

# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PAPERS NO 1

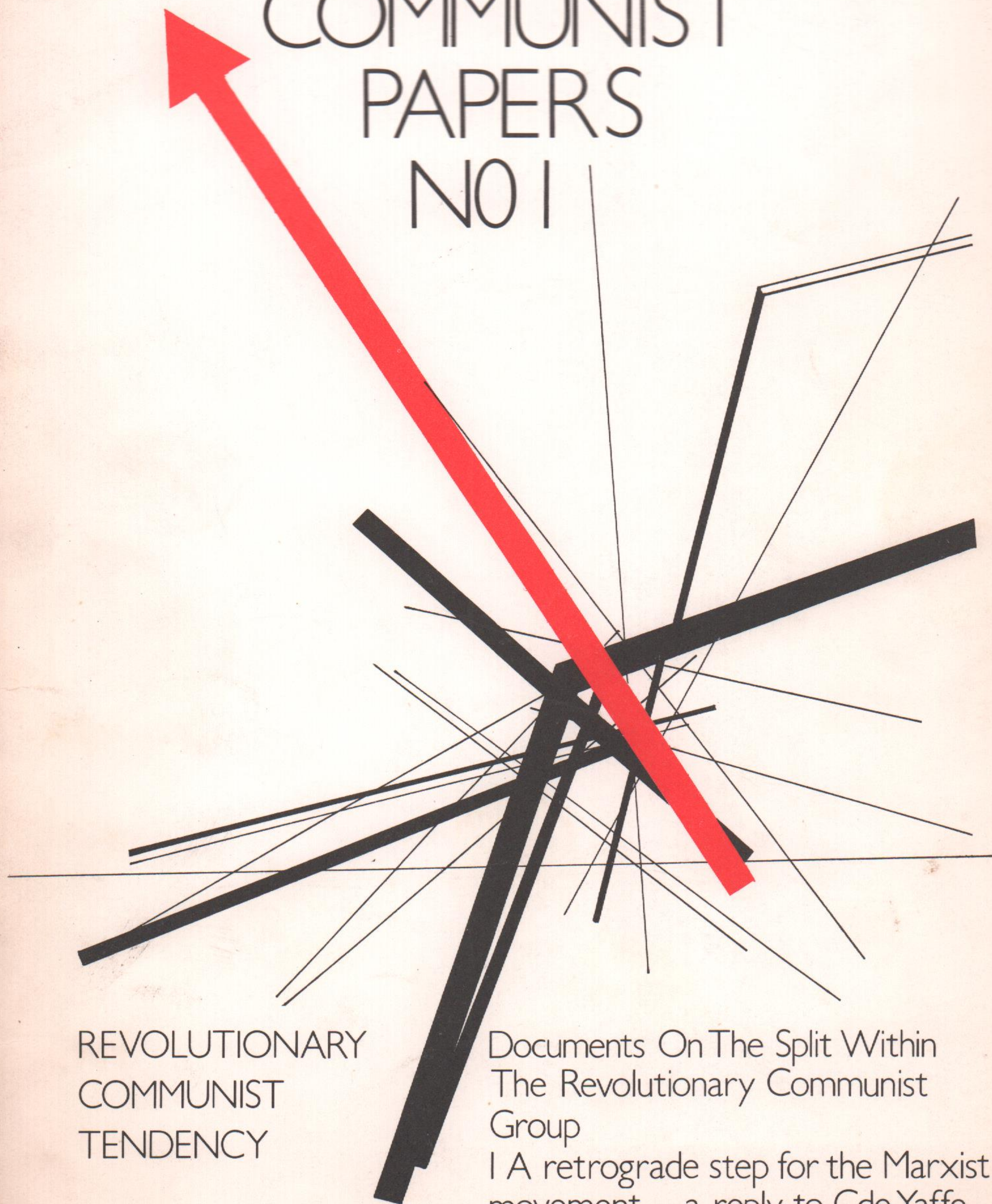
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REVOLUTIONARY  
COMMUNIST  
TENDENCY

MARCH 1977

Documents On The Split Within  
The Revolutionary Communist  
Group

1 A retrograde step for the Marxist  
movement — a reply to Cde Yaffe  
2 Stalinism, the Communist Party  
and the RCG's new turn



# **Revolutionary Communist Papers**

## **Number One March 1977**

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# Preface

'One more word to the opponents of Social-Democracy. They gloat and grimace over our disputes; they will, of course, try to pick isolated passages from my pamphlet, which deals with the failings and shortcomings of our Party, and to use them for their own ends. The Russian Social-Democrats are already steeled enough in battle not to be perturbed by these pinpricks and to continue, in spite of them, their work of self-criticism and ruthless exposure of their own shortcomings, which will unquestionably and inevitably be overcome as the working class movement grows.' (V I Lenin, Preface to 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back' *Collected Works* Vol-7, p206)

Splits, heated debates and polemics have fallen into disrepute amongst sections of the left today. At the same time, the fragmentation of the left serves as a striking reminder of its political impotence. However, the problems facing revolutionaries go deeper than organisational disunity: the current plethora of groups on the left is an expression of the ideological fragmentation of the movement. Those who see only organisational barriers to revolution neglect the necessary stage of ideological clarification that is vital to the movement today. Though splits are an expression of the ideological weakness of the movement, they can also lead to the growth of political clarity about the methods necessary to build a revolutionary party. If this clarity is achieved the movement is strengthened overall.

The articles in this, the first issue of **Revolutionary Communist Papers**, arise from the split in the Revolutionary Communist Group. In November 1976, three members of the RCG's Political Committee were expelled from that organisation. In the next week almost half of the membership was expelled with them. The political differences at the heart of the split in the organisation had not been openly debated; a majority faction of the Political Committee chose to resolve them by organisational means. The decision of the majority faction to split the RCG expressed an abandonment of the group's founding principles. The **Revolutionary Communist Tendency** was founded to confront the tasks that the RCG had originally set itself. Our first task has been to conduct a full and open discussion around the questions posed by the split. The first issue of **Revolutionary Communist Papers** is the product of this

discussion, and reflects the general orientation that has been adopted by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency in the period since the split.

The articles **A retrograde step for the Marxist movement — a reply to Cde Yaffe**, and **Stalinism, the Communist Party and the RCG's new turn** are replies to two documents of the majority faction. These documents (**A Turning Point** by Cde Yaffe, and **The CPGB: a comment on Comrade Turner's article** by Cde Dornhorst) were written for a discussion in the RCG which was cut short by the majority faction. We have published them unamended to ensure that the RCG's new political standpoint is made known to the movement. Cde Yaffe's document was accepted by the majority faction as a perspective for the RCG at the Political Committee meeting which precipitated the split. Although it did not have the status of a position of the majority faction, Cde Dornhorst's document provided a theoretical basis for **A Turning Point**.

The articles of reply penetrate beneath the tactical differences which the majority faction has presented as the reason for the split. Through examining the political questions which were in dispute — internationalism, solidarity work, and Stalinism — they demonstrate that it was the fundamental question of party-building which was at stake.

**A retrograde step ...** replies to the opportunist conception of party-building that is expressed in Cde Yaffe's turn to the CPGB. It was this turn which led to the majority faction's decision to instruct RCG members not to intervene at an Anti-Apartheid Movement Conference on South Africa. The chauvinist arguments advanced by CPGB\* members from the platform were not to be challenged by the RCG. This was the first time that the RCG had allowed chauvinist views to be put forward at a political meeting without attempting to counter them. It is no accident that this issue acted as a catalyst for the split in the RCG, since it expressed in a clear form all the underlying differences between the majority and the minority. The PC minority (JH, CD, and FR) who argued the need to combat the CPGB's chauvinist views was branded by the majority faction as 'sectarian' and 'chauvinist'. These charges are a thin veil for the majority faction's political adaptation to the CPGB — an adaptation that follows from the RCG's rejection of the task of training a political vanguard in the working class.

The method of party-building struggled for by the RCG in the past is reasserted and taken forward through this critique. **A retrograde step ...** clearly argues that the training of a vanguard capable of defending the independent interests of the working class demands of revolutionaries an emphasis upon revolutionary propaganda and ideological struggle.

**Stalinism, the Communist Party and the RCG's new turn** addresses itself to the theoretical basis of the RCG's new perspective. Cde Dornhorst's article is an example of the narrow, pragmatic approach taken by the majority faction to theoretical work. The RCG's theoretical workgroup on Stalinism had begun a critique of the programmes of the official communist movement which would show the connection between the Stalinism of today and the Stalinism of the past. Cde Dornhorst's approach is a complete break from this. His article is intended to show that the current differences

in the CPGB may give rise to centrist currents. Cde Yaffe's argument that the task of revolutionaries is to intervene directly in the internal debate of the CPGB rests on this premise. In motivating the dissolution of the Stalinism workgroup (discussed in **A Turning Point**), Cde Yaffe argues that the RCG's work must be related to 'immediate perspectives in case it should become academic'. The 'immediate perspective' he has in mind is an intervention aimed at splitting the CPGB through a series of opportunist overtures to it.

Our reply to Cde Dornhorst takes up his method of analysis and shows its departure from Marxism. It draws out the connection between this incorrect method and the RCG's opportunism towards the CPGB. In doing this, it provides a starting point for understanding Stalinism and its contemporary form.

Our decision not to deal with the slanders, charges and manoeuvres of the majority faction is a deliberate one. To have replied to Cde Yaffe's numerous charges of a subjective and organisational character would have served to obscure the political questions at stake. The charges of theft and of physical intimidation brought subsequently by the majority faction have been shown up as mendacious in a number of public statements published by the **Revolutionary Communist Tendency**. In the replies published here we have addressed ourselves only to the most urgent lessons of the split. We challenge the majority faction of the RCG to reply to our articles and to debate publicly the political difference with us.

The **Revolutionary Communist Tendency** has begun the crucial task of rebuilding the marxist tradition in the working class. The next stage of our discussion will be directed towards laying the political basis for a revolutionary propaganda group. Through the **Revolutionary Communist Papers** the results of this process of clarification will be made available for discussion in the movement. As the deepening crisis confirms our conviction that the greatest barrier to revolutionary clarity is the opportunist trend that dominates the movement, we hope that others on the left will be drawn towards discussion of the ideas presented here.

Revolutionary Communist Tendency  
March 1977

# A retrograde step for the Marxist movement — a reply to Cde Yaffe

## 1. IN DEFENCE OF 'OUR TASKS AND METHODS'

### (a) Bourgeois ideology and the struggle for the Leninist party

The Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) was born out of a struggle against the economist response of the International Socialists (IS) to the greatest upsurge in working class militancy in Britain since the Second World War. In its founding document, 'Our Tasks and Methods', the RCG advanced a political strategy distinct on the left(1). Whereas the IS and other groups saw the question of party-building in terms of organisational growth, 'Our Tasks and Methods' was based on a Marxist assessment of the period. Drawing on the early Bolsheviks' experience of party-building, but focussing above all on today's conditions, it argued that the sharpening of the class struggle would sweep off their feet those organisations that neglect the struggle for the Marxist method. It contended that they would end up tailing the working class movement and become an obstacle to the development of a revolutionary vanguard. This was no defeatist conjecture, but the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from any serious consideration of the road to power for the working class.

In *Lessons of October*, Trotsky attacked the 'superficial and agitational' approach of those leaders who underestimate the strength of the ruling class:

'They never see any obstacles or difficulties until they come into a head-on collision with them. The capacity for surmounting real obstacles by means of bombastic phrases, the tendency to evince lofty optimism on all questions ... is inevitably transformed into its polar opposite when the hour for decisive action strikes.'(2)

It was such failures of revolutionary leadership that sealed the fate of the proletariat in Hungary, Italy, Germany, Spain and elsewhere in the decades following the Russian Revolution. From these events the RCG drew clear conclusions. The stage of building a revolutionary cadre organisation could not be skipped — more than half a century of betrayals and defeats for the working class movement confirmed this elementary

lesson. The Spanish Civil War showed how an ill-prepared leadership would itself prove an obstacle to revolutionary advance. Trotsky remarked:

'To the left of all the other parties in Spain stood the POUM ... But it was precisely this party that played a fatal role in the development of the Spanish Revolution. It could not become a mass party because in order to do so it was first necessary to overthrow the old parties and it was possible to overthrow them only by an irreconcilable struggle, by a merciless exposure of their bourgeois character. Yet the POUM while criticising the old parties subordinated itself to them on all fundamental questions. It participated in the "People's" election bloc; entered the government which liquidated workers' committees, engaged in a struggle to reconstitute this governmental coalition ... A centrist party invariably acts as a brake upon the revolution, must each time smash its own head, and may bring about the collapse of the revolution.'(3)

From the outset, the strength of the RCG lay in its understanding of the power of bourgeois ideology and in its recognition of the objective tasks that face revolutionaries. The RCG argued that the historic task of the proletariat — the overthrow of capitalism — could only be achieved if a political leadership able to withstand, and combat, the pressures of bourgeois ideology within the working class was forged. While other groups on the left sought merely to give the existing consciousness of the class a more militant character, the RCG understood that a revolutionary party would only be built through challenging the existing reformist consciousness of the class; spontaneity, the instinctive class response of the proletariat, could not be given a revolutionary content until the party itself had strong roots in the class. For this reason, the RCG believed that all worship of spontaneity had to be fought: the spontaneous struggles of the class are inevitably dominated by bourgeois ideas and will necessarily be contained within a reformist perspective.

The RCG's understanding of the strength of bourgeois ideology in the working class rested on an analysis of its material basis. Bourgeois ideology is more fully developed and more cohesive than socialist ideology because it arises out of the social relations of capitalism.

In capitalist society the contractual relationship between labour and capital appears to be free and equal. The worker gets a 'fair day's wage' for his work; wage labour masks the fact that the worker produces more value than he receives in the form of a wage. The extraction of surplus-labour through the capital-wage labour relationship hides the manner in which the worker is exploited. The ideological framework of capitalism is further reinforced by the apparent voluntary nature of the contractual relationship between labour and capital. The compulsion to sell his labour-power seems to the worker a natural one arising out of his natural wants; it does not appear as one imposed by the social relations of production. The labourer exists for and thus belongs to capital before he has sold himself to it, but this bondage is 'concealed by the periodic sale of himself, by his change of masters, and by the oscillation in the market price of labour power' (4).

As the productive powers of social labour are further developed, the view that machinery itself is the productive force gains strength (5). The post-war period of capitalist expansion reinforced this view: the considerable development of the forces of production since 1945 has strengthened the material basis for reformism in the working class.

It is true that capitalism unifies the proletariat at an economic level, for by bringing large numbers of workers together to produce in common, it helps to create class consciousness. But again, this consciousness is not of itself revolutionary, even at the stage of open conflict between capital and labour. In Italy, in 1920, workers peacefully vacated the factories they had occupied for weeks, thus allowing the bourgeoisie to consolidate its forces. A unified revolutionary will had not been developed or given organisational expression in the preceding period. As long as the leadership of the proletariat had not consciously understood the social cause of capitalist crisis, its challenge to the bourgeoisie could be undermined by its own lack of direction. In Italy, the absence of revolutionary leadership allowed the bourgeoisie to sit out the upsurge of 1920 and wait until the working class exhausted itself.

Unless a revolutionary vanguard exists, the proletariat will be fragmented in its opposition to capital. It will fall under the influence of syndicalism and left-reformism and sections will succumb to chauvinism and racism.

The domination of bourgeois ideas over the proletariat is further given strength by the activities of the bureaucratic trade union layer that mediates between the working class and the ruling class. This layer continually exercises its power to blunt the spontaneous struggles of militant workers. Similarly, in the sphere of parliamentary politics, Social Democracy thwarts the left-reformist tendencies emerging in sections of the proletariat, frequently containing their demands by adopting them in diluted forms. But the dominance of the trade union bureaucracy and the Social Democrats is merely an expression of the dominance of bourgeois ideas over the class as a whole. Even when workers go beyond the constraints imposed by the bureaucracy and achieve partial victories through their struggles, these victories in and of themselves cannot free the spontaneous struggles of the class from the confines of capitalist ideology. To concentrate on the betrayals of

the reformist leadership at the expense of considering the entire ideological framework of bourgeois society is to overestimate the political preparedness of the working class. Correspondingly, it is to underestimate the task of revolutionaries in presenting a socialist outlook to the proletariat. The economic battles of the class cannot be given a revolutionary character unless the political groundwork has been laid by means of the struggle against bourgeois ideology.

For Lenin, training the proletariat in support for the struggles of oppressed strata and in a full understanding of all other classes in society was an essential part of this. By demonstrating that capitalism is a system that necessarily has to deny democracy — and hence the 'principles' of freedom and equality on which it claims to rest — it could be exposed as reactionary. A study of other classes would not only school the proletariat in democracy, but would also teach it the relevance of materialist analysis:

'In reality, it is possible to "raise the activity of the working masses" only when this activity is not restricted to "political agitation on an economic basis" ... Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected ... The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population.' (6)

Such an approach is foreign to much of today's left. The Workers Socialist League (WSL), for instance, denies that democratic struggles are central in the fight to change the consciousness of the class. They:

'... disagree fundamentally with your [the RCG, Ed] assessment that the question of Ireland is "the key issue in challenging the reformist perspectives".' (7)

In a single sentence, everything that Lenin argued about the need for ideological preparation of the class is thrown to the winds. Ireland is the only country in Western Europe annexed by a foreign army of occupation. The brutality of this army is well documented: hundreds of men, women and children have died at its hands over the past eight years. But nevertheless the British working class has failed to respond to this repression, and for this reason the WSL refuses to see Ireland as central to changing the consciousness of the British working class. Lenin's approach was the direct opposite of this. He recognised that the working class could not gain a revolutionary consciousness unless it was trained in the struggle for democracy. It was the 'bounden duty' of revolutionaries to emphasise the struggle for democratic rights, even if their arguments initially met with little response from workers. No other course was possible:

'Why do the Russian workers still manifest little revolutionary activity in response to the brutal treatment of the people by the police, the persecution of religious sects, the flogging of peasants...? Is it

because the "economic struggle" does not "stimulate" them to this...? To adopt such an opinion, we repeat, is merely to direct the charge where it does not belong, to blame the working masses for one's own philistinism (or Bernsteinism). We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages.'(8)

It was this recognition of the need to transform the present consciousness of the class that was central to 'Our Tasks and Methods' and to all of the RCG's work, and it was this that determined the political questions which were made a priority — namely those which confronted nationalism and chauvinism in the working class movement.

#### (b) The Leninist party and the programme

The programme of the party is the synthesis of an understanding of capital at its current moment of development, and of the path to the seizure of state power. This is first of all stated in terms of the general characteristics of the epoch, the decay of capitalism and the tendency to stagnation. The programme must also demonstrate its relevance to existing conditions; it has to understand and depict in detail the specific tendencies of the current period and their corresponding reflections in the spheres of politics and ideology.

The radical left only understands the question of programme in a one-sided and partial manner, if at all. On the one hand the programme is seen as a notebook of immediate and empirical observations: on the other it is accorded the status of an epochal text whose guidelines are eternal; sections of the left see the 1938 founding programme of the Fourth International in this way.

The first, pragmatic, camp is characterised by a rejection of any theoretical basis for a programme and often of the need for a programme altogether. In the case of the IS (now the Socialist Workers Party), for instance, programmatic statements are replaced with periodic balance sheets that ignore the strength of reformism:

'If the coming year is like the last, the position looks bleak. Not since 1967 have so few workers taken strike action as in the first half of 1976 ... But there are grounds for optimism. Militancy has been at a low ebb not primarily because men like Jones and Scanlon command the unswerving loyalty and trust of millions of trade unionists. Many companies have passed through a period of depleted order books, short time and low profits. Workers are disinclined to fight hard for money which they don't believe is there to be had. But now once more, large sectors of British capitalism are vulnerable to effective strike action. The order books are filling up, exports are rising, and there is plenty of money in the bank.'(9)

Here the IS measures its prospects by the amount of money in the capitalist bank. At times of crisis it finds itself marking time, until the rising tide of capitalist prosperity removes the damper on working class militancy and paves the way for bigger and better struggles over wages and conditions. The strength of

reformism is only understood in terms of loyalty to 'men like Jones and Scanlon'.

If the IS can do no more than react to developments in the class, the same adaptation to prevailing moods and consciousness underlies the recent move into the Labour Party by other sections of the left. This change has not been prompted by any scientific analysis, but is simply another frustrated 'tactical' response to the downturn in the economic struggles of the class.

In August 1975 the Political Committee (PC) of the RCG summed up its differences with the radical left as follows:

'The priorities outlined in Tasks and Methods are not advanced in relation to this or that likely variant. It is based upon a materialist assessment of what has to be done regardless of shifts in day to day struggles... The British left can only see party building in terms of activities that are extensions of the debates and struggles that exist in the labour movement ... the need for the ideological preparation of the working class is not understood as the pressure of isolation has the last word.'(10)

The blind adherents of the 1938 Programme come under this indictment, no less than the empiricist left. They seek to convince the vanguard of the seventies with the programme of the thirties. Their formal recognition of the need for a programme can only be reconciled with a quick route to the masses by choosing a programme off-the-peg. The comrades who resigned from the RCG to join the Workers Socialist League expressed this very clearly:

'When today's conditions take on more and more the characteristics of the thirties ... the epochal significance of the Transitional Programme becomes obvious.'(11)

Not all groups which adhere to the 1938 Programme put matters so crudely. Recognising that things have changed since 1938, sections of the radical left seek pragmatically to update the 1938 Programme. The League for Socialist Action (LSA) for instance, claims to defend the method — rather than the letter — of the Transitional Programme:

'The task of marxists is not to repeat parrot fashion the demands stemming from conditions operating over 30 years ago (despite the fact many of these demands still remain valid today). It is, using the method of the programme, to modify and adapt it to the very real changes in the objective situation that have taken place in the intervening decades. Such changes include the creation of nuclear warfare, the rise of new workers states from China to Cuba, the growth of revolutionary nationalism and of the women's liberation movement.'(12)

However, despite the many qualifications designed to take into account developments in the post-war period, the LSA still argues for the applicability of the 1938 Programme to today. With its only proviso the need to 'adjust' the Transitional Programme so as to 'expand' on certain demands and 'remove others', the LSA invokes Trotsky to confirm that the 1938 Programme:

'...is a programme of action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution.'(13)

The International Marxist Group (IMG) agrees and argues that all that is needed is to 'concretise' the Transitional Programme:

'Such a programme in the entire period leading to the revolutionary crisis and working class seizure of power can only be the full Transitional Programme of the Fourth International ... However, in the method taught by Trotsky in his theses of the first four Congresses of the Comintern, **Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch**, and his many writings and analyses, it is also necessary to concretise this programme in every conjuncture so as to encapsulate the chief and most central tasks which confront the working class and its allies in any particular conjuncture.' (14)

Reservations about making a few changes or concretising the 1938 Programme notwithstanding, the IMG and the LSA are left with the 1938 Programme in its essentials. However the problem with using the 1938 Programme as the programme of a revolutionary party in today's conditions lies not simply in the fact that things have changed or that the programme remains to be concretised. Not only are the material conditions today vastly different to those of 1938, in that the post-war boom has witnessed the greatest ever expansion of capitalist production, but the consciousness of the working class has come to reflect the whole experience of the past period. How can a programme which is not based on an assessment of the experiences of the working class movement of the crucial last 40 years be concretised for today?

Trotsky wrote about the 1938 Programme:

'This programme is not a new invention of one man. It is derived from the long experience of the Bolsheviks. I want to emphasize that it is not one man's invention, that it comes from long collective experience of the revolutionaries. It is the application of old principles to this situation.' (15)

If Trotsky was able to assimilate the previous experience of the working class into the 1938 Programme, this programme could not relate in advance to the experience and consciousness of the working class in the 1970s. The massive defeats suffered by the proletariat through fascism and the Second World War tremendously accelerated the erosion of Marxist ideas in the working class that had already begun. The political impact of the post-war boom has further destroyed political clarity in the workers' movement. Today's working class — its consciousness and its organisation — are a product of an experience which cannot be understood through the 'concretisation' of the 1938 Programme.

Revolutionaries can show the relevance of the experience of the Bolshevik movement for today. But showing the relevance of, say, the Leninist party is different to 'concretising' the programmatic conclusions of the pre-war period. Starting from the previous experience of the working class movement, the 1938 Programme was already a concrete expression of existing objective conditions (pre-war stage of capital accumulation, the balance of class forces, the theoretical and practical conquests of the revolutionary movement). To attempt to reconcretise this programme for the specific conditions of capitalism today is to devalue Marxism. Marxists must begin with a materialist analysis of today's conditions and, from that starting point, develop a programme adequate to arm the proletariat for the struggles ahead. This programme

must be based on an understanding of the accumulation of capital in the post-war period. It must grasp the specific expression of reformism in this period and provide a critique of these bourgeois ideas in the workers' movement. The programme must reflect the experience of the vanguard in struggling for revolutionary positions in the working class.

The conception of a programme outlined in 'Our Tasks and Methods' represented a total break with the left. 'Our Tasks and Methods' did not argue for updating old programmes; instead it posed the necessity of carrying out a materialist analysis of the fundamental questions facing the movement that would provide the necessary basis for programmatic development. 'Our Tasks and Methods' also recognised that the development of a programme had to be integral to the experience of the vanguard. Hence a very clear relationship was drawn between the development of a programme and the training of a vanguard.

### (c) The relation of the programme to the vanguard

The programme is a resumé of the tasks that flow from an understanding of the current moment of capitalism, and a guide to how these tasks can be achieved. As such it only becomes a living force through a dialogue with the vanguard of the proletariat. Seen in this light, the vanguard is a political entity. The vanguard is frequently interpreted on the left in a sociological way as being the most militant sections of the working class, or as strata drawn into action on specific issues — for instance, women, blacks or students. In the absence of an adequate conception of the programme, the vanguard must inevitably be viewed in this way. In 'Our Tasks and Methods', the connection between programme and vanguard was drawn out as follows:

'The concept "vanguard" implies "leading", "hegemonic": a section of the class which both recognises the independent interests of the class and is prepared to lead a struggle for a correspondingly independent strategy.' (16)

Thus, the vanguard of the class is the bearer of the programme. It can only emerge and mature along with the development of the programme itself.

How does the vanguard emerge? In 'Our Tasks and Methods', it was argued that workers would become open to revolutionary ideas, that is, would constitute elements of a potential vanguard, as soon as they came up against the barriers of reformism. As soon as, in other words, their traditional methods of struggle could take them no further. The struggles of the working class in the early seventies did not indicate, however, that these barriers of reformism had been reached. They were seen not as struggles against the state but against the Tory government. The period from the Saltley confrontation between miners and police in 1972 to the three-day week in 1974 was the most militant period in British labour history since the Second World War, but it did not mean the end of traditional methods of struggle. Rather, it was these very struggles that ensured Labour's victory in the 1974 elections. Only as the Labour government proved incapable of granting significant reforms — only as the level of unemployment began, in mid-1975, to surpass the peak it had reached under the Tories — did the working class come

up against the barriers of reformism, in the sense of directly experiencing the impotence and class collaboration of its own leadership. Far from developing a potential vanguard, this experience eroded the confidence of the working class and led to the signing of the 'social contract'.

Thus it was shown that not every economic downturn leads to a heightened political consciousness in the working class. The working class came up against the barriers of reformism which contained its advance. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the only alternatives posed for the working class today are those of revolution on the one hand or cuts in living standards on the other. It will be from a reformist standpoint that workers will search for a solution to the problems they face. Thus today we can see that all the radical plans to beat the 'British crisis' that are offered as alternatives to the policy of the Labour government are merely an expression of 'left' reformism. The election of a Labour government has represented a dead end for the working class, but the manifold strategies of left-reformism are waiting in the wings; pressure will grow for import controls; sections of the left will demand 'industrial democracy' as compensation for attacks on the living standards of the working class. Not until such steps are discredited, not until their ultimate logic — the heightening of inter-imperialist tensions and the integration of the trade union movement into the state — is sensed, will the potential vanguard comprise more than a few of the most advanced workers. Only when the advanced sections of the working class link a rejection of these solutions with a recognition that they are the logical outcome of the reformist approach will they become open to a revolutionary alternative. In the past the RCG correctly argued that:

'Given the strength of reformism, the working class will first support the national solution of their old leadership. The political solution of an independent proletarian perspective will not be taken up by the masses until the apparently new political solutions of the reformists is discredited ... Given the above analysis the struggle to develop a Marxist tradition becomes the issue facing revolutionaries. The very development of a vanguard is inconceivable unless the struggle to establish a Marxist tradition is waged.'  
(17)

The absence of a Marxist tradition in the working class was borne out by the attitude taken by the British left to the Common Market referendum of 1975. Among the various left groups, agreement was virtually unanimous that the duty of socialists was to oppose Britain's entry into the Common Market and thus to call for a NO vote. The radical left was not interested in advancing a political strategy for the working class on the EEC that was ideologically independent of all bourgeois options. Rather it decided that it wanted to follow the NO campaign pioneered by the Tribunites and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). As *Socialist Worker* put it:

'A NO vote, that is to say, a defeat for the big business, Tory, Liberal and right-wing Labour coalition on this issue, is in our interests. We are part of the left. We can no more abstain in this confrontation than we could abstain in last year's elections. The arena for our internationalist message is inside the NO

camp. That is where the vast majority of class-conscious workers are. That is where we belong.' (18) For the IS it was a question of being with the 'vast majority' of what it terms 'class-conscious workers' — that is all workers to the left of pro-Marketeer Roy Jenkins. After all, if the IS refused to go along with the NO vote they would leave the field open to the opportunism of the Communist Party who:

'would be able to pretend that their own disgusting chauvinism and alliances with Powell were the only alternative to the Jenkinsites and the Market.' (19)

It is unfortunate that the IS did not attempt to explain how, by joining the CP's campaign, it could combat its chauvinism and opportunism. The IS argued that an abstentionist policy would imply a refusal to hinder what they saw as British capital's plan to strengthen itself, a cry that was taken up by other left groups. The IMG declared in *Red Weekly* that:

'Anything that weakens it [the EEC, Ed] tilts the relation of class forces in favour of the working class on both an international and a national level. It is for this reason that the IMG will be calling for a vote against British membership.' (20)

According to the simple logic of *Red Weekly* anything that economically weakens big capital somehow must be in the interests of the working class. But, the materialist method is not quite so straightforward. The proletariat needs an independent orientation, not one that is determined at each instant by the moves of big capital. If it were the case that the interests of the working class were always served by adopting a position diametrically opposed to big capital, there could be no legitimate arguments against the imposition of import controls or bans on the export of capital. Are not these also moves that would 'objectively weaken capital' in the sense understood by the left? Are not these steps also supported by many of what IS terms 'class-conscious workers'?

Only a revolutionary abstentionist position on the EEC could express the independent interests of the working class. In arguing this the RCG emphasised the re-emergence of inter-imperialist rivalries and the corresponding strengthening of chauvinist ideology in the working class. It stressed that the working class had no interest in supporting one capitalist option over another: neither British nor European capital could offer a way forward for the movement.

The absence of a Marxist tradition in the working class movement means that revolutionary ideas will often be met with indifference. Positions which defend the overall interests of the class will frequently be unpopular and the arguments supporting these positions will often appear difficult. Nevertheless revolutionaries must advance them. Lenin wrote:

'The objection will also probably be raised that the working class masses are not yet able to understand the idea of the political struggle, an idea that is comprehensible only to certain, more developed workers. To this objection, which we hear so frequently from "young" Russian Social-Democrats, our answer is that, firstly, Social-Democracy has everywhere and always been, and cannot but be the representative of the class-conscious, and not of the non-class-conscious, workers and that there cannot be anything more dangerous and more criminal than the

demagogic speculation on the underdevelopment of the workers. If the criterion of activity were that which is immediately, directly, and to the greatest degree accessible to the broadest masses, we should have to preach anti-semitism ...'(21)

The road to the masses lies in the training of a vanguard, and the road to the vanguard has to start from the most advanced elements — elements who can be won to a recognition of the need to build a Marxist tradition in the working class.

At least as late as November 1975, this task of 'rebuilding the Marxist tradition' was the perspective of the RCG. Cde Yaffe, quoting the Political Committee (PC) Report to Conference, remarked:

'It is still true to say that: "The RCG's justification for existence lies precisely in its determination to develop an independent proletarian perspective. The backwardness of the British movement should not blind us to the unique opportunity we have in attracting those workers and intellectuals who demand political answers to the problems facing the working class." But the process will be that much harder and much less dramatic than we imagined.'(22)

Throughout the following months, as the bourgeoisie's ideological and economic offensive intensified, demoralisation in the class was mirrored by the desperate opportunism of the left. As it began to lose its members and periphery, pressure mounted on the left to look beyond the current setbacks towards the mass struggles that would develop as disenchantment with the Labour government grew. Arguing for a principled revolutionary standpoint provoked immediate hostility, for the left was concerned above all to overcome its isolation through adaptation.

The pressure of political isolation had an impact on the RCG as well. From April 1976 onwards, the majority of the PC of the RCG began to argue for a 'turn to the class'. In April the turn reflected itself in talk of building the RCG 'independently', through bypassing the radical left. Cde Yaffe wrote:

'We are not competing with them. Rather we are attempting to build an altogether different movement to them.'(23)

It is indeed necessary to break with the methods of the radical left in order to train a vanguard. But this will not be achieved by abandoning the struggle against the opportunist standpoint of the radical left. Cde Yaffe's 'turn to the class' implied that:

'Our main orientation was not to the radical left but to reformist workers and at this time, the Communist Party.'(24)

In choosing an 'orientation', the decisive factor for Cde Yaffe — the factor that sent him scurrying in the direction of the CPGB — was that of social composition. Cde Yaffe found in social composition the root of all the problems involved in building a revolutionary organisation. Treating the radical left as a class, he adduced its non-revolutionary nature from its social position:

'This kind of nonsense, the dishonesty and self-deception which we have encountered in all our work with the radical left is possible precisely because the "revolutionary" movement is predominantly petty bourgeois.'(25)

This concern with social composition showed how the

pressure of isolation was beginning to interfere with a rational assessment of the objective tasks. Lenin argued against this standpoint as follows:

'Our wiseacres, however, at a time when Russian Social Democracy is passing through a crisis entirely due to the lack of sufficiently trained, developed and experienced leaders to guide the spontaneously awakening masses, cry out with the profundity of fools: "It is a bad business when the movement does not proceed from the rank and file."

"A committee of students is of no use; it is not stable." Quite true. But the conclusion to be drawn from this is that we must have a committee of professional revolutionaries and it is immaterial whether a student or a worker is capable of becoming a professional revolutionary.'(26)

For Lenin, the task of the day was to destroy the opportunist accommodation to the existing trade union consciousness of the class that characterised economism. It was this objective task that determined his emphasis on an organisation of professional revolutionaries. This is the clear message that runs throughout all Lenin's writings until the defeat of economism as the dominant trend in the movement. Looking back on *What is to be done?* five years later, Lenin defended it against those who saw it as one-sided:

'Iskra fought for an organisation of professional revolutionaries. It fought with especial vigour in 1901 and 1902, vanquished Economism the then dominant trend, and finally created this organisation in 1903 ... And now, when the fight for this organisation has long been won, when the seed has ripened, and the harvest gathered people come along and tell us: "You exaggerated the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries!" Is this not ridiculous?'(27)

Cde Yaffe has enjoyed no such victory over economism. Yet he is anxious to leap over the stage of training professional revolutionaries in favour of tactical turns to the class:

'Propaganda directed at the Communist Party should become a vital part of our work. This is not only because the Communist Party has a working class base, but also because it offers the clearest and consistent expression [sic] of left reformism.'(28)

It was later made clear that Cde Yaffe was far more interested in the 'working class base' of the CPGB than in its programme. Ideological clarification via 'propaganda directed at the Communist Party' became an 'orientation' towards splitting the CPGB itself:

'... we have attempted to ferment the split in the CPGB...

That split has to be brought about to offer a revolutionary tendency like ours some fertile ground to argue our standpoint in the labour movement.'(29)

Cde Yaffe's approach recalls the blatant workerism of the International Socialists:

'We are interested in action in the working class movement, tenants, etc. So we are interested in the CP which has real forces on the ground. We are not interested in little groups without a working class base. Of course we want to work with militants of any political tendency where we can get agreement. But, generally speaking, we are not too concerned about the attitude of the IMG, the "Militant" group, etc. and certainly we do not waste much time on them. If

they agree with us, fine. If they don't and want to argue, let them go their way; we will go ours.'(30) It needs to be said that among the factors distancing the IS from Cde Yaffe is that the former, at any rate, has never had any pretensions to reestablishing a Marxist tradition.

#### (d) Building a cadre organisation

Revolutionary organisation — structure, constitution, method of political clarification inside and outside the party — is the form of interaction between programme and vanguard. In 'Our Tasks and Methods' it was noted that:

'Revolutionary organisation is not a mere form which arises automatically with the development of revolutionary theory. The organisational form must be adequate to the tasks of revolutionaries in developing a correct programme and fighting for it in the working class.'(31)

Just as political ideas remain no more than theoretical concepts until their consequences for practice are drawn out, so too the political orientation of the revolutionary party can only express itself concretely through its organisational form, the way in which it relates to the movement and the organisational structures it adopts to carry on its activity.

Understanding this, Lenin regarded organisational questions as directly linked with political tasks. In a period of what Lenin called 'theoretical disorder' the chief task of revolutionaries had to be the struggle for a clear principled line: a struggle waged by expressing all differences clearly and sharply:

'As long as we had no unity on the fundamental questions of programme and tactics, we bluntly admitted that we were living in a period of disunity and separate circles, we bluntly declared that before we could unite, lines of demarcation must be drawn ...'(32)

The struggle for clarity which characterised the formation of the Russian party proved to be the exception rather than the rule. In the other parties of the Second International, by contrast, all shades of political opinion coexisted. Lacking an organisational expression, the fight against opportunism could not assume therefore a sharp form. Without any clear lines of demarcation drawn in the preceding period the Second International fell apart at the outbreak of the First World War. As Lukacs pointed out, the struggle within the International was conducted in a purely intellectual way: differences were expressed as disputes over the formal correctness of this or that theory. Because of their reluctance to harden their differences into a systematic political perspective the opportunists could not be isolated:

'If the war with opportunism is conceived exclusively as an intellectual conflict within the party it must obviously be waged so as to put the whole emphasis on convincing the supporters of opportunism and on achieving a majority within the party. Naturally it follows that the struggle against opportunism will disintegrate into a series of individual skirmishes in which the ally of yesterday can become the opponent of today and vice versa. A war against opportunism as a tendency cannot crystallise out...'(33)

Thus political battles have to be fought not only at the level of ideas but at the level of organisation as well. Furthermore, organisational form has to be adequate to the political content of the struggle to ensure that this content is expressed in the sharpest way. The politics of an organisation are not just a collection of theoretical positions which it has developed or which it supports. Rather, an organisation establishes its political identity by the totality of these ideas and the strategic line by which it attempts to translate them into a material force.

The politics of the old RCG did not just reside in the major theoretical gains it made for the movement. The political consequences of these gains also had to be fought for. For this reason the activities of the RCG — its relation to the potential vanguard — took the form of a sustained polemic against the prevailing opportunism of the left. Only in the course of this struggle could the membership be developed to learn the Marxist method in practice. Conversely, given this objective of ideological struggle, the task inside the organisation was to prepare the membership theoretically to the highest level. Only a rounded theoretical understanding could begin to equip comrades for the task of reasserting the ideas of Marxism — ideas that have had no currency in the class for several decades. In line with this, all members were required to carry out work in the various theoretical workgroups of the organisation. These units were seen as vital to the overall development of members to the level of cadres. The necessity was to forge future leaders, and this could only be ensured by developing comrades to the stage where they could critically analyse all aspects of capitalist society.

Democratic centralism is the organisational basis which makes this political development possible. The two poles of democracy and centralism are not opposed in the sense of two conflicting principles: rather they form an integral whole. Democratic debate can only ensure the political development of the membership and the political homogenisation of the organisation as a whole if it is given centralised political direction. Conversely, centralism can only be effective if it trains all members to play an active part in determining the group's direction.

The totality of this approach constitutes the organisational form of the party, and the strategy it adopts for relating to the vanguard and the class.

#### (e) Sectarianism and the radical left

The left not only rejects the struggle against opportunism; but also sees it as disruptive and as a barrier to 'real' struggle. Thus the fight against opportunism is seen as 'sectarian' and theory is regarded as separate from practice. The Women and the Cuts Conference in February 1976 brought this out very clearly. The RCG argued at the conference that the divisions in the working class movement in face of the public sector cuts could only be overcome from a revolutionary standpoint. As long as opposition to the cuts remained on a reformist level, it could only amount to an ineffective rearguard action. An understanding had to be created at the conference of why the cuts were necessary for capitalism, and of how they were related to the oppression of women. The radical left argued that debate on such questions would be divisive: but it

offered no political basis for uniting the working class. The Workers League report of the conference summed up the prevalent attitude:

'...unproductive sectarian debate ... diverted this conference from its most important tasks. While discussion of theory and its implementation is crucial, this sort of disruption only alienates many non-aligned delegates from "theory" and "politics" which seem unrelated to their struggles ...'(34)

Here theory is seen as 'crucial', but not if it alienates people. An insistence on drawing a distinction between a reformist and a revolutionary basis for a campaign is termed 'disruptive'. The 'many non-aligned delegates' are to be allowed to get on with their struggles, unhampered by 'theory' or 'politics'. The logic of the radical left's criticism is to abdicate the role of revolutionary leadership altogether, under the guise of non-sectarianism. The position adopted by radical left groups at this conference was no isolated occurrence but was indicative of a general trend. The fear of alienating the 'non-aligned' means that adherence to revolutionary principles becomes a tactical question. Thus the IMG could argue that the 'excellent' demands 'Troops Out Now, Self-determination for the Irish People' need not be adhered to:

'The TOM demands are both excellent. They should be fought for everywhere support can be won for them. But the sectarians are wrong. They are wrong because although many people can be mobilised in opposition to the British presence in Ireland, not all — perhaps not even most — will agree with the TOM demands. Obviously it is necessary to debate with these people, to convince them of the role of the troops and the need to pull them out right now. But you can only have that debate if the actions are already underway. It is no use and no help at all to make your principles a barrier to convincing others that those principles are right.'(35)

Here principles are seen as an optional and cumbersome extra. The implicit assumption is that the stage of ideological preparation of the vanguard has been completed; all that remains is a mere quantitative growth of its ranks. It seems that there is now no need to emphasise propaganda or to insist on ideological demarcation. But how can this stage be complete when such theoretical disorder exists on the left? How can revolutionary principles be given any meaning at all if they are continually jettisoned in an attempt to reach the masses? And how can a cadre be trained in the political 'marsh'(36) defined by these positions?

The left fears its own isolation to such an extent that it is prepared to try any opportunist manoeuvre to gain the ear of the masses. It is thus fiercely opposed to principled struggle, which it sees as 'sectarian'. Frequently, political debate itself, if it assumes an organisational form is also seen in this light. The IMG complains of the intransigence of 'small groups':

'The proliferation of small groups and sects on the Trotskyist left leaves most militants bemused and seriously harms the winning of politically conscious workers and students to revolutionary socialism.'(37)

Here the IMG denies that the fragmentation of the left has any cause other than a refusal to unite. The logic of this is expressed when it calls indiscriminately for the unification of the 'Trotskyist left':

'...the International Marxist Group, while it has many disagreements on particular issues with organisations such as the Workers Socialist League, International Communist League and the supporters of the **Chartist** newspaper, nevertheless recognises these as **revolutionary** organisations. It therefore seeks to unify its forces with these organisations.'(38)

and later, under the heading 'Sectarian Politics' ...

'It is to be hoped that the ICL will sort out the contradictions in their positions, stop their absurd attempt to claim that the IMG is not a revolutionary organisation and will seek to unify their forces with the IMG.'(39)

This placing of organisational unity above political agreement is characteristic of the opportunism that dominates the left. It is just another form of the short cuts taken by the left in its search for numerical growth. The real problem — the ideological fragmentation of the left — is ignored, and quick cures are sought on an organisational level.

The struggle against opportunism must go hand in hand with a struggle against this method of blurring political differences for the sake of bogus unity. Lenin argued that sharp struggle and demarcation was especially necessary when as today the most general principles and the fundamental aims of revolutionary policy were at issue:

'Undoubtedly, this struggle has many unattractive features ... Today, in retrospect, we can clearly see which of the circles was really in a position to act as a base of operations ... But at that time ... the controversy could be resolved only through struggle ... the struggle that they waged posed the key problems of the Social-Democratic movement in the sharpest possible manner and solved them in an irreconcilable revolutionary spirit, thereby creating a firm basis for broad party activity.'(40)

For the left, however, it is the 'unattractive features' of the struggle that are paramount. Afraid to wage a principled struggle or to sharpen differences lest it offend the 'non-aligned', the left adapts to the most backward prejudices that dominate the movement. The destructive power of the opportunist trend gathers strength behind the stern mask of the opponents of 'sectarianism'.

#### (f) Cde Yaffe joins the 'non-sectarians'

The following indicates how Cde Yaffe's position developed between March and November 1976.

'The Women and the Cuts Conference demonstrated once again that the RCG is regarded as "sectarian" because it insists on putting over a principled revolutionary standpoint. **It will necessarily appear that way until we begin to build roots in the working class movement.** Nevertheless, it is vital to make this stand against the radical left for it is a central part of the struggle for ideological leadership of the working class movement.'(41)

'The dangers now facing us are those of sectarianism. This expresses itself as a refusal to come to terms with the tactical and strategical adjustments needed to take our positions into the working class

movement. It is a position which puts the RCG before the overall interests of the working class.'(42)

The fear of isolation which reflects itself in a desire to appear 'non-sectarian' stamps every page of *A Turning Point*. Like a captain who mutinies on his own ship, Cde Yaffe has begun to appropriate and use the language previously employed by the radical left in attacks on the RCG.

Though previously Cde Yaffe had regarded sectarianism as merely the form in which a 'principled revolutionary standpoint' necessarily had to appear, within the short space of eight months 'sectarianism' had turned from appearance to reality. The interests of the working class would now be best served by a complete change in the RCG's political line, by a complete change of its previous organisational form. Far from fighting for clear ideological demarcation, the majority faction, as we shall show, now curbs criticism of the CPGB on South Africa, and argues on the Irish question:

'We would have welcomed the presence of the CPGB in the Troops Out Movement on the basis and only on the basis of the minimum demands: Troops Out Now, Self-determination for the Irish People. We would have defended them against sectarian attacks within the Troops Out Movement should the occasion have arisen.'(43)

The majority well recognises the unpalatable — if undeniable — fact that the CPGB is not amongst the few forces who, at least nominally, support a principled stand on the Irish question. Nevertheless, writing as if things could be different, the majority proceeds to conjure up a fantastic scene in which the CPGB, participating in a principled solidarity campaign, is attacked by the wretched sectarians of the petit-bourgeois radical left. By showing its willingness to defend the CPGB — even if in the context of an impossible dream — the majority will be able to remain 'principled' on the one hand, while appearing 'reasonable' on the other. What is most remarkable about this new-found method is that it ceases to fight opportunism as a trend in the movement. Rather, the politics of the CPGB are now portrayed as unaccountable lapses or accidental errors.

Lenin's approach was the exact opposite. Criticising Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet on the collapse of the Second International, he remarked that its 'chief defect' lay in its failure to explain social chauvinism as a necessary consequence of the opportunism that held sway in the International:

'This is wrong from the standpoint of theory for it is impossible to account for the "betrayal" without linking it up with opportunism as a trend with a long history behind it, the history of the whole Second International'(44)

Not only was it wrong from a theoretical standpoint, but it was 'a mistake from the practical political standpoint' as well. Lenin argued that the degeneration could only be overcome through exposing the opportunism that led to the Second International's collapse.

By contrast, the RCG today prefers to cloud rather than clarify vital questions for the movement. It portrays the social-chauvinist position of the CPGB on Ireland as an unfortunate quirk of its political line, not as a

necessary consequence of it. Furthermore, it argues that it would be wrong to emphasise or sharpen differences between the RCG and the CPGB:

'Preaching to the CPGB, announcing our own purity on the question [in this case South Africa, Ed], will enable the CPGB to dismiss our criticism as ultra left and sectarian, and what is more to convince others that this is the case.'(45)

The central criterion is now what 'others' will think: political demarcation is ruled out, as the training of a political vanguard is rejected in favour of appearing reasonable to the CPGB and others.

#### (g) Cde Yaffe's finest hour

The majority faction chose to execute its about-face at the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) Conference on 6th November 1976 (46). At an RCG Executive Committee meeting in early November, Cde Yaffe and the majority faction opposed and defeated a motion put by the PC minority which argued that if 'anti-working class views' were expressed at the conference, RCG comrades had a duty to combat them. Arguing that 'sectarianism in this case ... must inevitably assume the form of chauvinism', Cde Yaffe put his case as follows:

'Insofar as the CPGB supports the demands of the liberation movement for the isolation of South Africa we consider it the height of sectarianism and in this context chauvinism to use public meetings called to support the South African struggle for the purpose of conducting a struggle within the British labour movement against the CPGB'.(47)

In the following sections we will show how his new-found definition of chauvinism is in full accord with his changed political practice.

## 2. 'A TURNING POINT'... THE RETROGRADE STEP

The arguments presented in *A Turning Point*, the newly adopted perspective of the RCG, relate primarily to tactical considerations, questions of administration and organisation, and to the subjective motives and psychology of the PC minority. Insofar as political points are advanced, they are asserted, rather than argued for. It therefore becomes necessary to make explicit what is only implicit in *A Turning Point*. We do this by referring to other material of the majority faction where the consequences of *A Turning Point* emerge more clearly.

In this section we deal with the majority faction's approach to the question of solidarity work and South Africa. For the majority faction the question of South Africa provided a means of demonstrating a 'non-sectarian' approach to the CPGB. The subordination of the task of training a vanguard to that of seeking splits in the CPGB has led to the development of an opportunist position on solidarity work. The first major consequence of the RCG's adaptation to the CPGB has been its abandonment of the struggle for proletarian internationalism. We shall show that the goal of appearing 'reasonable' to the CPGB leads the RCG to 'reconcile' Marxism with opportunism.

The political consequences of the majority faction's orientation to the CPGB were made explicit during a

dispute about the RCG's intervention at an Anti-Apartheid Movement Conference. The majority faction instructed RCG members not to criticise the chauvinist politics of the CPGB at this Conference. The decision not to confront the chauvinism of the CPGB was made not as a tactic, but as a point of principle. The PC minority argued that the RCG must take up the CPGB's chauvinist standpoint. For this, it was characterised in the following way by the majority faction:

'The violation of the fundamental principles of internationalism by three PC members (JH CD FR) has become clear in their recent attitude to a conference called by the Anti-Apartheid Movement.' (48)

When we examine their charge of the 'violation of the fundamental principles of internationalism', we find that it refers to our insistence on fighting the reactionary politics of the CPGB on South Africa. The discovery of these new 'fundamental principles of internationalism' — which are never explained — marks a rejection of the principles which guided the solidarity work of the RCG in the past.

#### (a) From Proletarian Internationalism ...

With the deepening of the world crisis of capitalism, inter-imperialist rivalries have emerged with renewed force. The intensification of capitalist competition expresses itself in the growing antagonism between different national capitals. Thus each nation-state attempts to protect its own industries in order to solve the crisis; protectionist measures, such as dumping charges and quotas, have been imposed by all advanced nations, and tariffs have been placed upon international competitors. The dominance of reformism in the working class has allowed 'national-interest' arguments to gain strength. Indeed, as the crisis deepens, less and less of a distinction is made by reformists between 'the British people' and the working class. The CPGB, advancing its 'British solution' to a 'British' crisis, writes:

'But we are already being "retaliated" against. What is the flood of imports if not an effort by international capitalist giants to take over markets from British-based industries? ... Import controls are urgently needed as an emergency measure against a trade war which is being waged against the British people here and now.' (49)

The acceptance of a 'national solution' to the crisis subordinates the interests of the working class to those of British capital. Nationalism represents one of the greatest dangers facing the movement. The defence of the independent interests of the working class cannot be separated from a consistent struggle for proletarian internationalism.

For the RCG in the past, the struggle for proletarian internationalism was a fundamental task. It was recognised that the overthrow of capitalism was inconceivable if the international proletariat remained divided along national lines: this was the lesson to be drawn from the past defeats of the working class movement. The social-chauvinist Second International had led millions of workers to die fighting the workers of other nations 'in defence of the fatherland' during the First World War. Twenty five years later the working class paid the same price for the abandonment of

internationalism by the Stalinised Third International. The objective importance of fighting for international solidarity arose, therefore, not from moral considerations, but from its centrality to the defence of the international proletariat.

For Lenin, international solidarity in defence of the oppressed nations was directly connected with the struggle against social-chauvinism in the oppressor nation:

'It means that the action is twofold ... (a) first, it is the "action" of the nationally oppressed proletariat and peasantry jointly with the nationally oppressed bourgeoisie against the oppressor nation; (b) second, it is the "action" of the proletariat, or of its class-conscious section, in the oppressor nation against the bourgeoisie of that nation and all the elements that follow it.' (50)

This understanding led the old RCG to insist that solidarity with liberation movements of oppressed nations must combine aiding those movements in their struggle against imperialism with the attempt to free British workers from their political alliance with the British imperialist ruling class. The impossibility of giving real solidarity to the struggles of the oppressed without combatting nationalism in the working class of the oppressor nation was drawn out by the RCG in relation to Ireland:

'This approach is twofold: giving concrete solidarity to the national struggle of the Irish people and advancing the revolutionary independence of the British working class.' (51)

A struggle against nationalism and chauvinism in the British labour movement was seen as the only way to provide effective solidarity with the oppressed. The failure of reformism to support the struggles of the oppressed had to be exposed. The old RCG's participation in solidarity movements was never separated from confronting chauvinism inside and outside those movements. This was the reason why, in its founding document, the RCG insisted on the right to advance its own independent positions:

'Our participation in these movements is dependent on the demands of the movement, eg self-determination for the Irish people, being consistent with our programme. Within the movement we will put forward our own independent positions and attempt to attract support for our political approach, but the acceptance by the movement as a whole of our positions in full is not a condition for our participation in such movements.' (52)

The adaptation of today's RCG to the CPGB has led to its abandonment of a principled approach to solidarity work. The majority faction has developed its new 'principles of internationalism' through attacking the PC minority's insistence on the need to combat chauvinism at the AAM Conference. According to the majority faction, the PC minority:

'...wished to use this conference for the purpose of attacking the position of the CPGB, so furthering the "interests" of the RCG. This we had no right to do.' (53)

The majority faction has dismissed the role of revolutionary leadership with the phrase of a bourgeois liberal. We no longer have the right to confront chauvinism in the working class — a task which was

formerly seen as a necessary element of revolutionary solidarity. This task has been reduced by the majority faction to a literary prerogative:

'As always we reserve our right to criticise in our Journals all groups with whom we disagree.' (54)

A non-aggression pact with the CPGB has replaced political struggle against the ideas of that organisation. This is a bankrupt approach: unless revolutionaries oppose opportunist and chauvinist tendencies in the working class, the ideological basis for effective solidarity will not exist; internationalism will be reduced to sympathy for 'the poor and the oppressed'.

At the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920), Radek, speaking for the Bolsheviks, criticised British communists whose solidarity with the oppressed extended no further than their newspapers, and drew particular attention to their failure to confront the social-chauvinism of the British labour leadership:

'Radek: The Labour Congress of Scarborough has adopted an important resolution demanding the independence of India and Egypt. There was not a Communist at that Congress to get up and state that the Macdonalds are supporting the English bourgeoisie and beguiling the English workers in speaking of the independence of India, Ireland and Egypt ... We regret very much that our comrades in the Labour Party did not tear the masks from the faces of these hypocrites. The International will judge the English comrades not by the articles they write in the "Call" and in the "Workers' Dreadnought" but by the number of comrades who are thrown into prison for agitation on the colonial question. We draw the attention of the English comrades to the fact that it is their duty to support the Irish movement with all the means at their disposal; that it is their duty to carry on agitation among English troops; that it is their duty to oppose with all possible force the policy of English transport and railway workers allowing the transportation of troops into Ireland. It is very easy at present to take a stand against intervention in Russia for even the Left Wing of the bourgeoisie is opposed to it. It is much harder for the English comrades to stand up for Irish independence, and to carry on anti-militarist activity. But just this hard work we are justified in demanding of the English comrades ...' (55)

By upbraiding the British communists for their failure to expose the phoney internationalism of reformists, the Communist International made it clear that proletarian internationalism could not be separated from confronting chauvinism head-on.

#### ... to petit-bourgeois moralism

The separation of solidarity with oppressed peoples from the struggle against chauvinism in the oppressor country places the majority faction in the camp of those petit-bourgeois moralists who degrade the term 'solidarity' to mean helping the underdog. This moralistic approach to internationalism attempts to aid the oppressed without exposing imperialism and bourgeois ideas at home.

In its work on Ireland in the Troops Out Movement (TOM), the RCG had to confront not only chauvinism in the British working class, but also that standpoint which saw the task of aiding the Irish people as distinct

from the task of fighting chauvinism. The TOM leadership divorced the democratic struggle of the Irish people from the class struggle as a whole. It could therefore say:

'...TOM is specifically the sort of broad-based and flexible movement which can achieve its aims on the basis of very limited demands and it will do so in the interests of the Irish people, and not in the interest of achieving "revolutionary clarity for the British working class". Unlike the RCG we hope the TOM will soon no longer be necessary — the sooner the better, and we will take all the short-cuts we can to ensure troops are withdrawn.' (56)

Through dismissing the need for 'revolutionary clarity' in the British working class, the TOM leadership dismissed the only basis for effective solidarity. Against the moralists of TOM, the old RCG argued that solidarity could only be effective on the basis of independent working class struggle against the British State. What separated revolutionary internationalism from moral internationalism was its determination to overcome British chauvinism.

Rather than confront the unavoidable barrier of British chauvinism, the TOM adapted itself to chauvinist arguments, arguments that portrayed the war in Ireland as an intolerable burden on the British State. As the failure of TOM became more and more evident, its leadership attempted to build new alliances on an opportunist political basis. The CPGB's formal support for the slogan of self-determination provided a vehicle for this. That the CPGB's support for self-determination involves its very denial — a British imposed Bill of Rights, and opposition to the demand Troops Out Now — was of no importance to the moralists. Instead of struggling for principled demarcation between the hypocritical internationalism of the CPGB and the revolutionary slogan of Troops Out Now, they were prepared to drop the demand for immediate withdrawal at every occasion. As the RCG's **Statement of Resignation from the Troops Out Movement** correctly noted:

'over the last eighteen months ... TOM has failed to mobilise for a single major event under the banner of its own slogans. Instead, it posed as a mild-mannered, harmless reformist, politely requesting "Free Speech on Ireland" (5 October 1975), tactfully suggesting an "End to British Involvement in Ireland" (1 February 1976) and modestly proposing a "Progressive policy to assist the Irish" (Labour Movement Delegation, September 1976). By means of these manoeuvres, it hoped to seduce the CP into "unity in action" and force its much-sought-after (though never found), war weary liberals and downtrodden taxpayers onto the streets.' (57)

The majority faction's orientation to the CPGB has led it to apply the bankrupt politics of TOM to the South African question. Just as TOM was prepared to forget that the CPGB's formal support for self-determination was in reality support for a different form of British rule in Ireland, so the majority faction is prepared to take the CPGB's support for the 'isolation of South Africa' at its face value:

'In so far as the CPGB supports the demands of the liberation movement for the isolation of South Africa we consider it the height of sectarianism and in this

context chauvinism to use public meetings called to support the South African struggle for the purpose of conducting a struggle within the British labour movement against the CPGB.'(58)

In the 'interests' of the South African liberation struggle the majority faction is happy to apologise for the CPGB. Leave aside the fact that the CPGB's 'support' for isolation has as its central plank the chauvinist demand for repatriation of capital to Britain (59) — that is seen as a question for the British labour movement: here we are concerned with the South African struggle and:

'...if the liberation movement chooses to share a platform with the CPGB, as it has done, it is not for the RCG — at a solidarity meeting — to attack the CPGB.'(60)

Alongside the moralists of the TOM, the moralists of the majority separate the struggle for solidarity with oppressed peoples from the struggle against bourgeois ideas in the working class. Just as the TOM actively seeks opportunist 'united fronts' with the CPGB 'in the interests of the Irish people', so the majority faction keeps silent about the chauvinism of the CPGB — ostensibly in order to 'help' the South African liberation movement.

The RCG's diplomatic approach to solidarity work signifies its rejection of the task of training a vanguard. Without ideologically arming sections of the working class with the principles of proletarian internationalism, the solidarity movement will not establish firm foundations in the workers' movement, and can have only a transitory character. The majority's assertion that revolutionaries have no 'right' to fight for their views inside a solidarity movement shows the consequences of its new-found 'principles of internationalism'; the struggle against chauvinism in the British labour movement is no longer at the centre of the RCG's solidarity work. Rather, the majority has opted for building a solidarity movement on a basis that cannot confront the reformist consciousness of British workers, but which it hopes will further its end of seeking splits in the CPGB.

#### (b) The charge of chauvinism is a charge into the CPGB

The charge of chauvinism hurled by the majority faction at the PC minority is as empty as its charge of 'sectarianism'. Nevertheless, we must explain how it can be that the determination to confront chauvinism can itself be characterised as 'chauvinist'. The charge is nothing new — it was aimed at the old RCG by the TOM leadership:

'the RCG give the impression of seeing TOM as a battleground for different theories on Ireland ... The RCG position leads very dangerously near to something of which they themselves accuse others: British chauvinism.'(61)

For the petit-bourgeois moralist, principled ideological struggle can indeed appear 'chauvinist'. Seeking a short cut to the CPGB, the majority faction will not let 'sectarian' ideological demarcation serve as an obstacle. And when the question of South Africa is raised, the charge of 'sectarianism' can easily be turned into the charge of 'chauvinism'. Cde Yaffe and the majority faction have perfected this game:

'The RCG must and will fully discuss the South Africa question ... We shall then be better equipped to participate fully in this campaign but on a non-sectarian basis. For sectarianism in this case ... must inevitably assume the form of chauvinism.'(62)

As was the case with the charge of 'sectarianism', the majority's charge of 'chauvinism' is most revealing about the RCG's new political standpoint. It is worth quoting the RCG's new characterisation of 'chauvinism':

'Members of the RCG have no right to approach the South African liberation movement as though they, comrades in a British group, have the right to decide when and where their leadership is needed. This reflects the deeply entrenched imperialist mentality that has soured the British labour movement throughout its history ... [and led] ... our chauvinists to place a disgusting condition on the work of the ANC/AAM in this country.'(63)

Comrades who are accustomed to the precise political characterisations of the old RCG will be surprised to find that openly criticising the CPGB would have been 'placing a disgusting condition' on the ANC/AAM, and that 'comrades in a British group' have no right to criticise the South African liberation movement. Though in the past the RCG defined chauvinism as 'support for a particular imperialist nation state in its relations with other nation states'(64), today it is defined as arguing honestly and openly for proletarian internationalist principles.

The 'non-sectarian' courtesy of the majority faction towards the CPGB also extends to the ANC/AAM. The majority faction replaces proletarian internationalism with flattery:

'The ANC is a broad organisation embracing classes and strata of all oppressed peoples of South Africa. The question which concerns us here is not whether it is "right" or "left" oriented, but whether it is a revolutionary or reactionary national movement.'(65) Toying with the words 'broad', 'right', 'left', 'revolutionary', 'reactionary', the RCG searches for a word which will avoid the sticky problem of characterising the ANC for what it is — a bourgeois-democratic movement. Later, we are told that the PC minority must believe that the ANC is reactionary, 'since otherwise they would be compelled to give full support to the ANC in its struggle for the overthrow of white supremacy'.(66)

But our unconditional support for the destruction of the apartheid regime does not absolve us from criticising the politics of the ANC/AAM. As Leninists, we reject Cde Yaffe's plea that 'comrades in a British group do not have the right to criticise the ANC'(67).

In fact, the right to criticise the ANC was not the issue at the AAM Conference. The red herring raised by the majority displays the petit-bourgeois moralism that underlies their new position. However, it should not be allowed to obscure the central question. It was the rejection of our responsibility to criticise the CPGB that was at the heart of the charge of 'chauvinism'. Like the charge of 'sectarianism', this position flows from the RCG's new orientation to the CPGB. The 'principles' of internationalism that the RCG has recently discovered demand that it appeals to the British labour movement's moral concern for South African workers, but refrains

from attacking the chauvinism that is the barrier to effective solidarity. This new standpoint was illustrated in another of the 'very damaging disputes' Cde Yaffe refers to — the dispute over a paragraph in his article in *Revolutionary Communist* 5(68).

The paragraph illustrates both the RCG's refusal to criticise the CPGB's role within the South African liberation movement, and its attempt to base internationalism upon moral 'devotion ... to the South African cause':

'The RCG is aware of the long-standing association of the CPGB and the ANC (South Africa). Many CP members in Britain have for long devoted themselves to the South African cause. Some have risked life and limb going to South Africa in support of the struggle. But they too have an interest in opposing the leadership of their party and fighting for an end to the chauvinism that is part of its political line. Only on the basis of proletarian internationalism can their devotion to liberation in South Africa assume real meaning. We are convinced that many of its members when confronted with the chauvinism of the CPGB will come out unequivocally against import controls, and the entire paraphernalia of "national" solutions.' (69)

Let us examine what this paragraph is trying to do. First, it treats the 'long-standing association' between the CPGB and the ANC in an entirely dishonest way. It confuses the individual heroism of CP members with the CPGB's role as a political organisation. To talk about the CPGB's relationship to a section of the South African liberation movement in this favourable way is to forget that the national-reformist politics of the CPGB are an obstacle to the struggle for national liberation. The only basis for acknowledging the CPGB in this fashion is one of liberal moralism. Taking the subjective commitment of individuals as his starting point, Cde Yaffe wishes to make their 'devotion ... assume real meaning'.

Secondly, the paragraph tries to make proletarian internationalists out of individual CP members by 'confronting' them with the chauvinism that is 'part of' (sic) the CPGB's political line. We are told that many of its members, when confronted with the chauvinism of the CPGB, will come out 'unequivocally against import controls, and the entire paraphernalia of "national" solutions'.

Here we have an attempt to challenge 'part of' the CPGB's line — the part that is chauvinist — by appealing to its 'devoted' sections and showing them the incompatibility of the two separate standpoints. In fact, the CPGB's social-chauvinism and moral internationalism are entirely compatible. An internationalist section of the British working class will only emerge through the struggle against chauvinism and nationalism, not through appeals to the moral sentiments of individual CP members.

For Cde Yaffe, the rejection of this paragraph by three PC members was further evidence of their sectarianism:

'...3 PC members ... could not support that article because it acknowledged the long-standing relation of the CPGB with the ANC (South Africa). It was said that this standpoint "fails to confront the standpoint of the CPGB on South Africa". But not to start from this relation, and from there to show it cannot

assume real meaning unless on the basis of proletarian internationalism is ultra-leftism, the form sectarianism is beginning to take in our group.' (70) The old RCG recognised that no effective campaign could be built on the basis of moral internationalism. Its pamphlet, *Ireland: British Labour and British Imperialism* (71), took the form of a polemic against the CPGB's reformist perspective for this reason. Now, however, Cde Yaffe sets himself a different task — that of lending 'real meaning' to the CPGB's moral internationalism. Instead of showing the chauvinist logic that runs throughout reformist politics, thereby posing the need for a revolutionary solution to the demands of the oppressed, Cde Yaffe speculates on the possibility of 'devoted' sections of the CPGB abandoning reformism in favour of principled revolutionary politics. This is the significance of his statement:

'We are convinced that many of its members when confronted with the chauvinism of the CPGB will come out unequivocally against import controls, and the entire paraphernalia of "national" solutions.' (72) For our part we are certain that precisely because social-chauvinism and moral internationalism are entirely compatible it is all the more necessary to combat the politics of the CPGB directly. As the PC minority stated before their expulsion:

'It would be wrong to denounce the CPGB in a hysterical way, but it is necessary that all illusions in the CP's position are crushed. Any worker breaking from the CP will not be won to a revolutionary standpoint unless our critique of the CP is unambiguous and no credence is given to the CP's moralistic "internationalism" on South Africa.' (73)

#### (c) Ideas that speak for themselves

On a closer inspection of the Majority's views we find that speaking at the AAM conference would not only have been 'chauvinist', but completely superfluous; first, because the conference had a 'consistently anti-capitalist content' of its own; and, secondly, because there were others, 'just as able as we are', who would make sure that Marxism 'was influencing the debates in the labour movement':

'...Here we have one of the most important conferences held in this country by the AAM, a conference which showed tremendous promise. Trade Union and labour movement delegates from all over Britain came to the conference for the purposes of strengthening the solidarity campaign with the South African liberation struggle. The attack on Apartheid had a consistently anti-capitalist content to it and in this sense was a resounding success.' (74)

The phrase 'the attack on apartheid had a consistently anti-capitalist content to it' is the PC majority's next justification for the enforced silence of RCG comrades at this conference. We shall be most interested to hear about the 'consistently anti-capitalist content' of the speeches by Michael O'Leary (Minister of Labour in the Dublin government — notorious for its repression of anti-imperialists), Ernie Clark (Executive Committee member of the CPGB), and others at the AAM Conference. In the meantime, Cde Yaffe has discovered a way of lending the consistent anti-capitalist content of the contributions 'real meaning', without actually

having to do it himself. There are others, 'just as able as we are', who come forward at exactly the right moment:

'As it so happens anyone reading recent material on South Africa or having attended the conference would realise that the South African left is just as able as we are. It was the South African comrades who managed to have the tendency of the rate of profit to fall discussed in an audience of over 300 British trade union and labour movement delegates — a task we ourselves have yet to accomplish.' (75)

For Cde Yaffe:

'The fact that through the Good and Williams pamphlet **Marxism** was influencing the debates in the labour movement was an enormous step forward for the movement. Anyone who denies this is not only sectarian but thoroughly chauvinist. They have forgotten that our aim is to reestablish a marxist tradition in the movement.' (76)

and he continues

'Comrades, the RCG did not discover the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Marx did that.' (77)

The point of all this is to justify not taking up the CPGB's chauvinism directly: instead, 'ideas' must be allowed to do their work. The South African comrades, though 'just as able as we are', sometimes, for 'reasons best known to themselves':

'do not deal with this opportunism in the ranks of the working class.' (78)

However, they do talk about the falling rate of profit in front of large audiences, and this is what impresses Cde Yaffe most of all. As for the content of their arguments:

'The fact that these views are taken up in a particular way in the South African movement lies beyond our immediate consideration.' (79)

But it is precisely the particular way in which views are taken up in the movement that interests revolutionaries. It is quite possible for contradictory ideas to coexist so long as their consequences are not drawn out. The law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall was all the rage at the AAM Conference because it was legitimate to speak about this formula in neutral terms. This is what Cde Yaffe has in mind when he says that we must:

'...make Marxism an acceptable standpoint within the labour movement.' (80)

Making Marxism 'acceptable' means being content that at the conference Ruth First expounded upon the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and appealed to arguments about the national interest — and that the contradiction was nowhere pointed out. Similarly, it means being content that John Forrester (Deputy General Secretary (AUEW/TASS) said he agreed wholeheartedly with the 'doctrine' of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and went on — unopposed — to argue a nationalist position.

Cde Yaffe's new version of 're-establishing a Marxist tradition' consists of being glad that some of the ideas of Marx, in a garbled form, have become fashionable in certain circles. Such a view ignores the fact that Marxist ideas, far from 'influencing the debates in the labour movement', were being distorted at that conference. 'Marxism' was being used as a cover for chauvinist positions. This is nothing new — opportunists have been using the language of Marxism for decades in the

workers' movement to obscure their real intentions. In justifying the fact that no-one at the conference drew out the contradictions between different sets of ideas, Cde Yaffe is legitimising the views of opportunists.

#### (d) How Cde Yaffe 'reconciles' Marxism with opportunism

The majority faction's eagerness to appear 'non-sectarian' has led it to leave ideas to speak for themselves. The significance of this new approach should not be underestimated, for Marx's ideas have frequently been distorted and used for opportunist ends. In the past Social Democracy and Stalinism used 'Marxism' to justify policies of class collaboration. Lenin characterised the bankrupt politics of Kautsky as:

'...a blend of loyalty to Marxism in word and subordination to opportunism in deed.' (81)

and accused him of turning Marx 'into a common liberal' (82).

Unless their political consequences are drawn out, the revolutionary significance of Marx's categories is lost. By letting ideas speak for themselves, Cde Yaffe's contribution on the South African question 'reconciles' Marxism with opportunism; his failure to confront chauvinism in the working class movement leads to the degradation of Marxism.

The majority faction's final excuse for not criticising the CPGB at the AAM conference is that it has done so elsewhere — in its theoretical journal (83). Cde Yaffe's article on South Africa takes the form of an 'extended commentary' on a pamphlet written by Good and Williams (84). In his Editorial to **Revolutionary Communist** 5, Cde Yaffe argues that the Good and Williams pamphlet places solidarity work with the South African liberation movement on a:

'firm revolutionary basis. They show conclusively how the struggle in support of liberation in Southern Africa is inseparable from the struggle for socialism in Britain. Without a correct revolutionary theory the opportunities that the crisis in Britain opens for solidarity work will be irretrievably lost.' (85)

We would be only too pleased to share Cde Yaffe's high regard for this pamphlet if it did indeed demonstrate 'how the struggle in support of liberation in Southern Africa is inseparable from the struggle for socialism in Britain'. However, an aspect of the pamphlet which Cde Yaffe delicately characterises as 'curious', for us expresses the absence of a revolutionary standpoint in the pamphlet as a whole. Cde Yaffe remarks:

'This brings us to the only curious feature of the Good and Williams pamphlet. For reasons known best to the authors they do not deal with this opportunism in the ranks of the working class.' (86)

What for Cde Yaffe is a 'curious feature' is for us a factor of fundamental importance. Good and Williams' failure to deal with opportunism expresses their inability to fight chauvinism in the British working class and therefore undermines the basis for effective solidarity with the South African liberation movement.

## (i) The curious feature of Good and Williams

We must look carefully at the Good and Williams pamphlet, as it is the basis for Cde Yaffe's article. For us, there is nothing 'curious' about the absence of a critique of opportunism in the Good and Williams pamphlet: the pamphlet Cde Yaffe regards as providing the 'solid revolutionary basis' for solidarity work on the South African question, does not merely fail to deal with opportunism but sets out to reconcile Marxism with opportunism.

Good and Williams argue the case for working class solidarity with the struggles of the South African liberation movement by attempting to show that the ending of apartheid is in the interests of the British working class. They say that the maintenance of apartheid poses dangers for the British working class and therefore call on British workers to isolate the apartheid regime. They draw on the Marxist theory of crisis to point out that the precondition for further investment in Britain would be a reduction in British workers' living standards. This last point is their strongest argument and the point Cde Yaffe seizes upon. He writes:

'This leads us to the revolutionary significance of the Good and Williams pamphlet. It is true that the export of capital from Britain to South Africa deepens the recession and thereby generates unemployment in Britain. But it is equally true that if the capitalists were to invest in Britain rather than South Africa, unemployment in Britain would still result. From this it follows that the struggle in this country to bring about a complete blockade of South Africa must be directly linked to the struggle for socialism in Britain.' (87)

However, from the argument that wherever capital is invested 'unemployment in Britain would still result' it **does not follow**, as Cde Yaffe suggests, that solidarity with South Africa 'must be directly linked to the struggle for socialism in Britain'. On the contrary, the only way in which this link can be made is through a struggle for proletarian internationalism — **through confronting the national standpoint in the working class movement**. As matters stand, Good and Williams' failure to do this leads to the reconciliation of Marxism with nationalist views.

Since Good and Williams do not take up chauvinist trends within the working class, their arguments about the dangers of apartheid will only be interpreted from the standpoint of nationalism. They argue:

'... For British capital invested in South Africa to find a profitable outlet in Britain, a large increase in unemployment and an even greater reduction in living standards would be required. But the export of capital to South Africa serves to strengthen the power of British companies over British workers. It is therefore in the immediate interests of the workers in Britain that they fight in solidarity with the workers in South Africa.' (88)

and

'South Africa's apartheid economy has enabled the British corporations to open a "second front" in their attack on the British workers. The profitability of the corporations in this country, as we have shown, can be restored only at the expense of the workers. But if

the workers do not accept a lowering of their living standards capital will be transferred to South Africa where higher profits are to be made. It follows therefore that the struggle of workers in Britain to defend their hard won gains is inseparable from the struggle of the South African workers for their basic democratic rights.' (89)

There is no direct correlation between defence of jobs in Britain and a principled struggle against apartheid. Because Good and Williams do not confront nationalism in the working class, their message is that it is in the **immediate** interests of the British workers to support the liberation movement because the continued export of capital to South Africa strengthens the hand of the corporations over **British** workers. The British worker cannot be won to a position of support for the South African liberation movement merely by means of appeals to the defence of 'hard won gains'. So long as the argument is conducted at this level, it will always be the case that the **apparent** immediate self-interest of British workers — as against workers of other countries — will prevail.

It is nothing new to try and reconcile the interests of workers as **British** workers with their interests as part of an international class. Reformists frequently dress up their chauvinist demands as acts of international solidarity; they call for import controls as a way of isolating 'reactionary' regimes; they call for a ban on the export of British capital for similar altruistic reasons.

Outlining the Tribune group's strategy to solve 'Britain's' crisis recently, Labour MP Arthur Latham said that it:

'...included control of the export of capital. "We must stop the outflow of capital to South Africa for example" ... Import controls were needed urgently...' (90)

In reality, there are no internationalist by-products to be gained from pursuing nationalist ends; the chauvinist logic of the reformist programme must be fully drawn out. Good and Williams do the opposite. By starting from what appears to be in British workers' immediate interests and not confronting the national standpoint, they end up lending respectability to the views of reformists. An internationalist purpose cannot be lent to struggles with a nationalist content. British workers, taking action to protect their jobs, are just as likely to call for an economic blockade of Japan, the US and Germany as of South Africa. British Leyland workers, who have passed resolutions in support of trade union rights in South Africa, have also opposed the 'export of jobs' to Germany (91). Good and Williams build their basis for solidarity work on arguments that seek to reconcile British chauvinism with proletarian internationalism; Chrysler's 'second front' in South Africa is the reason why Chrysler workers have an immediate interest in supporting the struggles of South African workers (92). It remains to be seen if there are 'internationalist' reasons why British Leyland workers have an interest in isolating Germany.

When arguing for international solidarity in the past, the starting point for the RCG was **not** British workers' 'hard won gains', but rather the necessity to achieve political independence from their own bourgeoisie. In relation to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, for example, the RCG criticised those who wanted to

substitute a struggle for the defence of British workers' 'hard won gains' in the sphere of legal and democratic rights for the struggle against the British state's imperialist role in Ireland:

'The rationale for this orientation has been that trade unionists will readily see the threat of repressive legislation to trade unionism. This economistic appeal to the labour movement fails to grasp the fact that a narrow approach to "civil rights" in no way challenges the chauvinism in the working class ... The only way in which the question of repressive legislation can be taken up and effectively fought is in the context in which it arose — Ireland.'(93)

In its desire to appeal to the existing consciousness of the class the left completely lost sight of the real issue — the occupation of Ireland by the British army. The struggle for solidarity with the oppressed is a political struggle to train a vanguard in the working class in a spirit of uncompromising opposition to 'its own' ruling class.

Good and Williams have chosen another path. They have provided arguments that show how the cheap labour force in South Africa poses a threat to the jobs of British workers. The 'curious' feature of Good and Williams is in fact at the heart of their politics — arguing for solidarity with South Africa without undermining the dominance of nationalist ideas in the British working class movement. This failure to struggle for proletarian internationalism is one of the hallmarks of opportunism. Thus we are not surprised to find that the pamphlet does not merely fail to deal with opportunism, but goes out of its way to lend credence to the views of the CPGB. The title page of the pamphlet carries the following quotation from an article by former General Secretary of the CPGB, John Gollan:

"We felt the spirit and the strength of internationalism in our struggle"

and the pamphlet concludes by quoting Gollan's thoughts more fully:

'The strength to be drawn from international solidarity is incalculable. As John Gollan recalls in **Comment**: "I remember after the slaughter of Sharpeville when 69 Africans were shot down in cold blood, we sent a comrade to South Africa with £1,000. He sought out the illegal leadership of our party and handed over this small donation as a token of our solidarity. Eighteen months later I met comrade Moses Kotane, the Secretary of the South African Party, and he said 'You will never know the effect. Our people have just been gunned down in the most inhuman circumstances, and then a British Communist turns up and says, "How can we help?" We felt the spirit and the strength of internationalism in our struggle.'""(95)

Good and Williams' services to John Gollan extend beyond quoting him approvingly in their pamphlet — by providing a 'Marxist' version of reformist arguments they have lent respectability to the CPGB's views. Platitudes about internationalism and socialism serve as a cover for their failure to combat the chauvinist standpoint. The CPGB is also capable of talking about the common interest all workers have in fighting for socialism:

'To take a stand against apartheid and to support the national liberation movements in Southern Africa is not only an act of internationalist solidarity by the

British labour and progressive movement. It is in the direct interest of the British working people as well. The big British monopolies which exploit the black workers of Southern Africa are the same monopolies which exploit the British workers, push up prices, hold back wages, put 1 ½ million on the dole and clamour for more and more cuts in social services. No less than 49 of the top 100 companies in Britain are operating in South Africa. We and the black people of South Africa have a common enemy, the giant firms. We should, therefore, strengthen our common fight. Every measure of help to the national liberation movements is an aid to our own struggle here for better wages and conditions, for jobs and security, and to end monopoly rule and usher in socialism.'(96)

But in the same breath it argues that:

'...it is criminal that at a time of mass unemployment, partly arising because of the lack of domestic investment, British enterprises such as British Steel, or Leylands, should be planning further investment in South Africa. In any case, a liberated southern Africa would provide possibilities for a big expansion of trade with Britain ...'(97)

Unless the chauvinist standpoint that underlies the CPGB's 'internationalism' is criticised explicitly, and the impossibility of fighting for internationalism on a reformist basis shown through this critique, the struggle for internationalism in the British working class is just an empty phrase. The appeal for solidarity will founder on the nationalist views that dominate the workers' movement. Mike Terry, CPGB member and Executive Secretary of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, expressed this candidly when he wrote in the **Morning Star**:

'In Britain shop stewards at Leyland and Pilkington have expressed their solidarity with their fellow workers in South Africa. However, the trade union movement in general in Britain has been reluctant to move into action precisely because of the extensive economic links between Britain and South Africa. Britain is the major foreign investor in South Africa and is that country's leading trade partner.'(98)

What is required in order to lay the basis for international solidarity, is a thorough critique of the moralism that postures as internationalism on the South African question — and disguises the chauvinist content that is inherent in reformist politics.

Good and Williams' position is representative of the standpoint we have already discussed in relation to the TOM. It separates the interests of the South African masses from those of British workers, in spite of its professed aim of showing the connection between the two. As we have seen, Cde Yaffe has adopted the outlook of a petit-bourgeois moralist. It is a view that accords well with the position of Good and Williams, and with the perspective of fomenting splits in the CPGB.

## (ii) Cde Yaffe's critique of the CPGB

Cde Yaffe seeks to correct the 'curious feature' of Good and Williams, and attempts to provide a critique of the CPGB. In the past, the RCG criticised the positions of the CPGB as part of its task of training a vanguard. Now, this task recedes into the background as Cde

Yaffe's new orientation to the CPGB comes to the fore. Cde Yaffe provides neither a revolutionary critique nor an independent alternative to the CPGB. This is the case because throughout his commentary there is an attempt to set up a contradiction between the CPGB's opposition to apartheid and its national-reformism, rather than a demonstration of the necessary link between the two.

The CPGB's position on the relationship between the two sides of its national reformist programme is clear:

'...we have never regarded our internationalist position as being in any way in conflict with our devotion to the British working people and our desire to do everything possible to assist them to establish their own democratic power in Britain ... This is how we understand our patriotic duty alongside our internationalist duty.' (99)

This is why the CPGB finds it possible to reconcile its devotion to the British people with its devotion to the South African cause:

'Britain's future will be best served by supporting the advancing cause of African liberation — not by tying our destinies to the dying system of white minority domination.' (100)

For the CPGB it is a question of 'democratic' Britain isolating reactionary regimes like that in South Africa. Whilst paying lip-service to Britain's role as an imperialist power and its special role in maintaining apartheid, the CPGB sees imperialism as a policy which has no future. It asks the question 'which side is Britain on?', and replies:

'For Britain to be dragged behind those sordid manoeuvres [ie of the US, West Germany, France, Ed] would not only be a blow against the justified struggle of the national liberation movements of southern Africa. It would also prejudice Britain's future relations with the African continent ...' (101)

The CPGB calls on the British state to dissociate itself from the 'sordid manoeuvres' of other imperialist powers. It follows therefore, that the solidarity campaign should be built on the basis of an appeal to British 'democracy', 'justice' and so on. It has no choice but to conduct its struggle for 'internationalism' on the basis of nationalist arguments, since it sees the British state as an agency for democratic change in the African continent — just as it calls on the British state to implement a democratic 'Bill of Rights' in Ireland. The CPGB's patriotism necessarily expresses itself as allegiance to the British capitalist state.

However 'devoted' CPGB members may be to the South African 'cause', their reformism necessarily leads them to take the interests of British capital as their basis (102). Their nationalism cannot be separated from their reformism, and is the content of their moral internationalism. But because the 'interests of Britain' are antagonistic to the interests not just of black South African workers but of all oppressed peoples, revolutionaries can lend no credence to moral internationalism, but on the contrary must wage an irreconcilable struggle against it.

Cde Yaffe does the very opposite. He attempts to establish 'contradictions' between the CPGB's position on South Africa — its slogan for the isolation of the apartheid regime — and its position on other questions. The central point — that the programme of the CPGB is

chauvinist — whether on South Africa, Ireland, import controls or immigration — is lost. By appealing to those CPGB members who are 'devoted' to the South African 'cause', Cde Yaffe has done nothing to undermine the reformist standpoint that heals the breach between internationalism and nationalism.

He asks how CPGB member Joan Bellamy can support the struggle for the liberation of South Africa, yet also support immigration controls (103). Furthermore, he asks how the CPGB can be for black majority rule in South Africa, but fail to support the struggle for self-determination in Ireland (104). And still more curious, he asks how the CPGB can be against restrictive laws in South Africa while having members in its ranks who support an incomes policy for Britain (105). Cde Yaffe's twenty questions approach to political debate leaves us guessing. Instead of showing how these 'contradictions' are entirely compatible for the national-reformist, instead of showing the inability of reformism to give consistent support to the oppressed, he calls on the nationalist, Joan Bellamy, to 'fight nationalism' (106). According to Cde Yaffe the programme of the CPGB is not chauvinist — chauvinism is 'part of its political line' (107). The CPGB is not anti-working class — 'it allows its members to express anti-working class views' (108). Cde Yaffe seems reluctant to call things by their real name, but nevertheless issues threats. Singling out CPGB member David Purdy, who argues the need for wage restraint in Britain, Cde Yaffe says he will not believe in the CPGB's opposition to apartheid so long as it has such members in its ranks:

'So long as the CPGB allows its members to express anti-working class views in their journal, we cannot take seriously their opposition to Apartheid.' (109)

We cannot 'take seriously' Cde Yaffe's opposition to the CPGB when he finds a contradiction in the fact that (some of) its members are for wage restraint here, though it is against restrictive laws in South Africa. The possibility that these contradictions may be resolved is raised when Cde Yaffe draws a parallel between the 'white chauvinism' of Bunting, and the CPGB's capitulation to British chauvinism on Ireland; Bunting, after all, was expelled from the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and, according to Cde Yaffe's version of history, the CPSA 'to its credit' 'waged an attack on white chauvinism' (110). Perhaps the same can happen here?

In search of a split in the CPGB, Cde Yaffe draws out inconsistencies in its positions, rather than attack its politics as a whole. His position is opportunist, for Cde Yaffe explicitly seeks to reconcile the irreconcilable. Cde Yaffe takes up certain of the more reactionary consequences of the CPGB's programme and says 'how can the CPGB tolerate certain members in its ranks?', without showing that these positions are necessary consequences of the CPGB's programme (111). He has reconciled the CPGB's Marxist rhetoric with its opportunism. He goes out of his way to sow illusions in the possibility of the CPGB's internationalism 'overthrowing' its nationalism.

The interests of the South African liberation movement and of the British working class have not been furthered by Cde Yaffe's critique. The practical consequence of his failure to deal systematically with

the CPGB's chauvinism is to hold back the struggle for proletarian internationalism in the British working class. The result of using South Africa for narrow ends, for the purpose of 'fermenting splits' in the CPGB, is the abandonment of a principled internationalist position.

#### (f) The Turn summed up

Cde Yaffe's attempt to reconcile Marxism with opportunism follows from the new turn towards the CPGB. Trotsky wrote:

'...opportunism expresses itself not only in moods of gradualism but also in political impatience: it frequently seeks to reap where it has not sown, to realise successes which do not correspond to its influence.' (112)

It is precisely the desire to 'reap where it has not sown' that has led the RCG to seek splits in the CPGB. What are described by Cde Yaffe as:

'...the tactical and strategical adjustments needed to take our positions into the working class movement' (113)

amount to a rejection of the RCG's former position on solidarity work; confronting chauvinism to win and train a vanguard in the working class is regarded by the RCG today as 'chauvinist'.

For the old RCG the struggle for internationalism was central to the process of winning a vanguard; the vanguard was defined politically, by its independence from bourgeois ideology. Today, the vanguard is identified with sections of reformist workers, in and around the CPGB. The RCG's orientation is:

'not to the radical left but to reformist workers and at this time, the Communist Party.' (114)

The vanguard has become defined, not by its political independence, but by its organisational relationship to the CPGB.

The very purpose of taking up the struggle for international solidarity has been stood on its head; the RCG is today engaged in 'solidarity work' on the South African question for the short-term end of 'fermenting splits' in the CPGB. It prizes the organisational unity of the AAM and advises its comrades to be 'non-sectarian' for precisely the same opportunist reasons that have led the radical left to discard revolutionary principles in such campaigns in the past. By refusing to attack the chauvinism of the CPGB the RCG has in practice abandoned the struggle for proletarian internationalism.

Thus, the South African question is used for narrow ends, to make inroads into the CPGB, instead of being seen as an important question for training a vanguard in the working class in the principles of internationalism.

That the RCG today is seeking out its 'fertile ground' in the CPGB, rather than the Labour Party, is a feature that distinguishes it from a host of other radical left groups. The methods it pursues however, have everything in common with the opportunism of the radical left. And indeed, the orientation towards the CPGB is not so new. Others have been 'convinced' about the likelihood of winning sections of the CPGB to revolutionary politics in the past, on the basis of a 'non-sectarian', 'dynamic and flexible' approach: the following resolution was adopted by the Fourth International in 1954:

'The crisis in these parties [the CPs, Ed] can lead the major part of the communist cadres to come close to the Fourth International and even join its ranks. This on condition that the Trotskyist organisations fulfil their task of revolutionary leadership of the masses and adopt a dynamic and flexible attitude toward the communist militants by seeking a common basis in action which would facilitate their transition to Trotskyism.' (115)

And Cde Yaffe certainly has an ally in Ernest Mandel, who agrees that there are great opportunities today which must not be lost:

'...revolutionary marxist currents today have a much more powerful weapon than in the past to use in dialogues with workers and Communist cadres and to apply in following a policy of rapprochement and unity in action' (116)

The policy of rapprochement towards the CP has been developed by Cde Dornhorst elsewhere (117). **A Turning Point** expresses the rejection of the RCG's founding document 'Our Tasks and Methods'. It does this most strikingly in relation to the abandonment of the task of training a vanguard in favour of seeking splits in the CPGB. In this instance the turn has been expressed through an opportunist approach to solidarity work on South Africa. It follows from this perspective that comrades who rejected **A Turning Point** had to be charged with 'sectarianism' and 'chauvinism'. Cde Yaffe's document seeks to justify the opportunist turn of the RCG, but can do so only by rejecting the entire political approach of 'Our Tasks and Methods'.

### 3. THE ABANDONMENT OF 'OUR TASKS AND METHODS'

In 'Our Tasks and Methods' it was argued:

'These tasks, of developing a programme and winning the potential vanguard, must go together with the development of a revolutionary organisation and the training of a revolutionary cadre. Only a democratic centralist organisation of committed revolutionaries can develop such a programme and fight to win the potential vanguard to it. It is to carry out these threefold tasks that we have formed the Revolutionary Communist Group.' (118)

It was the recognition of the combined nature of the tasks of training a vanguard, developing a programme and building a cadre organisation together with the determination to carry out these tasks that provided the revolutionary starting point for the RCG. All the work of the RCG was to be consciously related to the three-fold tasks outlined in its founding document. As against the radical left, the RCG engaged in activity not for activity's sake, but in order to train a vanguard around the struggle to develop a programme. Out of these tasks grew the necessity to build a cadre organisation.

As we have shown in the previous sections, the RCG's abandonment of 'Our Tasks and Methods' is most strikingly expressed in its rejection of the need to win and train a vanguard in the working class movement. However, the rejection of the concept of a political vanguard has been paralleled by a change in approach to the tasks of developing a programme and the building of a cadre organisation. In this section we

shall outline how **A Turning Point** has led to a fundamental break with the principled approach to party-building on which the RCG was founded.

**(a) From winning the vanguard to talking to reformist workers**

The liquidation of the RCG's defining political principles did not take place in isolation from developments in the rest of the movement. The acquiescence of workers to a fall in their living standards in the name of the 'national interest' has thrown the radical left into a state of disarray. It has had little scope for gaining any influence in the movement by tailing or posing more radical alternatives to the existing struggles of the class; and unable to gain any significant influence in the working class, it has sought organisational means to overcome its isolation, thus failing to confront the real barriers to winning sections of the class politically. The radical left has not even paused to ask itself how the militancy of the preceding period could have given way to demoralisation, and therefore does not recognise why the political basis of the trade union struggles of the past has proved so inadequate today.

As nationalism and chauvinism gain ground in the movement, it is all the more difficult to counterpose an alternative to the dominant class-collaborationist ideas. Only those in the workers' movement who have broken with the reformist view of the state will be able to lead the struggle to defend the independent interests of the working class. It follows that the struggle to win and train a vanguard in the working class is the central task facing revolutionaries today.

The tendencies of the radical left draw a very different conclusion from the adverse conditions of today. Their isolation leads them to see the few principles to which they formerly held, and sometimes even their independent organisational identity, as obstacles to their work. The urge to overcome these obstacles has led the radical left in the direction of outright opportunism. The RCG has not been immune to the effects of isolation. Its rejection of the need to train a vanguard was preceded by a process which demonstrated the group's inability to withstand these pressures. A few examples suffice to show how the tendency to react pragmatically to events eventually led to the rejection of the task of training a vanguard.

From month to month the RCG discovered new 'priorities'. In February 1976 the RCG's National Activities Report (NAR), written by Cde Yaffe, recognised the downturn in working class militancy and called for a period of consolidation:

'The aim is to use the ebb in the class struggle to prepare our propaganda material, and attempt to make contact with sections of the potential vanguard before a new upsurge in working class resistance to the attacks on living standards etc takes place.' (119) Consolidation was to be a priority for the RCG in February. Yet, four months later, Cde Yaffe's National Activities Report struck a different note. By June, the RCG was at a 'turning point':

'The organisation is at a turning point. The large attendance at the London fortnightly forums and the much higher quality of contacts we are attracting are indications of this ... A central question, therefore,

faces the RCG. Can the RCG begin the process of taking its ideas into the working class movement?' (120)

Shifts in perspectives took place without any political justification. The question — 'Can the RCG begin the process of taking its ideas into the working class movement?' — was a pragmatic response to the fact that more people were coming to the RCG public forums in London and contact work had improved. New 'perspectives' were floated like trial balloons throughout 1976. Cde Yaffe wrote in April:

'We should now consider whether some of our comrades should begin the process of building a base for the RCG in certain trade unions.' (121)

No discussion on trade union work, no explanation about what building a 'base' involves, or even about which trade unions were under consideration, was felt to be necessary. Two months later, the NAR nonchalantly presented

'RCG bulletins as the way forward to a newspaper.' (122)

Again, no explanation about the political relationship of bulletins to a newspaper was offered; there was no discussion on what a revolutionary newspaper should contain. Wishful thinking increasingly replaced a serious assessment of the group's capabilities, as the RCG turned away from the tasks it had originally set itself. Such political instability reflected a failure to relate the activities of the organisation consciously to the three-fold tasks outlined in 'Our Tasks and Methods'.

By November 1976, the RCG was at a 'turning point' yet again. In the document that was to precipitate the split, Cde Yaffe wrote:

'The RCG is at a turning point; its isolation is ending — its propagation of Marxist ideas is being seized upon by an ever-increasing number of people in many parts of the world.' (123)

This time, an absence of political justification goes hand in hand with fantasies about the ending of the RCG's isolation. In this latest document the necessary outcome of the previous period of political instability is indicated by the rejection of the RCG's former conception of the vanguard. In the past, the RCG had argued that the vanguard would only be trained through ideological struggle against all reformist trends in the movement. Hence it could not be identified as the existing militant leadership of the working class. However this political conception of a vanguard which had been central to the old RCG is now replaced by a sociological definition of the vanguard that has far more in common with that of the radical left. For the RCG the potential vanguard is to be found amongst 'reformist workers'. The feature that distinguishes the RCG from the rest of the radical left is that it expects to find these reformist workers in and around the CPGB. As Cde Yaffe recently put it:

'Our main orientation was not to the radical left but to reformist workers and at this time, the Communist Party.' (124)

This new orientation to reformists in the movement — instead of one to those who have begun to break from reformism — represents a clear rejection of the task of training a vanguard. Previously the RCG had recognised that there could be no short cuts to establishing

Marxism as a political force within the working class; this could only be achieved through the training of a revolutionary vanguard which could fight for these ideas. Now however, the RCG thinks it has found an altogether easier way to end its isolation — an orientation to reformist workers! It is this step which has exacerbated the tendencies towards opportunism in the RCG. The necessity for ideological struggle against reformist ideas as a way of training a vanguard is subordinated to 'intervening in the CPGB' and talking to reformist workers. The fear of 'sectarianism' expressed in *A Turning Point*, together with its concrete expression in relation to South Africa and the CPGB are symptomatic of this trend. Cde Yaffe is no longer interested in confronting the politics of the CPGB in order to train a vanguard; he is more preoccupied with 'not preaching to the CPGB' and 'not announcing our own purity' on key political questions.

For the RCG, tactical considerations require that it no longer appear 'sectarian'; its arguments have to be presented in a more palatable form than in the past. These adjustments in form do not merely imply a change in language, but a new political orientation: propaganda is no longer advanced to train a vanguard but to appeal to the 'reformist worker'. The approach contained in *A Turning Point* was vividly drawn out by one of Cde Yaffe's supporters, Cde Marlowe:

'...we are no longer arguing with the mentally exhausted and panic stricken radical left ... we will have to start from the way that reformist workers see the world and transform that outlook.' (125)

Crude abuse of the radical left is coupled with a new perspective; we need 'no longer' argue with the radical left — in other words the struggle for ideas is replaced by talking to reformist workers. Driven on by the pressure of isolation the RCG has developed an orientation towards the CPGB at the expense of confronting the task of training a vanguard.

#### (b) Abandoning the struggle for the revolutionary programme

Just as *A Turning Point* discovered that the RCG's 'isolation is ending', that it no longer had to argue with the radical left and could now have an orientation towards reformist workers, so too it noted that it had solved most of the major programmatic questions facing the movement. Like the radical left, the RCG has given in to the temptation of paying lip-service to the need for revolutionary theory while providing the working class with inadequate ideas.

The new orientation towards reformist workers has led to an underestimation of the necessity for ideological struggle. It is not surprising, therefore, that the rejection of the task of training a vanguard is coupled with a lowering of standards for theoretical work. Intervening in the CPGB and arguing with reformist workers means that training a vanguard around the development of a programme now becomes redundant. The task of arming the working class movement ideologically recedes into the background as the RCG's more pragmatic needs come to the fore.

One of the main strengths of the old RCG was its determination to confront fundamental theoretical questions in order to develop a programme adequate to

today's conditions. 'Our Tasks and Methods' rejected the view that a revamped version of past programmes would suffice for today. It was recognised that the Marxist tradition had been destroyed in the working class movement and that therefore the RCG was faced with the task of developing a revolutionary programme based on a materialist analysis of today's conditions. Systematic theoretical work was seen as a precondition for the training of the vanguard.

In *A Turning Point* Cde Yaffe complains that:

'Theoretical work was to be a priority in the last period. This has not been the case.' (126)

Having conceded that there was a problem, does Cde Yaffe pause to examine why 'this has not been the case' and how this state of affairs can be rectified? Not at all. Despite the RCG's negligence in producing theoretical work, it nevertheless has:

'...the political arguments to begin the struggle to build a revolutionary movement in Britain and make Marxism an acceptable standpoint within the labour movement.' (127)

So, all that remains is:

'...to discuss how we can get material in a form that is directly related to the struggles of the working class.' (128)

Cde Yaffe is only paying lip-service to the necessity for more theoretical work. How can we take seriously an argument which concedes that barely any theoretical work has been done, only to switch immediately to talk about getting material in a form 'directly related' to the struggles of the working class? Just like the 'theoreticians' of the radical left, Cde Yaffe utters platitudes about the importance of theory, but makes do with whatever is at hand. The lowering of standards that accompanies the majority's perspective is clearly spelt out in Cde Yaffe's plan to 'reorganise' the workgroups and caucuses:

'The time has come to bring about a basic unity between work groups and caucuses.' (129)

What does this mean? That the task of developing a programme through the theoretical workgroups has been achieved? But we have just heard that the workgroups have barely been functioning and little theoretical work has been produced. So what is this 'basic unity' Cde Yaffe speaks of? It turns out that the main rationale for the 'reorganisation' is as follows:

'For most comrades it is impossible to be in a work group and caucus covering different areas of work. In the end both aspects of their work suffer, and they despair of ever completing adequately the tasks they face.' (130)

Touching concern for overburdened and despairing comrades serves as a justification for reorganising things so that all theoretical work will in future be 'directly related' to the latest set of 'priorities'. The Stalinism workgroup is to be disbanded because:

'...work on the question must be directly related to our perspective for work in relation to the CPGB. Otherwise the work will have an academic character.' (131)

So it turns out that there is 'a perspective for work in relation to the CPGB' — a perspective that has never been discussed in the organisation and did not originate from the Stalinism workgroup — which will determine what is and is not 'academic' in future. The real import

of getting material 'in a form that is directly related to the struggles of the working class' becomes clearer; anything that is not 'directly related' to the new turn towards reformist workers and the CPGB is now considered 'academic'.

Theoretical work no longer serves as a means for developing a programme: it has been reduced to providing material for a quick pay-off. Cde Yaffe's article on South Africa becomes the paradigm for future theoretical work. The article does not even pretend to contain a materialist analysis of South Africa but is 'directly related to ... work in relation to the CPGB'. This lowering of standards of theoretical work necessarily flows from the RCG's new turn.

In the past, the RCG recognised that rigorous theoretical work was absolutely essential for the building of a Marxist tradition in the working class. A scientific analysis of the Soviet Union for instance was seen as necessary both to counter bourgeois ideology on this question ('look at "socialist" Russia') and to provide a firm foundation for our struggle against Stalinism. The new RCG's aims have become more modest. According to *A Turning Point*, work on the USSR will only continue 'if resources permit' and will be done mainly 'through book reviews etc' (132). The majority faction's philistine rejection as 'academic' of all questions that are not within their orbit is the necessary consequence of their abandonment of 'Our Tasks and Methods'.

### (c) The political destruction of the RCG

Having emptied the concepts 'vanguard' and 'programme' of their political content, the majority faction has now no need to insist on the training of a cadre to develop a programme and win the potential vanguard. The term 'cadre' is itself emptied of political content. Thus we find in *A Turning Point*:

'The task now is to develop a cadre which can intervene and influence the struggles of the working class' (133)

The task facing a cadre is always to 'intervene and influence the struggles of the working class'. The struggle to rebuild the Marxist tradition — to develop, discuss and argue for revolutionary propaganda — must constantly be waged. This struggle has to be engaged in, irrespective of the shifts in the level of day to day struggles of the working class. 'Our Tasks and Methods' correctly noted that:

'On the contrary, it is precisely an intensification of the class struggle which demands of the party the highest theoretical accuracy, political clarity and organisational thoroughness.' (134)

Thus 'Our Tasks and Methods' argued that these standards could not be jettisoned in favour of a turn to 'intervening' in the class.

The RCG today no longer holds to the conception of a cadre trained in the struggle to develop a programme. On the contrary, its new conception of cadre is one that is trained to transmit ready-made ideas to the working class. The cadre is now seen as a force, primed for direct intervention in the working class. Thus Cde Yaffe can boast:

'We have already developed a method of work which will politically enable us to intervene in any major

developments which involve such issues.' (135)  
'Such issues' turn out to be the questions of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties worldwide — questions on which the RCG has not yet developed a position. The real task of a cadre today — that of analysing and developing positions on such issues — is downgraded in favour of 'intervention'. The existence of a 'method of work' absolves Cde Yaffe from the task of working out programmatic positions. Having downgraded the programmatic tasks of the organisation to what is required to win 'reformist workers', and replaced ideological struggle with the notion that ideas can speak for themselves, the role of the membership has been adjusted to serve these new ends. The RCG has adopted the conception of a cadre that is prominent on the radical left; one that 'can intervene and influence the struggles of the working class' but plays no part in developing the programme which determines the political orientation of the group.

In 'Our Tasks and Methods' it was argued that only an organisation

'...composed of revolutionary cadres and organised on a democratic centralist basis will be capable of carrying out the tasks of developing a programme and winning the potential vanguard.' (136)

It is this political understanding of what a cadre is that has been thrown aside by the majority faction; the 'cadre' now responds pragmatically to developments in the working class movement.

In the past, the RCG argued that the development of a revolutionary programme must take place through

'...a disciplined discussion, without clique or personal ties, in which the political consequences of our theory are pursued to their end.' (137)

Today, the majority faction has been forced to resort to precisely those methods it rejected in the past. Over half of *A Turning Point* is devoted to personal slander directed at the expelled PC members. According to Cde Yaffe, all the problems facing the organisation can basically be put down to one individual — Cde Harrison. The concluding section of his document — 'The National Tasks' — ends as follows:

'JH must overcome her petty egoism and the political consequences of this attitude, if she is to fulfill her role as National Activities Organiser and play a constructive part in meetings of the EC and PC. If she fails to do this, she will simply continue to disrupt the leadership of the organisation, and will become an obstacle to the healthy development of the RCG.' (138)

Earlier we were informed:

'Many problems exist for London Branch and the failure to resolve them is due to the relations JH has with other PC members in London.' (139)

This is the level of political debate that is considered acceptable in the RCG today — a level that is totally unacceptable for revolutionaries.

Abandoning the task of building a cadre has as its necessary corollary the personalisation of political questions. Political opposition is met with personal abuse; discussion and debate are dominated by slander. The short cuts that the majority faction has taken towards reformist workers and the CPGB find their reflection in the internal life of the group. Political opposition can only be dealt with by administrative

measures. Having abandoned 'Our Tasks and Methods' the majority faction ignores the real problems confronting revolutionaries in this period. Instead it chooses to invent the bogeyman of 'sectarianism', and 'chauvinism'. In the end, the majority faction is forced to personalise 'the danger facing the group' and make individual comrades the 'obstacle to the healthy development' of the RCG. This is the justification for the political destruction of the organisation.

#### (d) Conclusion

The widespread acceptance of reformist solutions to the crisis in the working class underlines the necessity to confront the three-fold tasks that are outlined in 'Our Tasks and Methods'. Because the radical left has ignored the perspective for party-building advanced there, the pressures that are a result of the downturn in working class militancy have had a major impact upon it: opportunist tendencies have been reinforced as different organisations invoke 'tactics' to overcome their isolation. As we have shown, the RCG has not been immune to these developments. The adoption of **A Turning Point** by the majority faction and the expulsion of nearly half the membership of the RCG express the political destruction of that organisation.

The **Revolutionary Communist Tendency** has set itself the task of continuing the struggle for the training of a vanguard, the development of a programme and the building of a cadre organisation. We have written this document for two reasons. First because we demand that the majority faction replies publicly to the arguments presented here. The differences that underlie the split in the RCG must be fully and openly debated. Secondly, we wish to stimulate discussion on the lessons of the split in the movement as a whole. The degeneration of the RCG serves as a negative example to those attempting to re-establish the Marxist tradition in the working class. Comrades who have begun to see the dead end that results from the radical left's method of party-building, and are looking for a political approach that will confront the problems facing the working class today, should examine the political conclusions that are drawn in this document. Our aim is to ensure that the lessons of the split in the RCG become part of the general experience of the revolutionary movement.

Chris Davies  
and  
Judith Harrison

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 RCG 'Our Tasks and Methods: the founding document of the RCG' **Revolutionary Communist** 1 January 1975 p3
- 2 L Trotsky 'Lessons of October' in **The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)** Pathfinder 1975 pp255-6
- 3 L Trotsky 'The Class, the Party and the Leadership' in T Cliff et al **Party and Class** Pluto 1971 pp75-6
- 4 K Marx **Capital** Vol 1 Lawrence and Wishart 1974 p542
- 5 Similarly, the organisation of the workforce in its capitalist form appears to inject it with its productive potential:  
'With the development of relative surplus value ... whereby the productive powers of social labour are developed, these productive powers and the social inter-relations of labour in the direct labour process seem transferred from labour to capital. Capital thus becomes a very mystic being since all of labour's social productive forces appear to be due to capital, and seem to issue from the womb of capital itself.' K Marx **Capital** Vol 3 Lawrence and Wishart 1972 p827
- 6 V I Lenin 'What is to be Done?' **Collected Works** 5 p412
- 7 Reply from **Socialist Press** to RCG May 1975 reprinted in **RCG Discussion Bulletin** 5, June 1975 p13
- 8 V I Lenin 'What is to be Done?' op cit pp413-4
- 9 **International Socialism** 91, September 1976 p4
- 10 RCG Report of the Political Committee Conference Document 4, August 1975 p4
- 11 Birmingham Branch of the RCG Letter of Resignation, **RCG Discussion Bulletin** 6, October 1975 p13
- 12 **Socialist Action** Vol 2 No 1 December 1976 p32
- 13 Ibid p31
- 14 'The Programme we Need' in **International** Vol 3 No 2 Winter 1976 p60
- 15 L Trotsky **The Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution** Pathfinder 1974 p129
- 16 RCG 'Our Tasks and Methods' op cit p9
- 17 RCG Report of the Political Committee op cit p3
- 18 **Socialist Worker** 8 March 1975
- 19 Quoted in **Workers Fight** No 99
- 20 **Red Weekly** 30 January 1975
- 21 V I Lenin 'Apropos of the Profession de Foi' **CW** 4 p291
- 22 D Yaffe **Post Conference Report of the Political Committee** December 1975 p2
- 23 D Yaffe 'At what stage are we at?' Supplement to **RCG Internal Discussion Bulletin** April 1976 p18
- 24 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p45
- 25 D Yaffe 'At what stage are we at?' op cit p18
- 26 V I Lenin 'What is to be Done?' op cit p462
- 27 V I Lenin 'Preface to the Collection Twelve Years' **CW** 13 p102, first emphasis added
- 28 D Yaffe 'At what stage are we at?' op cit p22
- 29 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p46
- 30 D Hallas 'The United Front Tactic and the Communist Party' **Internal Bulletin of the International Socialists** May/June 1973 p7
- 31 RCG 'Our Tasks and Methods' op cit p12
- 32 V I Lenin 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back' **CW** 7 p385
- 33 G Lukacs **History and Class Consciousness** Merlin 1971 p286
- 34 **Workers News** 13 March 1976
- 35 **Red Weekly** 29 January 1976
- 36 The term 'marsh' was used by Lenin in 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back' to refer to the unprincipled alliance of opportunists in the Menshevik camp.
- 37 IMG leaflet for a public meeting on 15 February 1977
- 38 A Jones 'First Principles' **Red Weekly** 15 July 1976
- 39 A Jones 'Sectarian Politics,' in **Red Weekly** 22 July 1976
- 40 V I Lenin 'Preface to the Collection Twelve Years' op cit pp104-6
- 41 D Yaffe 'National Activities Report' in **RCG Internal Discussion Bulletin** April 1976, our emphasis
- 42 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p45
- 43 **RCG Statement on the Expulsion of a Chauvinist Grouping in the RCG**, Judith Harrison, Frank Richards, Chris Davies (Statement) 17 November 1976 p2
- 44 V I Lenin 'The Junius Pamphlet' **CW** 22 pp306-7
- 45 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p46
- 46 A one day delegate conference organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement 6 November 1976 — Southern Africa and the British Trade Union and Labour Movement

- 47 RCG Statement p4
- 48 Statement op cit p1
- 49 Morning Star 7 February 1976
- 50 V I Lenin 'A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism' CW 23 p62
- 51 RCG Ireland: British Labour and British Imperialism March 1976 p28
- 52 'Our Tasks and Methods' op cit p12
- 53 D Yaffe A Turning Point our emphasis p45
- 54 Statement op cit p3
- 55 K Radek 2nd Congress CI, Fifth Session 16 July 1920 p115-6
- 56 Troops Out Movement National Delegate Conference Documents October 1975 p11
- 57 RCG Statement of Resignation from the Troops Out Movement October 1976 p6
- 58 Statement op cit p4
- 59 See for example, J Woddis Southern Africa — which side is Britain on? CPGB 1976
- 60 Statement op cit p2 emphasis in original
- 61 Troops Out Movement National Delegate Conference Documents op cit p11
- 62 Statement op cit p3
- 63 Ibid
- 64 RCG 'Britain and the Irish Revolution' Revolutionary Communist 2 May 1975 p17
- 65 Statement op cit p4
- 66 Ibid
- 67 Statement op cit p3 Whilst in the past the RCG has opposed the chauvinist attacks of the left on the military campaign of the Irish republican movement, it has not hesitated to criticise the political programme of the movement, where necessary. See, for example, 'Britain and the Irish Revolution', op cit, especially pp15 and 16
- 68 RCG Revolutionary Communist 5 November 1976
- 69 D Yaffe 'South Africa: International Solidarity and the British Working Class' Revolutionary Communist 5 p63
- 70 D Yaffe A Turning Point p46
- 71 RCG Ireland: British Labour and British Imperialism op cit
- 72 D Yaffe 'South Africa: International Solidarity and the British Working Class' op cit p63
- 73 RCG Political Committee minutes October 1976
- 74 Statement op cit p1
- 75 D Yaffe A Turning Point p45
- 76 Ibid p46
- 77 Ibid
- 78 D Yaffe 'South Africa ...' op cit p59
- 79 D Yaffe A Turning Point p45
- 80 Ibid
- 81 V I Lenin 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky' CW 28 p230
- 82 Ibid p231
- 83 Statement op cit p3
- 84 D Good and M Williams South Africa: The Crisis in Britain and the Apartheid Economy Anti-Apartheid Movement June 1976
- 85 D Yaffe Editorial Revolutionary Communist 5 p1
- 86 D Yaffe 'South Africa ...' op cit p59
- 87 Ibid pp57-8
- 88 D Good and M Williams op cit p4
- 89 Ibid p22
- 90 Morning Star 16 February 1977 p1
- 91 Morning Star 31 January 1977 p1
- 92 D Good and M Williams op cit pp4 and 22
- 93 RCG 'Britain and the Irish Revolution' op cit p19
- 94 D Good and M Williams op cit cover
- 95 Ibid p22
- 96 J Woddis Southern Africa — Which side is Britain on? op cit pp9-10
- 97 Ibid p5 our emphasis
- 98 Morning Star 13 January 1977 p2
- 99 J Woddis Nationalism and Internationalism CPGB p27
- 100 J Woddis Southern Africa — which side is Britain on? op cit p1
- 101 Ibid p1
- 102 Thus the CPGB argues its case for isolating South Africa on the following grounds:  
...our exports to South Africa constitute only around 3 per cent of our total exports. Moreover, Britain's exports to our eight largest trading partners in the rest of Africa now

stand at over £600 million — or nearly 4 per cent of total exports — and are thus more important for our future. This trade could be jeopardised if our exporters were to continue to cling to trade with South Africa.' J Woddis Southern Africa... op cit p5

- 103 D Yaffe 'South Africa...' op cit p59
- 104 Ibid p63
- 105 Ibid p60
- 106 Ibid p59
- 107 Ibid p63
- 108 Ibid p60
- 109 Ibid
- 110 Ibid p61

'To the credit of the CPSA it has waged an attack on "white chauvinism". Bunting himself was expelled from the CPSA in 1931'. The 'attack on "white chauvinism"' is a myth; by the time Bunting was expelled, it was not for white chauvinism but for opposition to the CPSA's 'Third Period' line. 'The expelled members were not accused of being chauvinists or of opposing the black republic policy.' (H J and R E Simons Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950 Penguin 1969 pp448-9). Cde Yaffe has not even bothered to read the book he cites as his source of information.

- 111 Keen to convince us that there is no difference at all between the way certain CP members' views are taken up in this article, and the way this has been done in the RCG's past material, Cde Yaffe writes:

'The Purdyites are a bourgeois tendency within the CP. Our attitude to them has been to regard them as outside the ranks of the working class. We argue this to the "opportunists" within the CP — a characterisation that adequately covers the leadership tendency which adapts to the moods of the working class. The Editorial in Revolutionary Communist 3/4 — an editorial which has not been criticised by FR, JH, CD — expresses this position clearly. It asks the CP how it can have anti-working class views like those of Purdy in its organisation/publications etc. Our articles have treated, as did the editorial, the opportunists in the ranks of the CPGB differently from the Purdyites. While sharply criticising them, we have attempted to ferment the split in the CPGB by urging them to fight against the views of the Purdyites ... We have never treated these two tendencies politically in the same way. To do so would have been to go against the fundamental interest we have in seeing a split in the CPGB. The positions of JH, CD, FR on the South African article therefore, opposed directly the previous practice of the group. This has to be made clear.' (A Turning Point p46)

In his attempt to make 'clear' that we have always been engaged in 'fermenting splits' in the CPGB, Cde Yaffe forgets to quote the relevant passage from the Editorial, which read:

'The working class will wish to know how the British Communist Party can have in its ranks Devine, Steedman, and others who propagate the position that high wages etc. are a primary cause of inflation, when in popular pamphlets the CP asserts that workers are not to blame for inflation' (Revolutionary Communist 3/4 Editorial p3)

In the Editorial the RCG first of all addresses itself to the working class, not to this or that tendency in the CPGB. It did not urge the 'opportunists' to fight the 'Purdyites'. It said 'the working class will wish to know' the following; how can the CPGB's popular pamphlets argue that workers are not to blame for inflation when its 'theoreticians' argue they are? It attacked the explicit revisionism of Devine, Steedman and others in order to expose the CP's inability to defend the working class against inflation. It did not distinguish between 'bourgeois' and 'working class' tendencies, nor did it favour one brand of reformism against another. It posed the question in order to bring out the sham character of the CPGB's 'working class' positions.

What Cde Yaffe wants to do is pretend that the RCG has always used the method he today employs in his article on South Africa — and hence to accuse the PC minority of rejecting long established positions. His method of 'questioning' however diverges sharply from that which was used in the Editorial in Revolutionary Communist 3/4; it is an utter caricature of the RCG's past approach.

- 112 L Trotsky **The First Five Years of the Communist International**, Vol 1 New Park Publications p13
- 113 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p45
- 114 Ibid
- 115 M Pablo Resolution adopted at the Fourth World Congress of the Fourth International 1954, cited in **The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism**, Education for Socialists pamphlet, Socialist Workers Party (US) March 1970 p25
- 116 **Intercontinental Press** Vol 14 No 44, 22 November 1976 p1666
- 117 See **Stalinism, The Communist Party and the RCG's new turn** op cit
- 118 'Our Tasks and Methods' op cit p3
- 119 D Yaffe 'National Activities Report' (NAR) in **RCG Internal Discussion Bulletin (IDB)** February 1976 p5
- 120 D Yaffe 'NAR' IDB July 1976 p1
- 121 D Yaffe 'At what stage are we at?' op cit p22
- 122 D Yaffe 'NAR' IDB July 1976 p5
- 123 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p49
- 124 Ibid p45
- 125 T Marlowe 'Notes on the Manchester Labour Movement Bulletin No 2' IDB, October 1976 p33
- 126 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p46
- 127 Ibid p45
- 128 Ibid p46
- 129 Ibid
- 130 Ibid
- 131 Ibid p47
- 132 Ibid
- 133 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p45
- 134 'Our Tasks and Methods' op cit p9
- 135 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p45
- 136 'Our Tasks and Methods' op cit p12
- 137 Ibid p11
- 138 D Yaffe **A Turning Point** p49
- 139 Ibid p48

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# Stalinism, the Communist Party and the RCG's new turn

## Introduction

Throughout the post-war period the official Communist Parties (CPs) have been an important and sometimes dominant force in the European working class movement. The years of capitalist boom, however, have fostered the national-reformist tendencies in these parties — tendencies which have come to the fore in the present capitalist crisis. All over Europe, the CPs have responded to the onset of the crisis by giving their reformist standpoint a more explicit character. The development of 'Euro-communism' and its explicit rejection of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the expression of Stalinism in today's conditions.

In their efforts to win credibility as respectable reformist parties, the CPs have been compelled to distance themselves from the Soviet Union and emphasise their 'democratic' qualities. This compulsion, which has been felt most strongly by the larger CPs — those of France, Italy, Spain and Japan — has now also impressed itself upon the small Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). On the day that a new draft of its programme — the **British Road to Socialism** — was published, the CPGB's General Secretary, Gordon McLennan, told *The Guardian* how he saw the problems facing the party:

'He was afraid that the party's lack of electoral success over the past fifty six years was partly due to its identification with the Soviet Union. But the British road was independent, and guaranteed proportional representation, civil rights and an extension of democracy.'(1)

Through its 'democratic' criticisms of the regimes in Eastern Europe, and the USSR, the CPGB has joined the 'Euro-communists' by presenting an image of itself which is distinct from the Cold War appearance of Stalinism.

If the political expression of Stalinism has changed and has come to incorporate a new anti-Soviet stance, the consequences of its programme for the working class have not. A precondition for the training of a

revolutionary vanguard in Europe is an all-out political struggle against the programme of the official communist movement. In order to carry out this task, revolutionaries must be armed with a scientific understanding of the history of Stalinism, its relationship to the Soviet bureaucracy and its contemporary expression.

The old RCG's theoretical workgroup on Stalinism had begun to gain such an understanding through critiques of the Western European CPs and the CPGB.

In sharp contrast to this, the position adopted by the majority faction of the RCG saw the recent developments in the CPGB only in narrow and tactical terms. Rather than seeking to develop the ideological basis for confronting the CPGB, the majority faction argued for 'intervening' in the debates of the Party in order to 'ferment splits' [sic]. In this document we reply to the political approach of the majority faction to the question of the CPGB.

In the RCG's short-lived debate on this question, Cde Dornhorst's article (2) served as a theoretical justification for the 'tactical' orientation of the majority faction towards the CPGB. His article was written as a reply to documents by Cdes Phil Turner and Frank Richards on the CPGB and Stalinism. Presenting the new turn towards 'intervention' in the debates of the CPGB in the guise of a position on Stalinism, Cde Dornhorst is forced to adopt a parochial standpoint that is very fashionable on the left today — namely, that Stalinism no longer exists as an international phenomenon and that the CPGB is no longer a Stalinist party. This document is also a reply to this standpoint.

This document will first deal with the distortions contained in Cde Dornhorst's reply. We will reply both in order to set the record straight and to clarify the real purpose of his document. We will then take up the political method which underlies Cde Dornhorst's arguments and demonstrate their distance from Marxism. By beginning to draw out the connections between the Stalinism of today and the Stalinism of the past, we will show the inadequacy of Cde Dornhorst's analysis. In the final sections we will draw out the political

consequences of Cde Dornhorst's arguments and counterpose to them the revolutionary approach.

## 1. CDE DORNHORST'S CLEVER POLEMICS

It is unfortunate that Cde Dornhorst has clouded the issues at stake by distorting the arguments of Cdes Turner and Richards. It would be a diversion to take up these distortions point by point. Instead we will restrict ourselves to three examples of Cde Dornhorst's approach to polemics. It is necessary to do this for he attempts to develop his arguments through a critique of Cde Turner's article. In order to prepare us for a turn to the CPGB, Cde Dornhorst offers an alternative view of the political development of the CPGB to that of Cde Turner. Cde Dornhorst adopts the approach of replying not so much to Cde Turner's arguments, but to what he would have liked Cde Turner to say. The initial 'severe blow' which Cde Dornhorst delivers relates to the first sentence of Cde Turner's document:

'To understand the present crisis of world Stalinism and the beginnings of its reflection in the CPGB demands that we understand its history.' (3)

It might be thought that this was a straightforward introductory sentence. But wait! Cde Dornhorst has a profound observation to make. Immediately after quoting the sentence above, he asks:

'Is there an entity which can be described as "world Stalinism"? Is its crisis only now impinging on the CPGB? These assumptions are ahistorical. Why do we need to understand its history if it is the same as it was in the pre-war period?' (4)

Cde Dornhorst has generously provided Cde Turner with 'assumptions' he never had. Did Cde Turner suggest that the crisis of Stalinism is 'only now impinging on the CPGB'? Anyone vaguely familiar with the English language can see that Cde Turner is discussing 'the present crisis of world Stalinism'. Cde Dornhorst has begun the process of setting up a straw man for his 'debate'.

Rather than taking up Cde Turner directly, Cde Dornhorst prefers to establish his version of 'orthodox Trotskyism' and by implication attribute this standpoint to Cde Turner. For example:

'Another myth of orthodox idealism is that the CPGB carried out the so-called left turn of 1947 on the orders of Stalin. It is noticeable that these people never explain exactly when this left turn ended ... The "turn" was explicitly chauvinist in content.' (5)

Cde Turner is unambiguous on the point that no real left turn took place in 1947 and that the turn was 'chauvinist in content'. He wrote:

'The new militant line, however, barely concealed the reformism which continued to run through the politics of the CPGB ... The CPGB's propaganda was filled with the rankest chauvinism.' (6)

If Cde Turner does not explain on what day the 'left turn' ended, it is because he locates the possibility of a new shift in the politics of the CPGB in the previous period:

'The basis for a further turn to the right by the CPGB was, as I have tried to show, contained within the "left" politics of the Cold War.' (7)

In carrying out his mission, Cde Dornhorst makes

countless attempts to score points. He suddenly declares that it is 'not true'

'that a commitment to building socialism in one country equals Stalinism. That is idealism. This underlies the statement in FR's document ...' [Cde Richards, Ed]

Unable to criticise a single sentence in Cde Richards' article for what it actually says, Cde Dornhorst can only criticise what supposedly 'underlies' his statements. And what is this statement which merits the charge of 'idealism'?

'The starting point of the Stalinist movement is the subordination of the Comintern to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Today Stalinism appears as a "polycentric" movement containing conflicting interests. Today's result should not be confused with the starting point of Stalinism.' (8)

A simple statement contrasting the appearance of Stalinism today with its appearance in the past is transformed in the mind of Cde Dornhorst into a statement that a 'commitment to building socialism in one country equals Stalinism'. Cde Dornhorst explains neither the connection between the two statements, nor the seemingly psychic powers which allow him to tell us what Cde Richards is thinking at any one time.

We have not exhausted Cde Dornhorst's numerous distortions. However, these examples should suffice to show that Cde Dornhorst is not replying to Cde Turner, but is rather establishing a false target in order to provide himself with a convenient starting point.

## 2. STALINISM AND CDE DORNHORST

### (a) Historical materialism versus reading history backwards

Cde Dornhorst claims that his 'reply' to Cde Turner 'seeks to lay the basis for a Marxist analysis of the CPGB'. As we shall show, however, Cde Dornhorst's method has nothing in common with Marxism. His analysis consists of starting from his conclusions and working backwards to prove his history. We shall outline Marx's approach to history in order to indicate how Stalinism should be analysed and thus illustrate Cde Dornhorst's inability to grasp the fundamentals of historical materialism. We are above all interested in the political consequences of Cde Dornhorst's approach. However, serious political debate cannot confine itself to an assessment of tactics, positions and programmatic statements. In order to demonstrate that an opportunist standpoint, in this case that of Cde Dornhorst, is not just an aberration, it is necessary to confront the method of approach that underlies the arguments. In this way, a revolutionary critique can show how a non-scientific method of approach necessarily leads to an incorrect political standpoint.

Cde Dornhorst did not accidentally stumble across his approach to Stalinism; it is a method of analysis that is most appropriate to the RCG's adaptation to the CPGB. He sets out to prove that the CPGB is not Stalinist, that the changing relationship between the Communist Parties and the Soviet Union is more or less irrelevant in shaping their development, and that the CPs are as

different from each other as different social democratic parties. He concludes his analysis thus:

'In analysing the development of communist parties since the second world war, their relation to or more accurately, attitude towards the Soviet Union is a secondary question. What is primary is the analysis of their relation to their own working class.... The Communist Parties are not Stalinist — they represent specific forms of reformism. This differs from country to country — the PCI, the PCF and the CPGB are now as different from each other as the Italian, French and British Socialist Parties. This cannot be explained by supposing that they are still Stalinist.' (9)

Cde Dornhorst's conclusion is based on a one-sided and empirical recognition of the worldwide strengthening of nationalism within the CPs today. The changed appearance of the CPs has led many bourgeois and radical left writers to accept the CPs' own view of themselves — the view that they are no longer Stalinist. The same approach adopted by Cde Dornhorst has led the prominent East German dissident, Wolf Biermann, to declare that:

'Even the most stubborn Stalinists have changed — just read the book by Carrillo "Spain after Franco"! Carrillo himself has changed, he describes that very honestly, and even great old Dolores Ibarruri has finally stepped on a new road with her party.' (10)

The changed appearance of the CPs is taken out of its historical context and is therefore arbitrarily counterposed to its previous history. Today's historical result — the fragmentation of the official communist movement — is given as an explanation of the process that led up to it. Such an explanation cannot provide the basis for understanding the future development of the official communist movement. History's result is not its starting point. We must see the present as a moment in historical development. Separating the present from the past leads to viewing the present in a partial way, torn from the totality of historical development.

Marx looked at history from the standpoint of the present, but, unlike Cde Dornhorst, he did not abstract the present from the past. For Marx, the lower forms of historical development could only be understood by means of an analysis of the most developed social forms. He wrote:

'Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organisation of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allow insights into the structure and relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, ... etc. Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc.' (11)

In *Capital*, Marx presented his analysis not as a historical sequence, but by the relationship that his scientific categories have 'to one another in modern bourgeois society':

'It would therefore be unfeasible and wrong to let the economic categories follow one another in the same

sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. Their sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development.' (12)

So Marx's presentation of *Capital* is not directly historical — it is **historical-logical**. The presentation of categories in their relationship to one another in modern bourgeois society is based on a method of historical abstraction, or a logical reconstruction of history. Marx starts from the present and looks at the past in order to draw out the specific form of development of each period. By seeing the present as 'self-superseding', his analysis of the past also sheds light on future development. It is vital to grasp that Marx sees present categories as being **historically specific**.

When he states that 'the bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient', Marx is quick to add: 'But not at all in the manner of those economists who smudge over all historical differences and see bourgeois relations in all forms of society' (13). Central to Marx's critique of political economy is the demonstration of the historical — and therefore transient — character of bourgeois social relations. Marx criticised bourgeois thinkers for reading the social relations of today back into the past:

'The so-called historical presentation of development is founded, as a rule, on the fact that the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself, and, since it is only rarely and only under quite specific conditions able to criticise itself ... it always conceives them one-sidedly.' (14)

Because the present is seen as given and natural, the bourgeoisie can see only its own reflection in the past and in the future. Projecting the present into the past — that is, **eternalising** the present — is the way the bourgeoisie looks at history. Marx moved between 'history's point of departure' and the 'historical result' in order to work out the inner connections of the totality of tendencies that had moulded his object of investigation. On the basis of such an inquiry, it is possible to reconstruct history in terms of its logical development. Marx wrote:

'Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere a priori construction.' (15)

For Marx therefore, an adequate presentation of 'the actual movement' of his object of inquiry presupposed an analysis of its 'different forms of development'. Marx noted that the ahistorical categories of bourgeois economists can demonstrate how production takes place within capitalism, but cannot show how the relations which the categories reflect have come about. Ultimately, the bourgeoisie understands neither the present nor the past:

'The view outlined here diverges sharply from the one current among bourgeois economists imprinted within capitalist ways of thought. Such thinkers do indeed

realise how production takes place within capitalist relations. But they do not understand how these relations are themselves produced, together with the material preconditions of their dissolution. They do not see, therefore, that their historical justification as a necessary form of economic development and of the production of social wealth may be undermined.' (16)

For Marx, the importance of 'history' lay in the fact that it showed how present social relations were produced and the tendencies that would lead to change in the future.

Although Marx's enquiry into the capitalist mode of production proceeded on a level of abstraction different from that appropriate to the analysis of a particular historical phenomenon, this logical-historical approach is essential to an understanding of Stalinism. It was the method of analysis adopted by Lenin in his struggle against opportunism.

Lenin's analysis of the collapse of the Second International provides an instructive example of how to approach the changing expressions of political tendencies. He presented his analysis of the collapse of the Second International by looking at the tendencies which had strengthened opportunism in an earlier period of capital accumulation:

"'Peaceful' decades, however, have not passed without leaving their mark. They have of necessity given rise to opportunism in all countries, and made it prevalent among parliamentary, trade union, journalistic and other 'leaders'." (17)

It was the impact of the First World War and crisis that reinforced already existing opportunist tendencies and changed their political expression into social-chauvinism — socialism in words, chauvinism in deeds:

'The war has changed this opportunism, which had been fostered for decades, raised it to a higher stage ...' (18)

For Lenin, social-chauvinism was a result not simply of the war. He outlined the historical tendencies which necessarily led to this changed expression of opportunism. In looking at the collapse of the Second International he asked the following questions:

'... what interests the socialist movement today is ... a study of the historical origins, the conditions, the significance and the strength of the social-chauvinist trend. (1) Where did social-chauvinism spring from? (2) What gave it strength? (3) How must it be combatted?' (19)

Through his analysis Lenin was able to show the connection between the opportunism of the previous period and social-chauvinism: how the war had changed opportunism — had 'raised it to a higher stage'. By presenting the historical process that led to the consummation of opportunism as social-chauvinism, Lenin could advance a method of combatting it. He could demonstrate that social-chauvinism was not an aberration, but the necessary expression of opportunism at a time of war and crisis. Revolutionary communists today, in a similar way, must demonstrate the historical relationship between the Stalinism of the past and its contemporary expression.

The development of national-reformist tendencies in the CPs took place at the expense of the old traditions of the official communist movement. Under the impact of

the crisis, this process has been intensified to the extent that Biermann's words 'But even the most stubborn Stalinists have changed' make 'common sense'. However, the real significance of the programme of the CPGB can only be understood through an analysis of its history.

In order to comprehend the political expressions of opportunism in the working class movement today, it is essential to come to grips with the process that shaped them — what Lenin called 'the totality of opposing tendencies' — in order to discard 'subjectivism and arbitrariness in the choice of a particular "dominant" idea' (20). It is characteristic of bourgeois historians to separate a 'dominant idea' from the contradictory historical tendencies that have led to that idea being dominant at a particular moment. Cde Dornhorst too has abstracted some of the 'dominant' features of the present-day CPGB from the 'totality of opposing tendencies' that gave rise to them and has substituted this abstraction for a materialist analysis of that party. As we shall see, this ahistorical view provides the theoretical justification for the RCG's adaptation to the CPGB.

#### (b) Is Stalinism a 'secondary question'? The tendencies of development within Stalinism

Today, most West European CPs have assumed the mantle of radical nationalism and publicly denounce the Soviet regime in a way that is barely distinguishable from that of bourgeois liberalism. The view that these parties are no longer Stalinist appears to make sense. However, a closer look at the official communist movement shows that Stalinism and 'Euro-communism' are not two distinct phenomena. On the contrary, today's CPs are the necessary result of their Stalinist past. Here we can only provide a bare outline of this development (21). Given Cde Dornhorst's view that the CPGB is not Stalinist, it is necessary to show the links between today's expression of Stalinism and its origins.

In order to understand the development of national reformist CPs in Western Europe we must start from the material conditions that prevailed in the Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution. The enormous pressures on the new workers' state — economic and cultural backwardness, civil war and invasion by imperialist powers, the physical destruction of a large section of the proletarian vanguard in the course of these wars, isolation — all these had a debilitating effect on the Soviet power. Following the failure of the revolutionary upsurge in Western Europe, the immediate survival of the Soviet state became dependent on the internal consolidation of the economy. These conditions provided the terrain for the rise of Stalinism.

Lenin had understood that the success of the socialist revolution in the Soviet Republic rested upon two conditions: firstly the victory of the socialist revolution in at least one advanced European country, and, secondly, a compromise with the peasant majority of the population. The latter, however, could be successful only on the basis of the former. It was understood that socialism could not be built by the efforts of the workers of one country alone (22). Thus the internal consolidation of the Soviet economy was necessary in

order to provide a breathing space for the workers' state until assistance could be obtained from the victorious proletariat in Europe. The New Economic Policy (NEP) which above all represented a necessary compromise with the peasantry, coincided with the weakening of proletarian forces in the Soviet Union. Internal economic consolidation increased the role of the state bureaucracy. The growing role of the bureaucracy in a situation where large sections of the working class vanguard were physically destroyed in the civil war posed new problems for the workers' state. After Lenin's death, tendencies towards bureaucratisation were reinforced. The bureaucratisation of the Bolshevik Party and the gradual merging of state and party bureaucracies expressed the defeat and demoralisation suffered by the vanguard of the working class. By the mid-twenties the bureaucracy had raised itself above the masses and had managed to stifle all elements of workers' democracy(23).

The NEP did lead to a degree of economic reconstruction in the USSR. Its relative success sharply contrasted with the defeats suffered by the European working class. An empirical recognition of the successes of the NEP was systematised into a theory of building socialism through internal reconstruction: the enforced measures of compromise were made into a principle — the necessity of the NEP became a virtue. The bureaucracy's euphoria over the NEP meant that Lenin's first condition for building socialism — the international revolution — gradually came to be subordinated to the process of economic construction in the USSR. 'Freed' from the control of the working class and basing itself on the NEP, the Soviet bureaucracy came to adopt a national outlook more and more. Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country' was the ideological expression of this process. By separating the building of socialism in the USSR from the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat worldwide, it rejected proletarian internationalism.

Lenin understood that the development of the forces of production adequate to the establishment of socialism could not take place within the confines of one country. Denying this, Stalin argued that the only obstacle to building socialism in one country was military intervention by foreign powers. This revision of the basic position of Marx and Lenin had two major consequences for the communist movement — consequences that were drawn out by Trotsky in 1928:

'The new doctrine proclaims that socialism can be built on the basis of a national state if only there is no intervention. From this there can and must follow ... a collaborationist policy towards the foreign bourgeoisie with the object of averting intervention, as this will guarantee the construction of socialism, that is to say, will solve the main historical question. The task of the parties in the Comintern assumes, therefore, an auxiliary character; their mission is to protect the USSR from intervention and not to fight for the conquest of power. It is, of course, not a question of the subjective intentions but of the objective logic of political thought.'(24)

The strategy of building socialism in one country did lead to the transformation of the Comintern and its sections. As Trotsky predicted, the Stalinisation of the Comintern assigned its sections a new role. This point

was spelled out by Comintern ideologue Manuisky:

'Today, the defence of the USSR determines the main line of policy of the world proletariat in relation to war; whereas in 1914, the best proletarian revolutionaries adopted the position of defeat of one's imperialist government in the war.'(25)

Manuisky's suggestion that the 'defence of the USSR' had replaced the need to defeat 'one's imperialist government' indicated the role of class collaboration assigned to the Comintern sections. The pursuit of this collaborationist policy contained the seeds of fragmentation of the official communist movement. The parties of the Second International too, did not find it necessary to defeat their own imperialist government. As Trotsky noted:

'If it is at all possible to realise socialism in one country, then one can believe in that theory not only after but also before the conquest of power.' If socialism can be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia, then there is all the more reason to believe that it can be realised in advanced Germany. Tomorrow the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany will undertake to propound this theory... The day after tomorrow the French party will have its turn. It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of social-patriotism.'(26)

In the national-reformist standpoint of the bureaucracy there existed only the logical possibility of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of social-patriotism. Though national-reformist tendencies were strengthened in the individual sections of the Comintern, their development as dominant characteristics of the CPs could not take place overnight. After 1928 the ideological weakness which had characterised the CPs since the foundation of the Comintern, coupled with the defeats suffered internationally by the working class and the consequent isolation of the local CPs all served to maintain the hegemony of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The Soviet bureaucracy's abandonment of internationalism led to the subordination of the Comintern to Soviet foreign policy. This transformation of the Third International had the effect of strengthening nationalist tendencies in the CPs. Although Stalinism developed on the basis of an international movement, its political foundation was the standpoint of nationalism — hence the possibility of 'disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of social-patriotism'. The CPGB's programme today is a result of the past development of opportunist tendencies which have been reinforced by the onset of capitalist crisis. Because Cde Dornhorst sees only the reflections of the present in the past, he cannot grasp the specificity of the CPGB today, or how the CPGB has come to be what it is. Basing himself in a formal way on Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism in 1938-39, Cde Dornhorst paraphrases Trotsky to note:

'The Soviet bureaucracy could no longer "dictate" policy to other Communist Parties in the way it could in the Third Period. It was no *deus ex machina* which could impose its own will on the laws of history. The growing reliance of the Communist Parties on their own bourgeoisies could only reduce their dependence on the Soviet bureaucracy.'(27)

This is correct if it is seen as a historical tendency. But revolutionaries have to show how this tendency

expresses itself in a particular historical moment.

Trotsky, in his analysis, demonstrated the necessity for the 'growth of nationalist tendencies in the sections of the Comintern'(28); he showed how the existing material conditions reinforced the tendency of the CPs to become more and more dependent on their own ruling classes:

'The growth of imperialist antagonisms, the obvious proximity of the war danger, and the equally obvious isolation of the USSR must unavoidably strengthen the centrifugal nationalist tendencies within the Comintern.'(29)

Being a Marxist, Trotsky characterised the fragmentation of the Comintern in terms of nationalist tendencies. The tendency towards nationalism had not fully worked itself out and Trotsky warned against those who 'want to begin with the degeneration complete'(30). Trotsky's work shows only the necessity for the strengthening of the 'national' character of the CPs. It is up to Marxists today to analyse how the 'centrifugal nationalist tendencies' work themselves out in the changing material conditions of the post-war period. In the past, the view which saw the CPs as merely an extension of Soviet foreign policy was based on an empirical recognition of one tendency of development. Today, we find Cde Dornhorst recognising only the tendency towards strengthening national reformism, free from all contradictions — in an equally one-sided way. Hence, for him it ceases to be a tendency and becomes instead an 'iron law' of history.

Cde Dornhorst backs up with 'history' his argument that the relationship of the CPGB to the Soviet Union is a 'secondary question' for the CPGB today(31). In order to find 'evidence' for his argument he rummages through past events so as to establish the case for his non-Stalinist Parties. Projecting history backwards, he rewrites the CPGB's past, in order to find it in its present form from 1939 onwards. He attempts to argue that the CPGB's chauvinist anti-war turn of 1939 had little to do with the Stalin-Hitler pact. To substantiate this, he tries to show that this turn was not really anti-war; 'this change did not mean that the CPGB adopted an anti-war line, as Cde Turner and orthodox idealism suppose'(32). Cde Dornhorst argues his point by making the correct observation that the CPGB's opposition to the war was social-pacifist and social-chauvinist. Looking at the continuity of the CPGB's position, he states that:

'In essence, this [turn] is no different from the naked chauvinism of the 1930s. It has just been given a pacifist gloss. The option of support for a "democratic" war was left open.'(33)

If all that Cde Dornhorst wanted to prove was that the CPGB could not take a stand against the Second World War on the basis of revolutionary defeatism, we would have no objections. But to deny that the CPGB opposed the war in this period as a result of pressure from the Soviet bureaucracy is plain stupidity. The continuity of the CPGB's politics during the 1939-41 period, which Cde Turner himself outlined, does not explain why the CPGB took an anti-war position — albeit in a social-chauvinist and pacifist manner. The fact is that the CPGB did oppose the war, did counterpose itself to bourgeois public opinion, did argue for strikes against speedups which accompanied the war, and in conse-

quence did isolate itself and lose a substantial portion of its membership. Did the CPGB have a 'national' and 'independent' inclination towards self-annihilation? We think not. It was precisely the contradictory relationship between the Soviet bureaucracy and the CPGB that formed the basis for this turn.

While, on the one hand, Cde Dornhorst suggests that the turn did not represent an anti-war line, on the other he is forced to concede that some kind of a turn did take place:

'The events of this period show that the Soviet bureaucracy no longer had unlimited powers to deal with foreign Communist Parties. The official slogans sanctioned by the Comintern denounced the treachery of the social democrats, and were summarised by the appeal: "Down with the Imperialist War". But the CPGB adapted it to prevailing national conditions, and thus rendered it more "moderate".'(34)

In the real world not even gods have 'unlimited powers'. Cde Dornhorst first attributes the Soviet bureaucracy with 'unlimited powers' in the previous period, only to show that in 1939-41 they no longer had them. Whether or not the Soviet bureaucracy had 'unlimited powers', we would expect the reformist CPGB to adapt its anti-war position to national conditions. The implication drawn by Cde Dornhorst — that this adaptation represented a departure from the position of the Soviet bureaucracy — is wrong. Every CP approached the war from a social-patriotic standpoint, the CPSU not excluded. The false distinction drawn by Cde Dornhorst between the position of the CPGB and of the Soviet bureaucracy on the war is paralleled by an attempt to minimise the significance of the CPGB's 'anti-war' turn. Cde Dornhorst writes:

'In the period from late 1939 to June 1941, it [the CPGB] undoubtedly gave this nationalism a radical twist. But this was as far as it was capable of going in responding to "orders" from the Comintern.'(35)

Impressed only by 'unlimited powers', Cde Dornhorst delicately characterises the CPGB's anti-war turn as a 'radical twist'. He assures us that this 'was as far' as matters went. By overestimating the break between Moscow and the CPGB at that time, Cde Dornhorst goes on to underestimate the significant changes in the relationship between the two in the post-war boom.

In an attempt to show that today's CPGB was already thriving in the forties, Cde Dornhorst argues that the CPGB's 'left turn' in 1947 had nothing to do with its relationship to Moscow:

'What prompted the change in the Party's orientation to the Labour government was not an edict issued from Moscow. It was its relationship to the British working class that had forced it to take a new stand. The CPGB did not need any assistance from luminaries in the Soviet bureaucracy to point out that the domination of American imperialism was a threat to any programme which envisaged a national road to socialism. The Party was quite capable of following its own chauvinist nose on this score.'(36)

To argue that the 'left turn' of the CPGB was due merely to its relationship to the working class is absurd. Working class discontent existed prior to the 'left turn', and the CPGB did its best to throttle the struggles prompted by this discontent. What was new was the onset of the Cold War and the growing attacks on the

CPs throughout Europe. The bourgeoisie could now dispense with the CPs' services. The Cominform's call for a new policy corresponded to the growing isolation of the CPGB.

The new line did not come naturally to the CPGB; nor was its relation to the Soviet bureaucracy irrelevant, as Cde Dornhorst suggests. The identification of the CPGB with the Soviet and British war effort and socialism had been an important stimulus to the previous growth of the CPGB. At this time the CPGB could not fail to respond to the 'left turn'. Moreover, because the CPGB had also become accustomed to playing a role of left support for the capitalist state, it was pressure from Moscow that was decisive in bringing about the 'left turn' in 1947. Thus all the Western CPs made this turn at the same time — all responding to Cold War pressures upon them and to the attacks being made on the Soviet Union. The way this 'left turn' expressed itself differed from country to country, and depended on the relations between classes and the strength of the national CPs. However, for Cde Dornhorst the CPGB had already become a simple patriotic reformist party(37).

Entirely absent from Cde Dornhorst's 'history' is an understanding that the national-reformist tendencies of the CPs were actively promoted by the USSR. In general, CPs with well-established national credentials were useful for the foreign policy of the USSR — the policy of class collaboration. In 1943, Stalin justified the dissolution of the Comintern thus:

(a) It exposes the lie of the Hitlerites to the effect that "Moscow" allegedly intends to intervene in the life of other nations and to "Bolshevise" them. From now on an end is put to this lie.

(b) It exposes the calumny of the adversaries of Communism within the labour movement to the effect that Communist Parties in various countries are allegedly acting not in the interests of their people but on orders from outside. From now on an end is also put to this calumny.

(c) It facilitates the work of patriots of all countries for uniting the progressive forces of their respective countries, regardless of party or religious faith, into a single camp of national liberation — for unfolding the struggle against Fascism ...'(38)

The dissolution of the Comintern was motivated in terms of the standpoint of patriotism — Cde Dornhorst's 'specific' brand for reformism! Not surprisingly, the CPs agreed that the dissolution of the Comintern would remove the 'misunderstanding' that Moscow had 'unlimited powers' to determine their policies. The response of the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party was typical of all the CPs:

'The dissolution of the International, which frees us from the obligations arising from its statutes and decisions, will still further reinforce the national character of the Spanish Communist Party and facilitate the unification of all Spanish patriots both within Spain and in emigration and so stimulate the development of all national forces in the struggle to recapture the freedom and independence of Spain.'(39)

The reinforcement of the 'national character' of the Communist Parties was the necessary development of Stalinism. When Cde Dornhorst looks at the history of the CPGB he can only ask: was it 'patriotic' or was it

'Stalinist'? Was Stalinism a 'primary' or 'secondary' question? But the CPGB did not and could not just 'say goodbye' to Moscow. The development of national-reformist tendencies was part and parcel of dependence on the Soviet bureaucracy. The crisis of 1948 strengthened both of these tendencies at the same time. Cde Dornhorst's one-sided appraisal of Stalinism cannot accommodate such facts and so he is forced to deny them. But, having underestimated the importance of the Soviet Union for the CPs after the Second World War, he is unable to grasp the 'specific form of reformism' which has emerged from the post-war boom.

### (c) Stalinism in the post-war period

For us, the CPGB of 1947 is not the CPGB of today. The impact of the boom on the British working class has had important consequences for the programme of the CPGB. The sharp 'break with Moscow' which has been the product of the boom, however, obscures the connections between the Stalinism of today and the Stalinism of yesterday; obscures them to the extent that for Cde Dornhorst, 'the specific form of reformism' of the CPs appears so 'specific' as to have no connection at all with the politics of the past period. But on the contrary, what Cde Dornhorst suggests to be a 'specific' brand of reformism is inconceivable without the development of Stalinism in the thirties and forties. The process of fragmentation of the official communist movement that has been accelerated by the post-war boom has not spelt the end of Stalinism — it has clarified the reactionary nature of this movement.

The development of the conception of the 'national road' to socialism was the theoretical adaptation of Stalin's position of 'socialism in one country' to local conditions. The concept of the 'national road' for Western CPs was pioneered by Thorez, leader of the French CP. In November 1946 he stated:

'The progress of democracy across the world, in spite of rare exceptions that confirm the rule, enables one to consider other roads to Socialism than that followed by the Russian communists. We have always believed and declared that the French People, rich in a glorious tradition, would find its own way toward greater democracy, progress and social justice.'(40)

Thorez was clear about distinguishing his national road from that 'followed by the Russian communists', that is, the road of revolution — the Russian Revolution. A couple of months later, Togliatti, the leader of the PCI, made the same discovery. In January 1947, he said:

'International experience tells us that, given the present conditions of class struggle in the world, the working class can find new roads towards socialism, namely to develop democracy to its extreme limit, which is precisely the same as socialism — roads different from those for example followed by the working class of the Soviet Union.'(41)

The 'national road to socialism' is the common political underpinning of the official communist movement. The very fact that all the different CPs talk about a 'national road to socialism' expresses their relationship with the Soviet Union. Social Democracy has no need to talk of a 'national' road, for it is not embarrassed by any previous

connections with the Russian Revolution and an international movement of some significance. Social Democracy does not have to prove its independence from the USSR — the CPs do. In striving to become respectable reformist parties, the CPs could only develop through asserting their independence from 'Moscow', the 'International' and even from each other. But this should not blind us to the programme they hold in common.

The development of national-reformist programmes leads logically to integration into the bourgeois state. But, precisely because the CPs were not just any old national-reformist parties — but were part of an international movement with definite ties with the Soviet bureaucracy — the integration of these parties into a bourgeois state had only a very limited character. After 1947, the bourgeoisie was not prepared to allow the CPs to participate in government, and, unlike European Social Democracy, the CPs were relegated to an oppositional role(42). In their capacity as opposition parties with a working class base, sections of the official communist movement have provided the form through which the reformism of the boom period has most coherently been expressed.

The post-war boom, which involved a tremendous increase in production and led to a rise in the standard of living of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, reinforced reformism in the workers' movement. The CPs' programmes reflected the experience of the boom and its expression in the working class. The CPs were unable to understand the boom and to counter the bourgeoisie's views that capitalism had changed. The General Secretary of the CPGB, John Gollan, wrote to the party economists in 1960:

'...The difficulty which confronts the average comrade is that in the fifteen years since 1945, he has not seen a crisis of the nature of 1930-31, and this lends substance to the theories of the people who say that capitalism has changed.'(43)

But the dilemma facing Gollan was not just a British one. We find PCI leader Giorgio Amendola noting the strength of the boom, its impact in strengthening bourgeois ideas in the working class, and the inability of the PCI to deal with this. Writing in 1961, Amendola observed:

'Today still the weakness of our criticism and its lack of precision, enable the "economic miracle" to make a growing impact amidst the working people...

'Thus, in spite of our criticism, the influence exercised by the miracle succeeds in penetrating widely amidst the working class movement and even in the ranks of the Party itself. The view, for instance, that the monopolistic expansion will last out indefinitely ... is evidence of the influence exercised by the "miracle" within the working class movement.'(44)

The militant rhetoric of the CPs in days gone by seemed outdated to them in the era of the 'economic miracle'. Under the stimulus of a lengthy — albeit temporary — stabilisation of capitalism, the old dogmas of Stalinism came to be supplemented by a systematic revision of the fundamental positions of Marx and Lenin. International conferences sponsored by the CPs presented forums for revising aspects of Lenin's theory of Imperialism and Marx's theory of crisis(45). More and more CP theoreticians advanced views which accepted

the bourgeoisie's arguments that 'capitalism had changed'. Thus in 1966, at an international meeting of CP theoreticians on State Monopoly Capitalism, Joye, a member of the Central Committee of the Belgian CP, noted that the tremendous intervention of the state under 'State Monopoly Capitalism' implies

'A basic change in the functions of capitalism, more profound than the transition from classical capitalism ... to monopoly capitalism.'(46)

Previously, the Stalinist movement had disguised its rejection of the fundamental principles of Leninism and proletarian internationalism under such phrases as 'the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to new conditions'. Under the impact of the boom the validity of these principles was questioned explicitly.

The revisionism of Bernstein was a break not simply from the vulgar Marxism of the Second International, but from Marxism itself. However, the development of Bernsteinism cannot be understood unless we have a clear grasp of the politics of the Second International. In the same way, what Cde Dornhorst suggests to be a 'specific' form of reformism is inconceivable without the prior development of Stalinism.

The capitalist crisis has had the effect of bringing to the surface the national-chauvinist tendencies that were nurtured during the post-war boom. In response to this crisis, Stalinism is expressed as a growing fragmentation of the official communist movement and as a growing criticism of the USSR by the CPs. In the simple world of Cde Dornhorst, this indicates that the question of Stalinism has been resolved — the CPs 'are now as different from each other as the Italian, French and British Socialist parties'. The CPs have indeed been transformed into distinct national-reformist parties, but they are not so different from each other as Cde Dornhorst suggests. If he had cared to look at the programmes of the different CPs he would have been struck by their similarities: 'national road to socialism'; 'advanced democracy'; 'left unity', 'anti-monopoly alliance', 'the multi-party system', 'autonomy' and 'non-interference' in party matters — the list could go on. How does Cde Dornhorst explain the fact that, with the onset of the capitalist crisis, all the major CPs have publicly reemphasised their rejection of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'? How does he explain the fact that the apparent militancy of the Portuguese CP in 1975 caused the Spanish, Italian and French parties considerable consternation? How does Cde Dornhorst explain the recent outburst of anti-Soviet criticism by most European CPs, and their preoccupation with 'socialist democracy'? For us, these things occur not because Western CPs are blind to the realities of national life, but because they all have to relate to their common heritage. According to the simple logic of Cde Dornhorst, these developments can only be a result of some strange coincidence.

The distinct brand of reformist which the CPs now share is how Stalinism presents itself today. But, precisely at a time when the political programmes of the CPs are going to have enormous consequences for the working class, Cde Dornhorst wants to forget about Stalinism — the force that provided the possibility for the development of today's CPs. Seeing Stalinism as a 'secondary question', Cde Dornhorst fails to grasp the political dilemma facing the CPGB today and frees it

from one of the most important political questions facing it — the negative example of 'socialism' in the USSR and East Europe. The national standpoint inherent in Stalinism and the theory of 'socialism in one country' has necessarily forced the CPGB to become more and more dependent on its own bourgeoisie. The 'national road to socialism', defined in contrast to the path (and gains) of the Russian Revolution, represents the adaptation of Stalinism to local conditions. Despite its fragmentation, the official communist movement stands on the essentials of its past political programme.

This point is central to a revolutionary understanding of Stalinism today. Far from being a 'secondary' question, its relation to the USSR is a major political problem for the CPGB. In the past, the RCG recognised the important role that Stalinism played in strengthening reformism in the post-war period. As the Report of the Political Committee to the last Conference of the RCG noted:

'In the post-war period reformism has been reinforced by the capitalist boom. The case for communism was not seen as relevant by a working class which experienced a steady increase in its standard of living. The Cold War and the negative example of Stalinism allowed the bourgeoisie to portray communism as being synonymous with totalitarianism. These two factors served to make communism a foreign ideology in the labour movement.' (47)

The negative example of Stalinism and the USSR in the Western European working class is not a 'secondary question' for the CPGB. Because he rids the CPGB of this political problem, Cde Dornhorst is unable to understand the specific historical form of reformism expressed by the CPGB today. While it is true that the CPGB adapts more and more to reformism within the working class in Britain, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and the working class the CPGB is still associated with the USSR. Even if its relationship with the USSR is only an embarrassed one today, it has had a major effect on the CPGB's recent evolution. The CPGB's desire to see the back of the Soviet Union is thwarted by the bourgeoisie, which is only too willing to refresh the memory of the working class (48).

Cde Dornhorst's method is to smudge over different historical periods and to view the present as the result of so many factors which can be ordered as 'primary', 'secondary', and so on. Like those bourgeois thinkers for whom 'the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself', Cde Dornhorst gives us a narrow presentation of the CPGB, based only on its appearance at any one time. The result is that he cannot see more than one side of Stalinism in the past, during the post-war boom and today. In this respect his analysis of Stalinism has more in common with the method of the radical left than the method of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. In fact Cde Dornhorst's narrow definition of the Stalinism of yesterday is essentially the same as that of the radical left. He tells us that

'Stalinism in the international Communist movement expressed the dependence of the Communist Parties on the Soviet bureaucracy.' (49)

In the forties, the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) wrote in a similar vein:

'The new reformist ideology of Stalinism is the most self-evident and cynical confession of the abandon-

ment of the revolutionary class struggle by those parties and their complete submission to the aims of the Kremlin's foreign politics.' (50)

Succumbing to the apparent features of the CPs today, Cde Dornhorst recognises that the CPs are far from being submissive to Moscow — that is, the bureaucracy does not have unlimited powers — and declares that they are no longer Stalinist. According to Cde Dornhorst's 'history', 'edicts from Moscow' were replaced for the CP by a 'relationship with the working class' as long ago as 1947:

'At the beginning of 1947, the British economy was in a severe crisis, with over two million workers temporarily laid off. Working class discontent with the government started to appear. The CPGB could not remain unaffected by this...

'What prompted the change in the Party's orientation to the Labour government was not an edict issued from Moscow. It was its relationship to the British working class that had forced it to take a new stand.' (51)

Yet even the Fourth International has noticed that things do change. In the fifties the International Secretariat noted some of the changes in the CPs and attributed them to the 'power of the mass movement':

'As for the mass Communist Parties, their relations with Moscow are being subjected to conditions different from the past; the very power of the mass movement in their own countries, developing in the direction of revolutionary struggles, asserts itself increasingly.' (52)

Only a few years and a little enthusiasm separates the formulations of the FI from those of Cde Dornhorst. Underlying their different conclusions is a similar method of approach.

For revolutionaries, it is never an 'edict from Moscow' that determines the policy of a Stalinist party. The CPs have never been sealed off from capitalist society and have always responded one way or another to the struggles of the working class. Trotsky did not talk of Stalinist foreign policy as a primary question or the national development of the CPs as a secondary question. Rather, he looked at the way the relationship between different tendencies worked itself out in a given historical period. He warned those who advanced the argument about Moscow's 'unlimited powers':

'I cannot agree that the policy of the International was only a materialisation of the commands of Moscow. It is necessary to see the policy as a whole, from the internal and the international points of view, from all sides...' (53)

This conception of Stalinism is entirely foreign to Cde Dornhorst, who has 'liberated' the CPGB from its past development. Just as the policies of the CPGB yesterday cannot be understood as a result of an 'edict', the policies of the CPGB today cannot be seen as simple responses to the movement of the British working class. Cde Dornhorst can only grasp the visible expressions of social development. In this case it is the tendency that dominates the programme of the CPGB today — that of its increasing dependence on the British bourgeoisie. This tendency has developed in contradiction to the CPGB's ties with the USSR. But the fact that the boom and its reflection in the working class have reinforced the national character of the CPGB does not make this

tendency a 'primary question'. Nor is the CPGB's relation to the USSR a secondary question. Marxists do not separate tendencies of development from each other, nor do they separate past development from its present historical result.

Revolutionary communists must establish the connections between the Stalinism of today and the Stalinism of the past in order to understand the 'specific form of reformism' taken by the contemporary CPGB. Only an analysis of the CPGB that starts from an understanding of Stalinism can deal with such questions.

### 3. THE CPGB IN THE WORLD OF CDE DORNHORST

#### (a) Independence and incomes policy

Having reduced the CPGB to an ordinary reformist party with no ties to the Soviet Union, Cde Dornhorst is forced to attempt to explain the basis for the existence of the CPGB. The explanation that is offered is based on the old method of reading history backwards. Cde Dornhorst has noticed that, in contrast to other reformist trends, the CPGB opposes wage restraint and incomes policy. Therefore what is distinct for him about the CPGB's form of reformism is its opposition to wage restraint. Basing himself on this superficial logic, Cde Dornhorst looks at history to find 'proof' for his thesis. And indeed the CPGB has opposed incomes policy in the past. Cde Dornhorst tells us:

'In 1948, the Labour Government instituted its first incomes policy as an essential step in reconstructing British capital. Living standards fell as inflation soared with the start of the Korean War. Opposition within the working class mounted, and reflected itself in conflicts inside the trade union bureaucracy. The CPGB became the spokesman for those sections of the bureaucracy which opposed wage restraint, since it had now achieved many leading positions in the official leadership.' (54)

The opposition of the CPGB to incomes policy in the forties is elevated by Cde Dornhorst to a supra-historical law — opposition to incomes policy becomes central to the CPGB's policy for all time:

'The CPGB became the organisational expression of opposition to incomes policy — it was this that ensured it would maintain its independent existence. It is therefore the case that the CPGB cannot revise its opposition to incomes policy; to do so would imply its dissolution.' (55)

Thus we have the conclusion that the 'independent existence' of the CPGB is based on its opposition to incomes policy. Indeed, Cde Dornhorst has made a novel contribution to historical materialism by arguing that the social basis of a party can be characterised through its opposition to a particular policy.

'The social basis of the Communist Party is that section of the bureaucracy which opposes state control of wages.' (56)

Through advancing a tautology — the CPGB 'became the organisational expression of opposition to incomes policy', therefore its social basis is 'that section of the bureaucracy which opposes state control of wages' —

Cde Dornhorst tries to explain the 'independent existence' of the CPGB.

But is opposition to incomes policy an adequate explanation of the social basis of the CPGB? Even Cde Dornhorst is forced by the weakness of his argument to embellish his ideas:

'The trade union leadership has turned to the CPGB to express opposition to policies carried out by various Labour governments which threatened to erode its independence ... the extent to which the Labour Party had been integrated into the state machinery during and after the Second World War had rendered it too insensitive to working class pressure for the safety of the bureaucracy. The latter has been obliged to use the CPGB as a safety valve.' (57)

Without a materialist analysis of the development of the CPGB, Cde Dornhorst is driven to provide a subjective explanation of its role. Inhibited about opposing the Labour Government but anxious about their independence from the state, certain trade union bureaucrats have asked the CPGB to put on a 'militant show' and act as their safety valve.

According to this penetrating observation, the distinct features of the CPGB are its opposition to incomes policy and its function as a safety valve to the trade union bureaucracy. Cde Dornhorst has, through describing the role of the CPGB as the left cover of the trade union bureaucracy, 'explained' that the CPGB's distinctive role is to be the left cover of the trade union bureaucracy. But description and explanation only coincide in the idealist world of bourgeois thinkers. A Marxist would have to ask: why has the CPGB opposed Labour policies for such a length of time? Why has the CPGB given an organised expression to left-reformism within the working class? Why has the CPGB yet to follow yesterday's left-reformists into the camp of the Social Contract? Why has the CPGB maintained an organisational independence from the Labour Party?

The fact that the CPGB expresses left-reformist views in the working class movement and hence acts as a left cover for the trade union bureaucracy is not the result of a historical accident. The CPGB was established as an explicitly revolutionary party; its formation was intimately related to the gains of the Russian Revolution in the minds of British workers. It was on this foundation that the CPGB grew subsequently. Despite its degeneration into a reformist tendency, the CPGB was able to maintain its independence from mainstream reformism through its historical relationship with the Soviet Union. The independent existence of the CPGB was not based on its opposition to incomes policy; rather, it was able to articulate opposition to wage restraint clearly because it was organisationally independent of the Labour Party. This 'independence' can only be understood in terms of the CPGB's relationship with the Soviet Union. Through its close link with the Russian Revolution, the CPGB could advance itself as a distinct 'socialist tendency'. From 1948 onwards, the bans on CP members holding office in the trade unions were a recognition of the party's special links with the Soviet bureaucracy. During the Cold War the survival of the CPGB as a distinct political trend was based on its relationship with the 'Socialist World'.

There was nothing distinctive in the CPGB's brand of reformist trade union policy to guarantee its inde-

pendent existence. In the past left-reformists from the ILP to the Bevanites have come and gone. The CPGB, however, has survived as an organisationally independent tendency precisely because of its relationship to the Soviet bureaucracy. Cde Dornhorst chooses to ignore the question of Stalinism and ends up explaining the survival of the CPGB by one of its policies.

His blindness to the historic relationship between the CPGB and the Soviet bureaucracy leads Cde Dornhorst to misunderstand one of the central problems facing the Party today. Since 1956, the CPGB has increasingly distanced itself from the Soviet Union. In attempting to become a bona fide national-reformist party, it has succumbed to bourgeois public opinion on the Soviet Union. But the CPGB has found itself in a dilemma: in the past its organisational independence was closely connected to a commitment to its version of the gains of the Russian Revolution. The CPGB could maintain its organisational independence even while arguing for 'left unity' and subordinating its identity to that of the Labour Party. The identification of the CPGB with the Soviet Union and other 'workers' democracies' gave the Party a distinct stamp even when it was playing the role of a poor relation to Labour.

In seeking to present a clear nationalist image, the CPGB is faced with the problem of finding an independent identity. Mass reformist parties like the PCI and PCF have strong roots in the working class — roots that ensure their future survival. The CPGB does not have a mass base and is therefore desperate to find an adequate foundation for its new 'independent' existence. Virtually every major policy statement made by the leadership of the CPGB in the present period attempts to provide a justification for the CPGB's existence as an independent organisation. In arguing against any 'tendency to operate merely as a "ginger group" to any part of the left', Dave Cook, the CPGB's National Organiser, exhorts CPGB members to recall that their organisation has a role to play:

'What are needed above all at this time are great blasts of Communist propaganda ... We need Communist arguments, theory, literature, meetings and initiatives — and Communist candidates in the May local elections. This is not a sudden sectarian switch away from our strategic objective of left unity. Of course our own initiatives and our criticisms of the left need to be framed with unity in mind. But we must not forget that left unity needs an input of communist politics; like real ale needs good yeast.' (58)

CPGB members should be forgiven for forgetting about 'communist politics', for the CPGB's positions are often indistinguishable from those of the Labour lefts. Cde Dornhorst's assurance that they have a distinct social base in trade unions is not likely to resolve the difficulty they have in finding a political role for the CPGB.

#### (b) The debate on 'Socialist Democracy'

The recent direction of the CPGB towards becoming an acceptable, home-made reformist party has raised doubts about its future political existence. The discussion on 'Socialist Democracy' that was launched by Gollan's article in the January 1976 issue of *Marxism*

Today reflects the dilemma that faces the CPGB. The article attempted to work out a coherent framework for presenting the CPGB as a respectable reformist organisation. In order to reassure bourgeois public opinion, Gollan presented his ideas through a critique of 'Socialist Democracy' in the Soviet Union. As an indication of the CPGB's honourable goals, he stated:

'Our aim is the construction of socialism in Britain, in forms which would guarantee personal freedom, the plurality of political parties, the independence of the trade unions, religious freedom, and freedom of research, cultural, artistic and scientific activities.' (59)

This exposition of liberal democratic aims by Gollan necessarily had to take the form of a critique of the 'excesses' of the Soviet bureaucracy. The article paralleled similar statements made by Western European CPs in the recent period: the concessions that were made to anti-Soviet propaganda by European CPs in the past have recently taken on a much more systematic character.

In opposition to this trend, sections of the official communist movement have attempted to use the revolutionary phraseology of the past in order to counter the growth of explicitly social democratic tendencies. In particular, the Soviet bureaucracy has rediscovered 'proletarian internationalism' as a way of asserting its hegemony over the official communist movement. Thus, in a key statement attacking the standpoint of the liberal CPs, Soviet ideologue Zaradov argues:

'The latter-day conciliators do not even pay lip-service to the independence of the proletarian party. They would like to dissolve it in an ideologically amorphous organisation, in any alliance set up according to the formula "unity for unity's sake". This logic, however, is the same as of the Mensheviks.' (60)

The debate in the official communist movement as a whole finds its expression within individual CPs. It would be wrong to imagine that individual CPs could make a rightward shift, abandon their Leninist phraseology and attack the USSR without any oppositional tendencies developing. A strong party like the PCI, which is entrenched in the state machinery and the trade union bureaucracy and is the dominant party of the working class, can easily ignore opposition to attacks on the USSR. The CPGB has already gone part of the way along the road taken by the PCI. However, the CPGB is not the PCI, and its future is less than secure. For those sections of the CPGB associated with Sid French (the 'Frenchites'), the 'independence' of the past seems a more realistic alternative than the new revisionism. The debates in the official communist movement thus find their reflection in the CPGB. Given the significance that a break with the USSR would have for the future of the CPGB, it is not surprising that the debate on 'Socialist Democracy' is intertwined with other discussions taking place in it.

Cde Dornhorst is incapable of understanding the discussion in the CPGB. He writes:

'The differences have appeared in the debate on socialist democracy. The leadership approaches the question from the standpoint of its adaptation to the British state. Its view of socialist democracy comple-

ments its abandonment of the idea of the CPGB as a vanguard party ...

'The Frenchites see the defence of the Soviet Union as inseparable from the real issue at stake: the leading role of the Party.' (61)

Cde Dornhorst accepts the Frenchites' view of the discussion — 'the real issue at stake' is 'the leading role of the Party'. At the same time he cannot explain why the Frenchite wing 'see the defence of the Soviet Union as inseparable from the real issue at stake'. The real question at stake, the problem which is at the centre of all major discussions inside the CPGB is, as we have said, the search for a clear political identity for the CPGB. Gollan wrote his article not because he wanted to abandon the notion of the 'leading role' of the CPGB but because of the need to provide the ideological underpinning for a 'respectable' CPGB. In order to do this, he had to settle accounts with the CPGB's history of links with a 'one-party state'. He attempts to reconcile the CPGB with its past.

The Frenchite wing of the CPGB opposes the leadership not because of any preoccupation with the question of 'the vanguard party', but because it understands that the survival of the CPGB in the past has been bound up with its relation to the USSR. For Cde Dornhorst the question of the CPGB's relation with the USSR may be irrelevant. But the Frenchites can only express the CPGB's 'independence' through maintaining a close relationship with the 'Socialist World'.

In order to prove that the USSR is irrelevant to the CPGB today, Cde Dornhorst has to show that the doubts raised about 'the leading role of the Party' represent a new phenomenon. Having argued vigorously that the CPGB has been more or less the same since the late forties, Cde Dornhorst now reveals that even it is not immune to change. From the late fifties onwards, according to Cde Dornhorst, a shift in emphasis on the vanguard role of the Party took place:

'Given its reformist nature, the Party could react in only one way — by adapting. This took the form of revising its pretensions to an "exclusive" role in the labour movement — by abandoning its pretensions as a vanguard party.' (62)

Should there be any doubts, the CPGB does not use terms like 'vanguard role' in their revolutionary sense. The Frenchites' major discovery of the 'vanguard party' is similar to the Soviet bureaucracy's discovery of the concept of 'proletarian internationalism'. It is an attempt to fight today's opportunism with the opportunism of the past dressed up in the language of Marx and Lenin.

Cde Dornhorst takes the Frenchites' views so seriously that he goes through a string of quotations to 'prove' a shift away from the conception of the CPGB as a vanguard party in the fifties. Over the past forty years the CPGB has, in reality, emphasised or downplayed its 'leading role' as it has modified the extent to which it has acted as a servicing agent to 'left unity' (that is, to the Labour Party), and the extent to which it has attempted to present an independent face to the working class. Thus, in 1937, Pollitt had to remind the CPGB members that their party was different from the Labour Party:

'Certain Labour leaders and journals are now busily

putting around propaganda that if the Communist Party were liquidated there could be unity in the Labour Movement ... Workers sometimes succumb to this type of propaganda because the role of the Communist Party is not understood...

'We sometimes hear the expression, "but there is hardly any difference between the Communist Party and the Labour Party, all you want to do is to ginger up and get a move on".' (63)

Because the distinctive feature of the CPGB was its association with the Russian Revolution, the expression 'there is hardly any difference between the Communist Party and the Labour Party' did not have the same consequences for the CPGB in 1937 as it does today. The CPGB could adapt to bourgeois opinion while still appearing as a distinctive workers' party. Similarly — despite Cde Dornhorst's selective quotations — the CPGB did not stop declaring its leading role in the period after the late fifties. A major pamphlet published in 1973 provides one example out of many:

'Carrying through revolutionary change requires a strong revolutionary party, a party capable of leading the people to challenge the capitalist class ... A party which understands the dynamic law of social change and is therefore able to chart the way forward at each stage of the struggle. Such a party is the Communist Party.' (64)

Thus we find that the CPGB could declare its 'leading role' even in 1973. The significant question today is not the 'vanguard role' of the CPGB, but its role as a distinctive political organisation.

Rather than seeing the discussion in the CPGB in terms of conflicting opportunist views, each of which attempt to resolve the crisis facing the CPGB, Cde Dornhorst introduces false issues like the 'leading role of the Party' in order to magnify the political differences within it. He has done this while ignoring the real political questions — those associated with Stalinism. Cde Dornhorst is forced to adopt the Frenchites' view of the discussion on 'Socialist Democracy' as a result of his simplistic understanding of Stalinism and its history. The Frenchites grasp — at least intuitively — why the issue of Stalinism is central to the discussion: but the question of why the debate necessarily takes the form of a critique of Stalinism and the 'Socialism' of the Soviet Union remains outside of Cde Dornhorst's brief.

#### 4. CDE DORNHORST INTERVENES IN THE 'DEBATES' WITHIN THE CPGB

##### (a) Frenchites and liberals

With the 'specific form' of the CPGB's reformism reduced to its opposition to incomes policy, and the Frenchites' view that the question at stake is the 'leading role of the party' accepted, Cde Dornhorst proceeds to intervene in the 'debates' within the CPGB. Since, with his aid, the CPGB has managed to shake off its Stalinist past, these debates are about incomes policy and the leading role of the Party.

According to Cde Dornhorst there are three tendencies in the CPGB — the leadership, the Frenchites and the liberals. In this schema, the leadership and the Frenchites — in contradistinction to the liberals —

adhere to the leading role of the Party. Since opposition to incomes policy has provided the social basis for the CPGB, Cde Dornhorst assesses the different tendencies in terms of their attitude to incomes policy. Cde Dornhorst argues that the logic of the positions adopted by the liberal wing would be to dissolve the Party altogether:

'The liberals draw out the logic of the leadership's position, a logic ... very fitting for their class position. Purdy's "quid pro quo" — a socialist incomes policy for more public control — would destroy the party ... The growing representation of the petty bourgeoisie within the Party ... has strengthened the tendency towards liquidation...' (65)

So the liberals represent a liquidationist tendency, in contrast to the Frenchites, who at least attempt to maintain the leading role of the Party — although only 'formally'. This contrast between the liquidationist liberals and the vanguardist Frenchites bears little relation to reality. The term 'liquidation' is usually associated in the Bolshevik movement with the liquidation of revolutionary politics. The CPGB is a national-reformist organisation and all its tendencies reflect various forms of the same radical bourgeois ideas. The distinctions that are drawn between the liberals and the Frenchites say more about the politics of Cde Dornhorst than the subject of his study. What they actually reveal is that Cde Dornhorst prefers the opportunism of yesterday to its contemporary expression. According to his logic, the Frenchites' stress on the independent role of the party makes them the most uncompromising opponents of incomes policy:

'The Frenchites ... contend with the leadership for the allegiance of the trade union base of the CPGB. They stress the independent role of the party ... They attack the leadership for its political compromises...' (66)

The only problem with the Frenchites is that they understand what they say only formally:

'The Frenchites see the defence of the Soviet Union as inseparable from the real issue at stake: the leading role of the Party. They counterpose their notion of the independent interests of the working class to the compromises of the leadership. Thus they support the purges of the thirties, since they defend the use of working class terror, and reject the leadership's bourgeois democratic notion of individual dissent. The problem that faces the Frenchites is that they can use concepts such as the leading role of the party only in a formal sense, since they accept the political premise which necessitated their revision — the national road to socialism.' (67)

Cde Dornhorst really does prefer yesterday's opportunism to that of today. In the old days, tendencies that 'support the purges of the thirties' and accepted 'the national road to socialism' used to be called **Stalinist** in the revolutionary movement. Cde Dornhorst would rather not use this 'unfashionable' phrase, for he wants to separate the past from the present and let bygones be bygones.

For many decades, the official communist movement represented Marxism in the eyes of the working class. The fact that it used concepts 'such as the leading role of the party' 'in a formal sense' represented its historical betrayal of the working class movement. Opportunism

in the guise of Marx and Lenin has been all the more effective in misleading the movement. We have every intention of fighting against the Frenchites' formal use of Marxism. Though Cde Dornhorst would like to forget the past, we have no such intention.

Like Cde Dornhorst, the Frenchites prefer the older, more palatable opportunism of the past. They want the CPGB to be more what they think it used to be — when the political consequences of their opportunism were not so explicit as at present. Thus the Frenchites refer back to the CPGB of a bygone age in order to bolster their case. In attempting to counter Gollan's brand of opportunism, Sid French stands for all his supporters:

'How are we faring in this situation? [ie in the present crisis, FR] The circulation of our paper is less than half prewar. Since the disastrous decision to change the name of our paper under the illusion that getting rid of the title **Daily Worker** would lead to the biggest advance in its history, the weekend extras have dropped by over half and are now just around 6000. The YCL has lost nearly three quarters of its members in recent years ... The considerable and rapid fall in our votes is very serious ... I won't dwell on the decline of the factory branches, of members paying dues, **Challenge** circulation and a host of other problems ...' (68)

The Frenchites' contribution amounts to recapitulating the CPGB's past, upholding a formal conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat and 'defending' the USSR — precisely the politics that have led to the political programme of the CPGB today. It is important to understand that all tendencies in the CPGB share the same political starting point. They all start from the premise of a national road to socialism and a national solution to the crisis. But for Cde Dornhorst, the hard, independent posturing of the Frenchites deserves special consideration.

For us, the 'debate' in the CPGB is not between the liquidationism of the liberals and the formal independence of the Frenchites. Rather, the Frenchites counterpose the opportunism of yesterday — a programme that guaranteed an identity for the CPGB — to the liberals' opportunism of today. The pro-Soviet attitude of the Frenchites is not incidental to this debate, for it is **only through maintaining a close link with the 'socialist camp' that they can assert the leading role of the party and guarantee the independent existence of the CPGB.**

#### (b) The political consequences of Cde Dornhorst's intervention

Having ignored the Stalinist past of the CPGB, Cde Dornhorst can now forget that the liberals are the logical outcome of the Party's historical development. The explanation offered by Cde Dornhorst for the growth of this tendency is:

'The growing representation of the petty bourgeoisie within the Party (in 1959, 15% of Party delegates at the national congress were white collar workers or students; at the last congress, it was 30%) has strengthened the tendency towards liquidation; it is the petty bourgeoisie which provide support for the likes of Purdy.' (69)

We should note that Cde Dornhorst has used the changing social composition of the CPGB to explain the

strengthening of liberal tendencies. This sociological approach fails to understand that it is petit-bourgeois ideology which plays an important role in the CPGB. The CPGB, like other national CPs, has always been dominated by petit-bourgeois ideas. The logic of national-reformism is precisely to develop a radical petit-bourgeois programme. It is crude sociology, however, to confuse the class content of ideas with the social composition of those who argue for them. That the CPGB should attract members from the ranks of the petit-bourgeoisie on the basis of a petit-bourgeois programme is no surprise: but the growth of the liberals can only be explained in terms of the fact that their ideas are a radical reflection of the reformist consciousness of the working class today. Purdy's 'socialist incomes policy' seems to provide an alternative to the dead end of free collective bargaining. Workers who have seen that the wages struggle of the sixties provided no solution, and who recognise the difficulty of struggling for higher pay in today's 'national crisis', may see a radical form of the social contract as an acceptable option. The liberals express the new opportunism of the CPGB — an opportunism that relates to the consciousness of the British working class today.

Cde Dornhorst's own opportunism leads him to see only one section of the CPGB as expressing radical petit-bourgeois ideas. He can thus dismiss the liberals not politically, but because of their social composition:

'Once the working class starts to move against the Labour government, and the Communist party is forced to place itself at the head of such a movement, the petty bourgeoisie will call it a day and scurry into safer niches.' (70)

Cde Dornhorst finds the Frenchites, however, more working class. Looking into his crystal ball, he predicts that because of their staunch emphasis on the independence of the CPGB the Frenchites will become the focus for working class opposition to the leadership of the Party:

'The criticism it [the Frenchite wing, FR] makes of left unity or the concept of the party held by the leadership will become a rallying point for workers within the Party.' (71).

Why workers should rally to the old Stalinist ideas of the Frenchites remains to be shown by Cde Dornhorst. We must conclude that he himself has illusions in the strength of their arguments.

For us, the debate in the CPGB is closely related to its search for survival. For Cde Dornhorst, however, 'the debates within the Communist Party are the debates going on amongst advanced workers' (72). Having elevated the discussion in the CPGB to a conflict between two distinct political tendencies, Cde Dornhorst now tells us that this is the discussion going on among 'advanced workers'. Thus we now find that 'advanced workers' are synonymous with membership in the CPGB. This is not a slip of the pen. Cde Dornhorst has found what every radical left tendency dreams of — a centrist current.

'... the conflicts between the Frenchites and the leadership will come into the open. In these conflicts exists the possibility of a split, with one tendency moving in a centrist direction.' (73)

In his search for centrist currents, Cde Dornhorst stakes

everything on the Frenchites and on the future leftward movement of the CPGB. This is the point that Cde Dornhorst has been trying to make all along. We do not rule out the possibility of centrist currents rising out of the CPGB. But there is no reason to believe that the politics of the Frenchites today will provide the basis for centrist currents tomorrow. Our task is to struggle against the ideas of the CPGB as a whole — against the most consistent expression of left-reformism in the working class.

Cde Dornhorst has set himself a different task: to intervene in the debate within the CPGB — no doubt to encourage the development of centrist currents. He writes:

'The debates in the Communist Party will focus on the new draft of the **British Road to Socialism**, which will appear in January or February 1977. This will be a most significant debate for advanced workers. We have to be prepared to intervene in it.' (74)

Though Cde Dornhorst's intervention in the 'debates' of the CPGB is not clearly spelled out, we can see what he is getting at. In his version of the struggle between the 'petit bourgeoisie' and 'the workers', the RCG's role is to provide the arguments with which to beat the liberals:

'The inability of the leadership to defeat the petty bourgeoisie expresses the Party's inability to create an opposition to the Labour government.' (75)

Cde Dornhorst would like the RCG to play a role in defeating the 'petit bourgeoisie', that is, the liberals in the CPGB. We get a clue as to what kind of intervention Cde Dornhorst is proposing from the leaflet 'Marxism versus Reformism'. This was written by the Manchester branch of the RCG for distribution at CP meetings. Parts of it read like a paraphrasing of Sid French:

'It is the inability of the Communist Party to provide a clear political opposition to the Labour Government that has led to the fall in **Morning Star** circulation over the past two years.' (76)

This friendly concern with the fall in **Morning Star** circulation is no accident. We find Cde Dornhorst particularly worried about appearing sectarian towards the CP. He criticises Cde Turner in the following way:

'The CP does not argue at all that socialism can be brought about by utilising the existing capitalist state. It is a typical radical left slander that they do. Of course, in practice, this is what their programme amounts to. But to imply that their view of the state is less subtle than it in fact is will only lead us to be regarded as typical ultraleft sectarians.' (77)

So concerned is Cde Dornhorst with the subtlety of the CPGB's theory of the state that he would rather refrain from calling it by its right name. Cde Dornhorst is more worried about how the CPGB will 'regard' us than with exposing this reactionary tendency to the working class. He has forgotten that, in the past, the RCG confronted the ideas of the CPGB in order to train a vanguard, and not in order to appear 'reasonable' to the CPGB.

By ignoring the history of the CPGB and magnifying the political differences inside the Party, Cde Dornhorst has been able to dress the Frenchites up as his future centrist current. With Stalinism relegated to the level of a 'secondary question', he has tried to dismiss the reactionary point of departure of all tendencies inside

the CPGB. From Cde Dornhorst's history we can only conclude that, some time after the Second World War, the CPGB was reborn out of the British working class. He has thus jettisoned the ideological link between all the opportunist tendencies in the CPGB.

Cde Dornhorst's 'history' of the CPGB has not, as he claims, laid 'the basis for a Marxist analysis of the development of the CPGB'. Instead, he has found himself a path into the CPGB and in particular the Frenchites. The opportunist distinction drawn between the Frenchites and the liberals gives us an indication of the nature of his 'intervention' in the CPGB.

## 5. CDE YAFFE JOINS CDE DORNHORST'S INTERVENTION

Although Cde Dornhorst's document had not been adopted as the position of the majority faction of the split in the RCG, his ideas are taken up by Cde Yaffe's document **A Turning Point** — the document that was adopted as the position of the majority faction of the Political Committee. Cde Yaffe has taken good heed of Cde Dornhorst's advice on the need to be subtle with the CPGB. Indeed, Cde Yaffe has elevated sectarianism into 'a new danger to the group':

'Preaching to the CPGB, announcing our own purity on the question, will enable the CPGB to dismiss our criticism as ultra left and sectarian, and **what is more to convince others that this is the case.**' (78)

The tactical question of how to relate to the CPGB is the dominant consideration of Cde Yaffe. He has already assimilated Cde Dornhorst's wisdom, lock, stock and barrel. Indeed, 'sectarianism' is a danger for someone trying to adapt to the CPGB. The old RCG's pamphlet **Ireland: British Labour and British Imperialism** advanced a ruthless critique of the CPGB's position on Ireland: no doubt it was seen by the CPGB as 'ultra-left and sectarian'. But in those days the RCG was concerned with training a vanguard through ideological struggle and not with being subtle with the CPGB.

Cde Yaffe accepts a modified version of Cde Dornhorst's analysis of the tendencies within the CPGB. For Cde Yaffe, the Purdyites are 'a bourgeois tendency outside the ranks of the working class' while the leadership is characterised as 'opportunist' (79). This magnification of the differences within the CPGB necessarily gives credibility to the Party as a whole. The views of the CPGB as a whole are opportunist and anti-working class — the views of all the tendencies in the CPGB have the same dangerous consequences for the working class movement. It is wrong to characterise one wing of the CPGB as 'outside the ranks of the working class' as opposed to another wing of the CPGB which is just 'opportunist'. Does Cde Yaffe now believe that the CPGB leadership's positions on Ireland, import controls and racism do not constitute anti-working class views? No doubt he prefers the 'working class' chauvinism of the leadership to the 'petit-bourgeois' chauvinism of Purdy.

This spurious distinction between different opportunist tendencies — a distinction which is not based on political argument — provides Cde Yaffe with the 'political basis' for intervening in the CPGB. He writes:

'While sharply criticising them [the leadership of the CPGB, FR] we have attempted to ferment the split in the CPGB by urging them to fight against the views of the Purdyites ... That split has to be brought about to offer a revolutionary tendency like ours some fertile ground to argue our standpoint in the labour movement.' (80)

We can now see why Cde Dornhorst and Cde Yaffe make so much of political differences within the CPGB. Cde Yaffe's new tactic of 'fermenting' a split in the CPGB is justified by making these distinctions between its different opportunist tendencies.

Cde Yaffe is so eager to split the CPGB that he never bothers to give one political argument to justify this tactic. We are simply told: 'that this split has to be brought about to offer a revolutionary tendency like ours some fertile ground to argue our standpoint in the labour movement'. Why should this split offer 'some fertile ground' for revolutionary arguments? This is just another short cut to the 'labour movement', an organisational way of confronting the difficult problem of party-building. In the past, the RCG directed its propaganda at the CPGB because it recognised the necessity of confronting their ideas in the workers' movement. One of the central tasks which the old RCG attempted to carry out was the building of a Marxist tradition in the working class. In order to struggle against the opportunist ideas of the CPGB, the old RCG set itself the task of developing a thorough critique of the CPGB as a whole. The 1975 conference of the RCG approved the Political Committee's recommendations for future theoretical work, which included this:

'The second area that needs to be developed over the next year is on Stalinism, the CPs and the central question of the transition to socialism. By analysing and developing the relation between the theory of Socialism in One Country and the reformist 'national' politics of the CPs we can demonstrate concretely the links between the CPs' reformism and Stalinism. As many workers begin to see the inadequacy of the CPs' programme as the crisis deepens (Portugal is an important example) the connections need to be made between this and the reactionary nature of Stalinism overall.' (81)

Here we have a correct political approach to the CPGB — the drawing out of the relationship between 'the CPs' reformism and Stalinism'. Workers influenced by the CPGB will only be won to a revolutionary standpoint if the relationship between Stalinism, the transition to socialism and the reformist CPs is clearly drawn out.

Today's RCG has abandoned this approach for petty manoeuvres around the CPGB. The CPGB is seen not as an ideological obstacle to the development of a vanguard, but as 'fertile ground' for advancing the RCG's arguments. The task of systematically confronting the reformist consciousness of the working class is replaced by organisational short cuts to party-building.

Yet, at a time when the CPs of Western Europe are trying to extricate themselves from their history, it is all the more essential to draw out clearly the links between their programme and the history of Stalinism. We have to show the connection between the Stalinism of the past and its expression today. We have to demonstrate to the working class that the programme of today's CPs if implemented would have the catastrophic conse-

quences of old. We have to argue that the opportunism of today's CPs follows logically from the more Moscow-oriented opportunism of the past. The refusal to confront this task leads Cde Dornhorst and Cde Yaffe to become a left cover for the CPGB.

The RCG's adaptation to the CPGB began in its 'subtle' and 'non-sectarian' reluctance to attack the ideas of the CPGB head-on. The manoeuvre of splitting the CPGB is based upon the opportunist political tactic of taking up only certain questions and certain tendencies in the CPGB. As we show in our reply to *A Turning Point*, Cde Yaffe's article on the CPGB and South Africa in *Revolutionary Communist* 5 is more concerned with demonstrating the inconsistencies of the CPGB's arguments than with providing a ruthless critique of its position.

This adaptation is further reflected in the different ways in which groupings within the CPGB are treated. Revolutionaries do make a distinction between different opportunist tendencies, but they do not support or favour one variety of opportunism against another.

Precisely at a time when the working class movement is in need of ideological clarity, the RCG's 'critique' of the CPGB's position on South Africa emerges as a set of rhetorical questions, turns of phrase and attacks on individual members rather than on the Party as a whole(82). The RCG has become more interested in intervening in the CPGB than in training a vanguard. The emphasis which the old RCG put on ideological struggle has been replaced by helpful reminders to the CPGB that their 'opposition to Apartheid' is inconsistent with having members who express 'anti-working class views in their journal'(83). As if the political programme of the CPGB could be anything other than an expression of anti-working class views!

## Conclusion

For the past fifty years the official communist movement has come to represent Marxism to the international working class. Despite its reformist history, official communism has appropriated to itself the language of Marx, the gains of the Russian Revolution and the term 'communism'. For a whole historical period official communism has acted as a barrier to the development of a revolutionary vanguard in the working class. Today, the crisis is forcing Western European Communist Parties to abandon the language of the past more and more.

In order to train a revolutionary vanguard it is necessary to provide a materialist analysis of the history of official communism and a critique of its current doctrines. Revolutionaries have to show why the programme of official communism is bankrupt and relate this programme to the rise of Stalinism and the liquidation of Marxism in the workers' movement. The task that is crucial to the development of a revolutionary vanguard has yet to be confronted by the non-Stalinist left. Until now the radical left has repeated Trotsky's analysis or used historical examples like the French Popular Front of 1936 to demonstrate the betrayals of Stalinism. But official communism has to be taken up concretely in terms of its programme today. History can be used to draw out the possible consequences of

Stalinism, but above all it has to explain the development of today's official communism.

As we have noted, in the post-war boom the official communist movement has become the most consistent expression of reformism in the European working class. A struggle against its views is a precondition for the development of an independent working class strategy. The old RCG took it upon itself to challenge the most consistent expression of left-reformism within the British working class — the programme of the CPGB — in an uncompromising fashion. The struggle against the ideas of the CPGB was not aimed at creating splits or finding 'fertile ground' in that organisation: the necessity of confronting the standpoint of the CPGB flowed from our understanding that this orientation was central to training a political vanguard. Today, the RCG has abandoned this strategy; the task of training a vanguard has been subordinated to 'fermenting splits' in the CPGB. In search of 'fertile ground', the RCG has begun to adapt its politics to the milieu of the CPGB. The underestimation of the questions of the Soviet Union by Cde Dornhorst, the fear of 'preaching' to the CPGB of Cde Yaffe — these trends show that the analysis of Cde Dornhorst is paralleled by political opportunism. Cde Dornhorst's document is the first major product of the Cde Yaffe's new conception of 'theoretical work' outlined in *A Turning Point*. In motivating the dissolution of the RCG's theoretical workgroup on the question of Stalinism, Cde Yaffe wrote:

'The work on the question (of Stalinism) must be directly related to our perspective for work in relation to the CPGB. Otherwise the work will have an academic character.'(84)

Cde Dornhorst's document is directly 'related to ... perspectives for work in relation to the CPGB' along the lines of the opportunism elaborated further by Cde Yaffe. The questions of the Soviet Union and Stalinism are 'academic' only for those who choose to ignore the historic defeats of the working class movement, the rise of Stalinism and the strengthening of reformism in the boom period. The CPGB will not be defeated if its political roots are ignored and if the terms of the discussion are restricted to 'incomes policy' and to its 'inconsistent' internationalism. Revolutionaries will not build a Marxist tradition in the working class through 'subtle' interventions in the CPGB.

For the RCT the question at stake in this debate is not merely the issue of Stalinism, but the necessity of training a revolutionary vanguard in the working class. As we have argued, principled ideological struggle against the ideas of official communism is central to the development of a vanguard — a vanguard which must itself be able to demonstrate the reactionary consequences of the programme of the CPGB, explain the rise of Stalinism and counter bourgeois propaganda on the question of the Soviet bloc. Short cut manoeuvres and subtle arguments against the CPGB will not provide the political basis for the training of the vanguard. Intervening in the CPGB in the way Cdes Yaffe and Dornhorst suggest means limiting politics to the existing debates within the Party. It means a diversion from the tasks of raising the ideological level of the movement. It represents a failure to provide the working class with an independent alternative to the CPGB. It is precisely the essential component of such an alternative

— a critique of Stalinism — which has been subordinated to pragmatic considerations.

Today, revolutionaries must advance a scientific critique of the politics of the CPGB — a critique which clearly shows that the programme of the CPGB is the expression of Stalinism in today's conditions. To do this is to retrieve the gains of the Bolsheviks by concretely demonstrating that the programme of the CPGB has nothing in common with the politics of Marx and Lenin. Only such a critique of the dominant opportunist tendency in the international working class movement can provide the basis for training a vanguard. It is this task — the task of training a vanguard through struggling against the ideas of the CPGB — that the RCT will address itself to in its work on Stalinism.

Frank Richards  
and  
Phil Turner

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 The Guardian, 2 February 1977
- 2 R Dornhorst, 'The CPGB — a comment on Comrade Turner's article', RCG, *Internal Discussion Bulletin* November 1976 (reprinted in Appendix), referred to here as 'The CPGB'.
- 3 P Turner, 'The Communist Party of Great Britain', in RCG, *Special Discussion Bulletin on Stalinism*, April 1976, p52
- 4 'The CPGB' p50
- 5 Ibid p51
- 6 P Turner, op cit p75
- 7 Ibid p78
- 8 'The CPGB' p52
- 9 Ibid pp52-53
- 10 In *Konkret*, January 1977, p17
- 11 K Marx, *Grundrisse*, Penguin Books, 1973, p105
- 12 Ibid p107
- 13 Ibid p105
- 14 Ibid p106
- 15 K Marx, 'Afterword to the Second German Edition', in *Capital*, Vol 1, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, p28
- 16 K Marx, 'Appendix: Results of the Immediate Process of Production', in *Capital*, Vol 1, Penguin, 1976, p1065
- 17 V I Lenin, 'Dead Chauvinism and Living Socialism', *Collected Works* Vol 21, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974, p98
- 18 V I Lenin, 'The Collapse of the Second International', op cit p243
- 19 Ibid pp241-3
- 20 V I Lenin, 'Karl Marx', op cit p57
- 21 For a more detailed examination of this question see F Richards, 'Capitalist Crisis and the Official Communist Movement', in RCG, *Special Discussion Bulletin on Stalinism*, April 1976
- 22 V I Lenin, 'Report on the tactics of the RCP, Third Congress of the Comintern 1921' in *CW* 32, Lawrence and Wishart, 1973
- 23 See V I Lenin, 'Political Report of the Central Committee, RCP(B), 11th Congress of the RCP(B), April 1922' in *CW* 33, Lawrence and Wishart, 1973
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- 26 L Trotsky, op cit p72
- 27 'The CPGB' p51
- 28 See 'A Fresh Lesson', in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938-9*, Pathfinder, 1974, p71
- 29 Ibid
- 30 L Trotsky, 'On the history of the Left Opposition', op cit p262
- 31 See Footnote 9
- 32 'The CPGB' p51
- 33 Ibid
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- 35 Ibid
- 36 Ibid pp51-52
- 37 Ibid
- 38 Cited in F Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, Penguin, 1975, p45
- 39 J Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943*, Vol III, O.U.P., 1965, p480
- 40 The Times, 17 November 1946
- 41 Cited in G Galli, 'Italian Communism' in J E Griffith, ed, *Communism in Europe: Continuity, Change and the Sino-Soviet Dispute*, Vol 1, MIT Press, 1964, pp305-6
- 42 The roles played in governmental coalitions in Finland and Iceland are exceptions to this tendency
- 43 Cited in 'Capitalism's Economic Prospects', *Marxism Today*, July 1961, p147
- 44 G Amendola, 'The "economic miracle" and the democratic alternative', in *Rinascita*, 9 September 1961. English translation in *Foreign Bulletin of the Italian Communist Party*, August-September 1961, p46
- 45 For a clear illustration of this revisionism see the discussion at the International Conference on State Monopoly Capitalism at Choisy-le-Roi, 26-9 May 1966 in *Economie et Politique* Nos 143-6, June-September 1966
- 46 See *Economie et Politique* Nos 145-6, p46

- 47 'Report of the Political Committee', in **RCG Conference Documents 1975**, pp1-2
- 48 See John Torode, writing in **The Guardian**, 12 February 1977: 'I mean, here are your friendly neighbourhood Communists explaining how they intend to take power peacefully, extend "existing civil rights and democratic rights", allow all political parties "even those hostile to socialism" to operate freely and to "respect the verdict of the electors" by surrendering power peacefully if defeated at the ballot box.
- 'And there, behind the Iron Curtain, is this Communist regime imposed on the Czech people by Soviet troops persecuting and imprisoning some of the brightest and the best in Czech society for daring to ask for the sort of freedoms promised in the British Road to Socialism. It casts a certain amount of doubt on the sincerity of the British Communists' stance.'
- 49 'The CPGB' p52
- 50 'The Russian Question Today, Draft Theses adopted by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International', in **Fourth International**, November-December 1947, pp268-69
- 51 'The CPGB' p51
- 52 'The Rise and Decline of Stalinism, Resolution adopted at the Fourth World Congress of the Fourth International, 1954', in **The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism**, Pathfinder, 1970, p25
- 53 L Trotsky, 'On the History of the Left Opposition', op cit p263, our emphasis
- 54 'The CPGB' p52
- 55 Ibid p52our emphasis
- 56 Ibid p54
- 57 Ibid
- 58 **Comment**, 27 November 1976, p378
- 59 J Gollan, 'Socialist Democracy — Some Problems: The 20th Congress of the CPSU in retrospect', in **Marxism Today**, January 1976, p28
- 60 K Zaradov, 'Lenin's Teaching on the Hegemony of the Proletariat in the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution', **Soviet News**, 19 August 1975
- 61 'The CPGB' pp55-56
- 62 Ibid p54
- 63 H Pollitt, **It can be done**, CPGB 14th Congress Report, May 1937, pp71, 73
- 64 J Woddis, **Time to Change Course**, CPGB, 1973, p136
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- 68 S French, 'Socialist Democracy: Some Problems', in **Marxism Today**, December 1976, p385
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- 70 Ibid
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- 73 Ibid
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- 75 Ibid p55
- 76 'Marxism versus Reformism', in **RCG, Internal Discussion Bulletin**, op cit p15
- 77 'The CPGB' p52
- 78 D Yaffe, **A Turning Point**, p46
- 79 Ibid
- 80 Ibid
- 81 'Report of the Political Committee', op cit p12
- 82 See 'A Retrograde step for the Marxist movement — a reply to Cde Yaffe'
- 83 D Yaffe, 'South Africa: International Solidarity and the British Working Class', in **Revolutionary Communist No 5**, p60
- 84 **A Turning Point**, op cit p47

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# Appendix

The following two documents — **A Turning Point** by Cde Yaffe, and **The CPGB: a comment on Comrade Turner's article** by Cde Dornhorst — have been published in their original form. Only information that could be harmful to the security of the RCG has been deleted from the documents.

## I A Turning Point

Letter from Lassalle to Marx June 1852,

'... Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of a party's weakness is its diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations; a party becomes stronger by purging itself...' (Lenin: **What is to be Done**, Preface)

'The draft June NAO report in a one-sided way seeks to blame the minority side of the day school debate for recent examples of a conservative approach to activity in the organisation. The arguments on both sides at the dayschool were diffuse. This was partly a result of the fact that more concrete discussions on our areas of work were not first arranged. Before the discussions are complete, it is not possible to speak in terms of a stable majority/minority of the PC, as such a situation may not exist. To continue to speak in these terms is to fuel artificial discussions in the organisation.' (June PC minutes: proposal supported by FR and CD)

### A turning point...

In the IBs since February 1976 a clear perspective for the work of the group was laid down. This perspective was developed in opposition to those comrades (FR and CD) who had an orientation towards the radical left. Their standpoint was one in favour of 'joint work' with radical left tendencies. Against this the majority argued that the concept of 'joint work' lacked any serious political content. Our main orientation was not to the radical left but to reformist workers and at this time, the Communist Party. It was argued that,

'propaganda directed at the Communist Party should become a vital part of our work. This is not only because the Communist Party has a working class base, but also because it offers the clearest and consistent expression of left reformism. The Communist Party will be the main 'radical' force attempting to contain the development of any mass struggles in the coming period.' (At What Stage are we at, April 1976 IB supplement p22).

It was the need to intervene on the basis of an independent working class standpoint in the struggles of the class that do arise, which was at the root of the majority's rejection of the concept of 'joint work'. The June National Activities Report posed the question before the organisation,

'can the RCG begin the process of taking its politics into the working class movement? That is, can we find ways of influencing and winning those sections of the movement who are beginning to recognise the serious content of our ideas...' (June IB 1976 p1).

This question suggests a new orientation for the group, a new attitude to carrying out our work. At each stage of the development of an organisation the immediate priorities do change. However comrades are very slow to recognise this and continue for quite a period of time in the old way.

In the early period of the group the essential requirement was to develop and establish the independent basis for our existence as an organisation. We rejected the methods of the radical left and began to lay the foundation for a marxist standpoint in the British movement. It was a hard and difficult struggle but we succeeded.

That basis has been laid. We have the political arguments to begin the struggle to build a revolutionary movement in Britain and make Marxism an acceptable standpoint within the labour movement. The task now is to translate these arguments into a concrete political practice. As the February IB put it,

'We must have the capability and means to win over the potential vanguard as the crisis deepens and the deteriorating material conditions eventually force the working class into conflict with a Labour government which is driving down its living standards...'

Let us reiterate what we have done. Our break with the radical left was expressed through the articles written in RC1 and 2 on **IS and Centism**, and on the **Fourth International**. An independent class standpoint began to be established at the same time on the issue of **Britain and the Irish Revolution**. It was consolidated in the articles in RC3/4 on the **Crisis and Productive and Unproductive Labour**. Those articles gave us the political arguments to intervene in many of the present discussions within the labour movement. They laid the foundation for the article on **Women's Oppression Under Capitalism** and the position developed on **South Africa and Solidarity Work** in RC5. While we must clarify and develop our positions on the Communist Parties world-wide and begin an analysis of the Soviet Union etc. We have already developed a method of work which will politically enable us to intervene in any major developments which involve such issues. The task now is to develop a cadre which can intervene and influence struggles of the working class with this standpoint. However the road ahead is not without its dangers.

### Sectarianism — a new danger to the group

'Joint work' represented an opportunist impatience with the working class movement and with the need for the RCG to carry out theoretical, educational and contact work to consolidate our gains. The malaise of the radical left, its inability to influence any struggles within the labour movement has somewhat altered the terrain. Opportunism has little fertile ground within which to sow its seed.

The dangers now facing us are those of sectarianism. This expresses itself as a refusal to come to terms with the tactical and strategical adjustments needed to take our positions into the working class movement. It is a position which puts the RCG before the overall interests of the working class.

The attitude of comrades JH and CD to the Conference called by the South African Liberation movement through the AAM on 'South Africa and the British Labour movement' illustrates this tendency within our group. The comrades did not agree with the EC/PC decision not to intervene at the Conference and instead to attend and observe as well as sell our literature. Both JH and CD wanted to intervene at the Conference. CD thought that we should do this on all occasions when our politics allow us to counter anti-working class views which are not being countered by others and this could be the case at this conference.

This was a conference called by the South African movement asking for actions of solidarity from the British Labour Movement. Comrades JH and CD not only wanted to tell the South African movement at this conference what position to adopt, but also expressed a complete lack of confidence in the South African left. They further wished to use this conference for the purpose of attacking the position of the CPGB, so furthering the 'interests' of the RCG. This we had no right to do. An intervention of the kind supported by these comrades would not only have been a sure way of destroying the possibilities of the left gaining ground in the South African movement, but also would have strengthened the hand of the liberals in the movement. They would be able to point to the British Left's chauvinist approach to their struggle — with the British left utilising the liberation struggle to further its own interests. As it so happens anyone reading recent material on South Africa or having attended the conference would realise that the South African left is just as able as we are. It was the South African comrades who managed to have the tendency of the rate of profit to fall discussed in an audience of over 300 British trade union and labour movement delegates — a task we ourselves have yet to accomplish. The fact that these views are taken up in a particular way in the South African movement lies beyond our immediate consideration. At the present stage we should be heartened that steps have been taken towards the strengthening

of a left-wing tendency in the South African liberation movement. And further that at this conference a basis has been laid for our own journal article on South Africa and Solidarity work to make an impact in the British movement. Internationalism is not telling other movements how to conduct their struggles or attempting to use their struggles for our own ends.

A remark by one comrade on the fact that the tendency of the rate of profit to fall had been the centre of political discussion at the conference really characterises the dangers here. It was said that this was great but the problem was that the ideas would not be associated with the RCG. Comrades, the RCG did not discover the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Marx did that. Further, as we have said, it was left to South African revolutionaries to raise it in front of an audience of over 300 British Trade union delegates and get a hearing. The fact that through the Good and Williams pamphlet **Marxism** was influencing the debates in the labour movement was an enormous step forward for the movement. Anyone who denies this is not only **sectarian** but thoroughly chauvinist. They have forgotten that our aim is to reestablish a marxist tradition in the movement.

There were other less important reasons for not intervening. We had not discussed the position in the organisation. Further our own views will be coming out in a journal article and this will allow our arguments to be presented precisely and clearly and as part of a debate in the British movement.

The same attitude existed in relation to the journal article '**South Africa: International Solidarity and the British working class**'. This article took up the issue of solidarity work and the question of the CPGB. Its devastating criticism of the two main tendencies in the CPGB could not be denied. And yet 3 PC members (FR, CD, JH) could not support that article because it acknowledged the long-standing relation of the CPGB with the ANC (South Africa). It was said that this standpoint 'fails to confront the standpoint of the CPGB on South Africa'. But not to start from this relation, and from there to show it cannot assume real meaning unless on the basis of proletarian internationalism is ultra-leftism, the form sectarianism is beginning to take in our group. You cannot confront the CPGB unless you start from the real existing concrete relations. Preaching to the CPGB, announcing our own purity on the question, will enable the CPGB to dismiss our criticism as ultra left and sectarian, and **what is more to convince others that this is the case**. Many CP members have devoted themselves to the South African liberation movement. Many CP members are in prison or exile because of this. Not to acknowledge this shows the political insecurity of our comrades. We can acknowledge it. We have the political strength both to recognise this contribution and at the same time show how politically it cannot 'assume real meaning' unless on the basis of proletarian internationalism.

The debate in the organisation on the CPGB will be a vital one for the development of our organisation. The CPGB is split into several factions. However the political positions we have so far taken up are those of the Purdyites and the leadership. The Purdyites are a bourgeois tendency within the CP. Our attitude to them has been to regard them as outside the ranks of the working class. We argue this to the 'opportunists' within the CP — a characterisation that adequately covers the leadership tendency which adapts to the moods of the working class. The Editorial in **Revolutionary Communist** 3/4 — an editorial which has not been criticised by FR, JH, CD — expresses this position very clearly. It asks the CP how it can have anti-working class views like those of Purdy in its organisation/publications etc. Our articles have treated, as did the editorial, the opportunists in the ranks of the CPGB differently from the Purdyites. While sharply criticising them, we have attempted to ferment the split in the CPGB by urging them to fight against the views of the Purdyites. That the leadership of the CPGB is no more capable of doing this than IS or IMG is of no consequence. That split has to be brought about to offer a revolutionary tendency like ours some fertile ground to argue our standpoint in the labour movement. What the likely developments are in the next period will be part of the coming discussion, as will our relation to the CPGB and its different tendencies. However we should be clear what has been done so far. We have never treated these two tendencies politically in the same way. To do so would have been to go against the fundamental interest we have in seeing a split in the CPGB. The

positions of JH, CD, FR on the South African article therefore, oppose directly the previous practice of the group. This has to be made clear.

There is little point in repeating again what has been said in early National Activities reports. We have to get our material in a form where it can be taken up in the labour movement. This is the most difficult task. It requires a deeper political experience and theoretical development than most comrades have at present. Theoretical work was to be a priority in the last period. This has not been the case. Without comrades being much more at ease with our positions our contributions will tend to have a formal and inflexible character. Because we are so isolated and inexperienced there is a danger of learning to repeat the truths we have reached so far by rote. The article in the June IB warned against this,

'We must avoid the danger of becoming so used to our isolation that it becomes an acceptable part of our make-up and manner of arguing.' (p.21).

This means that our theoretical work in future must become more directly related to our immediate intervention in the labour movement. We have to discuss how we can get material in a form that is directly related to the struggles of the working class and offers a perspective for our work. The Bulletins on Ireland, Women and the Public Sector will be vital in this respect. They should take up the ongoing developments in the movement, as well as, in more popular form, putting over our basic theoretical standpoint. At the same time articles must be written for the journal. More and more we will need articles like that on '**Meriden and Workers Control**' which should be based on **Inflation the Crisis, and the Post War Boom**. We will require material on the health service, the cuts in education etc, based on the position in **Productive and Unproductive Labour**. We shall continue to work on basic material for the movement — on the State, the Soviet Union etc. — this is central. But we need to utilise the very significant advances made in **Revolutionary Communist** so far. That is the task facing us in the next period. It will require not less but much more theoretical work than is being done at present.

I now want to go on to discuss how this can be brought about and at the same time take up the very damaging disputes which have been occurring recently at PC and EC meetings. I will put forward various suggestions for making sure that in future the political perspective embodied in the decision of the Weekend School in April and in the National Activities Reports, February-July, are put into practice.

#### **Work groups and caucuses**

The time has come to bring about a basic unity between work groups and caucuses. For most comrades it is impossible to be in a work group and caucus covering different areas of work. In the end both aspects of their work suffer, and they despair of ever completing adequately the tasks they face. The proposal I wish to put forward is to have work groups responsible for the overall theoretical and propaganda work of the caucuses. They will provide and discuss material for the Bulletins and the journal. They will regularly discuss perspectives for work in the area concerned and guide the caucuses in their work. Each work group can have sub groups if required concerned with a particular political task eg the Working class and its Leadership work group will have a sub group basically concerned with public sector work and so on. The PC or work group can decide to commission an article (subject to ratification by the PC), on a particular topic relevant to our work. It will ask for comrades from the relevant work group(s) to carry this out.

The proposal is for 3 work groups and, at present, three national caucuses as part of them. Each caucus will have a national sub-committee to direct our work, drawn from the relevant work group and elected by the PC. Where a bulletin is being produced an editorial board will be elected by the PC. The work group concerned and relevant committees will be:

- 1 Ireland work group  
National sub committee NISC  
London based executive committee of the sub committee LISC  
Editorial board of the bulletin
- 2 Working class and its leadership work group  
National Public sector sub committee NPSSC

London based public sector sub committee LPSSC

There should be three main areas under discussion in this work group and perspectives need to be drawn up for such work:

- (a) The Labour Party and Communist Parties of GB. Perspectives for work in relation to them.
- (b) Public Sector work group.
- (c) More general work on Stalinism and Social democracy, Trade Unions and the State.

This perspective means that the Stalinism work group is again subsumed under the larger work group. The reasons for this are as follows. 1 The work on the question must be directly related to our perspective for work in relation to the CPGB. Otherwise the work will have an academic character. 2 It is important that there is a regular exchange of positions with the comrades doing work on the Labour Party and Social Democracy in Britain. The perspective for work in the movement cannot be separated artificially into two areas as has been the case at present. It is not surprising that two completely different standpoints seem to have been developed in relation to the CP in the two work groups. The work group will discuss and develop our perspectives generally for work in the labour movement organisations. Eventually we could consider a joint Bulletin to cover both this area of work and our intervention in the Public sector struggles. 3 That many of the comrades in the Stalinism sub group are heavily involved in other areas of work. We should now rationalise this and use the opportunity to see that, if possible, their caucus work and work group work are in the same area.

### 3 Women's Oppression work group

National sub committee NWSC

London based sub committee LWSC

Editorial board to prepare for a bulletin

A number of comrades should be directed if resources permit to continue work on the Soviet Union etc. This should be done through book reviews etc. We should consider the question of work on South Africa and work on racism in Britain as our resources increase. Meanwhile files should be kept on these two issues.

### The Political Committee and Democratic Centralism

A number of issues have arisen recently which have led to wide divisions in the PC. There is a certain consistency to these positions in the case of FR and CD. The issue of JH is a separate one and will be dealt with separately. However, at present, she does support the standpoint of FR and CD and this might confuse comrades into drawing a much closer connection than is merited between their political standpoints. FR and CD have a consistent position. It took the form of 'joint-work' at one stage — opportunism, and now with the malaise in the radical left as explained earlier it assumes a new form — sectarianism.

The comrades, however, are entitled to their standpoint. What they are not entitled to do as part of the collective political leadership of the organisation is continually to challenge the majority standpoint both inside and outside the PC without organising themselves as a faction. Otherwise this means disruption of our work while the reasons for this are unclear to the organisation. This opposition to the majority positions has recently taken a more harmful form and, therefore, needs to be directly challenged. The comrades are continually accusing the PC majority of an undemocratic practice. However it is easy to show that their concept of democracy is a bourgeois one and that continually they have been supporting a standpoint which undermines democratic centralist practice and has led to the souring of relations within the PC.

We begin with the June PC. In the National Activities Report of June it was felt necessary to attack once again the 'joint work' position which had been heavily defeated in the organisation and point out how it had confused comrades in London to the extent of hindering our intervention in a number of disputes. However there was another reason for doing this. In spite of the fact that the 'joint-work' position had been heavily defeated in April, it reappears again in exactly the same form only dealing with the question of Ireland, in the May I.B. Two of the articles were written by members of a PC subcommittee with one being a PC member. Clearly the point had not got across. 'Joint work' was not part of our perspective and the attempt to raise it again barely

a month after the day-school went against basic principles of democratic centralism.

In respect of this the response of FR and CD to the National Activities Report of June is instructive. Far from recognising the right and need of the majority to drive home a position of the organisation they had the following points to make:

'(The NAR was) a cheap attempt to find a convenient scapegoat (for the conservative approach to activity) ... implicit in this view is the notion that there is a majority position on the PC, which has the answer for all questions facing the group for all time...' (our emphasis) For: 1 FR (CD abstained).

Another proposal was supported by both FR and CD. It included the following:

'... Before the discussions are complete it is not possible to speak in terms of a stable majority/minority of the PC, as such a situation may not exist. To continue to speak in these terms is to fuel artificial discussions in the organisation.'

The comrades want it both ways. They develop a position on 'joint-work' and have it discussed at a day-school of the organisation. It is soundly defeated. They then want to continue the discussion and complain if the majority of the PC wants to make it clear to the organisation that not only was the position defeated but it still is having an effect in undermining our work. Comrades, the PC majority is too lax. It should not have allowed CD and PT, members of the NISC, to re-raise the issue in the way they did without resigning from the NISC, and in the case of CD, from the PC. It is impossible to run a revolutionary organisation along bourgeois democratic lines. All revolutionary procedures were adhered to in having the debate. It was CD and PT who did not accept the consequences of a democratically reached decision.

However, the language of their objection is instructive. This was the beginning of the deterioration in relations on the PC. It was the continual attempts of comrades to re-raise issues in London Branch/Cell in particular, which had been decided on, which led to the following motion in the July PC Minutes.

'That PC members always put forward the collective position of the PC at meetings of the organisation outside the PC unless given explicit permission by the PC to do otherwise.

That any minority is entitled to minute its position in the PC Minutes providing this statement is accepted by the PC as a correct representation of their position. No further clarification of these motions or statements which would involve a rediscussion of the issues can be given at meetings outside the PC except via PC Minutes or with the explicit permission of the PC. PC members are entitled to outline their position, in the I.B. if permission is given by the PC.'

Does this not suggest a minority-majority position? And as it was passed unanimously did not all comrades of the PC recognise this? However, comrades CD and FR would have us believe differently. They want to have their cake and eat it. That is, to remain on the PC and continually raise a minority position that has been rejected by the organisation. That comrades, is liberalism, not democratic centralism.

During a recent dispute the PC majority was accused again in the EC of stifling discussion, by JH. Let us examine this point in some detail. An item was placed on the agenda of the Stalinism workgroup to discuss a motion sent to the PC by Manchester Branch on the question of commissioning an article on the new edition of the British Road to Socialism due out early next year. The PC has discussed it briefly and decided a fuller discussion in the PC was necessary based on a written contribution by the two opposing sides, FR and Manchester Branch. This matter rested with the PC and yet FR was attempting to have it discussed at the Stalinism workgroup before the PC could meet. The discussion was not prepared and given that it is normal for the PC to direct discussion on issues brought before it, the EC asked for the item to be struck off the agenda. Comrades should be reminded of a motion passed by the PC on workgroups:

'It was agreed that in future all work group convenors should inform DY of dates and agendas for meetings well in advance, and if the material is not ready well in advance for comrades to read, then the meeting should not take place...'

Let me say that no agenda was received well in advance of this meeting and in fact it had to be asked for. But this is unimportant and only indicates sloppy organisation. What is at issue was that the workgroup would be confronted with a discussion for which it had no documentation, not even the minimum requirements which the PC itself had insisted on. What kind of democratic debate then was going to take place. None at all. Rather the workgroup would be confronted with the views of FR and those who consistently support him.

Instead of waiting for the PC to direct the discussion in a democratic way, FR, for reasons which he can explain, was attempting to preempt the discussion of the PC and this before he had put down his own views in writing. JH and CD voted against a motion of the EC directing the convenor of the Stalinism workgroup to take the item off the agenda. JH was dishonest enough to put a minute to this motion arguing it was 'an attempt to stifle discussion on a matter which should be discussed at the Stalinism workgroup.' What in fact was at issue was FR's attempt to have a discussion on the issue before the basis for a democratic discussion had been laid.

A third item further indicates the uncomradely behaviour of comrades JH and CD. This concerned the Journal. Because JH had been unable to write the sections on domestic work in the article on **Women's Oppression under Capitalism** — a point that had not and would not have been communicated to the organisation in other circumstances — comrade DY had to be brought in to be involved in a major way in the writing of the article. The absence of a journal for one year was becoming a serious threat to the organisation. A date for production had to be decided on and kept to. In this context it was possible that normal procedures would not be kept to for publishing articles in the journal, although all comrades were doing their best by working extremely long hours to make this possible. The PC however fully discussed an earlier draft of the main article with the JEB present. The EC later passed a motion which reflected this position.

'That all JEB members be given final drafts of all articles to read and comment on but that a JEB is only called where possible (given the dates that have already been set for typesetting and printing), or if a majority of JEB members wish to have a meeting. That if the PC accepts JH's motion..., then we cancel the dates already booked.'

CD and JH voted against this position and yet were not prepared to say that the dates be changed. JH went so far as to accuse the EC/PC of breaking the constitution in her motion which said

'That the JEB meets to discuss the final draft of all the articles for this Journal, as is laid down in the RCG Constitution para 4(2) and that all PC members are consulted about this resolution.'

CD more or less insisted on the same position but less honestly by the amendment which said a JEB should be called if any member wanted it. He knew and so did we all that one member would certainly call for it. The comrades, one of whom (JH) was mainly responsible for the situation we found ourselves in, insisted on being 'formal' and by so doing threatened to disrupt the production schedule for the Journal. FR took a principled stand on this issue. In fact the full JEB did meet to discuss the article on women's oppression.

It is instructive to compare the attitude of the same comrades to the production of the Irish Bulletin. At the September PC a proposal was passed saying that

'The PC wishes to see the contents of the Bulletin before it is produced.'

And at a later PC meeting (October) saying that the 'following EC will discuss the final draft of the Bulletin.'

This was not done, as part of an article, — the Editorial — was not complete and one article had not been written. DY raised this in the EC (9.11.76) and made it clear that this was in no way meant as a criticism of the Editorial Board. He said that he was raising it to make it clear to the organisation that sometimes it was not possible to keep to the letter of a motion or even the Constitution once certain overall decisions like producing a Journal or Bulletin by a certain date had been made. This point needed to be made because of the attitude CD and JH had adopted to the Journal EB and he hoped that this new experience would drive home the

essential point. CD instead of taking this point in the comradely and educative fashion it had been presented in, proceeded to insist that everything was different in the case of the Bulletin as the PC had only wished to 'see' it not discuss it. This latter point was blatantly false and in fact cannot explain the fact that the PC had read and discussed thoroughly an earlier draft and insisted the EC see the final draft. DY said he regarded CD's view as factional and dishonest. This led to comrades wishing to put various 'minutes' in the EC minutes which would all have needed to be countered by a further minute. To save the time and energy of the PC Secretary, the EC decided that all 'minutes' should be withdrawn and DY and CD should write up their positions for the PC. This was regarded as undemocratic by JH and CD. Comrades will by now have seen how difficult it has become to carry out work through the EC/PC due to the factional behaviour of comrades CD, FR and JH. The organisation has to be aware of this because it is beginning to affect our overall capacity to work. The PC will have to take measures to prevent further occurrences of such behaviour. This will be discussed at the PC this weekend.

#### London Branch

JH is organiser of London Branch. This is a very difficult task which would fully tax the capacity of a comrade of much more political experience. Many problems exist for London Branch and the failure to resolve these is due to the relations JH has with other PC members in London. This will be taken up later. Here we should briefly examine the problems besetting the Branch.

The Branch Committee is very inexperienced politically. The comrades were chosen to be on it to relieve others, and PC members, in particular, of that work and as part of the process of developing a new political leadership for the Branch. This has not occurred. Branch committee members play little role in the political discussions of the Branch. The meetings have very little political direction and the contribution of BC members is usually of an organisational character. The reasons for this are very clear. The comrades on the BC are not doing **theoretical work** and have little or no time to prepare for meetings, and all in all are overloaded with work. Further, much of the discussion which should take place in the cell or branch takes place in the BC or in meetings preparing for it.

The meetings of London branch are therefore disjointed without any continuity or political direction. There is no leadership in the Branch and leading comrades of the organisation are forced to play much too prominent a role in Branch meetings. This leads to all too frequent disputes with the BC, and creates a certain hostility between comrades which makes it very difficult to change things.

The lack of political discussion in meetings leads to a very formal approach to work. This in turn can lead to a 'sectarian' attitude to other comrades outside the group and to those who come to our meetings and raise questions. We have to get away from preaching to our audiences and this requires the kind of political discussion and maturity that is not being promoted in London Branch.

The formal nature of our work on the question of selling literature has led to sympathiser members complaining that they are being used as selling fodder and having no time to carry out **theoretical work**. This is really serious, comrades, and suggests we are failing to train our future members. Very little theoretical work has been done by all comrades and indicates that the perspectives for work laid down in previous National Activities Reports have not been adhered to.

The PC needs to examine what has gone wrong in London Branch. We therefore propose an inquiry into the running of the Branch to be conducted by DY who will in future attend all BC meetings. The task will be to ensure that the branch is run in line with the perspectives laid down by the PC.

#### JH's role in the debate

It would not be correct to locate JH's position in these disputes as belonging to a particular faction, in spite of the ever greater consistency with which she supports FR and CD. We have to seek the roots of the opposition to the PC majority in her sheer

egoism combined with the lack of any firm political perspective.

On arriving in London to take over as London and National Activities Organiser, JH needed to come to terms with her own lack of political experience, and to draw on the advice and help of other comrades. She needed to learn to give a sense of political direction to the whole organisation, and to lead the development of London Branch in such a way that the political priorities of the organisation were fully understood and acted upon by the comrades in London.

Her inability to give London this political lead has been demonstrated. Her hostility to any comradely criticism or advice has led to continual disruption of EC meetings, where she has had to be repeatedly called to order by the chair for abusive and intolerable behaviour. At the EC meeting of 2.11.76, her temper flared with a vengeance in attacks directed particularly at SM for criticising the role she played over the election of London Branch treasurer. Among the torrent of abuse, JH called the EC majority a 'sectarian petit bourgeois clique', engaged in 'factionalism', who were 'stifling certain comrades' political development' and who represented a 'danger to London Branch'. By the next EC we had also become — no less — 'political cowards'. This kind of behaviour makes comradely political discussion and activity impossible.

JH has even gone so far as to neglect to carry out the majority decision of the EC with which she did not agree. The EC having decided that our comrades should not speak at the South Africa Conference for very explicit reasons which were thoroughly discussed, JH did not explain these reasons to B. who was attending as Trade Union delegate. The explanation he was given was that we had not yet fully developed our position on South Africa, which he found unsatisfactory. He was also not informed of the significance of this Conference and particularly of the afternoon session when Michael Williams' paper was being discussed. He therefore found it quite acceptable to be sent by JH to a workgroup meeting rather than attend the afternoon session. When the matter was raised at the end of the last EC, JH could only respond with a fit of temper, banging her fist on the table, and marching out of the room before the discussion had ended. Unfortunately this was the sort of response that the EC has become accustomed to over the past few weeks. It cannot be allowed to continue if the leadership of the organisation is to function at all.

#### The effect on London Branch

JH's petty defensiveness over her own role as London organiser has unfortunately been reflected in a similar defensiveness by the London BC to criticisms in the Branch and cell. The impossible pressures placed on a relatively inexperienced body of comrades, by an ill-thought-out strategy for Branch activity, has given rise to an unhealthy us-and-them attitude which does not encourage the political development of the BC comrades. The election of London Branch treasurer is the most striking example of the way JH has misled the BC and through it the Branch. Having discussed the matter of a new treasurer informally with two other PC members and having informed A. from this discussion that she would be proposing her as treasurer JH then changed her mind without informing any of these comrades. She allowed the BC to have its own 'election': accepting one comrade's nomination and rejecting A. who was raised as a possibility for the post. She found it acceptable to then call the item on the agenda 'BC proposal for Branch Treasurer', rather than 'election of Branch Treasurer'. And for reasons known only to herself but devoid of political content, she refused to vote for A. (the only candidate since the comrade proposed by the BC withdrew his nomination, having been asked to do so by DY.) What must be of even more concern to the PC is that the BC as a whole (with the exception of C) similarly refused to vote for A. Having misled the BC over the procedure to be followed and the political importance of the election, she could in no way show members of the BC that this was an experience to be learnt from rather than a slight to their 'credibility' — since she herself could only see it as 'undermining her credibility in the Cell'. Yes comrades, political credibility is undermined when a comrade's stubborn egoism and arrogance prevents her from developing in political stature through successes and failures, praise and criticism. This is something which JH has not grasped.

#### The National Tasks

If we turn now to the way JH has carried out her two national tasks, we have to point to a certain lack of priority. Inordinate time has been devoted to the preparation for BC meetings in comparison with the potential that exists for a fulltime NAO to inspire the branches with a sense of where they are going. Her decision to work at home, coming in to the office to pick up the post only 2 or 3 times a week for a few minutes, has meant that a good deal of the trivial aspects of London and national organisation has fallen on SM, whose tasks as National Administrator, PC Secretary and External Literature Organiser are already more than enough to fill a working week. The London Organiser must be in the office regularly to deal with Branch matters that crop up. The National Organiser must do more than take weekly phone-ins and write monthly reports of an organisational nature. And both these jobs must be carried out in complete cooperation with the other full-timers. This is the only way a firm political perspective can be reinforced in the organisation: when the fulltimers carry out their tasks together and in common accord — not pulling against each other or remaining isolated from each other.

We have to establish clearly that SM's task as Administrator is to run RCG Publications Ltd, while JH's task as NAO is to deal with all matters concerning the Revolutionary Communist Group. Our publications are expanding, our accounts are growing more complicated, and our correspondence is increasing weekly. The RCG is at a turning-point; its isolation is ending — its propagation of Marxist ideas is being seized upon by an ever-increasing number of people in many parts of the world. It is SM's job to make sure that we have the organisational structures and methods adequate to meet the flood of orders and correspondence that will come in the next few months and years. It is also her job to seize the opportunities that arise for political gains to be made. To do this she needs assistance in the office from contacts and members alike, and she cannot be continually interrupted by problems connected with London and national organisation. JH's role is key here: not only can she prevent the interruptions but also she should be precisely the one to have an overall view of the organisation and all its workings.

JH must overcome her petty egoism and the political consequences of this attitude, if she is to fulfil her role as National Activities Organiser and play a constructive part in meetings of the EC and PC. If she fails to do this, she will simply continue to disrupt the leadership of the organisation, and will become an obstacle to the healthy development of the RCG.

DY 11.11.76

## II The CPGB: a comment on Comrade Turner's article

The belief that the Communist Party of Great Britain possesses a political significance which outweighs its diminutive size underlies the decision to direct our propaganda against the political positions to which it adheres. That the programme of the CPGB expresses in its clearest and most developed form present day left reformist politics was the primary consideration in this decision. However, this is insufficient; what will give the CPGB a central rôle in political developments in the working class in the coming years is not so much those points on which it finds agreement with other left reformist strands, but those on which it differs. It will win workers above all through its opposition to wage restraint and cuts in the social services, rather than through its support for import controls. It will be the ability of the CPGB to provide a form of opposition to the attacks of the Labour Government that will put its present relation with the Tribunes in particular under great strain.

The CPGB finds itself in a position of opposing however reluctantly almost all those who share its nationalist view of the crisis. This has to be explained. Why does the CPGB have to oppose wage restraint? Although Tribune by and large takes a similar stand, nevertheless, it frequently qualifies its opposition, arguing Purdy's 'quid pro quo'. But the official line of the CPGB shows no such hesitations, despite its current internal debate. If the CPGB, despite the attempts of Purdy to the contrary, cannot break with its present position on wage restraint, then the consequences for the way in which a potential vanguard will emerge will have to be considered.

Cde PT's article provides us with no understanding of the present significance of the CPGB. The reason for this lies in its method, which whatever it is, is most certainly not Marxist. The abstract chronology of events and ideas tells us nothing about the development of the Party, and the conclusions are just plain wrong. We required a materialist analysis of the development of the CPGB, not one which ascribes it to a more or less accidental conflict of ideas. The inadequacy of the article is evident from the opening sentence:

'To understand the present crisis of world Stalinism and the beginnings of its reflection in the CPGB demands that we understand its history.' (Cde PT, p40)

Is there an entity which can be described as 'world Stalinism'? Is its crisis only now impinging on the CPGB? These assumptions are ahistorical. Why do we need to understand its history if it is the same as it was in the pre-war period? Of course, once these assumptions have been made, it is quite easy to draw the only conclusion possible, but it remains completely uninformative:

'... the strengthening of reformism in the working class has driven the Stalinist parties further than ever from the Soviet Union. Yet for all this, we are speaking only of a tendency and not of a decisive liquidation of Stalinism in the West. Whilst there is no law that says Stalinism must exist, to argue that its liquidation has already taken place, that western capitalism has "won" the CPs from the Soviet bureaucracy, is to underestimate the strength of Stalinism.' (ibid, p88)

After all, Cde PT cunningly asks:

'Would the CPGB today support a military attack on the Soviet Union or any of its allies in the third world?' (ibid, p89)

Satisfied at having asked an unanswerable question, Cde PT goes on to 'answer' in the negative. But it fits entirely with the method of the article that this piece of nonsense should have been included. As Marxists, we presume to deal with concrete questions, rather than indulge ourselves in airy speculations on the future. Whilst happily concurring with Cde PT's belief that there is no 'law' which states that Stalinism must exist, we must point out that there is likewise no 'law' which will enable us to predict what stand the CPGB may or may not take when a certain eventuality may or may not arise. But there is one law of whose existence we are certain: the law that any document which starts with the abstract and meaningless arrives at equally abstract and meaningless conclusions. Cde PT's document is no exception to this.

## What is the CPGB?

Cde PT's document boils down to this: the CPGB is still a Stalinist party, and as such, is still subject to the demands of the Soviet bureaucracy. This has manifested itself in several turns by the Party: those of 1939 and 1941 on the world war, the one in 1947 with the advent of the cold war, and one in 1956 which resulted in the explicit adoption of a Parliamentary road to socialism. Since then, happily, no further change has been demanded by the bureaucracy. However, in the meantime, an explicitly reformist trend within the Party has emerged, and is locked in conflict with the Stalinist leadership. This is the reason for the present debate on Socialist Democracy. We have it on Cde PT's word that his history of the CPGB

'... shows how the CPGB has apparently become a party which does not differ in principle from other social democratic tendencies in British politics, and often has more differences with the USSR than for instance the Labour lefts.' (ibid p52, my emphasis)

It would be nice if we were told 'for instance' why the CPGB has so few 'differences' with the Labour lefts. But never mind — presumably the comrade was so upset to find that there was no 'law' which says that Stalinism must exist that he had to spend the rest of the document cautioning us against underestimating its strength. Thus the CPGB, despite its reformist programme, its lack of differences with 'for instance' the Labour lefts, is still, due to the supra-historical strength of Stalinism, a Stalinist Party. The CPGB's reformism is for appearance's sake only — it serves to disguise the Party's dependency on the Soviet Union. But the notion of Stalinism that underlies the document is one that sees it as a dependency on a conspiratorial clique based in Moscow, the ultimate Machiavelli operating independent of the laws of history. Such a view serves the radical left quite adequately, but it will not do for us. The remainder of this article seeks to lay the basis for a Marxist analysis of the development of the CPGB.

## National reformism and the Comintern.

The theory of 'socialism in one country' was first advanced in 1924. Its implications for the Communist Parties outside of the Soviet Union were drawn by Trotsky in 1928:

'If it is at all possible to realise socialism in one country, then one can believe in that theory not only after but also before the conquest of state power. If socialism can be realised within the national boundaries of backward Russia, then there is all the more reason to believe that it can be realised in advanced Germany. Tomorrow the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany will undertake to propound this theory. The draft programme empowers them to do so. The day after tomorrow the French Party will have its turn. It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of Social Patriotism.' (The Third International after Lenin, p72)

The defeats of the 1930s in Germany and Austria, and the decimation of other parties of the Comintern, particularly in France, provided the conditions in which 'socialism in one country' became the political property of the whole Comintern, not just mediated through the national interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Social Patriotism became the official doctrine of the Comintern at its Seventh World Congress, setting the seal not only on the fate of the Comintern, but also on the hegemony of the CPSU over the world Communist movement. The pursuit of national roads to socialism, which was a necessary consequence of the decisions of this last Congress of the Comintern could not presume automatically an identity of interests between the various Communist Parties. Reviewing the situation in 1938, Trotsky wrote:

'Ten years ago it was predicted that the theory of socialism in one country must inevitably lead to the growth of nationalist tendencies in the sections of the Comintern. This prediction has become an obvious fact. But until recently, the chauvinism of the French, British, Belgian, Czechoslovak, American and other Communist Parties seemed to be, and to a certain extent was, a refracted image of the interests of the Soviet diplomacy ("the defence of the USSR"). Today, we can predict with assurance the inception of a new stage. The growth of imperialist antagonisms, the obvious proximity of the war danger, and the equally obvious isolation of the USSR must unavoidably strengthen the centrifugal nationalist tendencies within the Comintern. Each one

of its sections will begin to evolve a patriotic policy of its own account. Stalin has reconciled the Communist Parties of imperialist democracies with their own national bourgeoisies. This stage has now been passed. The Bonapartist procuror has played his role. Henceforth the Communo-chauvinists will have to worry about their own hides, whose interests by no means always co-incide with the "defence of the USSR" (Writings, 1938-39, p72)

The Soviet bureaucracy could no longer 'dictate' policy to other Communist Parties in the way it could in the Third Period. It was no *deus ex machina* which could impose its own will on the laws of history. The growing reliance of the Communist parties on their own bourgeoisies could only reduce their dependence on the Soviet bureaucracy. It is unfortunate that Cde PT subscribes to the views of orthodox Trotskyism which still sees the Soviet bureaucracy as some magician, conjuring 180 degree turns out of the Communist movement at the drop of a hat.

Several myths have been constructed on the basis of this idealist standpoint. The most pervasive of these relates to the turn of 1939. From 1934, the CPGB had enthusiastically endorsed national defence against the 'Hitlerian menace'. The outbreak of war followed immediately after the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact. This occasioned a new turn in the political line of the CPGB. However, this change did not mean that the CPGB adopted an anti-war line, as Cde PT or orthodox idealism suppose. A symptom of the political development of the CPGB was the fight that took place within the leadership over the change, which led to Pollitt's departure from the General Secretaryship. The Comintern, or the ghost of it, issued a proclamation that the war was an imperialist one, and urging pacifist opposition on those parties whose ruling class was participating in the war. Initially, the Central Committee of the CPGB opposed the Comintern line, supporting Pollitt's explanation that

'We have to face facts. Labour cannot form a government that can win this war on its own. My personal opinion is that you can't win this war unless you have in the new government not only representatives of Labour, but men like Lloyd George, Eden, Churchill and Duff Cooper — all imperialists. But we have to win this war and to win it with people who are going to be ruthless.' (Quoted in John Mahon: *Harry Pollitt — A Biography*, p251.)

The reversal came in October 1939. However, the CPGB interpreted the Comintern line according to its own nationalist framework; it is summarised in a Manifesto issued in mid-1940:

'The interests of the people require the speediest ending of the war, not by surrender to fascism at home and abroad, but by the strength of a free people organising their own defence and leading the way to peace and unity with the working people of all countries...

Forward in active campaigning to secure ... a People's Government in which no friend of Fascism or enemy of the working class movement has a place.

Such a People's Government alone can secure from the people the unity and unbroken will to victory that can guarantee the defeat of both the Nazi menace and of the danger which also threatens from the British representatives of fascism.

Such a People's Government, in whatever grave situations that may confront us, can defend the lives and homes of the people and achieve the preservation of a free and democratic Britain.' (Quoted in Montagu *The Traitor Class*, L&W, 1940, p124)

In the final chapter of this book, entitled 'National Salvation', Montagu, who was a leading member of the CPGB at the time, explains who is to be regarded as the 'traitor class', and who were the real patriots:

'Everybody knows that these measures summarised here: conscription of material resources, purging of the friends of fascism, mobilisation of the initiative of the people, unity with other peoples on a basis of their own determination of their fate, albeit revolutionary — would infinitely fortify the defensive power of the British people, infinitely weaken the power for conquest of Hitler.

Hence, anyone who obstructs these measures, is working against these aims, is a traitor to the interests of the people and the independence of the nation.

But the ruling class, because of their class interests, cannot fail to oppose these measures.'

The CPGB did not abandon the call for a People's Government which it had adopted in 1934. Its establishment was now seen as the prerequisite for peace:

'If a People's Government came to power in this country, it should immediately make its proposals for peace to all Governments and to all peoples.' (We fight for Life, CPGB Pamphlet, November 1940, p22.)

But of course:

'Pending the reaching of peace, the People's Government in Britain would take all the necessary measures for the defence of the power of the people against all enemies at home and abroad.' (ibid, p23)

In essence, this is no different from the naked chauvinism of the 1930s. It has just been given a pacifist gloss. The option of support for a 'democratic' war was left open. Once the Soviet Union had been forced into the war on the side of British imperialism, this option could be taken up. The coalition government now became the 'People's Government' that the CPGB had been demanding, since it was now formally allied with the Fatherland of the working people. The programme that the CPGB had outlined for such a 'People's Government' could now be implemented, and the betrayal of the British working class consummated.

The events of this period show that the Soviet bureaucracy no longer had unlimited powers to deal with foreign Communist parties. The official slogans sanctioned by the Comintern denounced the treachery of the social democrats, and were summarised by the appeal: 'Down with the Imperialist War'. But the CPGB 'adapted' it to prevailing national conditions, and thus rendered it more 'moderate'. The CPGB could not escape its past history at the behest of the Soviet bureaucracy. Its adaptation to the British state since 1934 had left a deep imprint, as the course adopted by Pollitt shows. It was now unable to escape the logic of its past naked nationalism. In the period from late 1939 to June 1941, it undoubtedly gave this nationalism a radical twist. But this was as far as it was capable of going in responding to 'orders' from the Comintern. It did not oppose the war in the way the Soviet bureaucracy demanded; it posed its opposition in terms of the way the war was being conducted, not because the war was an imperialist war. Once the Soviet Union had entered the war, there was no obstacle to the expression of the nationalism of the Party. It was the growing dependency of the Communist Parties on their national bourgeoisie which reduced the significance of Soviet intervention in their internal affairs, not as PT puts it, 'the physical impossibility of intervention' (ibid, p69).

#### The CPGB in the post-war period.

Another myth of orthodox idealism is that the CPGB carried out the so-called left turn of 1947 on the orders of Stalin. It is noticeable that these people never explain exactly when this left turn ended. Since it was precisely at this time that the British Road to Socialism was committed to paper, one can only presume that the CPGB is still in the midst of this turn (and, of course, still obedient to the orders of Stalin's successors!).

The 'turn' was explicitly chauvinist in content. Post-war reconstruction could not proceed without massive aid from American imperialism on the one hand, and more severe attacks on the working class on the other. In this context, the Cold War was not a particular policy which imperialism chose to pursue, but a necessary expression of its interests. It was part of a political attack on the working class movement. At the beginning of 1947, the British economy was in a severe crisis, with over two million workers temporarily laid off. Working class discontent with the Government started to appear. The CPGB could not remain unaffected by this. By the end of 1947, it had adopted a strident anti-American chauvinism, as it was forced into a more militant opposition to the Labour government.

What prompted the change in the Party's orientation to the Labour government was not an edict issued from Moscow. It was its relationship to the British working class that had forced it to take a new stand. The CPGB did not need any assistance from luminaries in the Soviet bureaucracy to point out that the domination of American imperialism was a threat to any programme which envisaged a national road to socialism. The Party was quite capable of following its own chauvinist nose on

this score. With the US producing half the annual global output, and investing heavily in Western Europe through Marshall Aid, any self-respecting patriot could see how Britain's national sovereignty was threatened. Now of course the Soviet bureaucracy had to respond to the more aggressive standpoint of world imperialism. But the formation of Cominform was not an attempt to set up a new structure by which the bureaucracy could assert its hegemony over the world Communist movement. That the response of the CPGB could meet with the approval of the CPSU was not because the latter had commanded such a change. It was because the CPGB, given its relation to the British working class, had similar interests to the Soviet Union in adopting a more militant position. As Pollitt summarised:

**'Therefore the fight for peace, against the war preparations and subservience to America, is also the fight against the economic crisis, and must be linked with it in all our campaigns.'** (Pollitt, Report to the 21st Congress of the CPGB, 1949. Our emphasis)

What came first for the CPGB was the economic crisis of British imperialism, and its consequences for the British working class. To this could be 'linked' the issue of peace and the fight against American domination. In 1948, the Labour Government instituted its first incomes policy as an essential step in reconstructing British capital. Living standards fell as inflation soared with the start of the Korean War. Opposition within the working class mounted, and reflected itself in conflicts inside the trade union bureaucracy. The CPGB became the spokesman for those sections of the bureaucracy which opposed wage restraint, since it had now achieved many leading positions in the official leadership. The Party played a significant role in bringing about the defeat of the incomes policy when the TUC rejected it in 1950.

It was during this period that the finishing touches were made to the British Road to Socialism. The programme agreed at the 21st Congress was as follows:

**'1. To raise wages and extend social services, and so increase the purchasing power of the workers.**

It would be fatal to the present and future interests of the workers and the trade union movement if they succumbed to the propaganda of the capitalists and the right wing Labour and trade union leaders that "the crisis demands wage freezing" and "cuts in real wages are essential to lower production costs".

To make concessions to the employers in a period of capitalist slump means to involve the workers of Britain in a starvation contest between all the workers of the world, for the capitalists in every land are making the same efforts to reduce nominal and real wages, and this can only result in reducing the purchasing power of their own home markets and thus intensifying crisis it is supposed to resolve. Such a policy not only means increased hardship for the workers — it rapidly intensifies the slump and hastens the development of mass unemployment on a gigantic level.

**2. To develop our trade with the Soviet Union, the People's Democracies and the New China.**

**3. To end the present criminal and wasteful military expenditure, and contribute in this way also to solving the balance of payments problem and raising the standards of living of the people.**

**4. To take over in a new form of nationalisation, those essential industries whose directors are likely to panic and intensify the crisis.**

Such measures, and the fight for them, and not appeasement of the big monopolies, are the way forward for the working class in the period of deepening crisis.' (Communist Policy to meet the Crisis. Report of the 21st National Congress of the CPGB, pp15-17, 1949.)

This similarity with today's 'Counter-crisis Programme' is clear. In these conditions, underconsumptionism expressed the opposition of those sections of the trade union bureaucracy who rejected state control of free collective bargaining. Since it also expressed the belief in national self-sufficiency in building socialism, the interests of the CPGB and this part of the labour leadership coincided. The CPGB became the organisational expression of opposition to incomes policy — it was this that ensured it would maintain its independent existence. It is therefore the case that the CPGB cannot revise its opposition to incomes policy; to do so would imply its dissolution.

Returning to Cde PT, we find him suggesting that the 'left turn' ended for him in 1956, when he believes that the CPGB explicitly

adopted the parliamentary road to socialism:

**'Whilst the idea of "peaceful" and "democratic" transition to socialism was implicit in the plans of 1945 and "The British Road to Socialism" of 1951, to locate the beginnings of the "Parliamentary Road" as early as this is to misunderstand its significance. Thus even in 1954, we could read that "no socialism could be built by utilising the existing capitalist state". (The British State, CPGB 1954).'** (ibid, p79)

But even today we can find this:

**'The working class must establish a new socialist state to defend the new social system from opposition...'** (The British Road to Socialism, p47)

The CP does not argue at all that socialism can be brought about by utilising the existing capitalist state. It is a typical radical left slander that they do. Of course, in practice, this is what their programme amounts to. But to imply that their view of the state is less subtle than it in fact is will only lead us to be regarded as typical ultra-left sectarians. What is most unfortunate for Cde PT is that he did not look at the pamphlet he quotes with proper care, since he would have found this:

**'Under the facade of "democracy", this constitution is reactionary and anti-democratic to the core. The Labour movement, under the leadership of the Communist Party, has the task of defending the hard won democratic rights of the people and eliminating all the relics of caste, privilege and reaction from our national institutions.**

This can be achieved by strengthening the Communist Party, returning more Communists to Parliament, and above all, by the unity of all democratic forces in the country in a great popular alliance to transform Parliament and to bring to power a government which will act in the interests of the majority of the people.' (The British State, CPGB, 1954, p20)

And in the 1952 edition of the 'British Road to Socialism'?

**'The enemies of Communism accuse the Communist Party of aiming to introduce Soviet Power in Britain and abolish Parliament. This is a slanderous (no less — RD) misrepresentation of our policy ... the British Communists declare that the people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real people's democracy, transforming Parliament, the product of Britain's historical struggle for democracy into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people.'** (The British Road to Socialism, 1952, p12)

Thus Cde PT's whole assessment of the post-war development of the CPGB is wrong. When we assess the development of any Communist Party, what is of primary concern to us is its relation to its working class, not to the Soviet bureaucracy. Cde PT just ignores this aspect. For him, since the CPGB does not express overt hostility to the Soviet Union, things are pretty much the same as they were in the 1930s. The point is that since the Second World War, the CPGB has expressed a specific brand of reformism. What determines its programme is not a relationship with the Soviet bureaucracy, but its relation to the British working class. Stalinism in the international Communist movement expressed the dependence of the Communist Parties on the Soviet bureaucracy. It was a material dependency, which expressed itself ideologically as a commitment to socialism in one country. But the reverse is not true: that a commitment to building socialism in one country equals Stalinism. That is idealism. This underlies the statement in FR's article that:

**'The starting point of the Stalinist movement is the subordination of the Comintern to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Today Stalinism appears as a "polycentric" movement containing conflicting interests. Today's result should not be confused with the starting point of Stalinism.'** (The Capitalist Crisis and the Official Communist Movement, p27)

Stalinism is seen here as an ideological question. It is wrong to conclude:

**'To understand the development of Stalinism internationally requires an analysis of the way the tension between Moscow's policies and the national considerations of the CPs work themselves out.'** (ibid, p27)

In analysing the development of communist parties since the second world war, their relation to, or more accurately, attitude towards the Soviet Union, is a secondary question. What is

primary is the analysis of their relation to their own working class. It is this that will give the reasons for the change in their attitude to the Soviet Union. The Communist Parties are not Stalinist — they represent specific forms of reformism. This differs from country to country — the PCI, the PCF and the CPGB are now as different from each other as the Italian, French and British Socialist Parties. This cannot be explained by supposing they are still Stalinist.

### The CPGB and the boom.

Cde PT comments:

'The many profound changes in the politics of the CPGB in the last 20 years have above all rendered a change in the CPGB's notion of "democracy", and consequently in its relation with the USSR.' (ibid, p84)

From this, Cde PT supposes that the current debate on Socialist Democracy concerns the relation of the CPGB with the Soviet bureaucracy, and that it raises

'... the validity of the strategy of the CPGB itself — the parliamentary road to socialism.' (ibid, p87)

This is completely wrong. The parliamentary road is not questioned by any of the participants in the debate. In fact, its essence has been summarised quite succinctly by Fergus Nicholson, a leading Frenchite in the Party (after Sid French, Secretary of the Surrey District of the CP, the uncrowned king of the so-called Stalinist trend in the Party).

'Most of the serious disagreements in and about our Party can be resolved into one question: what do we mean by the leading role of the party, and are we for it anyway.' (Letter to Comment, 1.11.75)

The leadership has already provided its own answer to the question:

'To win the alternative programme in our resolution calls for mass struggle on an ever-widening scale. Comrades have referred to the key importance here of the policy of left unity, and in bringing this about, our party has a vital role to play, a leading role. When I say this, I want to make it clear that **we Communists claim no special or exclusive position within the movement.**' (Chater: Reply to the discussion on the main resolution at the 34th Congress of the CPGB: 'The Crisis, Left Unity and the Communist Party', in Comment, 29.11.75)

Thus the leadership expresses the logic of the British Road to Socialism. The struggle for socialism requires the construction of a vast anti-monopoly alliance, headed by the working class. The first stage in building this alliance is to establish working class unity around the programme of the CPGB. This unity — 'left unity' — will involve sections of the Labour Party and the trade union leadership. These left sections, notably the Tribune group, will have to overthrow the existing right-wing reformist leadership of the Labour Party. One of the political components of the turn of 1935 by the Comintern was the characterisation of the leaderships of social democratic parties as reformist, with the implication that the left wing were revolutionary. Logically, this would mean that if such parties were won to a left position, they would be capable of playing a progressive role. The inherently capitalist nature of such parties was thus denied. Their bourgeois character was defined in terms of their present corrupt leadership, and not in terms of their origins and political development within the imperialist epoch.

However, if it is established that social democratic parties can be won to the cause of the working class, then the Communist Parties could no longer aspire to a vanguard role; this would amount to sectarianism. Instead, they would have to work alongside such left dominated reformist parties, offering perhaps fraternal criticism, but certainly not aspiring to an 'exclusive' position. A Communist Party could not 'lead' a Labour Party which subscribed to exactly the same programme. This presents further problems. Parties exist to lead social classes. In the case of a party based on the working class, it either attempts to lead the working class to its emancipation, or to its continued subordination to capitalism. There is no other reason for its existence in the long term. Thus the CPGB finds itself in a dilemma; for the more it

re-assures its allies in 'left unity' that it seeks no exclusive position in the movement, the more these allies demand that the Party renounce its independent existence. The Party's reply is characteristically lame:

'(The Communist Party) is the only party that has charted the strategy and tactics for a road to socialism in Britain which takes account of British traditions, history, class structure and institutions, as well as of the basic tenets of scientific socialism, of the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It is by our creative use of this body of theoretical work that we are able to make our distinctive contribution to our movement.' (Resolution on the Crisis, Left Unity, and the Communist Party, in Comment 29.11.75. Emphasis added.)

As other sections of the labour bureaucracy formally adhere to the programme to which the 'creative use of this body of theoretical work' gave rise, so as a distinguishing feature, it becomes more and more irrelevant. The question is: what conditions necessitated the re-assessment of the role of the Communist Party? Pollitt was quite happy to write in 1949:

'If as these struggles develop, we constantly and consistently carry out our Marxist explanations of the nature of capitalism and the need for the workers themselves to seize power we can lead them forward from these immediate struggles against the various aspects of the capitalist system to the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and for the seizure of power by the working class.' (Pollitt: Report to the 21st Congress of the CPGB, 1949, p3E, my emphasis.)

A few years later:

'The Communist Party is the vanguard, and its vanguard role is precisely that it is enabled to see the whole line of march and not merely the immediate issues.' (Britain Arise, CPGB 1952, p40)

And again:

'Neither the socialist propaganda nor leadership of the present struggles can be successful if out of these do not arise the steady building and strengthening of an organised Communist Party, rooted amongst the masses in the factories and areas, capable of leading the people from the immediate daily struggles to the struggle for political power and the building of socialism.' (The Role of the Communist Party, CPGB 1955, p12)

However, in the late 1950s a shift in emphasis took place. On the one hand, it became necessary to spell out that the CPGB did not wish to dominate the trade union movement:

'We emphatically deny any intention to dominate or control the trade union movement, and we recognise and respect its organisational and political independence.' (Quoted by Cde PT p79)

On the other, the attitude towards the Labour Party started to change. In a pamphlet in 1959, Gollan wrote:

'We do not pose our development against that of the Left in the Labour Party. Both are needed. Our case is, however, the stronger the Communist Party, the stronger every left development in the Labour Party.' (Which Way for Socialists?, CPGB 1959, p16)

and argued that the history of left movements:

'... shows the indispensable need for the Communist Party alongside and as part of any leftward development of the Labour Party.' (ibid, p15)

Pollitt, writing a little earlier, placed a slightly different emphasis on the role of the Communist Party:

'But the building up of the left, and the continuous political activity throughout the country which is essential to the defeat of the rightwing leaders and the Tories cannot be carried out **except by the organised work of the Communist Party.**' (The Communists and the Labour Party, CPGB, 1956, my emphasis.)

Pollitt sees the work of the Communist Party as a precondition for the development of a left trend in the Labour Party, whilst Gollan poses the question in terms of 'fraternal assistance'. The conflict this expresses, between the notion of the Party as a vanguard party, and the logic of the reformist politics of the Party matured during the boom, and has been resolved with the onset of the crisis.

The social basis of the Communist Party is that section of the bureaucracy which opposes state control of wages. The trade union leadership has turned to the CPGB to express opposition to policies carried out by various Labour governments which threatened to erode its independence. It is part of the contradiction that the bureaucracy finds itself in that it cannot allow itself to become a mere appendage of the bourgeois state. This would entail a complete separation from its working class base; it could only occur under a fascist regime, for it would entail the complete destruction of independent working class organisations. However, the extent to which the Labour Party had been integrated into the state machinery during and after the Second World War had rendered it too insensitive to working class pressure for the safety of the bureaucracy. The latter has been obliged to use the CPGB as a safety valve.

It is the role of the CPGB as a representative of sections of the trade union bureaucracy which oppose state integration under a Labour Government which has ensured its post-war independence. This role is expressed ideologically by its underconsumptionist view of the crisis. This in turn flows from the belief in the sufficiency of a home market for building socialism.

With the onset of the boom, incomes policy receded in importance as a political issue facing the movement. Regardless of how frequently the CPGB cried wolf on a forthcoming crisis, and the imminence of wage-cutting, capitalist production steadily expanded. In these conditions, the CPGB became isolated, and this tendency was reinforced by the ideological attack of the Cold War. It was actively ostracised by the trade union bureaucracy through a series of bans and proscriptions. Although this ensured that it would maintain its independent existence, the price it paid was an erosion of its political influence. To this may be added the effects of 1956, and the ETU election rigging scandal of 1960. Party membership, amongst the working class and in the official leadership, steadily declined.

Given its reformist nature, the Party could react in only one way — by adapting. This took the form of revising its pretensions to an 'exclusive' role in the labour movement — by abandoning its pretensions as a vanguard party. Although its isolation allowed it the occasional luxury of deriding the Labour left:

'The countless left movements over the years inside and outside the Labour Party were always supported by our Party. We always played an active part in connection with them. By their very nature, however, they have been transient, have played an important part at a particular time, only to subside and eventually make way for new movements.' (Report to 27th Congress of CPGB, 1962, p15)

But at the same time, it had to recognise that the CPGB alone was incapable of leading the working class to socialism:

'Today it is becoming increasingly clear that the struggle opened up by Scarborough (The venue of the 1960 LP Conference which rejected the amendment of Clause 4 in 1960 — RD) must be carried forward to the final elimination of right wing capitalist influence and leadership in the Labour Party. This could bring about the victory of a united Labour Movement, in which the Communist Party, as the political party of the working class struggle for power and socialism will fulfil its role in comradeship and partnership and agreement with all the advanced sections of the organised working class.' (ibid, p21)

Thus the conditions of the post-war boom placed new pressures on the CPGB. The net result was the growth of a tendency towards further adaptation to the existing level of the movement. The awareness that it could no longer pretend to the leadership of the working class only became official policy with the onset of the crisis.

### The CPGB and the boom

The re-emergence of the CPGB as a significant political force depended on the policies that the Labour government had to pursue in the years 1964 to 1970. The relative weakness of British capital in the world market was becoming more evident, and its declining profitability demanded the implementation of the first overt attacks on working class living standards since before the boom. It was for this reason that the Labour Party made incomes policy a main plank of its election manifesto, stating that it was the only party which could get the necessary co-operation from

the trade union movement.

Its Prices and Incomes policy took effect from April 1965, initially on a voluntary basis; it was approved by a majority of 6.6 to 1.8 millions at a TUC Special Conference of Union Executives. However, a speculative attack on the pound in July required further action by the government. It responded with a deflationary package at the end of the month, which included cuts in state expenditure, and the first statutory controls over incomes. The limitations to which the TUC General Council agreed required notification of all wage claims to the government, which could then refer them at its own discretion for consideration by the National Board of Prices and Incomes. These were approved at the TUC Congress in September but with a much narrower majority (5.25 to 3.3 millions). Thus even in the earlier days of the Government, a substantial opposition to incomes policy existed in the ranks of the trade union bureaucracy, which grew when the policy took a statutory form.

Within the Labour Party too, a diffuse opposition to incomes policy appeared; this was centred on the Tribune group of MPs, which formed themselves into a 'caucus' in 1964. The group soon realised that incomes policy was to be a central issue for the government, and that if it were to survive as a left ginger group, it had to take a stand on the issue. In December 1965, Tribune rejected its earlier support for control over incomes, and came out for the first time in editorial opposition. In this, it was following behind a core of about 20 to 30 MPs who had already expressed some verbal opposition.

It was in these political conditions that the 29th Congress of the CPGB met during December 1965. The Congress resolved the conflict which had built up over the post-war boom by ending all illusions about a vanguard role for the Party. The main resolution advanced proposals for 'left unity' a concept which replaced the previous one of 'working class unity'. The basis for this 'unity' was a nine point programme which included opposition to incomes policy. In line with this programme, the Congress decided to bury the *Daily Worker* — organ of the Communist Party — and raise in its stead the *Morning Star* — newspaper of left unity. These changes were to be set down in a new edition of the *British Road to Socialism*, which was commissioned for the next Congress. This is the present edition.

The next major pamphlet of the Party — *The Case for Socialism in the Sixties* — summarised the new line. The fragmented left in the Labour Party of which Gollan had been so derisive in 1961, was a thing of the past:

'The left in Parliament and the Labour Party is emerging more strongly, the Communist Party is still more active in its leading, pioneering and organising role.' (*The Case for Socialism in the Sixties*, CPGB, 1966)

No longer would the CPGB attempt to woo the left away from the Labour Party:

'We do not think that the left forces will break with the Labour Party in this way, and nor do we think they ought to.' (ibid, p72)

and finally, just in case anybody missed the point:

'We Communists in Britain do not stand for a one party state.' (ibid, p75)

In this way, the Party defined a new and closer relation to the labour bureaucracy, in particular with those elements who were predisposed to oppose state control over wages. The Communist Party proved a capable organiser and mouthpiece of this opposition. Its first important gain was in 1967, when, following '... an unprecedented coalition inside the union of Communists and left Labour activists', Scanlon was elected president of the AEU in opposition to John Boyd, the right wing's choice as successor to Carron' (Panitch: *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy*, p148). The Party also managed to head the movements of opposition to the Labour Government in the rank and file, through the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. And when the government floated 'In Place of Strife', the CPGB's influence reached its apogee as 'left unity' embraced the whole of the trade union movement, and the majority of the Parliamentary Party.

Thus the first years of the crisis brought the Party out of its

isolation, as the trade union bureaucracy resisted a certain form of state integration. But this was at the expense of further adaptation to British imperialism. It is this that has set the scene for the present conflicts in the Party.

#### The CPGB and Tribune.

The relation of the Tribune group to the CPGB can now be assessed. Although still somewhat disparate, nevertheless there is a fairly coherent core of about 30 MPs who constitute the left of the Parliamentary Labour Party. The assertion by the radical left that the social base of the Tribune group is the trade union bureaucracy, particularly its left wing, is wrong. It cannot explain why the heated exchanges between Mikardo and Jones should have taken place at the 1975 Labour Party Conference. Nor does it explain why this year in April, when Tribune MPs presented a motion to the NEC calling for an emergency conference of the Party, they were voted down by the trade union representatives, the most vocal opposition coming from Alex Kitson, a prominent left official in the TGWU.

In fact, the only audience the Tribune MPs have is that of the Communist Party. Thus the pages of Labour Monthly — a magazine of 'left unity', although edited and produced by the CP — are filled with Tribune contributions. This is why regular contributions to the *Morning Star* are made by Tribune MPs, or why they are the star speakers at events like the Unemployment Assembly, or the November lobby of last year. But the point is that it was the Communist Party alone which provided the mobilisation for these occasions.

Thus the Tribune group is entirely dependent on the CP for support for its opposition to the Labour Government. But it is important to understand that the Tribune group is inseparable from the Labour Party. It is above all a Parliamentary opposition, and it is thus electorally dependent on the Labour Party. Tribune MPs are elected to Parliament, not because they are lefts, but because they are Labour candidates. Without the Labour Party, they would be nothing — although without the Communist Party, they would not be much either. Although capable of making gestures of opposition to the Government, its dependency in the Labour Party sets the limits on how far it can move against the government. The mildest threats are sufficient to ensure that Tribune toes the line — witness the support for the vote of confidence which followed the Government's defeat on economic policy earlier this year, which was brought about by Tribune abstentions.

That Tribune cannot separate itself from the Labour Party gives its relation to the Communist Party a contradictory character. Its left image is dependent on the political and material support provided by the Communist Party. Yet the organisational independence of the CPGB signifies the possibility of a future rupture between the two organisations. Such a break would bring into question Tribune's radical reputation. It seeks to overcome this contradiction through periodic attacks on the Communist Party. By questioning the need for a separate Communist Party, or by criticising democratic centralism as a means for suppressing free speech, Tribune seeks to obtain political compromises from the CPGB which will bind it closer to the Labour Party. Thus it is not surprising that when the CP offered up its nine point programme for left unity in 1965, Tribune argued editorially that it could only be realised when the CPGB dissolved itself into the Labour Party. Recently, Eric Heffer returned to the theme:

'On the question of the Communist Parties in Western Europe, my view of the Communist Party in Britain is that it really ought to consider its future as a Party. The British party is only a small organisation. And, rightly or wrongly, it is considered by many people in the labour movement to be a mouthpiece of the Soviet Union, without any independent views.' (*Morning Star*, 20.8.76)

For its part, the CP does not wish to break with the Labour lefts at the moment. The links with Tribune symbolise the future possibilities of the policy of 'left unity'. It certainly cannot dissolve itself as Tribune fondly imagines; as the spokesman and organiser of the left union bureaucracy, it must maintain its independence. But the past ten years shows the extent to which it has had to compromise itself to build up the unity, particularly now in its determination not to offer any criticism of the Tribune MPs. How far this unity will be maintained depends on developments within

the working class movement; it must be recognised that the possibility of conflicts between the two is inherent in their different origins.

#### The conflicts within the CPGB

We are now in a position to assess the conflicts within the CPGB, what the different factions represent, and what course the struggle is likely to take. There are three obvious tendencies — the leadership, the Frenchites, and the liberals. What separates the first two is their attitude to the leading role of the party. The logic of the position adopted by the liberals would be to dissolve the Party altogether. Dave Cook, Party National Organiser, presented the dilemma of the centre in the discussion preceding the last congress:

'Our long term objective of reaching a position where the left is able to present a single working class candidate (with Communists amongst them) in selected constituencies certainly requires that we draw closer to the left wing in the Labour Party and the trade unions ... However, we also need to lay emphasis on presenting the party as an independent force — for the success of both our immediate and longer term perspectives. We need to challenge the widely held belief that the Party's main role is as a "ginger group", servicing the left in the unions and the Labour Party.' (Comment, 1.11.75, emphasis added)

The adaptation by the CPGB which led to the strategy of 'left unity' now raises the question as to whether the Party should maintain its independent existence. That it should appear as a 'ginger group' is no accident; in its role as organiser of the left labour bureaucracy, this is how it is called on to act. As a reformist organisation, it could not be anything else.

The liberals draw out the logic of the leadership's position, a logic that is very fitting for their class position. Purdy's 'quid pro quo' — a socialist incomes policy for more public control — would destroy the Party. It is not surprising that this trend has developed over the past few years. The growing representation of the petty bourgeoisie within the Party (in 1959, 15% of Party delegates at the national congress were white collar workers or students; at the last congress, it was 30%) has strengthened the tendency towards liquidation; it is the petty bourgeoisie which provide support for the likes of Purdy. The importance of this tendency for us is that it expresses the present consciousness of the working class. Its belief that wages are a considerable factor in the inflationary process is shared by the mass of workers, together with the consequences of wage restraint. The inability of the leadership to defeat the petty bourgeoisie expresses the Party's inability to create an opposition to the Labour government. In this, it is entirely dependent on the spontaneous anger of the working class, since it itself is incapable of explaining to workers why they should defend their living standards. However, the liberal tendency in itself is not important. Once the working class starts to move against the Labour government, and the Communist Party is forced to place itself at the head of such a movement, the petty-bourgeoisie will call it a day and scurry into safer niches.

The Frenchites are a more significant political force. They contend with the leadership for the allegiance of the trade union base of the CPGB. They stress the independent role of the party, and criticise the 'left unity' strategy of the leadership. They attack the leadership for its political compromises, and recently have had a field day over the *Morning Star*. This followed a report on the declining sales of the *Star* given by its editor, Chater, to the Executive Committee in May. It was written up in *Comment*, and generated a very critical correspondence. There was almost universal condemnation of the report, from the standpoint of the Frenchites. Letters to *Comment* argued that the bourgeois reportage should be dropped together with the 'Womanwise', gardening and children's features. Instead, they argued that there should be more in-depth analysis, more articles raising broad political issues. They also argue for introductory articles on questions of Marxist theory. In other words, they seek to turn the *Star* back into an organ of the Communist Party.

The differences have appeared in the debate on socialist democracy. The leadership approaches the question from the standpoint of its adaptation to the British state. Its view of socialist democracy complements its abandonment of the idea of

the CPGB as a vanguard party. If it cannot aspire to an exclusive position in the struggle against capitalism, then it equally cannot expect an exclusive position within socialism. Thus the notion of the multi-party state — a rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This rejection is implicit in the British Road to Socialism; its present significance is its association with the abandonment of the leading role of the Party. As one member put it:

'This critical ideological approach to the Soviet Union has its effect on our party in many ways ... (it results in):

The non-acceptance of the leading role of the Communist Party.' (Letter to Comment, 1.11.75, p355)

The Frenchites see the defence of the Soviet Union as inseparable from the real issue at stake: the leading role of the Party. They counterpose their notion of the independent interests of the working class to the compromises of the leadership. Thus they support the purges of the 30s, since they defend the use of working class terror, and reject the leadership's bourgeois democratic notion of individual dissent. The problem that faces the Frenchites is that they can use concepts such as the leading role of the party only in a formal sense, since they accept the political premise which necessitated their revision — the national road to socialism.

How this conflict develops depends on the response of the working class to the Labour government. The Party has a particular role to play when sections of workers start to resist cuts in their living standards. As the representative of the left bureaucracy, it will place itself at the head of such movements; it cannot allow itself to be outflanked by them. It will then seek to keep them within the framework of bourgeois legality, to prevent them escaping the political and organisational domination of the bureaucracy and Labour Party as a whole. In other words, it will try to reconcile such disaffected workers with the Labour Party and the TUC. The Kautsky wing of the SPD played a similar role in 1916-17, before it split to form the centrist USPD. In those years, the majority of German workers had become disaffected from the straightforward chauvinist leadership of the SPD. Kautsky refused to split with them until he was forced to through mass pressure; he argued that the unity of the German working class had to be preserved at all costs, even with the outright chauvinists. Lenin analysed Kautsky's role as follows:

'But the danger of Kautsky lies in the fact that, utilising the ideology of the past, it endeavours to reconcile the proletariat with the "bourgeois labour party", to preserve the unity of the proletariat with that party and thereby enhance the latter's prestige.' (Lenin, Imperialism and the Split in Socialism, CW 23, p119)

The CPGB also seeks to 'preserve the unity of the proletariat' with the 'bourgeois labour party'. It expresses this in its belief that the Labour Party can be won away from right wing capitalist influence towards progressive policies. This is the significance of abandoning the vanguard concept of the party, for it reinforces the notion that, despite its present leadership, the Labour Party must be considered as a legitimate vehicle for the historic interests of the working class. In fulfilling this role, however, the party is caught in a contradiction. On the one hand, it will be pushed by mass pressure from the working class away from its allies in the Labour Party. On the other, it has to maintain that link. This contradiction will reflect itself internally in the development of the antagonism between the Frenchites and present leadership. The former will mediate the pressure from the working class, reflecting a spontaneous hostility to the dominant reformist leadership of the working class. The criticisms it makes of left unity or the concept of the party held by the leadership will become a rallying point for workers within the Party. Although the leadership will manoeuvre and try to accommodate the two opposing pressures, the limits to this are set by its social base. To a certain extent, these conflicts are already being expressed:

'Left unity as projected by our party at this moment in time is seen by many people in the labour movement as the CP increasingly prepared to compromise on matters of Communist principles and quite blatantly watering down policy on some very crucial issues merely in order to give an image of acceptance and respectability to certain allies in the movement...

What of our partners in this "unity", how do they view the CP? A

recent editorial in Tribune made reference to groups and political parties who operate democratic centralism merely as a means of suppressing dissent and free speech. If this is unity, it is shallow unity indeed.' (Letter to Comment, 1.11.75, p352)

The debates within the Communist Party are the debates going on amongst advanced workers. That between Purdy and the trade unionists within the Party represents the current one on the social contract. Purdy's views are those of the vast majority of workers. The leadership's inability to defeat Purdy expresses the frustration of workers who cannot see how the social contract is to be fought politically. This debate expresses the current state of the movement, but it obscures what will be the more fundamental debate, when the question will be not whether to oppose the social contract and cuts in living standards, but how. At present, the Frenchites and the leadership are in a fragile unity in opposition to Purdy. But when the working class itself gives the answer to Purdy, the basis for that unity will no longer exist. Then the conflicts between the Frenchites and the leadership will come into the open. In these conflicts exists the possibility of a split, with one tendency moving in a centrist direction.

The debates in the Communist Party will focus on the new draft of the **British Road to Socialism**, which will appear in January or February 1977. This will be a most significant debate for advanced workers. We have to be prepared to intervene in it.

Over the past months, we have understood that the CPGB is important in that it expresses in the clearest and most developed form left reformist ideas. We have posed the question: why can the CP fill this role, and we have provided our answer, not by starting with the relation of the CPGB to the Soviet bureaucracy, but by looking at its relation to the British working class and its leadership. We see the relation to the Soviet Union as an entirely secondary question. The measure of the academic method of Cdes PT and FR is that they do not provide an answer to anything.

R Dornhorst 1.11.76.

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