

Party, non-ideology and faction

The tasks of the 21st century demand all partisans of the working class be united in one democratic centralist party

and Nina Temple's *Manifesto for new times*.

So reforging the CPGB is not only about re-establishing branches, cells, union fractions and digging deep roots amongst the masses. It is also about cleansing the *conception* of the Communist Party, purging it of the bureaucratic, undemocratic and centrist muck that has been attached to it over the years.

What is the Party?

To begin our Augean task we will ask a fundamental question. What is the scientific definition of a Communist Party? Obviously this immediately calls forth a twofold answer. Communism is a society of material plenty, an association of free producers, a stateless community in which the full development of each is the condition for the full development of all. As to the word 'party', it comes from the Latin *pars* - ie, a part. Thus where left social democrats say their party *represents* the working class and claim to use the bourgeois state to reform capitalism into socialism, communists say our Party must be part of the class. Not just any part. The Communist Party is the voluntary union of the most determined *fighters* for communism and the liberation of humanity.

The working class has many organisations with which it wages its struggle against capital: trade unions, cooperatives, educational associations, youth leagues, defence corps, soviets, etc. But only the Communist Party can coordinate these organisations, patiently win them to work in a united way, so that they do not hinder each other and instead serve the entire class. The Party can fulfil that centralising role because it has rallied the best part of the class to its ranks and trained them as leaders. But that is not all.

The Party can direct the class struggle because it itself, via the operation of democratic centralism, is the most *disciplined* detachment of the working class. Within the Party lower bodies subordinate themselves to the authority of the higher ones; both majorities and minorities act together as one in agreed practical action. Therefore the Party represents a single system. Nevertheless the Communist Party is not merely the sum of its organisations. It is a fist which must strike in the right direction. That is ensured through constant debate, education, criticism and voting. Such far ranging democracy is no indulgent luxury. It provides the best conditions through which the Party is self-united around scientific theory: ie, Marxism-Leninism - the most advanced guide for associated humanity in its *practical* mission of changing the world.

Hence the Communist Party embodies the iron will of the working class, the merger of the workers' movement with scientific theory. The Communist Party is in other words the highest form of working class organisation - for which there is *no* substitute.

It would be wrong to imagine that such a vanguard springs forth ready-made. No class spontaneously produces the party that corresponds to its interests. Social life is complex and full of contradictions. Individuals, for example, can belong to one class and yet take a political stand that means they belong body and soul to another. Only through the tangled skein of economic and political struggle do classes begin to form a collective consciousness of themselves. As they do the groupings, factions and trends of those classes shift, manoeuvre and crystallise around definite ideas and programmes. Then during great upsurges, when millions are drawn from inertia and passivity into activity and enlightenment, "basic questions powerfully emerge and divisions are finally created which really correspond to a given class" (G Zinoviev *History of the Bolshevik*

Party, 1973, p8).

What we have said thus far goes some way to answer the question of what relationship exists between the Communist Party and the working class. The Communist Party has no interests separate and apart from the working class. It does not set up sectarian principles of its own to judge and dictate to the workers' movement. On the contrary, Marx and Engels explained, the Communist Party seeks always to bring to the fore common interests, the "interests of the movement as a whole" (K Marx, F Engels *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1973, p61). To clear the way for the working class and the beginning of real history, communists also urge support for every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political conditions.

What about the relationship between the Communist Party and other working class groups, factions and parties? The Communist Party is not formed against genuine working class revolutionaries. Our *immediate aim*, like theirs, is the formation of the workers into a class, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of political power by the proletariat. Yet, it must be said, we not only have certain groups and factions who base themselves on this or that sectarian principle invented or discovered by this or that theorist. We also have the sad state of affairs whereby most of the left in Britain is embroiled with, or dependent on, the Labour Party, which, it must be emphasised, is not a workers' party. It is a *bourgeois workers' party*.

The party of the working class will only be built in ruthless and unremitting struggle *against* Labourism and all bourgeois influences. Those who think that by strategically and automatically supporting the Labour Party they further the interests of the working class are in constant danger of losing their bearings altogether. This is no academic matter. Certainly in the great class battles to come, when state power becomes an immediate matter, such theoretical weakness and confusion leads, as Zinoviev writes, to "different sides on the barricades". That was the case in Russia in November 1917 and Germany in November 1918.

However, even after the revolution, under the conditions of socialism, the making of the Party itself does not take final shape. Splits and unifications continue. The Communist Party must consequently be viewed as a process which begins with the first organisation of communist activity and ends with the negation of politics when the lower phase of communism passes into the higher phase.

From what has been outlined it is clear that the Communist Party, in the span of its existence, can contain a whole gamut of opinions and shades of opinion, the extremes of which may be sharply contradictory. After all it is itself part of the working class. In the various manifestations of the Communist Party in pre-revolutionary Russia, side by side with Lenin and the Bolsheviks, there were at different times centrist chiefs like Plekhanov, Martov and Trotsky, as well as ultra-revisionists such as Dan and Struve. We too were in the same organisation with Fergus Nicholson and Eric Trevett and other centrists, besides ultra-revisionists like Tony Chater, Nina Temple and Martin Jacques.

What matters for communists is unity in action. Beyond those bounds there must be the broadest and freest discussion and the open fight against all harmful decisions and tendencies. Openness is as much a matter of principle as it is a weapon. The working class must be fully informed about every faction, shade and opinion in the Party as well as the working class movement as a whole. That way it can be educated and won to take sides. So, besides fighting in the CPGB for consistent

EACH century may be said to have its own ruling principle. That, however, necessarily involves each successive principle being progressively negated by what was already embryonic within it. Tenth century Norse piracy gave way to 11th century Norman feudal stability. The papal greed of the 15th century produced the 16th century religious heresies. The absolutist ethos of the 18th century grew out of reformation and counter-reformation, and ended with the great French revolution. In its turn the bourgeois 19th century was challenged by the rising proletariat in Paris 1871 and then, with far greater scope and power, answered by the October Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent founding of communist parties around the globe.

Nevertheless the 20th century has been characterised by failure, and on all sides at that. Only an ectopic parody of socialism was possible in the weak links of imperialism. Marx and Engels were right; real socialism needs coordinated revolution across the advanced countries - ie, "as an act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and simultaneously" (K Marx, F Engels *CW* Vol 5, 1976, p49). Isolated, the fate of the *local*/Russian revolution was sealed. Its birth was its death. Trapped by dire material circumstances, the USSR quickly turned into its opposite and embarked on an unstable and unsustainable evolutionary pathway. The first five year plan was the genesis of a 'freak' society, not socialism. Eastern Europe and China, Cuba and Vietnam, were post-capitalist but equally non-socialist. Neither they nor the USSR held the mirror of the future in their hands.

Capitalism survived; yet only by time and again turning away from its essence. Militarism and monopoly, fascism and the social democratic state are all in their different, but related ways features of a decadent system, in a world of failure. After the 1989-91 democratic counterrevolutions Eric Hobsbawm and Francis Fukuyama, Martin Jacques and Tony Blair, Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher hymn the triumph of capitalism. However the 21st century has every likelihood of marking the beginning of the real world-historical transition to socialism. The *globalised* capitalist economy cannot for much longer contain within itself the wealth it creates in such antagonistic abundance.

Of course, once material conditions are ripe, everything depends on human will, human consciousness and human organisation. People make history; it should be emphasised though that they do so primarily through the clash amongst them of class against class. The 21st century will see either the victory of socialism and the working class or the victory of the bourgeoisie and mutual destruction. A new general crisis of capitalism is coming. Behind its seductive heralds of new technology and the New World Order ride economic collapse, plague, war and barbarism. That is why we communists stress the historic urgency of reforging the Communist Party of Great Britain and the agenda of winning for it, not the Labour Party, the position as the natural party of the working class. Without the Communist Party the workers exist as a mere slave class. With the Communist Party the workers make themselves into a class and the hegemon of society.

There is a problem. The Communist Party, which factions of the left - both from the Stalinite and Trotskyite traditions - consciously or unconsciously imitate in miniature, is not the one that led the soviets to power on November 7 1917. It is the degenerate ones that dominated the militant part of the proletariat after the bureaucracy in the USSR ceased being the servant of the working class and instead became its master. The destiny of the world communist movement was inextricably bound up with the Russian Revolution. Stalin's bureaucratic socialism had on the one hand the prestige and on the other the brute strength to subordinate most communist parties to its *state and sectional* interests. The *ideology* of socialism in one country was used to justify the transformation of Comintern into an arm of Soviet diplomacy. Once that entailed supporting democratic imperialism social democratisation was inevitable. Hence there is a liquidationist logic which joins Joseph Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*

revolutionary theory and practice, from the first we fought for freedom to discuss *and* to criticise. Our struggle was therefore the struggle to reforge the CPGB on the basis of a revolutionary programme and democratic centralism, and to draw in new, educated forces. That proved possible only by launching our own separate *Party* publication - ie, *The Leninist* (the forerunner of the *Weekly Worker*). Official channels were barred to us.

With our separate publication we wanted to, and did, force the *hidden* opportunist factions, cliques, shades and opinions out into the open. That was not designed to create a live-and-let-live atmosphere. Quite the reverse. As we said back in 1981; building a revolutionary Party that can lead the working class to victory against capitalism means a "protracted ideological struggle against all alien ideologies inside the working class movement" (Editorial *The Leninist* No1 winter 1981).

The fight against the opportunists - who then dominated the CPGB - could never be confined to literary criticism. Practice is vital. Pro-Party forces were rallied into the highest possible organisational form, a Leninist wing of the Party. Hence when opportunism collapsed we remained in militant fighting formation. Naturally the centrist and revisionist desertions, breakaways and splits did not end our duty as Party members. Their treachery increased our responsibility. And I am proud to say that we did our duty by our Party and class. Leninists established, and organised under the Provisional Central Committee - a Party leadership whose sole task is to re-establish the Party on the firmest possible basis.

This concerns and should involve *all* partisans and *legitimate trends* of the working class. Their place is in the CPGB. It was in that spirit that we issued the following editorial statement in 1982: "Leninism makes an open call to all latent revolutionary forces within the working class vanguard to enter the Party and fight on its side. The opportunists have their road and we must find ours. Those who pose the tasks of communism and proceed to carry them out, whether they can be in a majority or not, must eventually become the Communist Party" (Editorial *The Leninist* No2 spring 1982). The reader will see that we maintain and have developed this perspective.

Members of the Communist Party are, of course, obliged to work in one of its organisations and *accept* its principles and abide by majority decisions on practical actions. Members are though by no means necessarily united on theoretical questions, including matters of strategy and tactics. Even when it comes to the programme (we will incidentally issue a draft programme next year, hopefully in time for the 75th anniversary of our Party), it is perfectly legitimate to criticise points and formulations.

For communists such differences and their open expression are not signs of weakness but strength. The Communist Party strives to organise and contain within itself all partisans of the working class, because that can only strengthen and intensify revolutionary practice - which alone provides the ultimate proof about rightness or wrongness in theoretical matters. We for our part are sure that if our arguments do not convince, practice will. Those who doubt the worth of the election tactic or who think economic struggles are primary should not be excluded from the Party. Work within our ranks and the actual struggle will convince all honest elements (elements who lack or lose honesty do not last long in our ranks).

It would be mistaken to believe that a Communist Party consists, or should consist, of a conglomeration of separate factions and tendencies. That was the unacknowledged state of affairs in the 1970s. We fight for unity around Marxism-Leninism and a single whole. However unity cannot be decreed. It has to be worked and fought for. Communist unity, the unity of communists within the CPGB, does not in the least mean members should hide disagreements on strategy and tactics or refrain from fully explaining their views whenever and wherever appropriate.

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Nothing of the kind. The political struggle for what a communist regards as correct should be carried on openly, straightforwardly and resolutely till a congress decides. Naturally, even after a congress, if Leninists were in a minority, like any legitimate trend, we would retain the right to openly present our views and criticisms. That is democratic centralism.

Ideology

Over the years the scientific understanding of what a Communist Party is has been almost totally obscured. When the CPGB was formed in July 1920 it represented a great leap forward for the working class in Britain. In the battles that followed, despite the fact that it only had a few thousand members, its influence radiated out to the hundreds of thousands, at times the millions. Undoubtedly the CPGB was part of the class and the leading part at that. Tragically, not least due to the baleful influence of the Soviet Union and its degenerating leaders, from the mid-1920s onwards the CPGB went on to suffer death by a thousand opportunist cuts.

While in Britain that led to an almost total organisational collapse of the Party, liquidationism was a world-wide phenomenon. The once proud parties of Comintern ceased being an *internationalist* threat to the existence of metropolitan capitalism. Instead they became *national* pressure groups within capitalism. From time to time communist parties encouraged mass strikes and violent demonstrations, even threatened revolution. In spite of that, by the 1950s ‘official communism’, which began as a militant adjunct of Soviet diplomacy, in the main became respectable and programmatically social democratised (till the late 1960s this took a pro-Soviet form. Hence it was bourgeoisification *sui generis*). The 1951 reformist *British road to socialism* programme, in part written by Stalin - which as we have comprehensively shown was “the product of many years of centrist adaptation and opportunist retreat” - became the sorry paradigm of all ‘official’ parties (J Conrad *Which road?*, 1991, p126).

Throughout this period each opportunist turn of ‘official communism’ produced its batch of recruits for various left oppositions. None were of much social weight or - and this is what is crucial - any real Party spirit. They were sects made up of *like-minded persons* formed primarily for purposes of a *literary* nature. Membership was determined not by militant class activity, rather by loyalty to, and willingness to parrot, the self-defining principle. In turn the working class as a whole was haughtily told that liberation depended on it doing the same. The idea was all.

Not surprisingly in terms of theory Bordigaism, Trotskyism, Shachtmanism, etc, in all their myriad varieties, were only partial, one sided critiques of the USSR and ‘official communism’. Relying on ready-made categories borrowed from the past, or refusing to recognise the qualitative change that had been wrought in the Soviet Union by the first five year plan, in every way they remained part of the problem. Things were made worse for them by the post-World War II international situation and the Cold War world system. Against all their predictions capitalism boomed and bureaucratic socialism spread. Already deep, theoretical shortcomings were compounded; and through splits, disorientation and disillusionment, what had always been marginal nearly melted away in the thin air of social democracy. Meanwhile ‘official communism’ continued its rightist trajectory and its domination of the real movement.

From its first Stalinite breath to its last Gorbachevite gasp, what was notable about ‘official communism’, was its ‘ideologicalisation’. By this I do not mean the hypocritical end-of-ideology ‘non-ideological’ ideology - a rightwing contrivance which equates ideology exclusively with any attempt to change the existing conditions. Ideologies, according to this school, are sterile schemas, naive oppositions to the hard-nosed ruling sanity. Typifying the approach are the likes of Daniel Bell, Raymond Aron and Kenneth Minogue and other conservative political theorists. The latter declares: “Ideologies can be specified in terms of a shared hostility to modernity: to liberalism in politics, individualism in moral practice, and the market in economics” (K Minogue *Alien powers*, 1985, p4). By performing this shabby little trick such academic jesters automatically dismiss advocates of socialism as ideologically motivated and thus *ipso facto* hopeless (a Nietzschean conclusion that finds its tired echo in ‘radical’ postmodernism). In the mean time Minogue and his fellow defenders of capitalism have nothing to be ashamed of except good old fashioned common sense.

No, when I deploy the rather clumsy term ‘ideologicalisation’, what I mean is the replacement of the scientific world view by *inverted* or false consciousness. In “all ideology men and their relations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*”, Marx and Engels famously wrote in their *German ideology* (K Marx, F Engels *CW* Vol 5, 1976, p36). Marx and Engels together broke with, and transcended, ideological criticism of capitalism. Their socialism and communism was dialectical, material and practical, not utopian and dogmatic. So used here the ideologicalisation of the communist parties implies a retreat from, a bartering away, a denial of the science originated first by Marx and Engels and then painstakingly mastered and developed by other militant intellectuals such as Kautsky, Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Hilferding, Gramsci, Lukacs, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky, etc.

No serious communist will now question the depravity, the class compromise and eventual class treachery of ‘official communism’. We only need mention its purges, its popular fronts, its pacifism and its parliamentary cretinism. Naturally all this lived reality was theoretically advocated and gilded, not least by using Marxist-Leninist jargon and well culled quotations. Yet the theories cynically commissioned by Stalin, his sidekicks, his followers and his successors, were inevitably two-a-penny, transparently erroneous, illusory and apologetic. Socialism in one country, the identification of social democracy with fascism, popular fronts with ‘progressive’ imperialists, the peaceful parliamentary road, the state of the whole people, were invented not to fire the working class into revolutionary action. These ‘beautiful lies’ served the preservation of bureaucratic privilege.

Bourgeois and middle class revolutionaries needed illusion, a self-deceiving set of beliefs, if success was to be achieved. To further their class interests *others* had to be mobilised. This was done through the imagined splendour and “universality” of their “common” project (K Marx, F Engels *CW* Vol 5, 1976, p60). They promised themselves and the great unwashed *in ideal form* god’s kingdom on earth, liberty, equality and fraternity, and national freedom, not wage slavery, profit and national debt.

The ‘universalism’ of Stalin, Krushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev was the sectional attempt of the Soviet bureaucracy to find, or secure, common interests with imperialist finance capital. In contrast the working class, which is becoming a class for itself, requires for success the truth about the contradictory movement of the bourgeois world and the position within it of all classes. Naturally given the workers’ position as an underclass in capitalism (and even under socialism) this takes the practical-social form of mass *socialist counter-consciousness*, which is informed and taken to higher levels by the theoretical-scientific work of communist intellectuals. Through active *socialist ideology* workers become aware of themselves as a future ruling class and do battle with the bourgeoisie *and* its state. Socialist ideology must therefore be qualitatively distinguished from the perversions of ‘official communism’ and its regression into ideology.

At this point we return to the Party question. Getting communist parties to serve the narrow interests of the Soviet Union’s elite was not easy, especially as diplomacy by definition requires one twist and turn after another. It was necessary therefore to impose an authoritarian regime along the lines of the Stalin dominated CPSU. The opportunists dishonestly and misleadingly called it democratic centralism. We prefer the more accurate term, ‘bureaucratic centralism’. Achieving obedience and pliability meant hounding and demoralising every opposition, first and foremost internal oppositions. Bureaucratic centralism was however like the mythical dragon which, having devoured everything else, begins to eat itself. Not only revolutionaries found themselves subjected to ideological persecution. Adherents of the last opportunism - yesterday’s revisionism - became today’s victims. In our CPGB old believers in social fascism, democratic anti-Nazism and in due course, irony of ironies, pro-Soviet centrists, went on in turn to suffer mockery and castigation from the social democratising and ascendant right.

Of course, bureaucratic centralism relied primarily on organisational not political methods (in the Soviet Union a single bullet in the back of the head sufficed). Those who disagreed were excluded from Party positions, their views were denied a platform in the Party press and any public dissent from the leadership line was deemed a breach of Party discipline. That mockery of democratic centralism was taken to the point where no member of any elected committee was allowed to voice criticism of the leadership to rank and file Party members outside the fleeting and pinched pre-congress discussion period.

Intellectual pacification ran in tandem with intellectual poverty and organisational demobilisation. Theory which is mere justification, opposition which is forced to become purely organisational: both these inexorably produce a membership incapable of thinking critically and independently. Moreover, though to begin with the membership acts technically, finally it does not act at all. Denied the oxygen of theoretical controversy, it atrophies. That was the history of opportunism in our CPGB.

Bureaucratic regimes

If it was an irony of ironies that pro-Soviet elements - from the proto-New Communist Party to the Straight Leftists - were persecuted by the very regime they were most closely identified with, then what happened to the Trotskyites and Trotskyoids and the regime they created is the supreme irony.

The decline and fragmentation of ‘official communism’ left behind Maoism, Enverism and a batch of equally dead-end pro-Soviet splinters. It also left a political space which Trotskyism particularly could exploit and expand in. Like the Triassic birds, after the mass extinction of dinosaurs and pterosaurs, it grew both in size and diversity in the new environment. Notwithstanding the differences, the Workers Revolutionary Party, Militant Labour and the Socialist Workers Party - the three major lineages of Trotskyite evolution - have all been characterised by internal regimes *worse* than our CPGB suffered, even at its nadir under the Eurocommunists.

Till its implosion, just after the miners’ Great Strike in 1985, perhaps the largest Trotskyite group was the WRP. As is well known Gerry Healy ran the WRP as his private fief. Rank and file members worked like slaves. Healy lived like a minor lord. Opposition was not tolerated, and, when it did surface, was often dealt with using physical and always verbal abuse. Only one view was allowed - Healy’s. That applied externally to other revolutionaries as well.

While Livingstone and Labourites of a similar hue were courted and feted the leaders of other working class trends and groups were endlessly and disgustingly branded as being minions of the CIA, the KGB or both. But it was the WRP which was a *paid* agent - of Libya, Iraq, Iran and other reactionary Middle Eastern regimes. Gaddafi was praised for “politically” developing “in the direction of revolutionary socialism”. The name of this “undisputed leader of the Libyan people” was said to be “synonymous with the strivings of the oppressed in many countries” (*News Line* December 12 1981). The crossing of class lines was no aberration. Even as countless revolutionaries and communists were hanging on the gibbet, Khomeini was hailed a revolutionary hero, not condemned as a medievalist tyrant and butcher. The WRP also defended the execution of communists who had established party cells in the Iraqi army. And to prove his trustworthiness to Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist dictatorship Healy ordered mug shot photos taken of Iraqi communist protesters in London. When such unprincipled financial links and political doings were exposed by leftist critics, the WRP’s reply came - thick and fast in the form of libel actions in the bourgeois courts.

What defined the WRP was its strange mixture of millennialism, political prostitution, paranoia and biblical Trotskyism. Crowning it, as if with thorns, was Healy’s *Studies in dialectical materialism*. Published in 1982, this was a diabolically and deliberately incomprehensible work of philosophy which attempted to bamboozle readers with plagiarised quasi-Hegelianism in order to establish Healy’s status as a great thinker.

Interestingly in 1982 the WRP political committee “emphatically and unanimously” demanded that their fraternal comrade, David North, secretary of the US Workers League, “withdraw” his criticisms of Healy’s *Studies*. Though they “had never been discussed” he did (D North *Critique of G Healy’s Studies*, 1985, p3). Only in 1985 when the WRP was breaking up amidst financial scandal and tales of sexual wrongdoing, did Healy’s former lieutenants, notably Mike Banda and Cliff Slaughter, decide it was politic to announce that all along their king was philosophically naked. As the WRP spiralled into oblivion North’s *Critique*, ie, the notes he wrote and withdrew in 1982, were circulated ... True to bureaucratic centralist form they were “*for members only*”.

Things have never got quite so bad either in Militant Labour or the SWP. Nevertheless things are bad.

Militant (aka the Revolutionary Socialist League) existed for 40 years as the most Labourite

of deep entryists. It dismissed everything and anybody outside the Labour Party world; women, gays and blacks were told that they and their campaigns were mere diversions. Only the carrot and stick combination of Kinnock's witchhunt and the anti-poll tax movement broke Militant organisationally from Labourism. Politically however it remains a *right centrist* formation still dependent on, and working for, a Labour government. Despite claiming revolutionary credentials its programme, *Militant: What we stand for*, is thoroughly reformist. "Socialism", it says, will come not via insurrection, but "through an enabling bill in parliament", which will nationalise "the top 200 monopolies" (*Militant: What we stand for*, June 1990, p8).

Rosa Luxemburg pointed out that the real difference between the parliamentary road and the revolutionary road was not two ways to get to the same end - ie, socialism. No, different strategic approaches (means) lead to very different conclusions (ends). The reason is obvious. Communists want to mobilise the masses to smash the state, parliament included (to do that we fully accept the need to stand candidates and get MPs elected). Reformists, on the other hand, regard parliament as something to treasure and protect. It is after all the instrument with which they say Labour will usher in the socialist order. No wonder Militant insists, "The idea ... that we want to 'smash parliamentary democracy' is completely untrue" (*Militant International Review* No33, autumn 1986, p9). We should believe them.

Members of Militant are forbidden to voice criticism of its reformist perspectives in public. In point of fact neither Militant leaders nor rank and filers have ever been given a platform in the tendency's publications to develop their differences on any subject of substance or importance. Its publications are bland and lifeless.

In 1991 a deep schism opened up on its central committee over the turn from Labour entryism. Opinion seemed overwhelming in the 46:3 split. But this was not any old minority. The three were among the brightest stars in the rather dull Militant firmament. In spite of that, differences were not fought out in its own publications. Instead Ted Grant, the organisation's founder and most prominent theorist, Rob Sewell, national organiser, and Alan Woods, editor of *Militant International Review*, thought it would be a good idea to leak their opposition documents to *The Guardian*.

In it we find the minority complaining that a "clique" was operating which shielded "individuals from criticism", and how it bureaucratically tried to "gag" dissent (*The Guardian* September 3 1991). Why they chose to use an organ of the enemy class and not their own, or one of the many leftwing papers and journals, has never been explained. However as shown only a few days later the majority used exactly the same unprincipled method. The whole polemic was in fact conducted in *The Guardian*.

When it came to his turn Peter Taaffe implied that his one time leader and mentor was getting crusty, if not senile. He went on to argue that with Kinnock's shift to the right: "It would be criminal to pass over an immediate opportunity for expansion in order that we may cling to our few remaining points of support within the Labour Party" (*The Guardian* September 6 1991).

Since then Militant has not got very far in terms of expansion. Membership which was 6,000 is now 2,000. The sons and daughters who were easily gained in the Labour Party Young Socialists had not been politically trained or prepared for life outside the committee rooms of Labourism. Not that Grant's *Socialist Appeal* gained anything either. It too lost much of its, considerably smaller, following. Has the lesson been learnt? Hardly. Neither in *Militant* nor in *Socialist Appeal* will one find polemics, not even between each other.

The recent case of Phil Hearse and Militant Labour is instructive. For some 20 years he was a top member in Britain of the United Secretariat of the 4th International. Besides being editor of its fortnightly *Socialist Outlook*, he was the main spokesperson of its recently victorious majority faction. Despite that lofty and influential position he decided, in October 1994, along with Kathy Kirkham and no one else, to up and leave Socialist Outlook (internally known as the International Socialist Group) and join Militant Labour.

Though he claimed to have argued for a "fundamental change of direction" in the Socialist Outlook group it cannot be said this found expression in the pages of his paper. Former comrades and readers were presented with his decision as a *fait accompli* - in *Militant*. None had the opportunity to publicly argue with him, for or against, whether or not Militant Labour, is, as he maintains, best placed to make a "substantial contribution to the building of a revolutionary

party" (*Militant* November 4 1994).

His change of camp was an isolated and lone act which produced no theoretical gains. Citing Ireland, ex-Yugoslavia and Scotland, he admits not being in "100% agreement on every question" with Militant Labour. Sadly he does not elaborate ... Sadder still, I think we can safely predict he never will, at least in the pages of *Militant*.

At this present moment in time the SWP has managed to steal a march on other left groups. It is now by far the biggest left organisation, boasting some 10,000 members. Indeed it has for a number of years called itself the "smallest mass party in the world". However the SWP is not a party in the Marxist sense. It is a biggish sect which defines itself in an exclusive way around the Tony Cliff trinity of state capitalism, the permanent arms economy and deflected permanent revolution.

In its *Socialist Review*-International Socialism origins the SWP was rooted in the Labour Party and marketed itself as Luxemburgist: that is, explicitly non-Leninist (Leninism led to Stalinism was the suggestion). During the 1950s not much happened organisationally. It circulated the US Shachtmanites' journal and in general suffered a slow decline; in 1958 membership was no more than two dozen. The group worked along federal lines, with distinct libertarian, social democratic

"What is important, when it comes to membership, is not agreement, let alone with every dot and comma, with this or that theoretician's conclusions on the nature of the Soviet Union. Revolutionary practice is what counts."

and pacifistic leanings: Cliff himself described it as "centrist" (*SMatgamna A tragedy of the left*, 1991, p1). The idea of building a Leninist party in Britain was contemptuously dismissed as "toy-town Bolshevism". Cliff's clever idea was staying in the Labour Party, all the way to the revolution.

It was only 1960s youth radicalisation, above all over Vietnam, that provided conditions of growth. The 'third campist' position that marked out the group over the 1950-53 Korean War was quickly dumped in the pro-NLF floodtide. 'Ho-ho Chi Minh' became the chant, not 'neither Washington nor Moscow'. The IS, as it became, broke from the Labour Party in 1967, and a year later Cliff began his campaign for what he intuitively called Leninism and democratic centralism. In the early 1970s that meant a series of ruptures and expulsions: here was the primeval source of today's *Socialist Organiser*, RCG, RCP, Workers Power, etc.

A travesty of Luxemburgism gave way to a travesty of Leninism. The SWP membership is never involved in, let alone begins, genuine internal debates. There is a layer of 'red professors' who produce theory (and earn a regular living in bourgeois academia). But this is either the stuff of the lecture hall, or sophisticated apologetics, designed to justify the latest turn or shore up Cliff's crumbling old dogmas against the mounting evidence of real life. Together with an inner-core of full timers these intellectuals constitute the SWP leadership. All initiative, and any serious argument, takes place within the confines of this small circle.

Below the leadership there is a tier of cadre which is *selected*, not for its drive and self-reliance, but its loyalty to the leadership and willingness to carry out, without question, its wishes and latest line. Before 1905 it is true Lenin argued for the appointment of Party agents. But that was due to the appointment of the Okhrana, the Tsarist secret police, not principle. Only an underground Party could carry

out communist work and *open* propaganda and polemic. The SWP has adopted an internal regime which owes much to the Okhrana and nothing to Bolshevism. A recent splinter paints a bleak, almost police type, picture of the SWP cadre. "The test of a cadre", it says, with the benefit of recent experience, is "the lengths they are prepared to go to intimidate anyone who criticises the perspectives handed down to them" (*International Socialists Group Democracy and the SWP*, 1994, p3).

Those who persistently question or come to different conclusions face marginalisation or expulsion. Take Chris Jones, an SWPer for two decades. He wrote a letter to *Socialist Review* in June 1994 replying to an article by Duncan Hallas. In the course of his letter he naturally presented some of his own ideas, including the need to put republicanism to the fore. Almost immediately he found himself subject to all sorts of allegations by John Rees, a central committee member, including breach of so-called democratic centralism.

The majority of his branch in Liverpool supported him against suggestions that he was guilty of obstructing their work. Nothing was presented in writing. Only the flat, unelaborated, charge, that he had broken SWP rules. Jones was duly expelled. And even when he appealed he was given the opportunity neither to listen to or cross-examine his accusers, nor an explicit explanation of what he had been charged with. In the end he found himself expelled for "permanent opposition" (*SWP Pre-conference bulletin* No2, 1994, p38).

Such undemocratic practices are no aberration. The membership itself is neither educated theoretically nor trusted politically by the leadership. The SWP works almost entirely top-down. There is no control from below. The central committee appoints district organisers, who then appoint the district committees, and so on. To spike potential focuses of opposition, branch committees and the national committee were abolished. SWP conferences and councils are run like rallies or pep talks, not the highest decision making bodies.

Recruitment is the answer to all strategic and political questions. The continued existence of the Tory government, the fascist menace, are all put down to the SWP's *membership* and its failure to recruit. After the October 1992 mass demonstration against the pit closure programme, Tony Cliff famously insisted that if he had 20,000 members, part of the march could have been diverted to parliament and "the government would have collapsed".

True, SWP members are permitted factional rights. However they can exercise them only in the weeks before conference. With no continuous and open argument, with no culture of theoretical debate, with no democracy, it is predictable that when they do form, they are insubstantial, unthought-out and tend towards the purely *technical*. A typical example is the three-strong 'Filling the vacuum' *faction*. It agitates for a "rank and file network" in the trade unions and not much else (see *SWP Pre-conference bulletin* Nos 1,2,3, 1994). Factions such as these are as much a mockery of factions as the SWP is a mockery of a party.

All this creates, for the moment, a quiet life for SWP leaders. In the kingdom of the SWP they are princes of all they survey. Their instructions and whims are obeyed by cadres if not the increasingly passive members. Their ideology is wonderfully preserved, as if in aspic. But lack of democracy and freedom to criticise does not train revolutionaries nor build a party. The SWP regime Cliff has created is sectarian not party.

Unity

The failure of the WRP, Militant Labour and the SWP is primarily a failure of theory. Not personality, nor the corruption of power, nor a strange pathological compulsion to endlessly repeat the history of opportunism. None will understand that a revolutionary party cannot be built on the soft ground of an exclusive ideology or the undemocratic domination of one faction and its leadership. The *programme* of the working class - on which the Party is based - should not be trammelled by dubious theories such as Tory Bonapartism, parliamentary enabling bills, the permanent arms economy or state capitalism. The programme outlines the broad line of march from capitalism to communism and the practical demands of the working class. It - the programme, that is - ought to provide the foundation and guide through which all genuine partisans of the working class can be united for practice.

Hence the Communist Party is a far wider and more useful weapon in the class war than the sectarian group, which isolates and then pits the

working class revolutionary, one against the other, in a war of ideological nuance and dogma. Within the Communist Party there must be room for all sorts of Marxist shades and trends. What is important, when it comes to membership, is not agreement, let alone with every dot and comma, with this or that theoretician's conclusions on the nature of the Soviet Union. Revolutionary practice is what counts.

Our immediate task is to reforge the CPGB. Fulfilling that great task will be complex. It will, I believe, involve first and foremost the practical work of winning new layers to communism. However as and to the degree that proceeds, the renewed strength and vigour of the CPGB, can power a rapprochement, *in stages*, with all revolutionary proletarian forces. What I mean here is workers' unity. Such unity cannot be created by sects or lowest common denominator ideological 'agreements' between them. "Unity," as Lenin said, "must be *won*, and only the workers, the class conscious workers themselves, can win it - by stubborn and persistent efforts" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 20, 1977, p319).

There are, of course, the literati around *New Left Review*, *Radical Chains* and similar journals who like to believe that by regularly debating with and giving a platform to the amorphous band of freelance 'Marxists', armchair 'militants' and crackpot scheme-mongers they strike a blow for unity. But on the contrary such activity sustains and fuels sectarianism. It flatters sectarianism, when it should be treated with cold contempt. Unity, divorced from the fight for a Communist Party, is a parlour game for dilettantes who, though they sometimes like to boast about their 'defence' of the Marxist method, are completely useless when it comes to the fight for socialism. Communists take workers and serious left organisations as their basis. "Unity without organisation is impossible," runs one of Lenin's dictums. So we want to unite active workers. The idea of uniting the 'socialist intelligentsia', most of them lazy, semi-reformist and completely detached from the working class, is a reactionary utopia. The idea of uniting all workers willing to rebuild their CPGB - that is our cause.

I know there are those, some sincere, some insincere, who maintain that the Communist Party can only be rebuilt from the bottom up, from independent local or trade union branch work. This argument must be turned onto its feet for it to become a *communist* argument. Real communist work, locally, in workplaces, or in trade unions, is only possible if it is organised by an authoritative centre. Communism takes as its starting point the world, and the world-wide transition from capitalism to socialism. There is nothing parochial about genuine communism. As a matter of principle it favours the organisation of the working class in the *largest* possible units. Our main enemy is our own United Kingdom capitalist state not this or that employer, let alone the town council. Communist parties become local by first being international and state-national.

Localism is a slippery slope. It is organisational anarchism. Capitalism tried to destroy the Party by promoting Eurocommunism and the Democratic Left, by lauding Martin Jacques and Nina Temple. Localism carries out the destructive work of capitalism without being asked or even rewarded. Localism is not only independent of the CPGB, it is against the CPGB. The longer the period of reaction lasts the more weak elements will seek justification for desertion. One of the features of the present day is the flip from 'Marxism' to liberalism. The Democratic Left, *New Left Review*, the *Morning Star*, Tariq Ali and localism are all rungs of one ladder, stages in a single process, expressions of the same tendency. To be a real communist it is not enough to *call* oneself a communist: one must carry out the practical work of reforging the CPGB. The disintegration of the Party should not be added to by localism. Disintegration can only be overcome by rallying to the defence of the Party.

Reforging the CPGB rests at the moment exclusively on the shoulders of Leninists. All Party work in progress, not least in the field of elections, is being carried out by Leninists. Thus it devolves to us, the only consistent defender of the Party principle, to select and by gradation call up those elements fit to serve the cause. A new general crisis of capitalism looms; our enemies are upping the stakes in the class war; fascism stirs in the far wings. Under such conditions it would truly be criminal not to offer the hand of friendship to potentially pro-Party people in other groups.

So what stages of rapprochement mentioned above do I envisage? *Stage one* is calling again upon the surviving pro-Party elements scattered by the collapse of 'official communism' and those groupings who, formally at least, take a pro-Party position. *Stage two* will require us to reach out to

those who define themselves as being in the Leninist tradition. *Stage three* should open the door to all genuine Marxists. *Stage four* might still be a long way off, but any sizeable Communist Party ought to set itself the aim of organising those serious libertarian and syndicalist workers who are revolutionary but at the moment mistrust the party idea because of negative experience of Labourism, 'official communism' and the Trotskyist groups.

At every stage rapprochement necessarily means ideological struggle, crucially against liquidationism; in Britain that primarily and most dangerously takes the form of pro-Labourism. The fundamental line of demarcation in the communist movement in Britain today is between those who are pro-Labourite (in the last analysis that must mean pro-reformist and pro-capitalist) and those who are revolutionary and pro-Party. Some 'official communist' fragments make great play of the 'communist unity' slogan when all they really want is the unity of opportunism for the benefit of Labourism. Such liquidators should stop pretending to be communists. Go and join Blair's stinking party. That is where you belong. We want the unity of workers and genuine proletarian revolutionaries.

Arguments about how to skin the Labourite cat, how to strip the Labour Party of militant working class support, are one thing. Automatically voting Labour, the reformist notion that a Labour government would be a step in the direction of socialism, or would empower the working class, are another. The first is legitimate; the second is illegitimate.

Leninists must undoubtedly seek rapprochement with the former, those who are really Marxists and potential pro-Partyists. As to the latter, including the pro-Labourites who broke away from our Party, they cannot be regarded as a part of communism. There can be no rapprochement with reformist or counterrevolutionary elements. So we have no need for the services of conciliators, supposed honest brokers who would neutralise the differences between pro-Partyism and pro-Labourism. There should be no unity for unity's sake, but unity for the sake of Party work and the class struggle. We would only have NCPers, Straight Leftists, Communist Liaison and CPBers *back* in the Party on the definite condition that they break from liquidationism and pro-Labourism. They must come over to the real Party standpoint, the real Party way of life. Of course, the liquidationist fragments of 'official communism' are far from alone. Liquidationism is a deep rooted social phenomenon. The WRP, Militant Labour and the SWP likewise automatically make the call to vote Labour, and to a greater or lesser degree peddle the lie that a Labour government would represent social progress.

Let us concentrate to begin with then on what we have designated stage one. Frankly, the NCP, Straight Leftist, Communist Liaison, *Morning Star* and Democratic Left splits were a good thing. Leninists now lead the Party, much reduced though it is. By using the commanding heights gained in the inner-Party struggle we can reforge it out of our wing. We are well rid of those factions who wanted to liquidate our Party into Labourism. However the confusion and dispersal of pro-Party elements those liquidationist splits caused - that was a bad thing. We want to give the possibility of returning to the Party and working for the Party to all communists. We earnestly call the pro-Party diaspora back to the Party. Surely it is time for them, if they are serious, to return to their Party. Unite with the continuation of the Party represented by the Provisional Central Committee and the Party organisations which accept its leadership. It is either that or isolation, localism and effective death as any sort of communist.

Objective conditions dictate rapprochement with the PCC. A rapprochement of pro-Party groups with the PCC, because it is the only established and effective pro-Party centre. Let those who say they are for the unity of revolutionary Marxist-Leninists pass from word to deed. A mutually acceptable *contractual agreement* on the basis of the struggle for the Party and the Party principle against liquidationism, without any ideological compromises, without any glossing over of tactical or other differences of opinion within the 'what we fight for' credo presented in each edition of the *Weekly Worker* - that would be a splendid thing. And that is what we have proposed to *Open Polemic*, the Communist Action Group and the so-called Independent Communists. Who amongst them is really pro-Party, in deed, not merely in word - this is something that can be ascertained in the course of daily work. Nevertheless the coming over of even

one small communist group during a period of reaction such as this - that would be vastly more significant than the tiny numbers concerned would on the face of it suggest. It would be the unity of different *opinions* under the banner of pro-Partyism. Do not doubt it: such a development would reverberate throughout the left in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Will any of them dare? Will even one of them make the leap? Each must choose: seek rapprochement with the CPGB's PCC or become liquidators. Time, it has to be said, is pressing. Soon the seventh trumpet will sound. If the pro-Party elements within them prove too weak or unorganised, or no agreement is wanted, so be it. Then Leninists will remain the sole builders of the Party. We shall advance towards the goal of reforging the CPGB, only we will have to wait that bit longer before we can attempt to draw in all who stem from, or claim the Marxist-Leninist tradition. It will be a longer route but we shall get there. Our practical work will continue, and if the need arise we shall expose those who have by lack of courage put themselves in the anti-Party camp. Leninists will make the CPGB into a mass vanguard Party *together* with those who want to help and *against* those who are incapable, or do not want to help.

Party factions

Let us be quite clear what is being said. Reforging the CPGB can be a task for many others besides us Leninists. What is more, I think it is perfectly reasonable to expect, certainly it is necessary to provide for, the existence and struggle of *different* factions within the reformed CPGB. Leninists, at our 6th Conference in September 1993, have already *unanimously* agreed to allow "permanent or temporary" factions and "alternative platforms" (J Conrad *Problems of communist organisation*, 1993, p44).

"Not allowing for differences is far from healthy. Unofficial, hidden groups form, plot and fester. Much better to bring differences out into the light of day."

Before presenting concrete proposals on factional rights in the CPGB it would be a good idea, I think, to answer some of the typical objections to factions: ie, they are anti-Leninist; they increase the danger of splits; they are Trotskyite, etc. To begin, let us ask a very necessary question. What is a faction? (A term which, it has to be said, carries an enormous amount of negative baggage.) We can turn to Lenin for an answer. "A faction," he says, "is an organisation within a party, united, not by its place of work, language or other objective conditions, but by a particular platform of views on party questions" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 17, 1977, p265).

It is impossible to prevent the existence of different views on Party questions. If, as in the SWP, there cannot be any permanent groupings, then it is only a step, and a short one at that, to the banning of differences of opinion. For whenever there are two opinions, people tend to group together. Not allowing for differences is far from healthy. Unofficial, hidden groups form, plot and fester. Much better to bring differences out into the light of day. That was Lenin's theory and practice.

It will be seen that while he was not positively in favour of factions as such, his concern, as in the passage below, is to emphasise the difference

between honest and dishonest factions: "*Every* faction is convinced that *its* platform and *its* policy are the *best* means of abolishing factions, for no one regards the existence of factions as ideal. The only difference is that factions with clear, consistent, integral platforms *openly* defend *their* platforms, while unprincipled factions *hide* behind cheap shouts about their virtue, about their non-factionalism" (*Ibid*).

Lenin was proud of the Bolshevik *faction*. It openly defended and advocated its platform. When the Bolshevik paper *Rabochaya Gazeta* first appeared, he therefore did not blush or hesitate to announce that it "necessarily makes its appearance as a factional publication, as a factional enterprise of the Bolsheviks". After the defeat of the 1905 revolution and the disintegration of the Party, he fought, not for the end of factionalism, but the coming together of the Bolsheviks and pro-Party Mensheviks (those around Plekhanov). Lenin described the Bolsheviks as a "strong" faction and condemned "moralising, whining for their abolition". That moralising and whining, it should be said, came from the likes of Martov and Trotsky.

And let those who would have it that factions by their very nature lead to splits ponder this argument. In the "observance in practice" of "democratic centralism, on guarantees for the rights of all minorities and for all loyal opposition, on the autonomy of every Party organisation, on recognising that all Party functionaries must be elected, accountable to the Party and subject to recall" and "their sincere and consistent application", there is "a guarantee against splits, a guarantee that the ideological struggle in the Party can and must prove fully consistent with strict organisational unity" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 10, 1977, p314). The suggestion that in consistent democratic centralism and minority factional rights we find a *guarantee* against splits might be an exaggeration. They do however provide the *best conditions* to prevent splits. Full minority rights also remove the democracy fig leaf some use to cover desertion and renegacy.

So I think we can safely say that in the years that followed the first revolution Lenin did not oppose factions. He was a factional leader.

After the October Revolution, the third revolution, amidst the danger of German invasion, a Left Communist faction came out against peace negotiations and for revolutionary war. Lenin not only fought them, he tolerated them. In March 1918 they had a daily paper, *Kommunist*, which carried their propaganda. Lenin also *demande*d that they take a full part in the leadership. The 7th Congress elected 15 members and 8 candidate members to the Central Committee. Amongst them three Left Communists who refused to take their seats - Bukharin, Lomov and Uritsky.

There was of course the 1920 ban on factions by the Party's 10th Congress. This, it should be emphasised, was an "exceptional year". Peasant discontent was welling up, demobilised Red Army men were turning to banditry, imperialism was making plans and ominous threats, "bureaucratic practices" gripped the Party and demoralisation was fast spreading among the "largely declassed" workers. Under the flag of anarchism petty bourgeois counterrevolution was gaining strength (Kronstadt was soon to revolt). At the top of the Party there had been some fierce clashes, not least between Bukharin, Trotsky and Lenin over the trade union question. A number of factions emerged from below, the most notable being the Workers' Opposition. Its platform, written by Alexandra Kollontai, printed in 250,000 copies, won 21% of the votes in the Moscow Party in November 1920, 30% of communist miners in early 1921 and had 6% of the delegates at the 10th Party Congress.

"Assistance is on its way from the West European countries," Lenin promised the 10th Congress. "But," he added with sober realism, "it is not coming quickly enough." Under these specific circumstances he proposed a major retreat: ie, massive concessions to capitalism, which later became known as the New Economic Policy. More, he urged, as an *emergency measure*; a ban on factions. "Comrades," appealed Lenin, "this is no time to have an opposition. Either you're on this side, or on the other, but then your weapon must be a gun, and not an opposition.... Let's not have an opposition just now!" So there was nothing normal about the ban on factions nor the new (secret) rule which allowed for the expulsion of Central Committee members. It was not the principle Stalin turned it into (that is, excepting his own faction). "This is an extreme measure that is being adopted specially, in view of the dangerous situation" (Lenin).

Lenin feared internal and external enemies would use the "luxury" of factional disputes within the "governing Party" for counterrevolutionary purposes. Hence "just now" he insisted that "there

should not be the slightest trace of factionalism". A retreat was "no time to argue about theoretical deviations". The atmosphere of controversy was "becoming extremely dangerous and constitutes a direct threat to the dictatorship of the proletariat".

It should be noted that, though the 10th Congress overwhelmingly voted to call for the "immediate dissolution of all groups without exception formed on the basis of one platform or another", Lenin opposed the resolution presented by Ryazanov which would have prohibited elections according to platforms. "This is an excessive desire, which is impractical," he declared, "and I move that we reject it" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 32, 1977, p261). It was.

Back to the real business. Factions in our CPGB should have definite rights. That must include the right to become a majority. To facilitate this and the process of Party building, even under today's conditions, I personally would agree to automatic access to the central organ, provision for separate publications, and proportional representation on the Provisional Central Committee and other responsible bodies, editorial boards, appeals committees, etc (that, in passing, is why recommended lists are necessary). As long as factions are loyal to the Party and the Party principle, as long as all members of the Party, irrespective of faction, diligently and fully carry out agreed assignments and fulfil all their financial obligations, I believe such an arrangement provides the surest framework for the merger, the fusion of factions and the conversion of factional centres into centres that are only those of shade or trend. Instead of the present isolation and exclusiveness of groups, I urge the struggle for influence in the Party. 'Work, criticise and improve' should be the motto.

My comrades can rest assured - I am not suggesting the slightest watering down of our Leninist politics or principles. There can be no question whatsoever of dropping our stand on independent election work, our fight against Labourism, our militant revolutionism, our criticisms of bureaucratic socialism, our proletarian internationalism. We fight and shall continue to fight for revolutionary communism. Needless to say, Leninists will not dissolve their identity in the reformed Party. We will retain Bolshevik "self-determination" when it comes to "elucidating" our policy (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 16, 1977, p150). Leninism is a definite political trend and we will remain, no matter what, the foremost champions of Partyism and the revolutionary line.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that there exist big differences with those to whom we propose to grant Party membership and thereby factional rights. But nothing should stand in the way of reforging the Communist Party. Communists must by definition organise at the highest possible level. All pro-Party forces must be concentrated. Not to do so would be criminal.

The theoretical differences that at present divide us should not, as I have said, be glossed over. Communists might not agree on the nature of the former USSR, the exact way to overcome Labourism, or whether Iraq, Argentina and other such countries are proto-imperialist or oppressed neo-colonies. But communists should be resolutely united on the *imperative need* to fight for the growth of Party organisations and the reforging of the CPGB into a powerful national Party. In this period of reaction we are duty bound to come together in defence of communism in general and of Partyism in particular. The more powerful reaction, the stronger must be the Party spirit.

The enemy is triumphant in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, is imposing its peace in Ireland, South Africa and Palestine, is tightening its grip on the minds of the people in the metropolises. But even one modest step taken in practical communist work is a step towards providing the historic answer. Party candidates fielded in the Euro, Westminster, regional and local elections, under the auspices of the PCC, have already proved beyond doubt that communism in Britain is not dead. The increase in our votes and the growing confidence of our campaigns shows that shortcomings, inevitable at the outset, are being overcome, and a powerful weapon of revolutionary propaganda and agitation is being forged. Unitedly we can surely do much, much more in this and other fields of struggle. By uniting all pro-Party people the work of the PCC can be generally developed. For example, we need an expanded press, where present theoretical differences and problems can be debated and even resolved - unity can only grow through the process of theoretical rapprochement.

Let us hope that all communist forces will come together for broader, higher and more disciplined communist work. Now is the time for political boldness.