accounted for a staggering 50% of the entire capitalist world's total industrial production. But this position could not be sustained. Japan and Germany inevitably rose again, the consequence of which has been the slow but remorseless erosion of US hegemony. By 1970 the US share of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development — the great imperialist powers' club) industrial production had declined to 43.3%, and five years later it was down to 34.9%. The fact that the US had opened up the world market meant that its dynamic rivals too found it relatively easy to expand, and although this did not create any real problems in the boom years, as the capitalist world becomes increasingly gripped by crisis the result is inevitably the emergence of contradictions which are exacerbated and begin to fester as the possibilities of capital accumulation become ever more difficult. These developments provoke the reemergence of the threat of major wars as a method of solving economic problems.

Of course, at the present time there can be no real prospect of a full inter-imperialist world war simply because although US hegemony has been eroded it still exists. Although declining the US's 34.6% share of OECD GNP is significantly ahead of Japan's 13.7% and Federal Germany's 10.8%; it even outstrips the four leading European capitalist powers put together (figures for 1980). But in terms of military power, US superiority is overwhelming. In 1982-83 it spent \$215.9 billion on its military machine compared with a combined total for all other NATO powers of \$105.9 billion, and Japan's miniscule \$10.45 billion. And if we take a look at the mighty US nuclear arsenal, let alone the military integration and subordination of other imperialist powers, it is clear that at present while the drive for world war emanates from the crisis of capitalism and the growing rivalries and contradictions between the major imperialist powers, this manifests itself first and foremost against the Soviet Union.

So while there are the first signs of the emergence of distinctive imperialist poles: the USA, Japan, and more problematically the EEC; and while protectionism in various forms becomes more pervasive; the fact remains that the US still wields hegemony over the capitalist world. It is the conditions of capitalist crisis and declining but sustained US hegemony which have created the new Cold War against the Soviet Union and the socialist community (and certainly not 'Soviet expansionism' or some inner logic of the 'arms race' as EP Thompson naively believes).

The Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s was very much the result of US attempts to 'roll back communism'; socialism which as a consequence of the Red Army and the revolutionary turmoil following World War II now stretched from central Europe to the Pacific Ocean. The socialist countries centred around the Soviet Union were the great block to total US world domination and perhaps even more importantly they were revolutionary societies which could present a constant challenge to imperialism itself. The first Cold War tended to thaw when capitalist boom gave way to stagnation and capitalists, especially in Western Europe, sought desperately to extend themselves into previously limited markets in order to counteract the tendency for the rate of profit to decline. Although trade with the socialist community took place under conditions of the monopoly of trade by the socialist states and therefore profit rates were squeezed, the capitalists were only too ready to provide extensive credit facilities, rock bottom prices, and barter arrangements in order to

facilitate their continued capital accumulation.

The perspective of opening up new markets in Eastern Europe, China, and the USSR still exists. But capitalism pursues its aims not only through peaceful means but also through war: war is after all nothing more than the continuation of policy using different, that is, forceful, means. This is the key to our understanding of the new Cold War, and the slide towards a World War III.

For the US the actual reintroduction of capitalism under its hegemony into the socialist countries would stave off the ever growing contradictions between its imperialist allies, to redivide the world in its interests, would enable it to maintain and even extend its world power. This is what lies behind Reagan's B movie rhetoric about "the empire of evil", the foul orchestrated propaganda campaigns over 'human rights' and 'freedom' for Afghanistan and Poland. What Reagan is after is giving a new lease of life to decaying US imperialism by turning back the wheels of social progress, something which if not possible through fostering internal counter-revolution, as it hoped to do using Solidarity in Poland, or counterrevolution through economic integration, as it hopes for in China, Hungary, and indeed elsewhere, then if guile does not work, as far as Reagan is concerned blood and iron will suffice. To carry out this the US has launched a programme to achieve military superiority over the Soviet Union. It is therefore now deploying first strike Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe, and is bent on developing the 'Star Wars' technology with which it hopes to decisively win a World War III or force a capitulation by the Soviet Union's leadership.

Many, including those who should know better, simply dismiss this course as 'mad', as if the drive to war existed only between Reagan's ears. If only world politics were so simple. No, the cause of the drift to war is to be found in the existence of imperialism in general. Specifically it is to be found in US decline and in the growing economic independence manifested by the major allies of the US, something perfectly illustrated over the Siberian gas pipeline deal when even Reagan's most loyal sidekick Thatcher gingerly broke ranks. The drive to war we see today is a manifestation of imperialism's warlike nature, which has already plunged the world into two horrendously destructive world wars this century. Those who insist on blaming these wars on psychology, on Kaiser Wilhelm's potty training, Adolf Hitler's adolescent frustrations, or even, as many feminists ludicrously claim, the male ego and male values not only descend into simpleminded idiocy in theoretical terms but of course direct their energies in completely the wrong direction, thereby actually diverting the real struggle for peace. For war can only be ended by ending class society, and today in concrete terms this means the overthrow of imperialism and its replacement by the dictatorship of the proletariat: something our petty bourgeois dilettantes have little stomach for.

While we would be shortsighted to rule out a major split between the leading imperialist powers, the present open basis (that is, neo-colonial and relative free trade basis) for the world capitalist economy plus the existence of a maintained but declining US world capitalist hegemony means that as we have stated the main instigator of war today is the US, backed up by rapidly declining Britain. It is therefore the less dynamic, more established imperialist powers, that in the past were called the 'haves', that are the most warlike imperialisms today, unlike the periods leading up to both world wars this century, when it was the 'have nots' who were the most aggressive. Thus we see Britain fight Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas, outspend all other major European NATO powers on arms, fulminate against the Soviet Union, and generally act as a junior partner to

US imperialism, which invades Grenada, stations its RDF in the Middle East, sabre rattles over Nicaragua, and deploys new first strike weapons against the Soviet Union.

Because the main danger of war today is from the USA and that it is directed squarely against the Soviet Union it must be proclaimed time and time again that it is not the division of the world between socialism and capitalism that is the cause of war but the existence of capitalism and imperialism. And despite the greater aggressiveness of the established imperialist powers compared with the relatively pacifistic Japan and even Federal Germany it is vital for the proletariat to maintain an independent position and to avoid the trap of supporting one category against another. To stop war we must kill capital, it is as simple as that. For today's 'pacifistic' powers are still imperialist, they are therefore ultimately just as warlike as the most overt warmongers. Of course all the imperialists want peace; Star Wars Reagan, the Iron Lady Thatcher, Nakasone, Kohl, the 'socialist' Mitterand. The trouble is that every one of them wants the peace which suits their imperialism, their nation, as opposed to someone else's. As a result of this their imperialist peace is in reality nothing more than the preparation for their imperialist war.

#### 4. Has the Nature of Imperialism Changed?

According to some in the world communist movement the nature of imperialism has changed. This is implied through the attitude towards war, especially nuclear war, and is specifically stated in programmes such as the *British Road To Socialism*.

With intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads to any place on the planet, with their hellishly destructive power, it is speculated that a new world war would mean a "nuclear winter" and the annihilation of humanity. Therefore the principle defining war as the continuation of politics is as good as worthless. In a situation where the imperialists have no monopoly in nuclear weapons, when the Soviet Union can achieve rough parity in military hardware with the USA, to launch a new world war must be considered to be tantamount to committing suicide, it is said. As a result, so the argument goes, there appears two tendencies within the monopoly bourgeoisie. One that favours peace and moderation, and which however hesitatingly is committed to peaceful economic competition with the socialist countries. The other tendency is adventurous and warlike; it is personified by the likes of Reagan in the USA, Thatcher in Britain, and Strauss in Federal Germany. These hotheads represent the so-called military industrial complex, the section of monopoly capital which because it gains massive profits from arms manufacture has a vested interest in war.

The job of communists in these new conditions, we are told, is not to fight for peace by fighting for socialist revolution but to mobilise all strata and classes against the bellicose madmen. By exerting mass pressure imperialism can be forced to relinquish war and enter on the path of peace and cooperation.

It is this view of imperialism which permeated the *British Road* when it was presented in 1950. Indeed it has run like a case of congenital syphilis through all editions up to and including that of 1977. In line with this imperialism is now often merely described as a *policy* of leading circles in such countries as the USA, France, Japan, Federal Germany, and Britain. Thus, in the current *BRS* we read that following World War II there was a "need for a complete break with past imperialist policies", but instead of this the *BRS* bemoans "successive governments, whether Tory or Labour, have continued with such policies." With this sleight

of hand imperialism is reduced to nothing more than a pair of old gloves to be put on or discarded as the mood takes. Of course, for Leninism imperialism has deep material roots in capitalist society. It represents the domination of finance capital, and it is a definite stage of capitalism — its last. It is therefore no mere *policy* pursued by this or that government, for to break from imperialism is in fact to break capitalism itself: the two tasks cannot be separated.

If we base ourselves firmly on the method of dialectical and historical materialism we can see that the warlike nature of imperialism cannot change simply because it is embedded in and determined by the capitalist economy itself. Its drives, especially for continued capital accumulation, necessitate the export of capital, necessitate the offloading of crisis onto rivals, necessitate expansionism, and where this cannot be done by peaceful methods war is always looked to.

Surely the numerous 'small' wars conducted by imperialism since 1945 prove this point. Who can forget the bloody devastation wrought by US governments both Democrat and Republican in Korea and Vietnam. Certainly no one in Britain should forget that Britain fought alongside the USA in Korea, jointly invaded Egypt with France and Israel, and that it ruthlessly crushed the national liberation movement in Malaya as it is attempting to do in its oldest colony — Ireland — at this very moment. These imperialist wars were overseen by not only Tory governments but also Labour ones, including the radical Attlee one so beloved by our Euros. Where is the evidence in these wars over the last forty or so years that there are two distinctive tendencies within monopoly capitalism? Surely all the evidence shows that war is still the continuation of policy and that imperialism, far from developing a peaceful wing, is more warlike than ever, and that the mechanisms of imperialism are again perceptibly dragging the world to the precipice of war.

As to nuclear weapons, their development has of course brought about important changes in military tactics and strategy. But has this led to a metamorphosis of imperialism? The answer to this must be no. It is class struggle which is the motive force of class society. People not weapons make history. Nuclear weapons however powerful have not replaced class society and the class struggle. Nuclear weapons must be seen as nothing more than a tool within class society in the same way as other major military developments from the longbow to the tank have been.

With this understanding we look at all weapons, not as social determinants but as tools of classes which create them and wield them. Thus, whether two sides in a war fight with the same weapons is for us a technical question irrelevant in determining whom we support; what matters is the policies of each side; whether one side is progressive and the other reactionary. So the fact that the USA and the Soviet Union both possess nuclear weapons does not lead us to the conclusion that each side is the same as the other. Far from it. US nuclear weapons are reactionary because they are a tool of a reactionary economic and social system. On the other hand the fact that Soviet nuclear weapons defend the gains of the Great October Revolution means that we see them as a necessary evil just as we see all arms in the Soviet Union, from the swords of the Red Cavalry in the civil war to the T-34s which smashed the German war machine at the battle of Kursk in 1943 to the helicopter gunships which today deal death to the forces of black reaction in Afghanistan.

#### 5. The World Balance of Forces

Another device employed to get around the Leninist analysis of imperialism and its inherent warlike nature, while formally claiming adherence to it, is the claim that the world balance of

forces has decisively shifted in favour of socialism. Thus we are told it becomes possible to avert world war without the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism. For with the combined pressure of the socialist camp, the international working class and all who want peace, imperialism can be forced to renounce war.

This argument has two main problems. One, it is theoretically flawed in that it believes that imperialism can become peaceful, that it is possible to banish war while imperialism survives. For imperialism of necessity is warlike, the drive to war is as inherent in imperialism as is the tendency for the rate of profit to decline, and the need for capital accumulation etc. But secondly, the very claim that the world balance between capitalism and socialism has *decisively* shifted in favour of socialism is in reality a myth. By the way, it is more than coincidental that this claim is used to underpin the utopian peaceful parliamentary road to socialism enshrined in so many programmes of communist parties today, and the CPSU's acceptance of them. But let us look at a few concrete facts on the world balance between imperialism and socialism in general and the US and USSR specifically so that we can test claims about a decisive shift.

Well, according to figures produced by Soviet authors the socialist countries as a whole account for 43% of world industrial production, this is with around one third of its population. If we just take the Comecon countries by themselves the figure quoted is 33% compared with the advanced capitalist countries 50%. We consider these figures to be over optimistic, of course they partially stem from the result of distortions emanating from the non-convertibility of currencies in the socialist countries but we must also add that they are partially due to self-deception in order to excuse confronting the necessity of fighting for revolutions in all capitalist countries, especially the great imperialist powers, if we are to guarantee world peace and pass into the epoch of communism. For if we look at United Nations figures for industrial activity the "centrally planned economies" (which includes all socialist countries not omitting China) are only given 21.7% of the world's total compared with the "developed market economies" (ie the advanced capitalist countries) 63.1%. The figures for GDP are little different with the socialist countries accounting for 19.6% and the advanced capitalist countries 65.6% (Source: *UN Yearbook 1979/80*).

This general balance in favour of capitalism is also reflected in the balance between the US and the USSR. The UN gives an estimate of US GNP for 1981 at \$2,924 billion. The closest Soviet figure is that for Gross Social Product which for 1980 was given as 1,061 billion Roubles. This is just over \$1,500 billion at the official exchange rate of 1 Rouble to 1.5 dollars. These UN monetary figures are backed up by the 'hard evidence' of production of the likes of electricity where the comparative figures are 197,352 kWh for the US and 110,417 kWh for the USSR. It is true that the Soviet Union's industrial production roughly equals that of the US but the fact is that while industry accounts for 60% of the Soviet economy in the US it is only 30%, agriculture, transport, services, and other sectors being more important in relative terms. What is more, although the Soviet Union occupies first place in the output of oil, steel, cement, natural gas, iron ore, chemical fertilisers, wheat, cotton, and mainline electric and diesel locomotives, the fact is that in the field of advanced technology it is still far behind not only the US but also Japan. Thus if we look at the figures for general purpose computers in 1979 out of the 188,900 in the world the US had 45.7%, Japan 21.6%, Britain 4.4% and the Soviet Union a mere 4.2% (*Financial Times*, February 19 1979). The US and Japan have also gained a considerable lead in the development and installation of

microelectronics and robotics.

By making military preparedness a priority, by orientating much of the economy to the production of military hardware, and by diverting scarce resources to the armed forces the Soviet Union has managed to a remarkable extent to make up for the United States economic lead and achieve something near rough military parity. But this has been on the backs of the living standards of the Soviet masses, at the expense of the all-round development of the Soviet economy and inevitably is therefore detrimental to its growth rates and long term interests. And because of the US lead in terms of both sheer economic might and technological sophistication and innovation the US has always made the running in military terms, the Soviet Union desperately always attempting to catch up. The exception to this was the development by the Soviet Union of the ICBM in 1957, but even then by the early 1960s the US had not only developed its own ICBMs but had overtaken the Soviet Union in their development and had moved onto basing ballistic missiles in submarines thereby making them virtually invulnerable to attack.

Today the US certainly has a clear economic and technological lead over the Soviet Union. It possesses not only a greater clout in nuclear terms; 9,268 strategic nuclear warheads for the US compared with 7,300 for the Soviet Union; but its delivery systems are more flexible, less exposed, and far more accurate — vital requirements for a first strike capability. What is more the US is still in the forefront of developing military technology with pinpoint accurate silo busters: the ground hugging Cruise missiles, the Pershing II MRBM, the sea launched Trident II, and the ground based MX ICBM. These along with the neutron bomb, the new chemical and biological weapons all attest to the pacesetting of the US as does its moves in the militarising of outer-space.

The developing US anti-satellite weapons are far in advance of those tested by the USSR. The Soviet Asat system is a rather lumbering affair: a ground based rocket is used to haul into orbit a killer satellite which after one or two revolutions of the earth manoeuvres alongside the target satellite and then by blowing itself up puts out of action the other satellite by showering it with debris. In contrast the US is developing far more advanced and accurate technology. Using a F-15 aircraft an anti-satellite missile is launched from high altitude, this locks onto the target with a sophisticated homing device and destroys the target satellite by actually impacting on it. The US has also already demonstrated its ability to acquire an effective ABM system by successfully hitting an incoming Minuteman ICBM which if combined with Reagan's 'Star Wars' beam system could provide the US with a qualitative lead over the Soviet Union and the means to achieve a survivable victory in a world war — a fact that the US would at the very least use to blackmail the Soviet leadership.

In light of these facts about the economic and military balance between socialism and capitalism we must question those who insist on repeating the myth of socialist superiority. Surely they do so not because of some mental deficiency or lack of accurate statistical material but for opportunist reasons determined by the need to justify the rotten programmes so many communist parties developed in the 1950s and 60s — not least the CPSU's *The Road to Communism* which actually declares that the Soviet Union can build communism while imperialism survives. (A position which we sincerely hope our Soviet comrades will chuck out in their revision of their programme, along with the stupid commitments Khrushchev put in it about the USSR overtaking the US in per capita production by 1970! And the "material and technical basis of communism" being built by 1980!)

Even if imperialist encirclement and superiority was *in fact* replaced by socialist encirclement and superiority

this would not lead us to the conclusion that our programme should commit us to a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism. The question of violence must always be faced. We must be prepared to use violence, if the capitalists have an aberration and decide not to resist us, so much the better. Certainly socialist superiority would mean that in the event of a successful proletarian revolution fraternal assistance could be counted on and attempts at external counter revolutionary intervention rebutted.

But this is not the case today. Those who inflate the power of living socialism in practice act to delay the triumph of communism, in practice place a greater burden on the Soviet Union and the Soviet people. For while the socialist countries, above all the Soviet Union, can restrain the imperialist war drive they cannot stop it, to do that requires proletarian revolution. As Lenin declared in a speech to Party activists in Moscow in late 1920 "While capitalism and socialism exist side by side, they cannot live in peace; one or the other will ultimately triumph — the last obsequies will be observed either for the Soviet Republic or for world capitalism." (V.I. Lenin, CW Vol 31, p.457)

## 6. The Question of Peaceful Coexistence

Although recognising the inevitability of war while imperialism still existed soon after the October Revolution Lenin became fully aware that Soviet Russia would have to attempt to survive for a considerable time in a world dominated by capitalism. Until socialism triumphed all over the world it was therefore vital to take advantage of the antagonisms and contradictions that exist between the major imperialist powers to facilitate survival. This perspective was an integral component of the policy of peaceful co-existence. The fact that the Soviet Republic found itself a besieged detachment of the world revolution with the defeat of revolutions in Europe and especially the German revolution, meant that the days when Trotsky, the first People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, could refer to his job as merely being one of issuing "a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples of the world and then shut up shop" soon gave way to careful diplomacy and the tactics of peaceful co-existence as personified by G Chicherin.

Lenin was among the first to advocate the need for a comprehensive foreign policy for the Soviet state; this included the idea of the peaceful co-habitation or co-existence of states with differing property relations. By playing off one imperialist power against another, by offering foreign capitalists lucrative trade deals and concessions, using the capitalists' lust for profit, the possibility of aggression against Soviet Russia could be reduced. In conditions of peace the Soviet state could develop its economic strength and with this strength powerful armed forces could be built which would further deter potential attackers.

Lenin clearly saw the need to create a division of labour between the diplomacy of the representatives of the Soviet state in their dealings with capitalist countries, and the principled position of communists in both socialist and capitalist countries who should adhere to a firm revolutionary line and never deviate from the struggle for world revolution. Thus when speculating about a future inter-imperialist war between Japan and the United States Lenin said that advocating "propaganda for communism in these countries" is "correct, but it is not everything." The US and Japan "want to fight and will fight for world supremacy, for the right to loot... Of course, defence of our country in such a war would be a heinous crime, a betrayal of socialism. Of course, to support one of these countries against the other would be a crime against communism"; but then he added "we communists have to play one off against the other. Are we not

committing a crime against communism? No, because we are doing that as a socialist state which is carrying on communist propaganda and is obliged to take advantage of every hour granted it by circumstances in order to gain strength as rapidly as possible." (VI Lenin, CW Vol 31 p443)

So the tactics of peaceful co-existence were employed to strengthen the Soviet state not in the patriotic sense which from the communist point of view is secondary, but in order to create the most advantageous conditions for world revolution. Peaceful co-existence was therefore living with capitalism but only for as long as it took the workers in the capitalist countries to make revolution, something the Soviet state had every interest in, and the Soviet communists the duty to actively aid. From this it is crystal clear that peaceful co-existence was in no sense, shape or form a policy of class collaborationism or the renunciation of world revolution as Trotskyites blockheadedly brand it.

That many in the world communist movement have elevated peaceful co-existence to a major strategic goal to which everything else must be subordinated, including the struggle for proletarian revolutions in the capitalist countries, is a result of the drift to the right in our movement. But this does not of course therefore invalidate the policy of peaceful co-existence as such nor the proposals from the Soviet Union in favour of disarmament which have a certain value above all in propaganda. Our recognition of the benefit of peaceful co-existence for the Soviet Union today does not blind us to the fact that the long term interest of the Soviet Union, the guarantee of world peace cannot be obtained through peaceful co-existence but only through world revolution and the establishment of the World Union of Socialist Republics. The road to this goal has seen successes for the policy of peaceful co-existence but also successes in revolutionary wars fought by the Soviet Union — most notably against Nazi Germany when through revolution from above socialism was established throughout much of Eastern Europe.

Clearly the victory of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, the emergence of a community of socialist states has not eliminated wars in general or the threat of a new world war, and nor could it. Indeed we have not only seen wars between socialist and capitalist states but friction between socialist states themselves which on occasion has even led to the outbreak of armed conflict. The cause of war between socialist states must be firmly located not in some inherent drive towards war as is the case with capitalism but in the domination of opportunism which puts the short term interests of a particular state above the long term interests of the world proletariat. Less overt but still opportunist are those who also for short term state interests claim that we can have world peace while imperialism exists and also claim that existing socialism can develop to communism without world revolution, for such positions, despite the intention otherwise, are detrimental to existing socialism because of the failure to squarely face the fierce class struggles which are needed to achieve the peaceful communist future.

## 7. Leninists and the Struggle for Peace

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

We have already made clear that the emergence of a community of socialist states and growth of their power and the policy of peaceful co-existence far from invalidating this perspective still

demands it. The nature of imperialism has not and cannot change. And indeed the power of modern armaments above all of nuclear weapons, far from giving us the luxury of a protracted struggle for revolution once a war has commenced as Lenin advocated, makes it a necessity that the rabid imperialist beast is put down as speedily as possible. Our revolutionary struggle is the best possible service we can do for living socialism both in the sense of our duty to unconditionally defend it and in order to strengthen it by adding to the number of socialist countries, thus hastening the dawning of the epoch of communism.

Because we adhere to this Marxist-Leninist position of linking the struggle against war with the struggle for revolution and socialism we must resolutely oppose those in our Communist Party of Great Britain who while being bound by rules which demand that we are "guided by the theory and practise of Marxism-Leninism" have abandoned even the semblance of revolutionary principle not least when it comes to the question of war and peace.

Not surprisingly the *British Road* projects a picture of a transformed Britain: prosperous, democratic, and of course peaceful but still capitalist. And this programme is considered dear to the heart not only by the leadership factions but also by comrade Chater and his *Morning Star* — how can one put a "positive" interpretation on that? Because of this when the Euros, the right opportunists and assorted centrist camp followers deal with the question of peace they do so not with the aim of socialist revolution as their central objective — as the necessary precondition of any move towards disarmament let alone world peace — but in order to win workers to the hopeless attempt to win peace while the capitalist imperialist system remains intact. By attempting to do this these opportunists in practise work against the day when we can actually achieve universal peace. But then what do we expect of those committed to one edition or version of a thoroughly reformist programme like the *BRS*.

While the struggle against world war demands the adoption of pacifism according to our opportunists this is only the most obvious expression of their renunciation of the Marxist-Leninist position on violence. We all know that the *BRS* charts a course to socialism and then to communism not through the triumph of working class organs of power like soviets but through the bourgeois military-bureaucratic state itself being transformed. This perspective inevitably not only leads to the abandonment of working class interests in the long term but in the here and now. Thus confronted by a miners strike and its healthy growing politicisation and the willingness of miners to resort to violent measures against scabs and above all the police, the opportunists offer the miners the mystical women-only pacifism of Greenham Common as the shining example they should seek to emulate. Likewise on Ireland where the struggle has long crossed the Rubicon of peaceful protest our Party leaders call upon the forces of national liberation to lay down their arms — the British forces should, they say, merely withdraw to barracks — so that British imperialism can get on with its progressive tasks of overcoming sectarianism and economic stagnation and thus bring a colonialist peace: the precondition of our pipe dreaming opportunists for a united Ireland. And what is true of the miners strike, and Ireland was true of the riots in the summer of '81, the Warrington dispute, and every even minor challenge to the power of the state machine and its monopoly of armed force.

The opportunists have fully embraced social pacifism no doubt a momentary stage for many in their passage into full blown social chauvinists and who knows, if the bourgeoisie honours them, maybe social imperialists?

Leninists proclaim that the bourgeois state machine must be smashed

if we are to put an end to its plans for world war. So while we recognise the quantitative difference between the drive to a world war and violent clashes between police and pickets in an industrial dispute, for example at Orgreave, we see the embryonic means of stopping war emerging from the most basic struggles and needs of the class struggle as expressed by Orgreave; i.e. self defence.

Because of this we do not expend our energies in pleading that capitalism disarm or even only spends a "minimum required for defence" as those who like comrade Chater have cotton wool for brains do. No, our perspective is diametrically opposed to such reformist pacifist claptrap. We instead call for the arming of the working class. This is of course not something that the bourgeoisie will benignly consent to. It will be done step by painful step in the face of severe opposition from them. The arming of the workers cannot of course simply be proclaimed, it emerges from day to day experience of the fight against the police on the picket lines, in the protection of our meetings and demonstrations and against fascist attacks. So faced with the completely interlinked militarisation of capitalism, its war drive against the Soviet Union, its growing economic difficulties and attacks on the most basic rights, and conditions of the working class, we say the fight to establish Workers' Defence Corps is the only realistic course for our class to take. In the words of Lenin:

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

With Workers' Defence Corps it becomes realistic to move towards splitting sections of the armed forces to our side — something that no number of experiments in "community policing" can do — no matter what Straight Leftist comrades like Nick Wright might think. With Workers' Defence Corps we would have at our disposal the means to overthrow capitalism, eminently more practical than the ludicrous parliamentary alchemy advocated by the Euros and the utopian reformism enshrined in the *BRS*. It is only through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism that we can achieve socialism and in the victory of this struggle will be the victory of peace.

Peace can never win and never be guaranteed through the feminist women-only stunts at Greenham Common which comrade Bea Campbell offers as a universal elixir; nor the purile parliamentary hot air so dear to the heart and close to the spirit of comrade Andrew Murray; nor the pious prayers of Bruce Kent applauded so widely at our Party's 38th Congress; nor even through the power of the Soviet Union and the huge sacrifices of the Soviet people which centrists from the NCP to the Straight Leftists place their faith in; and certainly not through the S-O-S symbol of CND which unites them all. No, world peace and the saving of mankind from nuclear holocaust can only come through the elimination of capitalism from the planet, the ending of the exploitation of man by man, the subjugation of small nations, and the oppression of women and the triumph of communism. This will be the era of real freedom when peace will not merely be a pause in between war but the permanent state of things — as a result not only will the word 'war' gradually disappear from the vocabulary but eventually so will even the word 'peace'.

## Proletarian Internationalism and the Question of POLISH COAL

William Hughes

PROLETARIAN internationalism is not an abstract formula. It is an *objective law* given birth to by the development of international capitalism itself. It is a law which recognises that the struggles of the working class, in whatever country they take place, are ultimately indivisible. As we have argued, the 'touch-stone' of internationalism for Marxists in the capitalist world is their attitude to the socialist countries and above all the Soviet Union. But proletarian internationalism — precisely because it is not an abstract concept and it has this material basis — is not a 'one-way' phenomenon. The actions of the leaders of the socialist countries must also be assessed for the degree to which they hinder or advance the struggle for world socialism.

With this in mind, all communists should be deeply disturbed by the role that our Polish comrades are currently playing in the miners' strike in continuing to allow and even increase exports of coal to this country. Various Trotskyite publications have seized gleefully on the Polish authorities actions in order to spice up their anti-communist wailings and their continued support for the bosses' trade union Solidarnosc. We have even had Dennis Skinner MP, a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, writing to the Polish ambassador to register his:

"...(disgust at) the constant announcements regarding the imports of Polish coal into this country whilst the British miners are on strike. This can only be a policy of strike-breaking and I would like to know how you can claim to be socialists by undertaking this course of action." (Quoted in *Militant*, May 25, 1984)

We would be the last to deny Mr. Skinner his 'harder-than-thou' posturing, but we would certainly recommend that if he wants to cross swords with some *really* accomplished 'strike-breakers', he might start in the ranks of his own party.

Having said that however, we must clearly state that we condemn the actions of our Polish comrades in allowing coal to be still exported to Britain (4.8% of total coal imports into Britain come from Poland) while the miners are facing the Tory onslaught. This Polish coal has been used to *actively undermine* the struggle of the miners:

"Attempts by the National Union of Mineworkers to stop production at the British Steel Corporation's Scunthorpe, Humberside, plant suffered a further setback yesterday when 6,000 tonnes of Polish coal arrived at the works..." (*Financial Times*, May 29, 1984)

This has not been an isolated incident as some of our party 'hard-liners' have claimed. Nor is it due to the fact that Polish coal has in fact been circulating on the world market for a number of months before it even reaches Britain. In point of fact, the *Financial Times* of May 17 reported that imports of Polish coal have been "running at almost double their usual rate since the beginning of the year." In mid-May it was reported that representatives of the Polish coal industry had arrived in Britain to negotiate a long-term increase in this unfortunate trade. Indeed, May Day this year was shamefully 'celebrated' by the arrival of a heavy consignment of coal from Poland at Teignmouth docks in south west England — a cargo which was apparently unloaded by non-union labour.

Poland's social and economic problems, despite the respite of martial law, remain immense. The dislocation in production caused by Solidarnosc's counter-revolutionary bid for state power, along with the acute political



Our Polish comrades must take sides

and social problems that accompanied it have apparently produced a desire for economic consolidation and social peace almost at any price.

Yet socialism in Poland will not be saved by injections of hard currency obtained through strike breaking coal exports to Britain. The long-term interests of Poland and of all socialist countries, by definition, lie in breaking the imperialist domination of the world and in the advance towards world socialism. This truth was well understood by the Soviet workers during the 1926 General Strike in Britain. During those critical days for British workers, the Soviet government did not use the disruption to negotiate scab trading deals; instead Soviet workers in their millions donated a percentage of their incomes to their class sisters and brothers in struggle nearly half a world away in Britain. Ernie Trory, in his excellent pamphlet, *Soviet Trade Unions and the General Strike*, gives us some idea of the scale of the solidarity organised by the Soviet working people:

"When news was received by wire that...the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had declared a general strike in support of the miners, the workers of the Soviet Union reacted spontaneously. Without waiting for a lead, meetings were called all over its vast territories. In Kharkov, at the end of the day, columns of workers poured out of factories and offices with flags flying and bands playing and made their way to the great square in the centre of the city...It was estimated that more than a hundred thousand people participated." (pp.5-6).

An appeal for a quarter of a day's pay from all Soviet workers to help their British comrades was issued. Many workers however considered this too little and Trory gives examples of the many thousands who levied themselves half or a full day's pay, (*Ibid*, pp 7-8).

The central committee of the Water Transport Workers Union, in contrast to the present attitude of our Polish comrades, made clear its view of scab trade while British workers were in struggle:

"Stop work on all steamers sailing for England, whatever freight they may carry. Vessels on their way to England, having received information by wireless of the partial strike of seamen in the USSR must, on arrival at the nearest British port, make common cause with the British strikers and must not allow their vessels to be unloaded." (*Ibid*, p9).

Despite Scargill's limitations, he is outstanding in comparison to other trade union leaders. For example, he refused to be cowed by the bourgeois and Trotskyite hysteria over his correct

branding of Solidarnosc as an "anti-socialist" organisation. Scargill showed this level of almost gut-reaction class solidarity with socialism in Poland despite the fact that he is not, contrary to the *Sun's* rabid editorials, a "communist". How much more should we expect of our Polish comrades, whose official ideology is 'Marxism-Leninism'? The miners' struggle is not simply just another industrial dispute. It is one of strategic importance for the whole working class and we have a right to expect and a duty to demand international class solidarity *especially* from those countries where our class has actually achieved state power.

We remind those comrades, especially *Straight Left*, who would probably denounce our fraternal criticism of the Polish Party, that Lenin was unequivocal in defining the tasks of proletarian internationalism as *firstly* fighting for socialist revolution in *one's own country* and *secondly*, to support this revolutionary line and *only* this line in every other country without exception. *Straight Left*, in their ironically aptly named section on 'Anti-Internationalism' in their 'Woods' pamphlet, grotesquely redefine proletarian internationalism as in "principle" meaning "deferring to a country's own Communist Party on questions mainly affecting it." (*The Crisis in our Communist Party — Cause, Effect and Cure*, p7). Thus presumably 'internationalism' for *Straight Left* means "deferring" to the French party when it expresses its support for an "independent" French nuclear deterrent or to 'comrade' Pol Pot when he bans books and *smiling* in Cambodia.

Yet, even with their hopelessly incorrect definition of proletarian internationalism, we ask *Straight Left* — is this question of Polish coal exports one "mainly effecting" the Polish state? Surely it has far wider implications for the international class struggle? Does Polish coal not 'affect' British miners? And isn't it interesting that the Soviet seamen's union has it says: "Since the very first days of the strike" taken steps "to prevent coal and later oil deliveries" to Britain.

So what is *Straight Left's* position? Will it in parallel with the principled proletarian internationalism of *The Leninist* sharply criticise our Polish comrades and call for them to follow the lead of the Soviet seamen? We challenge *Straight Left* to answer this question — your silence comrades will be a signal of your sell-out of the British and international working class, (including those you seek to defend). Your silence will speak volumes...

We have argued that the solution to Poland's seemingly intractable internal problems is for the healthy elements in the Party to turn from the

political *defensive* to the *offensive*; to rally the historically socialistic Polish working class to the banner of the Party in defence of socialism, both against Solidarnosc's black counterrevolution and against the bureaucratic distortions of the past. Imagine the impact of socialist Poland announcing its intention of not "honouring existing contractual obligations and international laws" which are being used by the bosses to sabotage the miners' struggle; declaring their unequivocal support for the strike; introducing a ban on coal exports to Britain while the miners are fighting it out; offering free holidays to miners' children to ease a little the severe pressures that these families must be facing; and campaigning amongst Polish workers for a levy to help the crucial struggle of their British class brothers and sisters. If the Polish Party took the lead in fighting for and organising these and other actions of real solidarity, it could have two effects.

*First* — the prestige and standing of living socialism would increase immeasurably in the eyes of workers in Britain and all over the world.

*Second* — amongst Polish workers themselves, who seem to have sullenly accepted the fact of the crushing of Solidarnosc, the Party could not be seen as a grey, repressive bureaucracy, but a living, dynamic organisation which uses its presence in Polish society to fight for workers interests both at home and abroad.

No doubt some comrades would argue that Poland, beset as it is by chronic economic problems, cannot 'afford' such gestures. But then, could the Soviet Union in 1926, bled white by civil war, struggling to overcome its legacy of extreme economic backwardness and the effects of imperialist encirclement 'afford' solidarity with the British miners? Let us put it another way — as a *socialist* country can Poland ultimately 'afford' to do otherwise?

Poland's problems can certainly never be solved by economic sops to the Polish workers, especially if they are won at the expense of scabbing on worker's struggles in other countries. The sooner our Polish comrades realise this the better for the defence and advancement of socialism in Poland and internationally.

We call on comrades in the Party and the Young Communist League (and we challenge *Straight Left* if they have any pretensions to be *revolutionaries*), to exercise one aspect of proletarian internationalism that has fallen into disuse — the right to fraternal criticism. In the spirit of the world movement to which we belong we ask comrades to send calls for the ending of this trade to the Polish United Workers' Party — as individual communists or as Party or League branches and organisations.

FOLLOWING the Liquidationist 38th Congress the new EC set about dealing with a small but irritating thorn in its backside — the national Teachers' Advisory. The latter body used to provide the focal point for centrist Party teachers, with the Euros opting out of its affairs, that is until a few months ago.

Party members inclined to reading the duller Party publications will have noticed the sudden transformation of the Teachers Advisory's journal *Education Today and Tomorrow*. The old-style *ETT* was until fairly recently under the editorship of ex-Primary Head — Ian Gunn, with the Straight Leftist Pat Turnbull as assistant editor. But in the wake of the 38th Congress the Party Industrial Department extracted the irksome 'thorn', replacing Gunn and Co with individuals more to its own Eurocommunist tastes. For unable and unwilling to defeat the centrists in an open way, they have turned to the tried and tested weapon of bureaucratic centralism to purge from the Advisory any with the slightest oppositionist tinge. The old editorial board was swept out and the centrists expunged from the National Education Committee (the Advisory).

The majority of Party members and no doubt teachers are quite unaware of all these goings-on, as the Executive Committee has made no attempt to discuss or explain their summary actions. Furthermore, protests from individual Party teachers and some branches cognisant of the EC's machinations have been simply knocked aside. Some of the purged have written reams only to receive one paragraph replies from the National Industrial Organiser.

But to one unacquainted with the inner-Party intrigues, the most visible indication of these events is the emergence of a new-look *ETT*. The first issue under the Euros control was produced in near total secrecy for the NUT Conference last Easter. Rumours suggest that the next edition of this anaemic *ETT* is not due to see the light of day until September. However, yet another publication appeared in the left bookshops (that is except Central Books whose Euro staff take on the role of censors) bearing a remarkable similarity to the old, pre-Euro *ETT*. Both in format and content *Education for Tomorrow* echoes its non-Euro predecessor, and surprise, surprise is edited by a certain Ian Gunn!

This overtly factional publication is openly sold by a number of Party teachers and was actually welcomed by the London Teachers Advisory newsletter; Ian Gunn being congratulated "on becoming editor of a new education journal". Not surprisingly, the Euro-led EC did not greet it with open arms but gave it the same treatment as *The Leninist*, they banned it from all Party bookshops.

There of course, the resemblance ends. *Eft* is as grey and uninspiring as the old *ETT*, and is almost guaranteed to be equally as ineffectual at winning militant teachers to communism and the Party. Apart from the fact that there is no mention of why or who produced it (which even fellow centrists have commented on) it characteristically for a centrist publication contains the usual turgid mix of sycophantic 'pro-Soviet' articles, pacifism and mind-numbing conservative defence of union bureaucracies. Space does not permit a full review of the contents of the two issues produced to date, but one question that sticks out like a sore thumb is the coverage of the central political struggle in Britain today — the miners strike. *Education for Tomorrow* No.1 (Spring '84) carried a typically pedestrian exposition of the centrist 'analysis' of that struggle. Hence we find such gross garbage as "British capitalism is intent on destroying whole major and basic areas of British industry", i.e. the usual approach of opportunists posing as the defenders of 'our' industry against the likes of 'madmen' like MacGregor. Not only was that article (by Frank Baker) superficial, it also completely failed to pose tasks for teachers as to how they

# The Teachers: HARD LESSONS

*Communist Party teachers now have the choice of two factional publications: the official 'Marxism Today' — style 'ETT' and Ian Gunn's ungainly beast looking like a three-legged foal from the 'Straight Left' stable. Both are good examples of the reformism rife within the CPGB, for both orientate themselves to the union bureaucracy rather than to militants.*

Tony Coughlin & Dave Curtis

might assist the miners heroic struggle. But perhaps we might have found this in the next edition? No, there is not one word on this nor on the miners fight in general in *Eft* No.2!! It seems that Gunn will continue to fire the same brand of blanks as he did when editor of *ETT*.

So Party teachers now have the choice of two factional publications, the official *Marxism Today*-style *ETT* and Gunn's ungainly beast looking like a three-legged foal from the *Straight Left* stable. Both are good examples of the reformism rife within our Party today, for both orientate themselves to the union bureaucracy rather than to militants.

The major instrument that Party teachers have put their energies into shaping is the crumbling Teachers Broad Alliance. This collection spanning from right-wing Labourites to Straight Leftist liquidationists has two functions; firstly to act as a cheerleader for the NUT Executive, and secondly to attempt to batter what they term 'ultra-leftism'. Having carved out such a niche in the NUT, the Party acts as a mainly rightist force. Not surprisingly, despite having a number of Communist Party members on the NUT Executive, the Party's impact is minimal amongst the mass of teachers compared with that of the petty bourgeois radical left.

The main left rank-and-file group in the NUT is the Socialist Teachers' Alliance, a collection of assorted ex-IMGers, members of the Socialist League and other Trotskyist or Trotskyist influenced sections of the Labour left. Its main rival is another petty-bourgeois left-radical group (which has no definable political ideology) centred around the London teachers leader Richard Rieser, this group lays claim to the tradition of the defunct SWP teachers group, taking the name Rank and File '83. Touting either syndicalism or left-Labourism, and pandering to pacifism and anti-Sovietism, neither group can offer a truly revolutionary position to militant teachers. But neither do the two main Communist Party teachers factions for

that matter. A graphic example of how those factions shun such a role is provided by the recent industrial action in pursuance of the pay claim.

Following the rejection of the paltry 4.5% pay offer, one day strikes, three day strikes and numerous other forms of action commenced throughout England and Wales. It must be remembered that over the years the NUT leadership had allowed both the absolute and relative (to other white-collar workers) wage levels to fall, but because of the rising tide of anger amongst teachers, this time were compelled to put up at least some sort of fight. In fact, NUT members responded enthusiastically in their thousands to the May 9 strike, and at some local association meetings the Executive motion was amended or replaced by a more militant one. Many thousands of teachers, especially young ones made calls for wider strike action, some even calling for an all out strike.

Not surprisingly the NUT Executive was taken aback at the veritable hornet's nest they had unleashed. Their aim was merely to permit strike action only in certain areas, to pressure the employers to go to arbitration, which they venerated as some sort of holy grail. Proposals for a levy of the whole NUT membership, to prepare for far more extensive industrial action, were therefore rejected by the Executive.

What then was the response from the Teachers Advisory and its Straight Leftist dominated shadow? Though in private, many of them agreed that arbitration was unlikely to give teachers any substantial increase, they nevertheless went along to union meetings and actually argued for the direction of teachers' energies to that end. Not only that, the Euros in the guise of the new Teachers Advisory, eager to flex its muscles and show lapdog-like devotion to the union bureaucracy, announced its plan to lobby the NUT in support of arbitration. And when arbitration was announced it was proclaimed by many Party opportunists as a victory! (Let us note that, to date, the arbitration panel has not even met and does not look like

doing so until late August.) As many pointed out, from the capitalist 'heavyweight' press to various left groups, arbitration is of no direct benefit to teachers and in fact, as we would maintain actually sets back a sustained campaign. Yet many Communist Party teachers found themselves not working to build on existing militancy but to dampen it down and divert teachers along the blind alley of arbitration.

Their reply to these arguments can usually be reduced to one little word which has for them an almost mystical quality — *unity*. Especially those around the centrist *Education for Tomorrow* we must add, for in the second (Summer '84) issue we are treated to a whole editorial on the theme. Apart from blatantly crass statements such as "the balance of class forces depends largely on the only weapon which is possessed by working people, and that is unity." (what about the level of class consciousness of the workers, and the political influence, ideological health and power of the communist vanguard? to name but a few questions avoided in this fatuous editorial) we are treated to the most ham-fisted attempt at 'ultra-bashing'. But amidst the huffing and puffing about some supposed "private war" being waged by the 'ultras' against their LEAs and so on, we discern Gunn's pathetic peashooter blasts on behalf of 'unity'. He argues against the flat rate demand of militant teachers (which would greatly benefit the 70% of teachers stuck on scales 1 and 2) on the basis that the "other unions" (presumably he means the NAS/UWT) would not support it. Has the fact that though some unions in an industry have not supported another union's strike, the strike has nevertheless gone on and been successful ever occurred to him? And much more to the point at the present time, what about the situation in the coalfields this March when, in a number of areas, ballots showed a minority of miners in favour of strike action? Did the NUM leadership call off the drive towards a national strike in the interests of 'unity'? Certainly not and rightly so!

The fact of the matter is that leading Party teachers have used the lowest common denominator idea of unity to tail behind the more backward sections of the NUT. Leninists affirm that the real basis for creating a fighting NUT is provided by building unity around militancy and the struggle for socialism. As a result of the rightist sins of many Communist Party teachers over a number of years, it is the radicals, the Trotskyists and other assorted petty bourgeois lefts who have increasingly made the running in the NUT, and therefore attracted young teachers to their politics, whereas the influence of our Party amongst rank and file teachers has undoubtedly seriously declined. In a period of growing class conflict and social crisis teachers will need real communist leadership in the struggle not just for pay but for revolution and socialism: Leninists will strive to win teachers for those struggles.

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## REVIEWS

## Councils of Action

Richard Hardy

Emile Burns *The General Strike 1926: Trades Councils in Action* 1926 Labour Research Department, London pp191\*.

AROUND the summer and autumn of 1926 the assessments and results of the nine day General Strike in May were beginning to be made. After 58 years today's working class movement and its Party are again confronted with a battle in the class war that sees the miners in the forefront. It is with this in mind that the lessons of 1926 must be viewed: how can we match and then surpass the levels of solidarity achieved by our class in that notable struggle? 58 years ago our Party did not hesitate in its duty before, during and after the General Strike; and in its aftermath, with the miners battling on alone, the Party fought tooth and nail to sustain them. It was a Party not averse to criticism of the trade union bureaucrats who led the General Strike to defeat, but maintained its combative spirit in defiance of them.

There was, in fact, very little preparation for the General Strike. Once the call for it had been issued, however, even formerly moribund Trades Councils revived. Because of a lack of central TUC preparation local initiative came to the fore, and it was in such circumstances that the involvement of members of the Communist Party produced the liveliest results. First and foremost an active body of the local trade union movement became a clearly seen necessity. Although their makeup varied many of these local coordinating bodies began

\*Reprinted by Lawrence & Wishart, London in 1975

## Communist Women

Rebecca Sachs

Carola Hansson and Karin Liden, *Moscow Women*, Allison and Busby, London 1983, pbk., pp.191, £3.95

AT FIRST glance this book looks like little more than a couple of bourgeois feminists relishing in 'secret' interviews from "behind the curtain of ideology and counter-ideology" — always a good anti-communist selling point. And indeed it is doubtful whether this book will challenge feminist prejudices about the Soviet Union. However, from the communist point of view the book is not without interest and despite irritating leading questions the interviews are not all from women saying what they think their interviewers want to hear.

It is unlikely that these 13 interviews are totally "representative" of Soviet women as the authors claim but nevertheless some of what they say reveals certain truths. There are serious problems facing women in the Soviet Union and these cannot be explained away, as the centrists in our Party attempt to do, by claiming that they are only 'minor' problems, questions of 'fine tuning'. Such an attitude only reveals the blockheaded approach of the centrists who reduce communism to "a question of who you trust" rather than what reality shows you. These



The 1926 TUC General Council: held back the Councils of Action and then sold them out

to reflect very early on the great needs of the working class in struggle. Most were determined to emulate the example provided in the summer of 1920 when workers organised for a general strike in defence of the Russian workers' republic and formed Councils of Action. Thus most local trade union bodies in 1926 took the name — Council of Action — for their form of working class coordination.

The Councils of Action went far beyond the scope of the Trades Councils. The Executive Committee of the Trades Council were joined by Strike Committee representatives from unions not affiliated to the Trades Council. In addition it was common to have representatives from the Labour Party, women's organisations, and sometimes the local cooperative society. As the days of the strike increased different Councils of Action were slower or quicker at bringing in different sections of the working class movement. This was of course an inevitability given the lack of preparation at national level.

One constant headache for the Councils of Action was that the instructions from the TUC General Council were too vague. Indeed, since instructions to local trade union leaders had to come from each particular union's head office, it was not surprising that the disruption in national communications caused by the strike delayed the issuing of local strike calls. The unfortunate fact was that the local Council of Action had no authority to act on its own and call out workers within its geographical area. Similarly, whenever doubts about any particular

instruction were raised the Council of Action was unable to settle the question. In all such cases it had to seek higher authority and try to expedite matters. The higher authority was either the headquarters of the union concerned or one of the national sub-committees set up by the TUC General Council. Given goodwill from local officials, though, the Council of Action in many cases was able to exert an influence and use its initiative to solve problems.

The importance of local initiative in the Councils of Action, or its absence, bore greatly on the effectiveness shown by each local Council. The TUC General Council had after all only given Trades Councils the task of supervision of the stoppage and charged them with "the responsibility of organising the trade unionists in dispute in the most effective manner for the preservation of peace and order". (p19)

## COMMITTEES SET UP

- Distress, Relief, Class War
- Prisoners' Aid
- Entertainments, Socials
- Finance
- Food, Prices
- \* Meetings, Propaganda
- Office Staff
- Organisation
- Permits
- Pickets, Rota
- \* Police, Defence Corps
- Public Committees
- \* Publicity, Information, Intelligence, Literature, Press, Publications
- Research

comrades transform communism into some sort of faith in everything the Soviet Party says and does — a concept to be rejected as totally un-materialist and as such un-Marxist. In truth comrades with this attitude do not even achieve what they purport to — defence of existing socialism.

A fundamental axiom of Marxism is that you can measure the advance of a society by the position of women in that society. This is as true of the Soviet Union as anywhere else. The Bolshevik revolution granted women full equality. In contrast to the rest of the world women were granted full political and legal rights of equality with men, and more than any government had ever done was done by the Bolsheviks to ensure women's access to all forms of work. In 1920, 67% of the Russian population was illiterate and 76% of those were women; the latter now dominate the scientific profession and the proportion of women studying and actually practising 'male' professions (engineering, technology, medicine) is beyond comparison with any other country in the world.

Nevertheless, to claim that women have achieved full equality in the Soviet Union, as the CPSU does, is clearly a case of burying their heads in the sand. Our Soviet comrades project formal equality as genuine 'full' equality, a reflection of the fact that the Soviet Party also presents its present level of formal socialism not as such but as 'advanced' socialism. This near endemic official optimism presents what are in effect retreats as great achievements or even principles. For example, when introduced the 'Heroic Mother' award for having ten children could be defended as a necessary retreat given the massive loss of Soviet

citizens during the Second World War, but the real problem is that what should have been a short term method of encouraging women to have children still exists as opposed to any longer term plan which would alleviate the burden that each additional child still brings to Soviet women in the form of domestic work and absorbing spare time.

The major factor acting against the achievement of equality for women in the Soviet Union is the fact that they have not been liberated from housework, what Lenin described "barbaric, unproductive, petty, enervating, stupefying, and depressing." It was for this reason that the Bolsheviks advocated the socialisation of domestic labour — something that has been almost completely ignored by the modern CPSU but for which there is a desperate need:

"In general our women don't want to stay at home...It would be ideal if a woman could work and have freedom of movement and some time to herself, even if she had several children. But then she'd need some household help. Day-care centres are no solution. They give women the option to work, but no free time. When women come home they're still bound to the household chores." (Interviewee, *Moscow Women*, p.77) Yet the Soviet Party seems completely oblivious to these contradictions, so much so that they can declare that women have full equality in the Soviet Union at the same time as Brezhnev could write "A good woman is also a good housewife."

Instead of facing these problems squarely the CPSU has retreated

Sports  
\* Transport, Dispatch, Messengers, Lines of Communication  
Vital Services  
Women's

\* Constituting the four "more important committees" (p25).

It is most interesting to see the range of committees set up by Councils of Action around Britain. And these were not in the main paper committees: each had its function and was responsible to the parent Council, to which regular reports were given. Lack of information was seen as a great danger to the strike's solidarity, since all government efforts were directed to utilising the new BBC and its own rag to demoralise workers through lies and fabrications. The TUC's own *British Worker*, stodgy and ill-fed with reformism, was often supplemented or even supplanted by local strike bulletins. The effectiveness of these local efforts can be measured from the frequent reports of seizure and prosecution by the police. Distribution of the local bulletins or contact with TUC HQ could only be achieved by means of a courier service, most often organised by the local Council of Action, though on occasion the larger Councils also aided less well organised localities (for example, in the West Midlands).

However, it was in setting up committees to look after workers' defence that the influence of communists was most strongly seen. Not only were the Councils most influenced by reformism rather unprepared for state action against their operations, but in some areas of the country there was even collaboration with the police who had been sent against them. This was taken as far as providing the whole force of Special Constables in Lincoln, where "perfect order was kept" (p137). Where the Council was influenced by communists class collaboration of this kind was kept at bay. Such was the case in Methil, Fife where 700 lightly armed men protected pickets and kept a proletarian 'peace', untroubled by police attack.

ideologically by presenting not just physical differences between the sexes as being biologically determined but also psychological ones. Thus women have psychological characteristics which make them more 'suitable' for certain tasks and less 'suitable' for other usually more demanding tasks. So although women have made great progress in employment and are politically active at the local level, where the vital decisions are made women are visible by their absence. Only 26.5% of the Party membership are women, out of 320 members of the Central Committee only 8 are women and there are no women in the Politburo and the Council of Ministers.

Hansson and Liden, the authors of *Moscow Women*, look at these developments as bourgeois feminists rather than as communists and therefore somewhat predictably make a call for a women's movement similar to Western models in the Soviet Union. But for those that want to defend and advance socialism in the Soviet Union it is plain that such a movement would only serve to sectionalise the women's question rather than advance women's interests. No, the answer lies with the Communist Party. It is the duty of the CPSU not to rest easy on platitudes about the full achievement of women's equality but to actively continue the job the Bolsheviks started by initiating a programme for the socialisation of domestic labour. Until this is done the path of women's liberation in the Soviet Union is blocked; women are prevented from achieving in full what one of the interviewees in *Moscow Women* presented as her ideal:

"To be part of shaping the Communist human being is what I want to do most of all." (p. 123)

# Women's Support Committees

## WOMEN STRIKE BACK

Rebecca Sachs

IN BARNSELEY on May 12 at a demonstration by 10,000 miners' wives against pit closures Arthur Scargill triumphantly declared "our women are not just helping the men in the kitchen — they're with the men on the picket lines." Now women's participation in the strike has reached such a widespread level that a national demonstration of women's support committees is being organised. This transition in women's role from passively serving out soup to participating in militant picket lines is no trifling matter. It is an important development which must be applauded as an advance not only for the miners fight but also the class struggle in general.

When large numbers of flying pickets were arrested in Nottinghamshire and were forced to sign a declaration to the effect that they would not return many of their wives took the unprecedented decision to go in their place, and angrily confronted scabs and pro-scab wives. Spontaneously, incensed women have organised demonstrations outside social security offices and electricity boards which are aiding Thatcher in her attempts to starve striking families into submission. In one particular instance women formed a picket around houses where electricity was due to be cut off and convinced the workers who had come to cut off the electricity not to cross the picket line. These women have also shown strength and resourcefulness in providing food for striking families, in distributing food parcels and in negotiating credit in local shops.

In this way women have been drawn into activity and have become far more politically aware than would have been possible if they had remained atomised in the home waiting for their husbands to return from picket duty. In the event women have come to see their role in the strike as more than supportative; they see the strike as just as much their fight as the miners'. As a result the women have asserted their rights to be involved on strike committees and have met with some success although this process has not gone nearly far enough — it is after all vital that women participate fully in all class organisations.

The importance of such women's involvement cannot be over-emphasised. The support of women for the class struggle is a key to its success, and an enormous danger is presented to the struggle by women who are isolated from it. Because of women's role in capitalist society they are either isolated in the home or, as workers and mothers, often do not become active in unions. Cut off from others in similar circumstances women are alienated from working class struggle and therefore from working class consciousness.

However, with male and female workers struggling courageously side by side victory can be ours. The strength of such unity was felt by one miner's wife when she said "If this government thinks this fight is just against the miners then they'd better think again...I'll say this to the government...Men, women and families are together now and you've got one hell of a fight on your hands." The valiant roles women

have played in revolutionary struggles in the past bears witness to this. In 1917 the spark which actually fired the Russian Revolution was a strike by women textile workers. This revolution planted the most powerful blow against women's oppression ever struck.

In order to ensure this type of success the Third Congress of Comintern made clear the necessity of strengthening "the will of working women by drawing them into all forms and types of civil conflict"; the experience of conflict has indeed strengthened the resolve of miners' wives, in many cases groups of supporting women have stated that their motivation to take militant action came from seeing at first hand the way the police acted. For example, a group of women from Thurscoe in South Yorkshire were travelling down to Ollerton in Nottinghamshire to set up a soup kitchen when they were stopped, harassed and held by police in their bus for two hours:

"After a couple of hours of this, we decided that if we were going to be treated by the police like flying pickets then we might as well be flying pickets. We had only been trying to set up a soup kitchen! So we walked to Herworth pit, three miles away." (Quoted in *Socialist Organiser*, May 3 1984).

Such acts of militancy by the miners' wives present a real threat to the ruling class. The typical media images of the passive wife at home pleading with her husband to be 'reasonable', to put his family before loyalty to his union, his workmates and his class are undermined by the action of the miners' wives. The beginning of the miners' strike saw a standard piece of stage management by the media in the 'gunning for Scargill' scene where one pro-scab wife was pictured brandishing a toy pistol against Scargill. But these tactics misfired in that much of the activity by miners' wives was fuelled by anger at such media stage management. They wanted to make it clear that they would only save the future of their families by backing the strike. Of course the ruling class have ignored the role of women in backing the miners' struggle, reducing the Barnsley demonstration, for example, to a picture of Arthur Scargill being kissed by a woman. The fact that the media belittle the actions of the women is an indication of the fact that the capitalist class is threatened by their active support for the strike.

Not surprisingly the miners' wives have no illusions about the police and indeed the police have made it clear that they recognise the added strength the women give to the strike and consequently they have doled out the same treatment to the women as to the miners: "no lady-like treatment for us. We are even being accused of head-butting those great seven foot tall coppers." (Miners' wife quoted in *The Guardian*, May 28 1984). How would these women relate to that outspoken Eurocommunist Bea Campbell who, after the NGA dispute, declared that the violence used by pickets at Warrington did not present the 'public' with a good image of workers and that this violence was in reality little more than a reflection of a macho attitude. Janie Glen, defending comrade Campbell's view added insult to injury by stating that she could not

imagine "two large groups of men with opposing views and objectives coming together without such violence erupting." So far the Euros have kept quiet about the violence during the miners' strike but when it ends they will be throwing similar accusations at the miners.

Will the working class women who have taken part in this struggle agree with their attack on working class violence? Is it such bourgeois feminist nonsense which has motivated them? Something that the miners' wives understand but that the Euros with their petty bourgeois sensitivities patently reject is that these conflicts are not between groups of males but between the ruling class and the working class. Comrade Campbell can afford to advocate non-violence but the working class, male or female, do not have the luxury of abstaining from conflict — they are forced to take sides. For this reason we would argue that not only should women support the violence of their male comrades against the bourgeois state but that women should be actively involved in forming and working within Workers Defence Corps. Comrade Campbell, by attacking the violence of the unarmed working class against the armed state, objectively takes the side of the bourgeoisie.

The Euros in the CPGB are constantly trying to draw parallels between the miners' wives and the Greenham women and how the miners' wives and the miners themselves can learn tactics from Greenham. Such connections are dangerous diversions; if the miners were to go 'floppy' on the police they would get their heads kicked in. Unlike Greenham the miners and their wives present a real threat to the bourgeoisie; when Vicky Seddon asked a miners' wife about the possibility of using Greenham tactics on the picket line (*Marxism Today*, July 1984) the answer was that this was impossible "The police just come like swarms of bees." The Greenham women represent little more than a nuisance to the ruling class and if they were anything more, have no doubt the fact that they are women would not stop the state's thugs from using violence against them.

The Greenham women also do not even present a threat to the conventional image of women but, on the contrary, emphasise stereotyped role as life-givers and glorify the myth of female congenital non-violence. By contrast the Tories recognise the challenge that the militancy of the miners' wives present because of the strength given by their support. Thatcher is living proof that there are no universal 'women's interests' but only class interests. She talks of a return to Victorian values, of the importance of women in the home, of women's traditionally 'peaceful' role; this is selective. The women of Thatcher's class can afford to buy their freedom in the form of nannies, expensive laundries and 'dailies', while they pursue interesting jobs or go shopping in Harrods. Thatcher rules in the interests of her class and certainly not for 'women'. She has no qualms about unleashing her thugs on the miners or the women who support them.

The fact that violence erupts on picket lines is a class question and is

not a result of 'maleness'; but this does not mean that chauvinism does not exist within the workers' movement. We must fight the prejudices against women held by most male workers and increase the awareness of working men and women that they have common interests. The role of women in the miners strike is a very positive development in this direction. Unlike the petty bourgeois RCP who choose to emphasise the negative attitudes these women are encountering we view the militant intervention of miners' wives as a positive challenge to these attitudes and as the stirrings of a proletarian women's movement. The very fact that women are taking a militant role in the struggle, that they are organising themselves, that they are often defying reluctant husbands and trade union officials, and that husbands are minding children while their wives attend support committee meetings — these are important developments.

One strike does not a movement make but it gives us a glimpse of what the future could bring. Communists need to be working to consolidate these positive developments, to give a lead to this spontaneous militancy of working class women to ensure that it is not dissipated. We need to adopt the slogan used by the Third Congress of Comintern "agitation and propaganda through action". This means encouraging the self activity of women, dispelling the doubts they have about their own abilities and drawing them into practical work around struggle on a general basis. We must show working class women through experience that every step in reorganising the Communist Party, every action directed against the exploitation of capital, is a blow struck against women's oppression.

The demonstration of women's support committees is a step in this direction but we cannot just be self-congratulatory, we must take the struggle a qualitative stage forward. Scabs' wives may be gunning for Scargill but the mass of miners' wives are gunning for victory — they have to be armed with a clear strategy for that victory. We should fight to ensure the active participation of women in spreading the strike to other industries; the working class is facing a concerted, well orchestrated, class offensive from the bourgeoisie — we cannot fight with one hand tied behind our backs. We say strike back with the miners. Fight back with the united workers' offensive.

The August 11 demonstration represents women that have been awakened to the class struggle and they must not be allowed to go back to sleep after the miners' fight, whatever the outcome. The aim from this demonstration must be the formation of a working class women's movement. This movement should exist to support all struggles of the working class, and to organise an offensive against the capitalist attempts to tie women to the home.

To strengthen the fight for the day-to-day interests of working class women and to achieve communism — under which women can at last find true liberation, a powerful vanguard party is needed. That is why we call upon all class conscious women to join the Communist Party, join it and the struggle to reforge it.