



# Cracks appear in 'Cool Britannia'

The love-in with New Labour has  
turned sour - and angry

**T**ony Blair has conducted a ruthless crusade in his determination to forge a New Britain. This 'revolution' from above has been planned, conducted and engineered by a veritable army of spin doctors, PR consultants, advertising and media contacts, etc. Inspired by Bill Clinton and the vapid razzmatazz that is official politics, no gimmick or PR opportunity is missed - nothing is too shameful or embarrassing.

It is fair to say that New Labour is obsessed by the power of image and by the capitalist art of marketing. Tony Blair and his team have sought to wrap themselves with an aura of youthful vibrancy - a cosmetic distancing from the old fogey-ist culture of 'the establishment'. For the Blairites it was essential for New Labour to tap into and appropriate youth culture - and popular culture in general. One fertile territory, naturally, was music. The rising stars and heroes of Britpop had to be courted. (Many of the young Blairites instinctively feel, no doubt including The Great Leader himself, more at home with popular culture than the bourgeois-dominated high culture of opera, classical music, ballet, etc).

This does not make Blair unique. The Harold Wilson government similarly attempted to associate itself with the mop-topped optimism of the Beatles and their devoted followers. High-profile publicity shots of Wilson joking with members of the fab four sent out the message that we were witnessing a rebirth of Labour - the 'white heat' of technology aligned with the semi-hysteria of Beatlemania. Britain was back on the map - and it was *hip this time*.

The rise of Oasis, Pulp, Blur, Radiohead, The Verve, Prodigy, etc, has also been seen as the dawn of a new Britain, a Cool Britannia - under a Britpop-New Labour consensus. Noel Gallagher of Oasis, an unashamed and open 'druggie', visited No10. The catholic-church attending Tony Blair warmly embraced Gallagher. Gallagher, like virtually all the Britpopers, treated Blair as a conquering hero, a righteous paladin who had slayed the dread Tory beast. Blair seemed on the buzz. It was no accident that he did not invite members of Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull or Black Sabbath to his post-victory jamborees.

Everything seemed to be going Blair's way. Stories appeared in the music press about Blair's guitar-playing proclivities. Mat Snow, editor of the 'fourtysomething' music magazine *Mojo*, recounted his days with Blair in their university rock band, Ugly Rumours. Blair as sub-Mick Jagger. Thanks to the Britpop-ers, New Labour was linked with success "by simply coopting the most superficial elements of a notional Cool Britannia", as Sean O'Hagan wrote in *The Guardian* (March 13).

But things have started to go horribly wrong. Cracks are appearing in the synthetic Cool Britannia monolith.

First it was John Prescott, a living symbol of uncool Britannia. At a Britpop award ceremony in February he had a bucket of water thrown over him by Danbert Nobacon of the anarchist band, Chumbawamba.

Nobacon's act of liquid terrorism was on behalf of "single mothers, pensioners, sacked dockworkers, people being forced into workfare, people who will be denied legal aid, students who will be denied the free university education that the entire front bench benefited from, the homeless and all the underclasses who are now suffering at the hands of the Labour government".

Then at the end of last week we had the vicious - and articulate - attack on Blair by *New Musical Express*. For good or bad, *NME* remains a key arbiter of pop-cultural taste. Its core readership is young(ish), predominantly white, male and urban. To alienate this constituency could spell trouble for New Labour. This *NME* assault must have dealt a stinging blow to the Tony Blair image department - and to the whole Cool Britannia project. For once Martin Jacques, former editor of *Marxism Today*, got it right when he described the *NME* editorial as "the most important political event this week" (*The Observer* March 15).

The *NME* front page was pasted with the headline, "Ever had the feeling you've been cheated?" - alongside a large picture of a distinctly mean looking Tony Blair. The contents reflected the cover. The editorial, entitled 'The Labour government's war on you', damned the whole gamut of New Labour's initiatives: welfare to work, tuition fees, curfews and the war



Royal pop: Expropriated for Blair's project

on drugs. The approach of New Labour to drugs, for instance, is denounced as the living negation of 'coolness'.

As *NME* says: "Our music, our culture, our collective sweat of our groovy brows has been bundled up and neatly repackaged and given a cute little brand name and is being used by New Labour spin doctors to give this hideously reactionary New Labour government a cachet of radical credibility. A credibility of which is utterly undeserving".

In the light of Prescott's watery ordeal, the magazine concludes with a warning: "But New Labour might be better advised to treat the soaking as a warning from us all. As a warning

that New Labour's honeymoon is over. That rock music's decades-old, instinctive and deep-seated pro-Labour sympathies have, in the past nine months, been chipped away to almost nothing. Good morning, Mr Blair, this is your wake up call" (original emphasis, March 14).

Blair's former supporters are now turning into opponents - which is more than can be said for the SWP. In *NME* we read about Alan McGee of Creation Records and general New Labour consultant. He headed the Music Industry Task Force and donated £50,000 to New Labour's election campaign. McGee is appalled by New Labour's welfare-to-work schemes, whereby musicians - he singles them

out - have to take *any* employment offered. "Labour is making it worse for musicians". McGee points out: "I was on an Enterprise Allowance Scheme for a year after I worked on British Rail and that's how I got Creation together in 1983. If I had been forced to take a job then I would probably still be at British Rail now".

According *NME* New Labour's general attack on benefits threatens to obliterate the next generation of artists. The dole was a primitive form of arts subsidy. Without it, it would have been impossible for artists to emerge and nurture their talent - which takes *time*. It is no accident that the new wave of Britpop emerged when it did. After years of mass unemployment under the Tories. In a statement to the *NME*, The Verve echoed the point: "Of course we were on the sole when we left college. We needed just enough money to live on whilst we got it together. We wrote a lot of the first album during that time. You need time and space to grow as a band or, come to think of it, in any art form".

Gordon Brown's budget speech on Tuesday intensified the objectively philistine, anti-working class measures inaugurated by the Tories - and now being perfected by New Labour. Brown intends to drive working class youth into jobs by bribing the bosses to take on the long-term unemployed. From June they will receive a subsidy from the state of £75 a week for each new worker employed. As *The Guardian* semi-approvingly put it: "Work has acquired ideological status ... New Labour is all about encouraging aspiration, however lowly, rather than cushioning under-privilege, however chronic". It concluded that Blair and Brown have "the faith that people can be *made to want to work*" (March 18). Farewell to art and culture from below - if they get their way.

We have argued in this paper that over this coming period, splits from above should be expected - the Countryside Alliance march and Diana's funeral demonstrated that. But splits emerging in Cool Britannia could be particularly dangerous for New Labour. Whilst Britpop musicians may not be humble now, most of them are from humble origins. These bands, through their music and the very fact of success, exert influence - the songs have resonance amongst working class youth. If records of Blur, Oasis, The Verve, etc, become informed by a spirit of strident anti-Blairism ... who knows? ●

Danny Hammill

This line 5mm beyond crop

# Party notes

## Good morning, judge

A number of comrades currently embroiled in industrial action against the *Morning Star* have commented with some bitterness on the crassly bureaucratic approach of the despised Rosser-Hicks "North Korean" dynasty and their various cohorts. True, there is nothing even remotely communist about these people. Their culture, bearing and mindset reek of arrogant (and inept) capitalist managers.

Perhaps the most ugly example of this so far popped out of the mouth of Mary Rosser when she told Carolyn Jones - management committee member and Institute of Employment Rights director - "you're not here to put the union case. You're not here to defend the editor. You're here to uphold the management's right to manage" (quoted in *Weekly Worker*, February 26).

The contrast with how the Communist International wrote of a workers' paper could not be starker. In a resolution of July 12 1921 it underlined that such an organ must be "a proletarian fighting organisation, an association of revolutionary workers, of all its regular contributors, type-setters, printers, administrators, distributors and sellers ..." (*Theses, resolutions and manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International* London 1983, p252). Clearly these types of reciprocal political ties, which in turn generate their own morality and culture within an undertaking such as publishing a paper for the movement, simply do not exist at the *Star*. You may as well speak Martian to people with the politics of Rosser and Hicks.

Yet the journalists on the *Star* - many of them members of the Communist Party of Britain - are unfortunately guilty of having connived with these attitudes. The comrades even upheld precisely the same sort of bureaucratically formal, capitalistic norms when they perceived that some narrow political advantage was to be gained from it.

Thus, it strikes us as a little ironic to read comments in the strikers' bulletin that "the NUJ chapel is fighting to save the *Morning Star* from dynastic dictatorship for the movement to which it truly belongs" (quoted in *Weekly Worker* February 26). Surely it cannot just be ourselves that find, when comrade Haylett calls on this management team to "put loyalty to the movement before loyalty to cliques or individuals", it jars a little?

After all, the CPB was set up essentially as a support group for the bureaucratic rebellion of elements of the management of the *Morning Star* against the then Eurocommunist dominated leadership of the CPGB in the mid-1980s. Rebellion would have been a fine thing if it had been motivated by a healthy desire to defend revolutionary politics against the poison of the Euros. In fact, it was precipitated by the fears for their jobs of the likes of grey, deeply conservative apparatchiki like Rosser and Tony Chater (then editor) should the Euros seize control of the *Star* as they had *Marxism Today*, the Party's 'trendy' theoretical journal.

Yet a layer of the centrist opposition within Party - which later decamped into the CPB - rushed to support this rebellion with no political conditions on the management of the paper, despite the fact that they had a record almost as bad as the Euros.

Typically, throughout the rebellion of the *Star* Rosser and Chater studiously avoided a principled political fight against the CPGB leadership. With the support of the centrists, they fought out the battle using exactly the same type of narrow legalism that they now try to employ against Haylett.

Perhaps most famously (and disgustingly) they described the CPGB - the organisation that had set up, maintained and sacrificed for the paper throughout its existence - as an "outside" body (*Morning Star* June 1 1983). A few days later, they were denouncing the Party as "a powerful pressure group" exerting "undue influence". Characteristically, they proposed fighting the political challenge of the Euros in the only way that seems to occur to these time-servers - with changes to the rulebook. Such a modification would apparently "prevent a recurrence of the present situation" (*Morning Star* June 4 1983).

This paper, and the organisation that supports it, says that the fight of the *Star* workers against this oppressive management is principled and deserves support. Yet comrades, where were you when we were threatened by exactly the same narrow legalism of these people?

In the *Weekly Worker* of March 5, I reminded readers about the time these self-same bureaucrats threatened our leadership with the courts, bankruptcy and possible imprisonment. Our crime? A trial relaunch of the *Daily Worker* in 1992 to serve the struggle for communism in the April 9 general election (see Jack Conrad *In the enemy camp* London 1993, pp116-118). We received a threatening letter from solicitors acting on behalf of the management committee of the PPPS (the cooperative that formally owns the *Morning Star*): "It has come to the notice of our clients that you have commenced publishing a newspaper also entitled *Daily Worker*, the copyright in the title clearly belongs to our clients as can be evidenced by documents going back many years. Our clients are not prepared to grant permission for the use of the title by yourselves.

"Unless we hear from you ... within the next three working days that you will desist from using the title ... proceedings will be taken out against you without further notice for an injunction to halt publication forthwith" (Letter March 30, 1992).

Our reply in fact came a few days later, when a team of our CPGB comrades occupied the *Morning Star* offices.

The CPB was set up as a *Morning Star* supporters' group. The question of programme and political principle (the essence of the fight waged by our trend within the Party) was viewed as uncomfortable luggage, to be dumped at the first convenient opportunity. Now, the logic of these unprincipled politics comes back to haunt the CPB and perhaps threaten the very existence of the group itself. Sooner or later comrades, unprincipled politics always do ●

Mark Fischer  
national organiser

## Petty politics

I wish to make a brief 'reply' to Jan Berryman's tiresome article in last week's *Weekly Worker* (March 12). It is only a 'reply' because comrade Berryman has deigned my article ('Clique politics' *Weekly Worker* February 26) unworthy of comment.

Apparently, I am just some ruffian doing comrade John Bridge's 'dirty work'. Well, if that is the case, you are doing comrade Rock's 'dirty work'. So, one ruffian to another ... Comrade Berryman fails to address the substantive political points I raised about the nature of clique politics on the SLP left. He fails to even mention the fact that the entire Socialist Perspectives/Swindon statement project was predicated on the exclusion of suspected CPGB sympathisers in the SLP from day one.

Instead, comrade Berryman collapses into the petty politics of which he accuse John Bridge. He is responding to one "offending paragraph" in which he compares the role Carolyn Sikorski played as SLP doorkeeper to the role played by Lee Rock as Socialist Perspectives doorkeeper. The rest of the article dealt with other matters.

I return to the clique politics which prevails among the left. Apparently Jan Berryman accepts such practices. Comrade Jan points out the shenanigans of comrade Wicks in manoeuvring to have the meeting on his terms, with his agenda, against the democratic decisions of the previous Democratic Platform meeting. He then writes: "The [January 10] meeting would then split in two. Those remaining in the SLP would meet to discuss the way forward for the SLP. At the same time the 'exit faction' would meet to set up their new group ... The plan was known to all participants at the meeting".

Was it? You may have known, but this 'plan' was never outlined in the meeting. I for one, although having been at the last Democratic Platform meeting, was never even sent a mail-out by comrade Wicks. The meeting of the so-called 'exit faction' was billed as open to those who wanted to build a mass, pluralistic, democratic workers' party outside the SLP - no more, no less. Comrades John and Stan attended on this basis and were excluded for factional not political reasons. Not very pluralistic.

I believe that the comrades attended with honourable intentions. If the meeting felt it necessary to secure commitments about how the meeting was reported, or not, in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*, that could have been discussed. Comrade Rock knows very well that it is a possible route to take. It is an undertaking he got from me when I managed to attend the Democratic Platform meetings against the wishes of its self-appointed secretary, Martin Wicks, to whom I had to lie as I have to lie to Arthur Scargill.

The comrades cannot expect us to wear the fact that they have established their broad, pluralistic organisation on the basis of excluding communists.

Terry Watts  
London

## In defence

Jan Berryman, who wrote recently 'In defence of Lee Rock' (Letters *Weekly Worker* March 12 1998), is sadly mistaken. There is, it has to be said, legitimate doorkeeping and there is witch hunting: Jan obscures the difference.

As someone who also attended the Reading meeting convened by the then acting secretary of the SLP Democratic Platform, Martin Wicks, my experience there of Lee Rock was decidedly unpleasant.

After the combined meeting's 'indicative' vote showed a majority of participants in favour of leaving the SLP, I stayed on in the room where the majority was about to discuss its future. I wanted to engage directly and posi-

tively with those of my SLP comrades seemingly set on leaving. Surely there was nothing in the 'indicative' vote to prevent this. But it was not to be, at least not if comrade Rock had anything to do with it.

As the exit faction's meeting was about to start, comrade Rock approached together with comrade Wicks, who had just been chatting amicably with me. Comrade Wicks's manner changed; Lee Rock flatly accused me of being a sympathiser of the CPGB and they told me to leave. This accusation was a naked witch hunting action instigated by Lee Rock. Neither man was interested in hearing an explanation of my reasons for staying in the exit faction's meeting. I was, in their view, simply a CPGB supporter and just had to go: some communists could not be tolerated, it seemed.

Comrade Rock's initiative against me took place before any objections were made to the presence of two other communists, John and Stan, who are criticised by Jan. They had not yet entered the room, as I recollect. Disgusted at comrade Rock's behaviour and to prevent disruption of the exit faction's meeting due to his actions, I left. Lee Rock's witch hunting was little different from what I have experienced in the SLP from Fiscite ultra-sectarians, who levelled exactly the same charge of 'CPGBer' to exclude me illegitimately from SLP meetings.

Lee Rock is in danger of becoming just as anti-communist as ex-Fiscite Martin Wicks. And these men call their project "pluralistic"! Whatever they are, whatever their pretext, and whatever their record (previously admirable in Lee Rock's case), once they stoop to witch hunting any brand of communist - amongst whose serried and presently disunited ranks I am proud to stand - such comrades dishonour themselves and risk becoming the opposite of what they formerly espoused. You cannot target, exclude, and attempt to persecute only this or that communist, whether or not 'tainted' by association with the CPGB, and avoid being labelled witch hunter and anti-communist. The method is wrong, the politics are wrong, and the witch hunting 'doorkeeper' becomes an object of criticism for all communists, CPGB supporters or not. As the song says, 'Which side are you on?'

Colin Ansell  
East London

## At any price

I would like to challenge the current lack of action by the CPGB and the *Weekly Worker* when we face the loss of the *Morning Star*. It is the only daily paper - there is no other communist/socialist daily paper - to carry on printing the workers' news for the people to read and take action on against the capitalist bosses and management today.

It is time the CPGB and the communist movement rallied around in London and the regions to start building a communist movement for action. There is a real need for a daily paper to be back on the streets - even if it costs anything from 25p (for pensioners and unemployed) and 50p for those working, and a supporters'/solidarity price' (each copy could be £1?).

How much does it really cost to print and publish a newspaper of eight pages starting twice a week (Wednesday and Saturday for a weekend edition)? The time is now, the time is right to gather the communist tendency, our trade union comrades and make contact with our movement again. The poor, the unemployed, single parents, etc, deserve a stronger Communist Party in Britain.

The *Star* has its own dispute and problems but is still the daily paper of the left and is also run by the CPB, who do a good job to keep it going each day - but they are only a part of our communist movement. We have no *Daily Worker* (the daily paper of the CPGB),



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed.

and not even a *Daily Herald* or *Daily Tribune* which can report on behalf of the labour movement.

Please start a 'Daily Worker' fighting fund/appeal to raise money for a new paper which could at least try to print and publish a few times a week, so the Communist Party can have a decent paper to help re-build our movement.

We must make this happen even if it is only a new once-a-week paper to complement the *Weekly Worker* - to help organise the Party. Comrades, unite and help us fund a communist daily paper to be proud of when all others have walked away - given up before they even started to try and change the world for socialism, peace and freedom.

Andrew McGarity  
South London

## Plain daft

I was appalled - and not a little amused - by Jack Conrad's front page article on the London referendum, 'Boycott Blair referendum' (March 12). However, I was not suprised by comrade Conrad's arguments. Infantile leftism seems to have become the hallmark of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The form it takes at the moment is abstentionist or boycottist mania. Firstly, in its wisdom, the CPGB PCC decides to boycott the Scottish referendum. In the pursuit of lofty and noble principles (surprise, surprise - the referendum/election was not a model of working class democracy) the CPGB comrades effectively turned their backs on the democratic aspirations of the Scottish people.

OK, OK - it did not seem that unreasonable at the time. The CPGB and the *Weekly Worker* reassured that abstentionism/boycottism was not a principle. Just a tactic, right? And as we all know, tactics vary and change according to circumstances.

Then comes along the London referendum. Surely entirely different - especially if you believe the CPGB's analysis of Scotland. In Scotland there was mass discontent and disaffection with the Blair/Dewar proposals - a "latent" anger, as the *Weekly Worker* put it, which could have found expression on the streets. Blair's Scottish parliament was a sop designed to quieten the masses.

This is clearly not the case with the referendum which is proposed for London. No mass - latent or otherwise - desire for 'London self-determination'. No anger. No self-activity. In essence, passivity reigns - therefore no sop required. It only seems logical - given these circumstances, that any change can only be for the good. A Greater London Authority is a democratic advance - of sorts. Yes, even if it is copied more or less from the United States.

Indeed, as Jack Conrad says himself: "There is no mass movement in London, latent or otherwise, which at the present time is committed, or yearns for something higher than the gimmick Blair has on offer" (March 12).

Yet, after saying that, up pops the CPGB leftism - 'Boycott the referendum'! All this will do is reinforce the 'anti-politics' consciousness of Londoners. Sure, fight for an all-London Democratic Assembly, armed soviets, whatever you damned well want. Why not? But boycotting the actual May 7 referendum is plain daft. Take yourselves a bit more seriously, comrades.

It is about time that the CPGB got a dose of Leninist politics and started to reappraise its political strategy and tactics - if not its whole worldview.

Andy McPherson  
Edinburgh

This line 5mm beyond crop



From The Call, paper of the  
British Socialist Party,  
March 14 1918

## A double anniversary

Once again March 17 is with us and our thoughts turn to that historic incident in Paris in 1871, which will ever live in the annals of the struggle of the world's workers for emancipation.

For the first time in history the working people made a conscious effort to gain power for themselves. That is the great significance of the Paris Commune ... When the workers in Paris in 1871 raised the standard of revolt it was to rally the workers to the last fight against oppression and exploitation. It was a struggle not for a class, but to abolish classes, a struggle for social and economic equality. It was the first uprising of the proletariat for the overthrow of capitalism and for the establishment of socialism ...

But the day is for us also one of sad memories ... The bloody butcher Gallifet, of cursed memory, murdered in cold blood over 100,000 men, women and children before the vengeance of the bourgeoisie was appeased. Have you forgotten this, Messieurs Thomas, Guesde and Renaudel [French anti-Bolshevik socialist leaders], since you denounce our Russian comrades?

... This week we celebrate a double anniversary. Twelve months ago the Russian workers, peasants and soldiers overthrew the bloody and treacherous tsarism and established the rule of the workers. The same ideas that inspired our comrades in Paris in March 1871 inspired also our comrades in Petrograd in March 1917. But the Russian Revolution is on a much larger scale. Its effect is immeasurably greater. It has shaken the capitalist order to its very foundations.

Whatever happens in the immediate future, the revolution has profoundly modified the course of future development of the working class movement in all lands. Furthermore the revolution has completely mastered the whole of Russia. For the first time in history the triumph of the workers has been complete. The Russian Revolution can only be crushed from without.

... Remembering the savagery of the bourgeoisie in 1871, the mind shivers with horror at the fate of our heroic comrades of Russia if the wild dogs of international capitalism get them in their grip. In 1871 German workers were very weak. Liebknecht and Bebel could do no more than protest. But today the German workers can save Russia and emancipate themselves. Their duty lies before them.

And the workers of the other countries? On them too rests the responsibility to foil the plans of the imperialists. The triumph of reaction in Russia will give a new lease of life to decrepit capitalism. The great work commenced in Paris in 1871, continued in Russia in 1917, must be completed by the workers in all countries, and set the world free forever ●

# 1918

Russian Revolution  
this week 80 years ago

# Crackdown in Kosovo

The Balkans are facing renewed crisis. Fears that the recent violent crack-down by Serbian paramilitary police against separatist forces in Kosovo could lead to a new conflagration has led to the 'diplomatic' intervention of the imperialist Contact Group comprising the US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia.

The last two weeks has seen up to 100 Albanians killed in a terror campaign conducted by the Serbian state. Although a unitary part of Serbia, Kosovo is 90 per cent Albanian. Albanian political forces in the province now call for independence, either through military means as practiced by the Kosovo Liberation Army, or through peaceful negotiation, as argued by the so-called unofficial Kosovar president Ibrahim Rugova.

While the US emissary of the Contact Group, Robert Gelbard, has been trying to ease the hand of Serbia, he has made it clear to the Kosovar Albanians that independence will not be tolerated by imperialism. The United Nations, Nato and the European Union, backed up by the implicit threat of military force, are proposing a formula of "neither the status quo nor independence" to stabilise the region in the interests of their new world order. A return to Kosovo's provincial autonomy is being urged.

During the reactionary meltdown of Yugoslavia in 1989-91, Slobodan Milosevic whipped up anti-Albanian sentiment to strengthen Serb nationalism. Serbia stripped the Kosovo region of the autonomy it had under the old Yugoslav constitution. That strategy is now coming home to roost. The recent crack down has produced new instability in a region wracked by war and ultra-nationalism for most of the decade.

Sitting in the middle of the Balkan peninsula, an unstable Kosovo threatens to draw not only Serbia, but Albania, Macedonia, Greece and maybe Turkey and Bulgaria into war. There have been solidarity demonstrations with Kosovo in Macedonia and Albania. The conflicting interests of different Albanian clans is being dragged into the crisis.

Imperialism has renewed sanctions against Serbia. These include military measures which are clearly flouted and economic ones which are difficult to enforce. Serbia has until March 22 to open dialogue with the separatists or face tighter sanctions.

During the cold war stalemate, imperialism maintained a doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. Although this was regularly flouted, sometimes overtly, always covertly, the pretence remained. The 'new world order' has seen an end to all that. Imperialism, with the United States acting as world RoboCop, feels it not only can, but has the obligation to interfere where it likes in an unprecedented manner.

The pattern is clear. Certain countries are treated as rogue states, and backed up by a media offensive, opinion is tuned to accept open imperialist bullying. Whereas western interference once would have outraged liberal opinion in the west, these liberals are now more likely to criticise imperialism for not acting swiftly



Albanians demand imperialism intervenes

enough. For communists, this intensifies our duty to point out that our main enemy is at home.

Yet Serbia has no right to be defended by any working class forces. Along with Croatia and Bosnia, Serbia has attempted to carve itself out the largest internal market it can in order to constitute bourgeois 'normality' under the rubric of 'its' nation. This led to the bloody internecine slaughter of the Bosnian war.

The working class must stand for the right of Kosovo to self-determination. The Contact Group representing various imperialist interests has

no progressive role to play here. We must also fight against the vicious Serbian attempt to assert its reactionary hegemony. The way forward is for the working class to constitute itself in the region as champion of the democratic right of national self-determination, intransigent fighters against nationalism and imperialism. This is how to win the unity of the working class. Given the violent suppression of what appears to be a majority political movement for independence, communists should support this demand ●

Martin Blum

## Fighting fund

## Make a difference

New Labour is not so popular anymore. "It can only get better" was the tune sung by the Blairites. After 18 years of Tory rule some people got desperate - and even started to sing along with those cool young hipsters Tony Blair, John Prescott, Jack Straw and Robin Cook. Welcome to New Britain it seemed - a younger, sexy world.

Not any longer. Blair's pop stars, the movers and shakers of Britpop, have rebelled against him - with a vengeance. No kind words or praise, but condemnation and scorn. Yet that is not all. Some of Blair's ex-'comrades' are withdrawing their funds, pulling the purse strings shut. This is the case with Alan McGee of Creation Records, Labour Party member and formerly a keen supporter of Blair. He must have been. He donated £50,000 to Labour's election coffers but now says, "I'm not giving them any more money and I'll be a liability not an asset".

However, we are confident that you do not feel the same about the *Weekly Worker*. No one should have illusions in our politics. What you see is what you get. Let cowards flinch and traitors sneer, we have kept true to our principles. Our banner is and stays red. When it comes to funds, you - our loyal readers and supporters - are our most valuable asset. We need your constant moral, political and, of course, financial aid and backing. We are not too proud, or rich, to admit that £50,000 - are you reading this Alan? - would be a considerable help to us. But so will £50 or £20. Indeed, every pound and penny adds to the strength of the *Weekly Worker*, which is your communist paper.

Thanks this week to AS from Scotland (£20), JB from Surrey (£10) and JL from Liverpool (£5). This takes our monthly total to £352, still some way to go to our £500 total. Together we can do it ●

Katrina Haynes

## action

### ■ CPGB schools

London: The USSR: what was it? April 4-5

Communist University '98: One week of stimulating study and discussion in August. Contact Party centre for details.

### ■ Party wills

The CPGB now has forms available for you to include the Party and the struggle for communism in your will. Write for details.

### ■ Scottish Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact PO Box 980, Glasgow G14 9QQ or ring 0141-552 6773.

### ■ Hillingdon hospital workers fight on

The Hillingdon strikers in west London, deserted by Unison, still need your support. Send donations urgently, payable to Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign, c/o 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Middlesex UB8 1JD.

### ■ Support Magnet workers

To support the 350 sacked Magnet workers and for more information contact the strike committee on 01325-282389.

### ■ Irish political prisoners campaign

Downing Street picket - first Sunday of every month, 12 noon to 1.30pm. Release the prisoners! For more details contact: Fuascailt, PO Box 3923, London NW5 1RA. Tel: 0181-985 8250 or 0956-919 871.

### ■ Diarmuid O'Neill

The Justice For Diarmuid O'Neill Campaign is demanding a public enquiry into his murder by state forces. Contact BCM Box D O'Neill, London WCIN 3XX.

### ■ Network of Socialist Alliances

National network meeting. Saturday March 21 - 10.00am-4.00pm at the Koco Buildings, Spon End, Coventry. Tel: 01788-569766.

### ■ Glasgow Marxist Forum

Wednesday March 25 - 7.30pm at Partick Burgh Hall. Discussion on 'Marx's theory of value' All welcome. Sponsored by SLP (Glasgow) and the SSA.

### ■ South London Socialist Alliance

Election rallies  
Thursday April 2 - 7.30pm, Old White Horse pub, 255 Brixton Road, SW9  
Sunday April 26 - 4pm, The Brix, St Matthews Peace Gardens, Brixton Hill, SW2 0181-671 8036 for details

# When Robert Griffiths

## ■ Griffiths' critique of BRS

Where are the roots of [the] dilution of the Party's class essence, of the errors on fundamental questions, of the abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles? What are the factors to be taken into account? Of course, we can go right back to the Party's foundation in 1920 - but for reasons of space, this inquiry will confine itself here to the outward, visible signs of departure.

The 1935 programme of the Party, *For Soviet Britain*, mapped out an 'insurrectionary' road to socialism in which the Communist Party would lead the working class to state power, to a dictatorship of workers' and soldiers soviets. Social democracy, as represented by the Labour Party and in the trade unions, would be an obstacle - not an ally - in this process, whether it was of the left or the right. Bourgeois democracy was characterised as a hidden, camouflaged dictatorship of capital over labour, exercised through a state machine that would have to be destroyed during the revolutionary transition. Aspects of this programme are open to criticism, but it did not depart from fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, although it applied some of these principles in a sectarian and dogmatic way.

Did the popular front strategy adopted by the 7th (1935) Congress of the Communist International (but actually being formulated and implemented a year or two earlier in some countries) break with Marxism-Leninism? Not in principle. The Comintern debates and resolutions sought to apply these principles to the concrete circumstances of the period, notably the rise of fascism and the danger of imperialist world war. Estimating that social democratic workers could turn in droves to communist politics during the struggle against fascism and war, the main Comintern resolution argued that unity with them must not lead to glossing over the fundamental differences between communism and reformism, must not weaken the criticism of social democracy as "the ideology and practice of collaboration with the bourgeoisie". Nor must the communist parties weaken their own struggle against "the illusion that it is possible to bring about socialism by peaceful, legal methods". Social democratic workers had to be won to the cause of a single mass working class party, committed to establishing a soviet dictatorship of the proletariat. Rectifying communist errors of 'left sectarianism' must not spill over into 'right opportunism', when trying to unite the left in defence of bourgeois democratic liberties, against fascism and imperialist war.

.... But Marxism-Leninism runs right through the *Draft programme* for the Party's 16th Congress (scheduled for October 1939 but postponed by the outbreak of war to 1943). On reformism and social democracy (of the left as well as the right), on the state, on the need for a dictatorship of the working class and its allies, the programme bases itself clearly on Marxism-Leninism. The CP, it points out, strives to "win the majority of the working class for the aims and principles of communism". CP affiliation to the Labour Party is seen as part of the struggle to unite the working class movement and create the conditions for winning workers away from Labour reformism. The *Draft programme* also devotes a large section to British imperialism and its relationship to social democratic

Here we reprint edited extracts from an important document published in *The Leninist* (March 20 1987), the forerunner of the *Weekly Worker*. These 'discussion papers' were the product of, amongst others, Robert Griffiths, who in the mid-1980s played a leading role in the Communist Campaign Group in Wales (CCG de Cymru). The CCG later formed itself into the so-called Communist Party of Britain, which recently elected Griffiths general secretary in place of Mike Hicks. As the 'South Wales discussion papers' show, Griffiths was then decidedly opposed to both the *British road to socialism* and the Alternative Economic Strategy. However, as Jack Conrad explained at the time, his critique was flawed, limited and hence in danger of becoming a mere apologia

reformism. Yet in February 1939, general secretary Harry Pollitt had called in *Defence of the people* for "strengthening the Labour Party" and for the election of a (Labour dominated) progressive government. Alongside appeals for popular front unity in pursuit of a limited programme, there was no criticism of reformism as such - only of the right wing leaders of social democracy. Underestimating the political impact of imperialism on the labour movement, disregarding the grip of reformism, Pollitt expressed his supreme confidence in the working class as it is: the only problem was one of giving the right lead. Indeed, so politically strong was the labour movement in his estimation, Liberals and capitalists can serve in a people's government because we have no need to be afraid of them! Reflections of this emerging political line can be seen in the inner-Party struggle that came into the open in 1939, when Pollitt was compelled to resign amid accusations of taking a social chauvinist position at the outset of the war - only to be reinstated two years later.

The postponed 16th congress in 1943 endorsed the emerging line. It declared that the defeat of fascism would deal such a powerful blow to reaction as to make a peaceful and constitutional road to socialism - through extensive nationalisations - much more possible. The call was issued to strengthen the Labour Party as well as to build a mass Communist Party. But there was no more mention of winning the majority of workers to the aims and principles of communism. The 1939 draft programme was not presented to the congress.

Almost as a footnote to the *Report* of the 1943 congress is this single sentence on page 55: "The dissolution of the Communist International was reported by the congress". No debate, no dissent. With this one fell swoop, declared the now-restored general secretary Pollitt, Nazi propaganda about "the hoary old bogey of the menace of Bolshevism" - designed to turn the western allies against the Soviet Union - had been discredited. Dissolving the Comintern "took Hitler's last trump card right from under his nose". Within three years, though, the cries about 'communist fifth columns' (Winston Churchill) came louder than ever from the imperialist powers; dissolving the Comintern might have served an important short-term purpose, but at what longer-term cost to proletarian internationalism and the world communist movement?

By May 1945, Pollitt declared on behalf of the Party in *Answers to questions*: "The doom of fascism is settled, and this armed victory of democracy has led to the weakening of reaction in every country ... It has also settled the question of future wars. Likewise it has made it doubly difficult for the reactionary capitalist forces, after a war waged with extreme violence to defend democracy, to resort to violence to crush democracy"

(Democracy, note - not bourgeois democracy). Together with the new international situation, in particular the victory of the Soviet Union, unity in the British labour movement would make a peaceful transition to socialism more possible than ever. In fact, an even wider national unity was on the cards ... "The most important sections of the capitalist class have also an interest in co-operating in all efforts to solve the urgent problems.... Capitalism, in its pre-1939 set-up, had become such a fetter on production that the capitalists themselves find these very fetters a nightmare ... Hence there is, up to a point, a common interest between all the progressive sections of the nation, labour and capitalist alike, in finding a common solution." ....

There would be a peaceful transition to socialism in Britain - with a broad popular alliance of people who favour social change, led by the working class, defeating any attempts at capitalist sabotage and counterrevolution. The key role in the transformation would be played by a Labour-dominated 'People's government', enacting sweeping changes throughout the state machine, and putting massive measures of 'socialist' nationalisation and state control through parliament ... "The people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real people's democracy, transforming parliament, the product of Britain's historic struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people" (*British road* 1952 edition).

No more talk of new organs of workers' power, of direct democracy, of any British form of the dictatorship of the proletariat - just British special pleading for abandoning the very principle of dictatorship of the proletariat. "*Britain's* historic struggle for democracy"! - whose struggle? Against whom?

No distinction - as there had been in the 1939 draft programme - between 'minimum' and 'maximum' programmes, between reforms under capitalism and goals which require the overthrow of capitalism. Instead, the *British road* mashed the two together and proposed an alliance that does not change its basis or its composition according to different stages.

Rightwing Labour leaders were claimed to be the problem in the movement, not social democracy itself, and not the other influences and products of imperialism such as racism, chauvinism and economism. In fact, Britain is not considered so much as a major imperialist Nato power (although independence for the British colonies is demanded) - but as an oppressed nation in need of national independence from US imperialism.

The Communist Party's role was to be a (very) junior partner in parliament and the 'people's government', the organiser of leading trade union activists, and the supplier of programmes to the labour movement and

social democracy. There is no explanation in the *British road* of why the optimistic forecasts of 1945 had gone so wrong - apart from the treachery of rightwing Labour leaders. Why these leaders in the first place? Why the trust in them? Why was the left unable (or unwilling) to turn the 1945-51 Labour government away from its rightward course?

There was no intense and widescale inner-Party struggle over the adoption in 1951 of the reformist *British road to socialism*, no revolt of the membership. Why not? Democratic centralism and loyalty and trust in the leadership are some factors; so was the desire for unity in the face of Cold War pressure. But the basis for replacing a revolutionary programme by a reformist one was laid not at the 1951 congress, but as far back as 1943. There had been a huge influx of members from 1936, tens of thousands, many of them out of anti-fascist and pro-Soviet sentiment. At the turning point congress in 1943, 50% of the delegates had joined the Party after June 1938 - and many of them had less than 12 months membership. This was the period when the Party dropped its fundamental criticisms of social democracy, of bourgeois democracy and of illusions about the road to socialism. It was also a period when massive successes were scored in terms of recruitment, influence in the Labour Party and unions, and mass campaigning on a wide range of issues. Why risk driving away potential recruits and offending new allies, why risk a return to 'sectarian' isolation, why not postpone the polemics on fundamental differences as the Party grows stronger? Such is the fertile ground for right opportunism, as the Comintern congress had warned. By 1943 most Party members and delegates were not equipped theoretically to detect and challenge a slide towards reformism.

Subsequent failures and decline after 1950 could be wholly attributed to the Cold War, to the post-war boom, consumerism and growing working class prosperity. The pressures were, in fact, building up on the Party to adapt to Cold War propaganda (as it nearly did in 1956 on Hungary), to adjust to an apparent downward trend in class consciousness and militancy. The post-war revival of British imperialism actually strengthened trade union organisation in the short and medium term, because it could afford the concessions that strengthen economism (a narrow trade union obsession with wages and conditions to the detriment of wider political questions and goals). This was reflected in the CP where - aided by the winding down and dilution of Marxist-Leninist political education - the separation between industrial members and ideological activity widened in the 1950s and 1960s. The influx of petty bourgeois elements in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many under the influence of academic Marxism and

even Maoist ultra-leftism, uncorrected by Marxist-Leninist politics and discipline, provided the future leadership of the Eurocommunist faction; they swung over to the right, with only their anti-Sovietism remaining constant.

The latest (1977) *British road* is in one respect an advance on the 1951 edition. Under the impact of communist influenced mass campaigns in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and possibly in recognition of Party failure at parliamentary elections, it advocates mass struggle outside parliament. This is intended as a means of pressure on a left government, and as a means of support for it against counterrevolutionary moves - but not as the basis for exercising revolutionary state power. The central role is still to be played by a constitutional parliamentary government, utilising the modestly reformed institutions of the bourgeois state. What is also envisaged in the 1977 programme, however, is not the legislation for socialism in a single parliamentary term - but a series of Labour left governments making deeper and deeper inroads into capitalist power, gradually laying the basis for the construction of socialism. The broad democratic alliance led by the working class that is built up in the course of mass activity is to be aimed explicitly at the capitalist monopolies; in recent years, those communists who uphold this aspect of the *British road* have been attacked for their 'narrow and sectarian' and 'class reductionist' interpretation!

Absent from all editions of the *British road* is any Marxist-Leninist analysis of the bourgeois state, of social democracy, of the leading role of the Communist Party. British imperialism and its impact on the working class movement is played down. Major democratic questions such as women's liberation, racism and national rights are dealt with in a liberal and non-class way, thereby opening the door to a narrow redefinition and relegation of class struggle. The only path to socialism that is mapped out is a peaceful, gradual and constitutional one, although the need to crush counterrevolution (if it is unconstitutional) is mentioned in vague terms; the necessity for the working class and its allies to create their own organs of state power in order to suppress the capitalist class in the face of near certain subversion and counterrevolution, is unmentioned.

Long running right opportunism has resulted in the Party's current crisis. In its most modern and degenerate form, Eurocommunism, it now raises the serious possibility of the organisational liquidation of the Communist Party. These words of Lenin's, written in 1914, should have been heeded:

"Advocacy of class collaboration; abandonment of the idea of socialist revolution and revolutionary methods of struggle; adaptation to bourgeois nationalism; losing sight of the fact that the borderlines of nationality and country are historically transient; mak-

# was anti-British road

ing a fetish of bourgeois legality; renunciation of the class viewpoint and the class struggle for fear of repelling the broad masses of the population (meaning the petty bourgeoisie) - such, doubtlessly, are the ideological foundations of opportunism" (*The positions and tasks of the Socialist International*).

In *State and revolution* (1917) he attacked:

"The petty bourgeois democrats, those sham socialists who replaced the class struggle by dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion - not as the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become aware of its aims. This petty bourgeois utopia, which is inseparable from the idea of the state being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the working classes".

Lenin went on to point out that "only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat". Only an organised struggle against the political liquidation of the Communist Party, including an honest inquiry into the early signs of right opportunism, can prevent the organisational liquidation of communism in Britain.

## ■ Griffiths' critique of the alternative economic strategy

This is intended to highlight some aspects of the political strategy set out in the CCG's second pamphlet, *Which way for Labour: a communist perspective for the labour movement* (1986), aspects which require discussion and re-appraisal. This opening does not, therefore, provide a balanced assessment of the pamphlet, in that material which is not contentious is referred to only briefly, if at all.

*The introduction:* The pamphlet opens by stating the seriousness of the situation at present facing the British working class and emphasising that the necessary lead is not being given by the leadership of the Labour Party or the TUC. The reason for the absence of an appropriate political lead from these quarters is explained in terms of the role of the soft left and the Eurocommunists. This is superficial and subjective. There is a key question here - why does the Labour and the TUC leadership behave as it does? - which is never satisfactorily answered in this pamphlet.

Counterposed to the inactivity/collaboration of the Labour and TUC leadership is the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). Several formulations here are very emphatic and should be noted, because we will have to return to them later. The AES is described as "the movement's own independent programme for economic advance and for socialism" (p2); abandonment of the AES is equated with "removing socialism from the agenda of struggle" (p3); a direct link is made between "the AES and the struggle for socialism" (p3); it is argued that what is needed is "total commitment to the policies of the AES and to the struggle for socialism" (p3); and it is stated that the purpose of the pamphlet is to enable the case to be made for "the AES and for socialism as the labour movement's answer to the crisis" (p3).

*Chapter 1 - The Tory offensive:* The historical introduction to this chapter shows confusion. First it is asserted that capitalism was weaker after the Second World War, then the early

post-war years are described as an exceptional period which saw sustained growth in the capitalist economies. This muddle is not important for the purpose of this pamphlet, but it shows that we all need to read some more political economy.

Section 2, emphasising the importance of Britain's position as an imperialist power, and describing the 1970-74 Heath government - particularly in its first two years - as a predecessor of the Thatcher regime, is one of a number of sections of the pamphlet which make a welcome change from the liberal nonsense current in *Marxism Today*.

Section 3, on the failure of the Labour government of 1974-79 is also very sound, explaining that: "In essence the class objectives of Labour's rightwing leadership were fundamentally those of Heath and the Tories". If this is correct, which it clearly is, shouldn't it lead us to ask some pretty basic questions about the nature of the Labour Party?

Sections 4 to 7 on Tory strategy, policies and results are useful; but Section 8, however, shows again a tendency to avoid asking unpleasant questions. It opens, in fact, with a crucial question - "What then is the general state of the trade union and labour movement today?" - but no real answer is given and the subject is quickly changed.

*Chapter 2 - The AES:* Never mind the detail, what is important is the broad political argument. First, it is asserted that the AES "was collectively formulated and developed by the CP in particular, by Labour's leftwing and eventually by the TUC", and many of its key proposals, as well as a statement of its overriding objective, were incorporated in Labour's election manifesto in 1974, but were never implemented by the Labour government. This raises two questions - firstly, is it at all accurate to say that the Labour Party or TUC ever adopted a set of policies which were understood as a socialist orientated AES? Secondly, how is it that the Labour Party when in power regularly performs such a complete about turn that it represents class interests diametrically opposed to those it would, when in opposition, wish us to believe it represents?

Section 2 of chapter 2 expounds the AES in outline. Section 3 asks all the important questions - "Who will pay?" - and argues that the programme can be paid for by cuts in arms expenditure, price controls, investment controls, renationalisations, further nationalisation of key multinational companies, major banks and financial institutions, and of North Sea oil and also advocates planning agreements, capital-export controls, import controls and withdrawal from the EEC.

Two questions arise here. The first results from omission: the internationalist dimension of the AES is referred to only in passing, but no attempt is made to assess the economic returns from British imperialism, or to consider the economic, social and political implications of a non-imperialist economic policy. This is an old fault on the British left, but precisely because it is such a persistent blind spot, attention must be drawn to it. The second question, which concerns the political implications of the proposals outlined above, is the central question which regularly recurs throughout the pamphlet, and which will be returned to.

Section 4 outlines the nature of the resistance to be expected from the rul-

ing class. The means proposed to counter this are weak. Mention is made of "the widest possible democratic involvement", but there is no mention of the need to build alternative organs of power.

Democratisation of the media and the civil service is proposed, but there is no mention of what would need to be done with the police or the armed forces. At no point is it made clear that the working class will at some stage need to build its own state, not merely taking over the bourgeois state. Page 19 clouds the issue by talking of the state in non-class terms, and makes purely rhetorical use of the concept of democratic centralism in a passage which links mass extra-parliamentary struggle with the use of a (still capitalist) state by the working class against capital! "Steps must be taken to ensure that the central power of the state is effectively utilised to limit and severely restrict the powers of resistance of the opponents of the AES". This is hopeless confusion: whose state are we talking about?

Section 5 contains the fundamental confusion as to the nature of the programme being put forward. On page 20 it is asserted first that: "The AES in itself is not a socialist programme ... [but it is] the indispensable prerequisite for the advance to socialism". At the bottom of the same page we read that "the AES directly brings into play the question of state power and the question of its use by the working class ... the fight for the AES directly presupposes, and coincides with, the fight for socialism". So, is the AES a socialist programme or not, and what are the implications, either way? ....

Page 43 outlines the scenario of a Kinnock-led right wing Labour government leading next time around to the return of an even more reactionary Tory government - which is a very realistic assessment. Yet the alternative which we are asked to accept is that Kinnock and Hattersley can be compelled to implement the AES against their own wishes. What sort of a movement will be required to achieve this Herculean feat is left unexplained. In particular, the role of the CP is unexplained. The relevant passage begins by referring to the CP as the think-tank of the left and then tails off into a description of the Party's present plight.

The pamphlet under review is much clearer about what we are against than about what we are for.... [It] therefore reflects the view that the problems of the Party have arisen during the last five years, and that it is only necessary to revert to the policies of the 1970s for Eurocommunism to be defeated and for everything to be alright. A close examination of this pamphlet, however, should show that it is necessary to discuss another view - namely, that it was precisely the weaknesses and contradictions of the *British road*....

The central problem is the concept of a new type of Labour government. Both the *British road* and *Which way for Labour?* attempt to tell us that the decisive levers of economic power can be taken into public ownership by a Labour government, which will be able to accomplish all this because it does not amount to a socialist programme (!). Then, carried away with enthusiasm by this prospect, they assure us that the AES is a socialist programme after all. In this hazy vision, the role of the Communist Party appears to be little more than a ginger group. Britain must be one of the few countries - if not the only one - where the CP has a programme that relies on a social

democratic party to carry through the socialist revolution.

In order to begin sorting out this confusion, it would be useful to broaden the discussion in two ways:

Firstly, by considering the relevant experiences of other communist parties, for example, the French, Greek and Chilean; and indeed the experiences of other Labour and socialist parties - eg the French and Greek socialist parties.

Secondly, by considering the traditional distinction between a minimum and maximum programme and reviewing the *British road* in this light.

## ■ Jack Conrad's response (extract)

Although the South Wales CCG comrades are critics of the AES and the *BRS*, they are members of a faction which proclaims itself the true defender of the AES and the *BRS*. Our South Wales CCGers have therefore not given an inch to reformism, they have given a mile.

The plain truth is that the CCG is one hundred percent reformist. It was formed on the basis of defending the politics of the *BRS* and AES. This means it is attacking today's Eurocommunism by defending ten year old Eurocommunism. The current 1978 edition of the *BRS* was heavily influenced by the ideas of Eurocommunism, as anyone who remembers the debate that raged around the *BRS Draft* in 1977 will tell you. But even without the specifically Eurocommunist input, the *BRS* was always thoroughly reformist....

The CCG cannot show us one country where the capitalist crisis has been overcome through an AES or one country where the working class has become the ruling class through a *BRS*! The reason? No such country exists. So why does the CCG defend such dangerous illusions?

The South Wales CCG comrades do not really ask the question. Surely the CCG's defence of the Euros' old *AES* and *BRS* must be an example of opportunism. What else is it, an intellectual slip? .... No, quite simply the CCG is opportunist just like Eurocommunism, and opportunism has social origins, it does not result from disturbed brain waves or bad potty training.

As the South Wales CCG know, opportunism is a result of the influence of bourgeois ideas on the working class movement. More than that these bourgeois ideas tie opportunist political trends hand and foot to bourgeois society itself. In other words, the CCG is like the Eurocommunists because it is a bourgeois trend in our communist movement. Do the comrades in the South Wales CCG agree? Perhaps they do, but for the sake of their goal of having 'influence' in the CCG they do not say so. If this is so, then they would do well to look at what happened to the leftists who in their search for relevance, have attached themselves to Kinnock and the Labour Party - how leftwing are they now comrades?....

On page seven of the *Discussion papers* the *BRS* is rightly said to be "absent" of "any Marxist-Leninist analysis of the bourgeois state, of social democracy, of the leading role of the Communist Party". Indeed in the *BRS* "British imperialism and its impact on the working class movement is played down". And again, according to the *Discussion papers*, in the *BRS* we do not have "proletarian internationalism" but "national uniqueness and isolationism". The

AES fares no better. *Which way for Labour?* - the CCG's pamphlet defending the AES - is not only slated for not assessing "the economic returns of imperialism" but for "hopeless confusion" (p14).

This is all very well. No genuine communist would disagree. But it only scratches the surface of things. Marxism is about getting below the surface ... While the *Discussion papers* can trace the origins of today's sorry state to developments encapsulated in the decisions of Comintern's 7th (and last) Congress in 1935, ... any relationship between [Harry Pollitt's] opportunism and the Soviet Union is dismissed with hack phrases about the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as if it were Hegel's 'world spirit'....

Pollitt might have been a most enthusiastic advocate of class collaboration, abandoning revolution and retreating into national narrowness, but he was only carrying out the logic of the 7th Congress. And who can doubt that the CPSU was the guiding force in Comintern. Indeed far from the Soviet Union being the 'world spirit', its narrow diplomatic interests opened the door, albeit accidentally, to the Eurocommunist plague we have today....

Communists understand the need for the truth, so let us speak the truth. The CPSU was stunned by the victory of the Nazis in Germany, the ease with which the Communist Party of Germany was crushed and, fearful of German invasion, it discarded all the centrist leftism of the so-called Third Period and with extreme haste tried to align itself with the bourgeois democracies against German redivisionism.

Communists had to be eminently respectable, they had to wave the national flag, show that they and the Soviet Union were safe and would be good allies. As the South Wales CCG illustrates, Harry Pollitt loved it, he was in his element. But the needs of diplomacy change like the wind and with every turn opportunism became ever more intractable, ever more a way of life, ever more revolting.

Communists in the bourgeois democracies first courted the favours of 'progressive' imperialist politicians, then after the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact they had to equate these very same politicians with the Nazis and following Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 everything was thrown into reverse. Communists indulged in the most excessive patriotism and class collaborationism for the sake of wartime alliance. Thus the Soviet party leadership not only acquiesced to the growth of opportunism in the world communist movement, it created a Frankenstein's monster.

As is their way, this is something the South Wales CCGers fight shy of even considering ●

'South Wales discussion papers' and Jack Conrad's full response (pp8, £2) available from the CPGB address



*Morning Star strike***Haylett appeal stalemate**

**A** last minute change in venue for the appeal hearing for sacked *Morning Star* editor John Haylett on Saturday March 14 failed to escape the mass picket organised in support of his immediate reinstatement by striking *Star* journalists and their supporters.

Two weeks earlier, when the management committee met in the *Morning Star* offices in Ardleigh Road, Islington, they had to run the gauntlet of a 150-strong picket. Management committee member Francis Wilcox, the one remaining Rosserite on the so-called Communist Party of Britain political committee, who had voted for Haylett's suspension and dismissal, came in for a lot of stick after the meeting. Mary Rosser, chief executive of the Peoples Press Printing Society, the cooperative which owns the *Morning Star*, left the building with a police escort.

This time the picket outside the *Star* building was down to 100 people, but this was because another 60 were gathered outside the new venue - the Great Northern Hotel at Kings Cross station - the place where Arthur Scargill incubated his Socialist Labour Party in 1994-95.

SLP national committee member John Hendy QC, who the National Union of Journalists retains as its standing counsel, presented the first part of Haylett's appeal case. He detailed at length the many procedural flaws in the *Star* management's actions. These, he argued, rendered the disciplinary action invalid, and the management committee majority so "tainted" that they could not fairly hear the appeal. Haylett's full statement in his defence was not presented, nor the NUJ's full arguments, so the appeal process was not completed.

The management committee majority, visibly shaken by the authoritative and weighty procedural arguments, implicitly accepted they were "tainted" by voting in favour of Hendy's proposal to appoint a "different appellate body", namely an independent three-person committee to be agreed by both sides. However, this was only agreed conditional on a return to work by the strikers with Haylett still suspended on full pay, terms which are certainly unacceptable to the strikers.

Voting was eight to five, with no-one changing sides since the February 28 meeting. John Friel was absent again, and Haylett could not vote on his own case. The five for Haylett were Phil Davies, Alec Falconer MEP, Anne Green, Carolyn Jones and Gareth Miles. The latter had travelled from South Wales to Ardleigh Road on Saturday morning, evidently having not been informed about the change in venue. An attempt to remove

Carolyn Jones' vote, on the grounds she had been a member of the disciplinary sub-committee from which she had resigned in disgust, was thwarted early in the meeting. The eight against Haylett were Joan Bellamy, Terry Herbert (who is not a CPB member, as I mistakenly reported in a previous issue), Pat Hicks, Annie Marjoram, Kumar Murshid (although he reportedly left the meeting before the vote), John Thompson, George Wake and Francis Wilcox.

An amendment for the "status quo ante" - meaning Haylett would be reinstated as editor while the appeal proceeds - was rejected by the same votes. Thus neither side was willing to see a return to work unless their candidate for editor was in control. This was not because of the rights and wrongs of industrial relations procedures, however. If publication of the *Star* is resumed, editorial control of the paper will be a key weapon for influencing shareholders in the impending power struggle for control of the PPPS.

So Haylett remains sacked, but on full pay, while his appeal is unresolved. The management committee has authorised its three officers - secretary Mary Rosser, chair George Wake and vice-chair Pat Hicks - to act on its behalf in handling the dispute. Management committee and NUJ representatives will be engaging in "preliminary consultations" at Acas on March 19. Although the NUJ regards binding arbitration as "inappropriate" until the appeal has been heard, this is precisely what the management committee is mobilising support for, asking top trade union officials and Labour MPs to put pressure on the NUJ.

### ■ CPB executive March 14-15

The second bi-monthly meeting of the new CPB executive committee revealed a consolidation of the new leadership of Robert Griffiths backed by John Haylett and Richard Maybin (who missed ousting Mike Hicks as general secretary two years ago by only one vote). Before the November 1997 congress Mike Hicks had held out against a hostile political committee by virtue of a wafer thin majority in his favour on the 30-strong executive committee. This time the voting was 19 to six against the Rosser-Hicks 'North Korean' family dynasty, with five members absent, mostly if not all from their side.

The weakening of the Rosser-Hicks faction had been foreshadowed at two meetings in the North West district, where it had been boasting of support. After losing out at a North West district CPB membership agree-

gate, Rosser went to Manchester on March 11 to address the *Morning Star* readers and supporters group. On previous occasions, when appealing for donations, she had praised the hard work and selfless dedication of *Morning Star* journalists. This time she rubbished them as lazy, irresponsible youths who did not care about the paper. This backfired, and Haylett was backed by around 40 votes to six. To date, every mobilisation of rank and file *Star* supporters has been on the Griffiths-Haylett side. Rosser and Hicks have yet to show us a crowd. The only remaining question mark is over the CPB's Yorkshire district.

.....

**The charges laid against Haylett were declared to be "anti-party, anti-Morning Star and anti-trade union"**

.....

Hicks and Rosser have disgraced and isolated themselves through their inept bureaucratic style and by their disgusting championing of "management's right to manage". Hicks certainly has learned the knack of making personal enemies. On the March 14 Ardleigh Road picket, his crude personal accusations provoked the anger of Gary Davis, once a worker at the *Star*, who burst into an impromptu public denunciation of some of Hicks' sins. When the *Weekly Worker* rang Hicks for his version of events, we got a counterproductive snub. "I have nothing to say to you. You have told lies, calling GPMU branch committee members my 'bodyguards'." Well, Mike, we don't take offence so easily. This dispute is political, not personal. If you write your point of view, we will publish it accurately - and, of course, criticise it.

At the executive committee, CPB members on the *Morning Star* management committee were told to toe the party line, and that the "emergence of an anti-Party grouping will have to be challenged." The charges laid against Haylett by the management committee were declared to be "anti-party, anti-Morning Star and anti-trade union". Disciplinary action against Joan Bellamy, Mike Hicks, Pat Hicks, Mary Rosser, George Wake and Francis Wilcox now seem certain to follow.

All CPB organisations and members are being called upon to campaign for Haylett's reinstatement, and to assist preparations for a special general meeting of PPPS shareholders. The plan of action, as outlined to the pickets at Ardleigh Road by ex-TUC president and CPB member Ken Gill, is to requisition a special general meeting with over 800 signatures (2% of all PPPS shareholders), for the purpose of removing unwanted members from the management committee. The remaining "healthy" members can legitimately run the affairs of the society, and coopt fresh blood if they wish. New members can be elected at a subsequent annual shareholders meeting.

### ■ Scab Star

The campaign against the strike is being run from Mike Hicks' base in

the GPMU - the trade union with two chapels at the *Morning Star*. "Unions, staff and friends" of the paper have launched the Save our Star Campaign, and so far produced two issues of their paper, called ... *Morning Star*. This is a scab paper which campaigns against the journalists' strike and unashamedly argues management's case. Its claim to legitimacy is the complaint that NUJ members constitute a minority of those employed at the *Star*, and the NUJ chapel "has walked out without a single meeting of all the chapels involved." This is the reactionary method of using the 'silent majority' to suffocate any militant struggle.

Scab *Star* No1 accuses the NUJ of not "recognising the democracy of the PPPS and fighting for their member within it." So workers should not strike against any 'democratic' management? This gives us a taste of the kind of 'socialism' we would obtain if we followed the lead of the 'North Korean' dynasty.

The NUJ is also defying "widespread calls from across the labour movement for the strike to be brought to an end through conciliation." The strikers should not dismiss this claim, but should recognise it as management's strategy. The NUJ is undoubtedly under pressure to disregard the strikers' insistence on Haylett's reinstatement as a precondition for talks. However, this is not healthy pressure from the left, from rank and file militant workers, socialist and communist activists, but unhealthy pressure from above, from trade union general secretaries and left Labour MPs. The management committee is claiming support for their line of binding arbitration without reinstating Haylett not only from the GPMU but also from the likes of Rodney Bickerstaffe and Bill Morris - despite the latter having his name on the "role of honour" of those who have "sent messages of concern/support" or donated to the strike fund.

A mealy-mouthed statement of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs reproduced in the scab *Star* confirms this. Replacing "previously expressed individual views in letters or early day motions" - ie several letters of support for the strikers as well as Livingstone's early day motion against - it vacuously urges "all those involved in the dispute to find an early settlement". This is the kind of 'solidarity' we can do without - so-called left MPs whose desire for unity with each other overrides their support for workers on strike, who put their collective struggle for a place within Blair's New Labour before any principle. This is real sectarianism, putting sectional or group interests before class interests. New Labour sectarianism.

Scab *Star* No1, curiously, defends

the reformist parliamentary programme of the CPB, the *British road to socialism* ... from the CPB itself. "Shareholders have backed calls for the editorial line of the paper to be that of the BRS, the programme of the Communist Party," it says. Nevertheless, "Shareholders have guarded their rights. When the ['official' - IF] Communist Party of Great Britain tried to force the management committee to follow its orders and cut the paper's links with the *British Road*, it failed because the shareholders wanted to protect the *political* links but resisted all attempts to run the paper from the HQ of the CPGB."

Issue No2 continues, "Shareholders have guarded their rights over the years, resisting attempts to steal the paper away for the exclusive use of the Eurocommunists ..." This refers to Tony Chater and Mary Rosser snatching the paper away from Eurocommunist control, but also from Party control. In backing this declaration of independence, unfortunately shareholders were being duped. As is now obvious - but as we pointed out at the time - they were merely handing control of the paper from one opportunist clique to another.

Reforging the CPGB today, overcoming the division of the left into the myriad sects, requires junking the tried, tested and failed parliamentary reformism of the BRS, and developing a revolutionary programme in its place. If the *Morning Star* is to play any useful role in this, its columns should be made available for the expression of all shades of opinion on the left. As argued in the CPGB Provisional Central Committee's March 11 letter to the CPB, "On this basis, all sections of the left could be drawn into the immediate struggle to save the paper from extinction, and then to sustain and develop it as a weapon in the class struggle."

● The Save Our Star Campaign can be contacted by writing to M Toomey (FoC) and J Russell (MoC), c/o GPMU, 18-18A Brixton Road, London SW9 6BU (Tel: 0171-582 0382).

● Shareholders enquiries to: Mary Rosser, Chief Executive, PPPS, 1-3 Ardleigh Road, London N1 4HS. Tel: 0171-254 0033, Fax: 0171-254 5950.

### ■ The workers' Morning Star

The NUJ *Morning Star* chapel has so far produced two issues of its strike bulletin, *The workers' Morning Star*. Now they are going weekly. Send support and donations, and get on the mailing list. Cheques payable to: NUJ *Morning Star* Chapel, 422 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AA. Tel 0171-254 5000, Fax: 0171-254 5151 ●

Ian Farrell

## CPGB London seminar series

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● **Seminars are in central London on Sunday at 5pm. Call 0181-459 7146 for details**



## Solidarity greetings

NUJ Morning Star Chapel

Dear Ian Farrell,

Thank you for your letter of March 11. Your help will assist us in winning more support for our struggle and ensuring that publication of the *Morning Star* will be re-established as quickly as possible.

Enclosed is a copy of the latest edition of our strike bulletin. If you already have it, please pass this copy on to someone else who may be interested.

Thank you once again for your solidarity,

Yours sincerely,

David Nicholson

On behalf of the chapel

# Simon Harvey of the SLP Pawn in Star wars



Robert Griffiths: from 1980s revolutionary to 1990s reformist

of its critical financial situation.

Scargill saw this as his chance. His own project stagnating, *Socialist News* hardly influential, via a coup he could, with the support of Rosser and Hicks, gain control of the *Star* and thus inject much needed momentum to the SLP. The four conditions placed on a financial bail-out of the *Star* were to give him effective ownership. Naturally this is presented as being no political obstacle by Scargill. He states that: "Representatives of both the *Star* and the CPB have said that there are really no fundamental political differences between the aims of the two political parties".

A conversation between Rosser and Scargill at the TUC conference followed a letter to Nell Myers (September 3 1997) which Scargill took to be a rejection of the offer by the PPPS. However, the point must be made that

Rosser never reported any of these negotiations with Scargill to the paper's management committee, let alone a meeting of the CPB's executive. In a similar manner, Scargill was not discussing any such proposal within the SLP's NEC. Scargill's offer of a quarter million pounds to buy-out editorial control of the *Star* was certainly not known to poor old Alec McFadden, who was given a drubbing by Scargill at the December congress after he praised the *Star* and dared suggest a *democratic* takeover.

Scargill closes his letter with a proposal to meet with the NUJ chapel to expand on "any or all" of the points in his letter. To my mind, this probably means that his unappealing offer remains on the table to whichever side is successful in winning at the June AGM of shareholders. The Griffiths-Haylett faction has no interest in giving away 'its' broad labour movement paper. The Rosser-Hicks faction is another matter.

For whatever reason, some pro-Labourites refuse to see the truth. I suppose the interests of Blair's Labour Party always come first. Take Martin Sullivan in *What Next?* (No7 1998). Obviously unaware of the secret contact between Rosser and Scargill, comrade Sullivan repeats the line pushed by Livingstone in parliament, and Rosser outside, that a "lash-up between the SLP and the Griffiths-Haylett wing of the CPB" is on the cards. Accordingly, he writes: "Whatever their faults, the Rosser-Hicks element do favour a broad labour movement orientation, and deserve critical support against the sectarians".

I almost feel sorry for comrade Scargill. He may have some mysterious mountain of cash lying around,

but both sides are using him as a pawn in the dispute around the *Star*. However, he is not being claimed as an ally in order to bolster a position. He is claimed as a supporter of the *other side* to give credence to accusations of disloyalty to the pro-Labour *British road to socialism*.

Part of the irony is of course that Scargill claims to share the same politics as the CPB, but - thanks to one-time courtier Brian Heron of Fisc - recognises the need for different methods. The twin pillars of the old *BRS* are the Labour Party dominating parliament and the USSR dominating the world. Scargill at least has the ability to recognise that one is gone forever and the other has changed under Blair beyond all recognition. Scargill may be a 'British Roader', but he is saying some new transport is needed. Laughably he believes that the tiny and disintegrating SLP can substitute for *both* the USSR and the Labour Party.

In the heat of the *Morning Star* dispute, individuals and groups move in all manner of directions. Griffiths is now a born-again *BRS* loyalist. He started out political life as a Welsh left nationalist and entered CPB politics as a critic of the *BRS*. Rosser claims to be in favour of a paper of the 'broad movement'. Yet her clique's practice has been to treat the *Morning Star* as private property, refusing to allow first, the former Euro-communist majority of the CPGB and then the grouping around Griffiths-Haylett to run the paper.

Because of leaks, Scargill has been forced into print (albeit 'privately'). His attempts at a quick smash and grab raid on the *Star* to fix his own problems have been exposed in spite of his intentions. Here is the power of openness ●

In response to the above proposals, Mary Rosser said she would take them away, give careful consideration to all of them and, if necessary, consult with colleagues: a suggestion which I fully understood, bearing in mind that Mike Hicks (at that time general secretary of the CPB) was present during the course of the discussion.

Mary did eventually reply in writing, not to me but to my colleague Nell Myers on September 3 1997 and said:

"With regard to the ownership of the *Morning Star*, it is owned by the PPPS which is a cooperative on the coop principle of one person one vote so the amount of shares held do not give any extra proprietorial interest. In any case the number of shares any individual is allowed to hold is limited by law (£20,000 the last time I looked). The dissolution of a cooperative requires three quarters of the membership signing an article of dissolution"

I had a short discussion with Mary Rosser at the TUC and at that stage, it was my understanding that the PPPS had decided not to proceed any further with the discussion that Mary had initiated with me, in which I had made proposals about the SLP's effective, equal involvement in the ownership of the *Morning Star*, proposals which in my view were bound

to lead to increased circulation and growth of the paper.

A central feature of both discussions that took place was a request from Mary Rosser and Mike Hicks that the details, particularly those of the second meeting (July 10 1997) should remain confidential. This request I have hitherto respected completely.

However, in light of misinformation which has obviously been deliberately leaked, I feel it is essential that the NUJ, its *Morning Star* Chapel and all concerned for the future of the *Morning Star*, particularly the employees, are made fully aware of what actually took place, and my involvement.

Finally, could I suggest through you that it might be helpful if I were to meet and speak to members of the *Star*'s NUJ Chapel, including the paper's editor, John Haylett, together with, if necessary, members of the NUJ executive committee in order to expand on any or all the points raised in this letter.

Best wishes,  
**Arthur Scargill**  
general secretary  
(This is a confidential document and its contents must not be disclosed without prior permission from the author or the general secretary. Unauthorized disclosure will be considered to be detrimental to the SLP)

## What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party's publications; contributes regularly to the Party's funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

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## Rosser's dealing with Scargill exposed

Scargill's secret March 3 letter to NUJ general secretary John Foster blows the gaff on Mary Rosser and the *Morning Star* management

March 3 1998  
Dear John

Having read a number of reports in national newspapers regarding the dispute at the *Morning Star* and in particular the article in *The Observer* on March 1, I feel it necessary to write to you in order that you, as general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, are in possession of details of my meetings with Mary Rosser as opposed to the distortions which have been leaked to the capitalist press.

I first met Mary Rosser and Mike Hicks - at their request - on February 16 1996 to discuss the impending launch of the Socialist Labour Party on May 1 1996.

I met them again - at their request - on July 10 1997, a meeting arranged through an intermediary to consider a request from Mary Rosser as to how the SLP could provide substantial financial assistance to the *Morning Star* which she said was in a critical financial position.

During the course of our second meeting, Mary Rosser told me that the *Star* urgently required about £200-250,000 to clear its immediate debts, and thereby avoid having to continue

paying high interest charges on what was essentially an overdraft.

I said that it was my belief that members of the SLP together with supporters within the labour and trade union movement could raise those funds through the auspices of the SLP, but that our party would only be willing to do this on the following conditions:

1. In exchange for mobilising an input of £200-250,000 to the PPPS, the SLP would insist our Party have 50% ownership of the PPPS;
2. The SLP would in turn subsume its own paper, *Socialist News*, into the *Morning Star*, a move which in our view would assist in raising the daily sales of the *Morning Star*;
3. The SLP would want to see *all* employees of the *Star* including the editor remain in post with a guarantee that their jobs were protected;
4. The SLP would, of course, expect the *Morning Star* to reflect the general political line of the SLP, bearing in mind that representatives of both the *Star* and the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) have said that there are really no fundamental political differences between the aims of the two political parties.

# Senior ANC officials implicated in corruption and gun-running

## SACP holds the line

**T**his week's disclosure that ANC foreign ministry official Robert McBride has been arrested in Mozambique on suspicion of gun-running is the latest scandal to hit post-apartheid South Africa.

Last month the stench of corruption was in the air after it was revealed that an unregistered and potentially harmful anti-Aids 'wonder' drug, Virodene, was being mass-produced and widely circulated, despite being banned by the South African Medicine Control Council. It was alleged that senior ANC officials stood to gain from its production. The Aids Law Project, which helped expose the use and effects of Virodene, had its government funding cut off abruptly.

Meanwhile groups of workers continue to move into sporadic action for increased pay and improved working conditions. Last month's strike of thousands of security guards, which led to pitched battles with the police, was just the latest. Security workers are lucky to pick up 800 rand (just under £100) a month in what is a major business in crime-ravaged South Africa. Yet they are relatively well paid in comparison to other groups, and certainly much better off than the millions of unemployed. The security workers carried placards on one demonstration warning the police to stay away - or "there will be civil war".

Objectively, the combination of widespread poverty and spontaneous militancy, together with the heightened consciousness developed over the years of anti-apartheid struggle, is ripe for the development of a mass revolutionary movement. Yet the leadership of the South African Communist Party - whose cadre played an outstanding role against apartheid - is today determined to prevent and curtail any such development.

The SACP remains a loyal and very important component part of the African National Congress, including at the highest level of government. Despite all the obvious signs that the ANC is running a government typical of a medium-developed capitalist country - anti-working class and tending to corruption - the SACP continues to insist that Nelson Mandela's administration is actually at the helm of "an ongoing national democratic revolution" (*The African Communist* 4th quarter, 1997).

The SACP likes to present the ANC as "a people's parliament ... the home of the great majority who, historically, suffered from racial oppression" - in opposition to other groups and parties which "represent constituencies that benefited ... from the apartheid past". As against "the old ruling class and its allied social forces", the SACP argues that the ANC cannot be defined primarily according to class interests, except in terms of representing the historically oppressed. So the government it leads is defined by past social divisions, not the current class interests it serves. Indeed the aim of the national democratic revolution (NDR) is described in terms totally unrelated to class - "to build a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and



From people's hero to capitalist hero

united South Africa" - what the SACP calls "patriotic unity".

In the editorial notes of *The African Communist* we find the following passage: "The NDR should not be seen in narrow ideological terms. Nor should it be thought of as a mechanical 'stage'. When approached in this way, two seemingly opposed, but mutually reinforcing conceptions of the NDR get propagated. The one argues that (since it is only in a 'second stage' that we shall be building 'socialism') the key strategic task of the present is 'to construct a free-market capitalism'. The other position argues that (since the NDR is 'capitalist') we do not need to take this 'stage' too seriously: it is a necessary delay, but with no inherent value."

The SACP concludes: "The NDR is not defined centrally by answering the question, 'Is it socialist or capitalist?'" Rather it is defined by its "non-racial, non-sexist" aim. Yet this does not prevent the editorial from stating a few sentences later: "The ANC's alliance partners believe that only under socialism will the NDR goals be fully realised." So the NDR is not a stage on the road to socialism, yet logically ought to end in socialism nevertheless.

But of course the achievement of clarity is not the purpose of SACP 'theoreticians'. Their aim is to provide a left-sounding cover for the ANC's Thatcherite programme of privatisations and 'fiscal discipline'.

After holding up the vision of socialism (to be obtained by some indeterminate means in the distant future), the editorial writer brings us back to earth with a bump: "While we might have our differences about socialism, what is undeniable is that we are struggling for an NDR in a country and in a world dominated by capitalism. None of us can run away from this reality."

Therefore the NDR must content

itself with struggling against the "gross class, national and global inequalities" which capitalism produces. "At the same time," the editorial continues, "we have to find, through engagement, negotiation and inducement, points of convergence with the private sector ... We have to work both with and against the profit-seeking logic of private capitalism ... Of course finding the right balance between 'with' and 'against' in any particular situation is a difficult matter."

But surely there must be a vital role for the masses in this 'democratic revolution'? On the contrary, the SACP, while still paying lip service to mass action, sees it as totally subordinate to its abject parliamentarianism: "... parliament provides an institutional framework for the national liberation movement (represented by the ANC) to contest and negotiate with the political representatives of weakened but still powerful ruling elites from the past. The Cape Town parliament is an important reality. It is far better for these contests to be contained within democratic structures than for them to spill over into unconstitutional destabilisation." I am sure readers will agree that the SACP's NDR is certainly a remarkable form of 'revolution'.

It is of course true that the defeat of apartheid was a huge victory. It is also true that the government is set on implementing continued social reforms based on its policy of 'affirmative action'. But these changes do nothing to challenge the structures of exploitation. And, centrally, they are imposed from the top down, without the slightest working class input. For example legislation is currently under review in parliament which requires employers to analyse their workforce "by race, gender and disability", and obliges them to draw up plans to rectify any under-representation. This is

hailed by liberals and largely unopposed by international capital.

However, let us look at such measures in the context of the living conditions of the overwhelming mass of South Africans.

South Africa has rightly been described as a combination of the developed and third worlds, containing hundreds of thousands who enjoy a luxurious life style while the majority know only poverty. The ANC's 1994 reconstruction and development programme (RDP) estimated that 17 million people eke out an existence below the official 'minimum living level'. Twelve million people had no clean water supply and 21 million inadequate sanitation. Five million were homeless or squatting. "Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government," the policy document announced (ANC *The reconstruction and development programme* Johannesburg 1994, p4).

The housing 'backlog' was put, conservatively, at 1.3 million units and was still rising at an annual rate of 200,000. The ANC's equally conservative target was to construct one million low-cost households over five years: ie, in effect standing still. In reality the government will not come anywhere near its target and the housing situation continues to deteriorate. Unemployment remains at about 35%, but for the vast majority there is no unemployment benefit. However, the RDP was clear that "a system of 'handouts' for the unemployed should be avoided" (p18).

It is against this backdrop that the government's 'affirmative action' programme should be viewed. It is clear that it will have no impact whatsoever on the impoverished millions. What it will continue to do is open up career opportunities for middle class blacks - at the expense of middle class whites and, to a lesser extent, coloureds and Indians. Many companies have already adopted a policy of easing out long-serving white employees so as to meet government targets for black employment.

The *Weekly Worker* has been carrying an ongoing debate on the nature of the British state, in which some contributors have pointed out that its present official anti-racism can be just as divisive as racism has been in the past. There could be no clearer example of this than South African 'affirmative action'. White poverty is now much more widespread than ever seemed possible during the apartheid era. Soup kitchens have even reached into some of the poorer white estates. But this has not produced a greater unity of white and black, let alone common action. On the contrary, if anything, polarisation amongst the masses has increased. "No one wants to employ a white man these days," said one victim of 'affirmative action' (*The Independent* February 12).

So what solution does the SACP envisage for eliminating the huge social dislocation inherited from apartheid? Despite all its talk of "empowerment" it has no intention of

mobilising the masses in order to force through change that is genuinely revolutionary. Instead it lies low within the ANC and tries to sell its capitalist policies to the masses - like the latest, much trumpeted "job creation scheme" of president-in-waiting Thabo Mbeki. This involves big companies helping their employees to set up new businesses which would then sell services back to them. Compared to the scale of the problem, to describe this 'solution' as inadequate would be a gross understatement.

There is of course much disquiet within the SACP about the organisation's wholesale backing for the capitalist policies of the government, as well as opposition to the sinking of the party's identity within the ANC-dominated alliance. "The SACP and Cosatu [the main trade union centre, part of the tripartite alliance] have incidentally systematically disowned those who have sought to be elected into local governments for instance on an 'SACP ticket'," according to an alliance discussion document of last year (*The African Communist* 4th quarter, 1997).

And the SACP and ANC have an answer for those who want it to pursue an independent, anti-capitalist policy in opposition to the ANC majority. They warn that it would be "dangerous" to "simply declare big capital 'the enemy', and pursue headlong our own agenda regardless of the consequences". They go on to explain: "The realities of our global and national situation are such that big capital controls substantial resources without which we cannot carry forward our own national democratic transformation."

As a statement of the current hegemonic power of capital, this is of course correct. But, far from attempting to develop a global strategy to end this through international revolution, the alliance partners recommend instead unstinted cooperation: "The more strategically intelligent sectors of big capital are able to recognise that only the ANC ... is able to create the levels of social and political cohesion within our country ... and can establish the platform for a return to sustainable profitability. This creates the possibilities for an effective engagement with big capital from our side."

These tripartite discussion documents almost always originate with the SACP. While they can be safely ignored by government and capitalists alike, for the SACP membership and radical ANC elements their pseudo-Marxist terminology serves to provide a suitable left gloss for the government's pro-capital, anti-worker policies.

The time for 'loyalty' to these opportunist misleaders is long past. When the next revolutionary upsurge occurs, no appeal for pragmatism will be able to hold it back. Such an upsurge will need the leadership of genuine communists if it is not to be crushed. Those who try to hold it back will be swept away ●

Jim Blackstock