

communist bulletin

30p

* Communist Bulletin Group
Our Platform

* ELECTION
—Attack on Workers

* Aire Valley Yarns

* Left in Opposition
I.C.C.—Marxist Contradictions

* "Unity of Communist Militants"	Breaking from Leftism — or Leftist Brake?
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About The Communist Bulletin Group

This issue of the Communist Bulletin is the first to be published since the Bulletin Group made the transition from the loose discussion circle which emerged from the splits within the International Communist Current to a formally constituted organisation. The first three issues of the Bulletin, (a few copies of which are still available on request) are a detailed account of these splits and contain an extensive record of the subsequent discussions which led to the formation of the Communist Bulletin Group.

Put very simply the splits were a reaction to the monolithism of the ICC's internal practice and the sectarianism which inevitably flowed from that. Although individual members of the Bulletin group had many criticisms of specific positions of the ICC - the economics of capitalist decadence, the state in the period of transition, the Left in Opposition theory and the question of "Machievellianism" (readers of the ICC's press will be familiar with the debates) - its important to understand that the different analyses some of us hold on these questions, were NOT the basis for the splits and are certainly NOT the basis for a new organisation. The splits took place not because differences existed inside the ICC but because, contrary to its rhetoric, the ICC had developed a practice which dealt with differences by suppressing them.

Given that we defend a platform essentially similar to the ICC's and that our view of the role of the Party in the revolutionary process is also very close to that of the ICC its hardly surprising that we've been asked 'Why another group?' The ICC, for example, argue in WR 60 (p7) that "in practice" we dont actually defend the positions within the Platform because -

" this Platform isnt a disembodied set of ideas but a mode of functioning and collective praxis of the proletariat..."

We accept of course that a Platform isnt a disembodied set of ideas, but we reject the assumption that there is only one mode of functioning which can be logically deduced from it. That assumption must imply that revolutionary practice and organisation has a simple, eternally valid form. We think that this is fundamentally incorrect. It's not just the clarity of the political positions that we defend that determines how we organise ourselves and our work - its also inseparable from our assessment of the specific period in which we operate, from our own strength or fragility and from the development of the class' consciousness and activity and our actual relationship to that.

Of course, although its correct that a Marxist understanding shows that the dynamic of the proletariat's consciousness and activity tends towards a unity which is reflected in its revolutionary minorities by the eventual emergence of a single centralised party, we dont think that its possible yet to tell the precise form and shape of that organisation. We believe the objective and subjective conditions for such a fundamental regroupment are not yet present. It depends fundamentally on the development of the crisis, on the balance of class forces and on the proletariat itself. We cannot summon up the Zimmerwald of tomorrow by an act of will or by wishful thinking. However we dont have any illusions that the Party will somehow emerge spontaneously with the maturation of the material conditions for it. It will also be the product of a long process of clarification involving the unceasing efforts of revolutionaries NOW towards its creation. Therefore we think that it is necessary that revolutionaries today, regroup their forces on as wide as possible a basis but that it can only be a regroupment which doesnt place chains on the very process of clarification which is required for the final regroupment of tomorrow.

In the critique we've made of current revolutionary practice and in the positions we've developed since we left the ICC we believe we have a significant contribution to make to that process of clarification and something to say about the way it should be carried out. Its the fact that we dont believe that that contribution can be made from inside any other existing organisation that underlies our decision to form the Bulletin group. We're certainly open to arguments that our contributions can be made inside other organisations or that our positions are either wrong or trivial and therefore not worth organisational separation, but so far no-one has even attempted to convince us of that. Until we are convinced otherwise the formation of a separate organisation remains the only way that we can both intervene in the class struggle and simultaneously contribute fully to the theoretical elaboration of the tasks facing us as revolutionaries. Paradoxically therefore, we believe that our split from the ICC is a positive contribution to the process of regroupment.

We dont have any illusions about ourselves as an organisation. On the contrary, the crux of much of our critique of current revolutionary practice is precisely that our tasks can only be realistically carried out if we abandon illusions. Therefore we do not present ourselves as the kernel of the future party or the current pole of clarity or regroupment. With only the seven of us such a claim would be

ridiculous. We see ourselves as only one among many elements which make up the revolutionary milieu whose collective efforts make up the process of clarification which will lead to the vital regroupments of the future.

What we've been arguing for the past two years is that the central question underlying the question of regroupment is the question of organisation and that can't be discussed outside an understanding of the material circumstances in which the revolutionary milieu finds itself. The theoretical acquisitions of the revolutionaries of the last revolutionary wave the Bolsheviks and the Italian and German Lefts, in particular the KAPD - can't possibly be understood

and applied until we understand how fundamentally our situation differs from theirs. Today we are more tiny, more remote and more isolated from the class than revolutionaries have ever been in a pre-revolutionary period. Our situation is UNIQUE and UNPRECEDENTED in revolutionary history.

Only by understanding the consequences of that can we begin to deal with the question of organisation. We've already dealt with this at considerable length in the last three issues of the Bulletin but because of their restricted circulation we would like to quote at length from "A New Regroupment" in Issue 3 which deals specifically with the consequences of the current fragility of the revolutionary movement.

"For us, the tininess and isolation of the revolutionary milieu has two major consequences:

1) First of all it means a major weakening in the process by which revolutionary fractions give voice and shape to the clarity which emerges from the activity of the class as a whole. The rupture between the class and its revolutionaries means that the task of clarification so vital to the tasks of revolutionaries is condemned to take place in considerable isolation from its material base. The day-to-day contact with the life of the class, the unceasing interplay between communist militants and the class as a whole at every level of struggle which was enjoyed as a matter of course by the revolutionary fractions of the past, is totally denied to us. When revolutionaries of the last wave 'reflected' on the lessons of the class' experience they did so as a living part of the class in a fashion which allowed them not only a sensitivity to the twists and turns of the developments of the class' consciousness, but more importantly, provided them with an immediate feedback on the validity of their 'reflections'. The Bolsheviks were implanted in the heart of the class not only because of their political clarity, but, dialectically, the opposite was also true. They were politically clear because they were at the heart of the class.

For us however the situation is quite different. Not only are we forced to carry on the process of clarification from the position of virtual bystanders, but the fruits of this process, the political positions which underpin our activity, aren't subject to the same testing in the fires of the actual struggle. We can't tell you how valid or how wrong a position is simply by the response of the class to it since the response is nearly always the same - nil. In this situation there is almost nothing to guard against an arbitrariness in the emergence of positions and in the weight we accord them. The briefest of glances at the various "vital" issues which have torn the communist milieu apart in the past decade provides no shortage of evidence on this. From the CWO alone we've had an entire series of issues proclaimed to be absolutely essential to revolutionary identity - The Falling Rate of Profit theory V Luxemburgism, the necessity for Labour Time Vouchers in the Period of Transition, 1921 as the definitive date for the demise of the revolution etc. etc. - today of course they've all been replaced by other equally "vital" issues (like factory groups, for example) or become merely ideas for debate. The CWO's response to the debris left behind by this sectarianism is simply to apologise for being wrong and insist they'll be extra careful in the future.

The ICC, on the other hand, began its life with a much fuller grasp of the real weight of sectarianism and of the real material basis which lay behind it. For this reason it was able to achieve the most complete and significant regroupment since the last revolutionary wave - an achievement which can't possibly be underestimated. But, as we've argued in past Bulletins and argue again in texts in this one, their grasp of the material basis of monolithism and sectarianism remained tragically incomplete and that, despite much rhetoric to the contrary, the end result was an edifice of monolithism and sectarianism every bit as stifling as that of the CWO's.

We're not arguing here that our fragility and isolation means that we should never take up positions for fear that we're wrong. What we're arguing for is that in the absence of that vital input and scrutiny from the class itself we must exercise a much greater caution about WHEN to take up a position, and that when we judge the time to be ripe, we exercise a much greater caution about the WEIGHT we give any position. THE EAGERNESS WITH WHICH THE ICC, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE LEAPT INTO PROGRAMMATIC COMMITMENT OVER THE MOST TRANSIENT AND CONJUNCTURAL ANALYSES - THE LEFT IN

OPPOSITION, THE LEFT IN POWER, MACHIEVELLIANISM, etc - IS THE VERY FLESH AND BLOOD OF SECTARIANISM. We believe, and experience bears us out, that in the present period, its an attitude which interferes with the most vital aspects of our work - the process of clarification and the organisational strengthening of the revolutionary milieu.

2) We think that these arguments apply with equal force to the question of centralisation. If the question of the moment is "what kind of centralisation?", we dont think it can be answered in the abstract, or in advance, but we must take as our starting point our extreme fragility and isolation. In this situation, divorced from the enervating effect of the life of the class, and lacking the natural checks and balances which flow from that, the pressures towards a sect-like behaviour and all the paraphernalia which accompanies that - bureaucracy, cliquism and survivalism - must be enormous. We've already shown how the ICC, for example, while theoretically rejecting Lenin's democratic centralism, have in practice created central organs more absolute, more powerful and more monolithic than anything that was ever seen in the Bolshevik Party prior to the counter-revolution. Again, we dont think our argument here leads to an abandonment of centralisation, but towards a centralisation which is consistently aware of the pressures on it in the present period, and which therefore, places the emphasis not on monolithic homogeneity and not on rigid discipline with itself at the head but on a method of working which is more concerned with involving ALL in the tasks of the organisation and which opens up and aids the process of clarification.....if the crippling weight of sectarianism and monolithism is to be seriously rejected then wishful thinking and pious rhetoric is insufficient. Our desires must be concretely reflected in the way that we work and in the way that we organise ourselves. And in the current period that must mean an organisation which is much more open, much more flexible and which defines itself more broadly and less specifically than do organisations like the ICC and the CWO. We have regrouped ourselves into a new organisation, not because we think we have more correct positions than other currently existing organisations but because we believe we are putting forwards a better way of asking more correct questions."

Back Issues

Issue 1

Editorial. Who is publishing the Bulletin and why.

The Long March of the CWO. (or The Hunting of the Snark). A brief exploration into the as yet unmapped territory which is the history of the Communist Workers Organisation.

C.W.O., the Italian Left and the Comintern. Another assessment of the process of Bordighisation of the Communist Workers Organisation.

An Open Letter to the Proletarian Milieu on the Chenier Affair. The destruction of the militant Chenier by the ICC has implications for the whole proletarian milieu.

Correspondence. Aberdeen and NoWar on the Class nature of the ICC

Rowntree and Weyden on Communist Organisation.

The Falklands War and the Response of Revolutionaries

Issue 2

The Ultra Left Review: Vehicle without Lights. An open letter to the comrades of Wildcat and Ultra Left Review. Why we believe the path they are on to be a political dead end.

Letter to the ICC and Our Reply. A response to our letter suggesting joint action on the Falklands War and our reply.

Aberdeen and the ICC. A statement of our experience in the ICC and a repudiation of their accusation that our intention was to "destroy" the ICC.

Letter from the CWO and our Reply.

Letter from Tampa. Correspondence and a leaflet from US comrades.

Another Look at the Question of Organisation. A major look at the question in the light of the experience of the last revolutionary wave.

Issue 3

A New Regroupment Introduction, texts and letters which ended with the formation of the Bulletin group

Capitalism - One Way Ticket to Atlantis. A text from Tampa.

Letter on the Aberdeen/CWO meeting.

Intercom. A post mortem.

PLATFORM of the Communist Bulletin Group

Class Society

The exact age of humanity is unknown but current estimates put it somewhere between one and four million years. Class Society, a society in which one class of men dominates all other classes is perhaps only six thousand years old: in terms of human history, an extremely short period of time.

For the vastly greater part of his existence on Earth man has been a cooperative communal-living being. Class Society, in an attempt to make legitimate and to perpetuate its existence, has thrown up an elaborate ideological facade which tries to peddle the lie that how man is today is how he has always been, conveniently forgetting the thousands of years before Class society. Human nature is portrayed as base, brutish and unchanging, rather than as a product of the base, brutish nature of Class society.

The high point of Class society - Capitalism - has, as is to be expected, spawned the greatest refinement of this lie: that the pinnacle of human potential is - Capitalism. It is Marxism alone which has challenged this lie and which has pointed to the historical movement of all class societies; Marxism alone which has shown that such societies have gone through periods of ascendancy which are then inescapably followed by a period of decadence. Ascendant when they have served a progressive function in developing man's potential to develop the productive forces and control the world and enjoy freedom from want; decadent when the revolutionary thrust of the particular class society has come up against the limits of its own historic period and has thus become a barrier to further human development.

Thus Slave society, which destroyed the hundreds of thousands of years old communal society of primitive man was revolutionary and progressive in that it laid the foundations for a subsequent development of thought and technology which, after subsequent centuries of decadence and stagnation, gave birth to Feudalism. And Feudalism in turn gave birth, with its further creation of both a potential proletariat and a productive surplus, to Capitalism; a Capitalism which, through revolution, swept aside Feudalism's decadence.

Capitalism's ideology would have us believe that this latest and most profound class society is eternal. It is not. Capitalism is based on the creation of and the exploitation of a collective producer class - the Proletariat. Despite the barrage of capitalist ideology which attempts to fragment, privatise, isolate and individualise workers, that collectivity is absolute and is as international as Capitalism itself. Capitalism has, as Marx noted, produced its own gravediggers.

The proletariat, as with all previous classes which would become revolutionary, threw up a political expression - in this case Marxism - which even in the period of capitalist ascendancy was able to identify the logic of previous human development and predict the finite nature of Capitalism.

The Development of Capitalism

Capitalism, up to the end of the Nineteenth Century, despite all its appalling exploitation and horrific conditions, was progressive. It created a world wide social system, created a world wide revolutionary class and developed technology and man's control of his environment to the point where all mankind's material needs can be potentially met. It also during this period of ascendancy was able to provide real gains for the working class upon demand, for the proletariat could and did ally itself to progressive factions of the bourgeoisie to further its own, and Capitalism's ends.

Decadence

But 1914 marked the definitive end of Capitalism's progressive period. Up until then its wars had been wars of capitalist expansion; its crises had been crises of growth. By 1914 the world was already carved up between the capitalist states. Expansion could only take place at the expense of rival capitals. And Capitalism had to expand to fuel the accumulation that is the motor of its existence. From 1914 Capitalism began to feed upon itself - it had become decadent. The working class it depended upon now became a revolutionary class, a fact dramatically driven home by the victorious Russian revolution, and indeed by the Europe-wide upheavals of the revolutionary wave of 1917 to 1921. As the Third International proclaimed:

" A new epoch has opened - the epoch of proletarian revolution."

The Revolutionary Wave

It is within the political expressions of this wave that we locate our roots. From Lenin and the Bolsheviks of course, who played such a major role in the initial unfolding of the revolutionary wave and in the efforts preceding that to break from the decaying elements of the Second International, but more specifically from the Left fractions of the Communist movement - the K.A.P.D., the Dutch Tribune Group and the Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Left, who fought a rearguard action against the decay of the Third International which rapidly became a defender of the counterrevolution in Russia with the downturn and defeat of the revolutionary wave.

The Counterrevolution

This counterrevolution was a direct product of the failure of the workers of other countries to successfully make revolution. Russia, trying to exist, isolated in a capitalist world, could only do so by becoming capitalist. The workers who rallied behind the cries of Internationalism in 1917 were soon to be crushed in the interests of the Russian 'Motherland'.

The Communist Tradition

The Left Communist tradition built on the gains of Marxism of last century - the understanding of the revolutionary role of the proletariat, the realisation that the capitalist state must be toppled by force, the recognition that a dictatorship of the workers must oversee the transition period between Capitalism and communism, the understanding that Capitalism's very process of accumulation would lead to its death crisis. To these understandings the Left Communists added the working class' experiences during the 1917-1921 revolutionary wave and the appreciation of the political and historical changes that decadence had brought, to lay the foundations upon which we, and all today's communist groups, build our platform. More than fifty years separate us from the last revolutionary wave but once more these political gains of the working class are being presented as the class intensifies its battle with Capitalism.

Our Political Activity

Thus our political activity is based on the following:

The Cycle of Decay.

This century Capitalism is locked into a cycle of crisis-war-reconstruction-crisis. Capitalism this century has no solution to its crisis other than preparation for war and war itself. Only on the back of reconstruction following war has it been able to stagger on. The onset of decadence at the beginning of this century forced Capitalism worldwide into a frenzy of mass murder in World War I; the defeat of the revolutionary wave of 1917-21 allowed Capitalism to force the proletariat into the misery of the Great Depression and then into the further bloodbath of World War II. Only on the bones of millions of workers and on the destruction of whole economies was Capitalism able to carry out the post war reconstruction which lasted until the 1960's and the end of which presents Capitalism once more with the horror of its own decay.

The Impossibility of Reforms

Decadent Capitalism cannot grant meaningful reforms to the working class. The 'gains' that workers appear to have made this century are both localised and temporary (we see how quickly they disappear). They are won by only a small percentage of the world's workers and, above all, are paid for by the blood of millions of workers who have died in Capitalism's wars.

The Unions

The Trade Unions which were set up last century when the winning of reforms was a possibility, have fundamentally changed this century when such gains and reforms are no longer possible. They now act to tie workers to the state, policing them in the interests of capital. In times of war they have dragooned workers to the front; in times of 'peace' (and this century the world has known no peace) they have acted as brokers for the state dictating levels of exploitation. Whenever workers have struggled this century the unions have been at the forefront of the state's defences - dividing, isolating, fragmenting workers, locking them into the 'national interest'. This role is practiced not, as the leftists would have it, because of 'bad leaders' (as Marxists we recognise that leaders are thrown up by the logic and drive of social organisations, they don't determine that logic and drive), but because the whole union apparatus defends a bourgeois political programme for the organisation of capital which forces it to act as an arm of the capitalist state. Indeed it is the grass roots of the union machine which are the most dangerous to workers. Few workers have any deep confidence in the bureaucrats at the heads of the unions but many stewards and union militants because of their militant words and radical stances, are able to tie workers to the union organisation. Workers in struggle constantly find themselves in conflict with these stewards who in turn are forced to adopt ever more radical poses so that they and the union machine can ultimately fulfil their role of derailing struggle and confining it. There is nothing Machievellian about this: some stewards are obviously stooges and toadies, but many others are well intentioned individuals trying to defend workers' conditions. However their subjective intentions count for nothing. Their objective role is to prevent workers breaking out of the union strangle-hold, joining up with each other and recognising that capitalism can offer nothing but austerity and war.

The Capitalist State

The state in decadence dominates all social life. The economic crises and collapses of last century led to a centralisation of capital. This century, where national capitals confront one another for survival, has led to the state more and more controlling all aspects of the economy in an effort to make it as resilient and responsive as possible and this domination has been mirrored in all aspects of society: education, health, planning etc. State Capitalism is not to be found only in China and the Iron Curtain countries, it is universal - as developed in America as Angola, Britain as Brazil.

Parliament and Democracy

Parliament, once a vehicle for workers winning reforms, under decadence can offer workers nothing. Even the bourgeoisie uses it only for its role in mystifying workers, pushing the lie that 'Democracy' has some meaning. It is the state's executive and permanent organisation that fundamentally dictates policy. Parliament is an attack on the struggle and consciousness of workers and acts to encourage them into a passive, individualised acceptance of their exploitation. The readiness of the bourgeoisie to dispense with it completely - in time of war, for example or when it is no longer an appropriate form of control for them - shows the emptiness of its content.

Factions of Capital

Under decadence all factions of the bourgeoisie are reactionary, all are equally mortal enemies of the workers. To pick and choose between them is for workers to pick and choose their own executioners. The 'democratic' and 'liberal' factions are every bit as drenched in workers' blood this century as the 'right-wing' and 'fascist' factions. Campaigns by radicals, Stalinists or Trotskyists to 'critically' support one capitalist faction against another are merely manoeuvres by these bourgeois groups to lead workers away from the real battle ground and disarm them. For these 'leftist' organisations, far from being part of the proletarian movement, are, by their explicit defences of capitalism - East or West - shown to be merely the left wing of the international bourgeoisie. By their failure to separate themselves from the decaying Comintern and the advocates of state capitalist programmes they show themselves to be merely offering workers yet more bourgeois programmes for the survival of Capitalism and for the continued dominance of Capitalism worldwide.

The Impossibility of 'National Liberation'

With decadence all the world is capitalist. Last century workers could support some bourgeois national liberation movements since these aided the development of Capitalism and eliminated pre-capitalist social relations. Today this is no longer possible: Capitalism cannot develop any more. Two world wars have seen the formation of imperialist blocs: after World War I some half dozen blocs - after World War II this had been whittled down to two, the Russian and the American, which have carved the world up between them. National liberation wars today are only moments in the imperialist rivalry between these two. National liberation movements against one of the blocs serve only to turn workers and peasants into cannon fodder for the interests of the other. The revolutionary cry of World War I; "turn the imperialist war into a civil war" can be the only watch-word of the proletariat everywhere, the 'third world' included.

Partial Struggles

The decomposition of capitalist material life has led to a decomposition of capitalist social life in reaction to which all manner of partial struggles have arisen, focussing on race, or sex, or age. These, far from contributing to revolutionary struggle merely serve to defuse it. Only by destroying the material base of Capitalism can its cultural oppression be destroyed. Partial struggles act to veil the real conflict between classes today, hiding this beneath the myth of inter-class unity of blacks, gays, women or the young.

The Barbarism of decadent Capitalism

Decadent Capitalism is barbaric. It can only survive through a remorseless drive to war - even though the next world war may destroy humanity. This drive is inescapable; it doesn't result from irrationality or lunacy on the part of a particular faction of the bourgeoisie, or the intrigues of an entrenched military; it is endemic in a system which is based on competition and accumulation. A peaceful Capitalism is no more a possibility than a Capitalism which stamps out poverty and oppression. Thus peace campaigns are reactionary campaigns - attempts to blind workers to the real nature of Capitalism, to tie them to

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the state with the myth that the state can be appealed to and is susceptible to popular feeling, to hide the fact that war under capitalism is inescapable. The only way to end war is through the civil war which will overthrow Capitalism, for if this fails Capitalism will destroy all humanity in the holocaust of World War III.

Workers and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The form that the Proletarian dictatorship will take has been made clear by the experience of workers' struggles in the past: workers councils, centralised and based on elected and revocable delegates which will enable the working class to wield its power in a truly collective manner. The working class cannot yield up its power to any minority, no matter how proletarian that minority may be. Only class-wide involvement in the running of the state will ensure the continuation of the surge of consciousness which revolution brings and which alone will ensure the destruction of Capitalism.

The Task of Communists

The communist groups thrown up by the class before the revolution will always be small - the mass workers' party belongs to the period of ascendancy. Numbers are likely to grow significantly only in the revolutionary period. The recognition of the need for a centralised international party is recognised by almost all communist groups today - but only the heightening of the class struggle can ensure its creation, though the preparation for that moment is an urgent task today. We, unlike some other communist groups, don't see the party's role as one of organising and directing the class. This view stems from a lack of confidence in the class, an inability to grasp the lessons of past insurrections which showed how the full revolutionary potential of the class frequently left even the most clear communist organisations far behind. Only the complete involvement of the whole class can offer guarantees against reaction; the clearest party programme is no substitute for this. The role of revolutionary groups, as it will be of the party is to give a political leadership to the class, to make clear the communist goal and to point the way forward showing clearly the dangers that face the proletariat today, in the revolutionary period and in the period of transition to communism. As the party will be in the revolution so it must be today: centralised and disciplined yet careful not to let such discipline be confused with conformity, rigidity or monolithism. The guarantees of the party's, and today's political fractions', work must always be political clarity and not just organisational practice.

The Communist Bulletin Group

June 1983

After the Election

The Capitalist class of the Western 'Democracies' makes clever use of parliamentary elections to keep workers under control. They try to con them into believing that it is 'the people' who decide how the country is governed, obscuring the fact that all the fundamental organs of the State remain in place whatever the election result. Furthermore the parliamentary system allows discredited governments to be speedily replaced by a fresh figurehead leadership with a new batch of empty promises.

In those parts of the world where the bourgeoisie does not have this flexibility, notably Eastern Europe, contempt for their regime is near universal and their rule is preserved by little more than pure repression - this can have explosive consequences, as demonstrated by the recent eruptions in Poland.

There can only be one response from revolutionaries to parliamentary elections: an unambiguous denunciation of the whole charade, a refusal to participate in any way and on any basis, and a call on the working class to boycott the polling booths and organise their own struggle. This is what our organisation attempted in the distribution of the leaflet which follows this article.

Why Did Thatcher Win?

When revolutionaries analyse the victory of the Conservative Party in the recent British General Election they do so for specific reasons. We are not university professors seeking to explain the minutiae of the bourgeoisie's party political pantomime and to make speculative forecasts for the future. Nor do we share the mass media's interest in the sordid progress of individual capitalist politicians' careers. Rather we seek to determine the general thrust of the bourgeoisie's political manoeuvres and their implications for the class struggle.

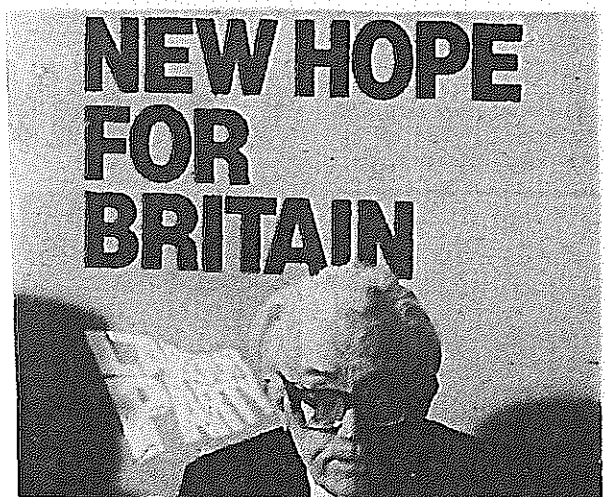
Thatcher's government has succeeded in halting the recent British trend (mirrored in many other countries) in which the party in power fails to be re-elected for a second full term. Their triumph can be ascribed to two main factors: their success in keeping workers militancy in check and the disarray of the Labour Party.

In the 1974 and 1979 elections the party in power had seen its credibility shattered by waves of unrest and strikes. In contrast Thatcher's government has experienced an almost unbroken string of successes against the working class. After some early scares against the steel workers the bosses have been firmly on top. Strikes have never looked like getting out of the control of the Unions who have "led" workers to defeat after defeat by keeping strikes isolated and sapping combativity by calling useless token stoppages - the health workers strike was a prime

example of these tactics at work.

The most potent weapon in the bosses' armoury over the past four years has been the threat of mass unemployment; whole industries have been dismantled, and those still in work have been battered into quiescence by the promise that if they struggle they will be out of a job with no hope of getting another. The carrot of an economic recovery "sometime in the future" and a return to the good old days of full employment and prosperity has been dangled in front of the workers in return for industrial peace today. Having milked the Falklands war for its full propaganda value Thatcher was quick to call an election before it became clear that there was to be no recovery and before any section of workers called her bluff and managed to break the bosses' stranglehold.

In the early 1970's revolutionaries considered the Labour Party to be the most intelligent faction of the bourgeoisie, and therefore the most likely to hold power. Labour were clear on the counterrevolutionary role of trade-unionism, understood the pivotal role of the state in all economic and social spheres and did not share the commitment of the Tory 'backwoodsmen' to the



New Hope? — No Chance!

dinosaurs or private capital. Today this evaluation must be reconsidered for it is clear that it is the Tories rather than Labour which has, thus far, more successfully come to terms with the deepening crisis. They have mounted a

selective and cunning attack on the working class (having learned the lessons of the 1970-1979 period) have been prepared to close down whole industries in the overall interests of the US bloc and have been the staunchest supporters of the American military build-up. By contrast, the Labour Party has been thrown into turmoil by the downturn in the economy. No matter how its leaders thrashed about for a vote-winning issue all they were able to serve up was a dog-eared Keynesian programme for recovery which was incredible to a large proportion of those who normally vote Labour.

Labour's decisive defeat on June 9th can be explained by simple material factors rather than by recourse to absurd theories about a huge plot by the whole capitalist class. As the crisis deepens the options open to the different factions of the bourgeoisie are narrowing. The economy is no longer generating any surplus, as it did in the 1960s and early 70s to allow left wing parties to differentiate themselves from the right through provision of new welfare measures, buying off certain militant sections of the workers etc. More and more the ONLY policies open to ANY government is a full scale austerity programme and a direct attack on the living standards of workers, as demonstrated by the current actions of the Socialist Party regime in France. Given its composition it was not surprising that the Tory party could unite behind a full frontal attack on the working class, but the Labour party has been thrown into confusion and factional infighting. Large sections of the Labour party have been unwilling to accept the adoption of the austerity measures made necessary by the crisis, being fully aware that putting such a programme into action would destroy their credibility as the 'workers party' and have instead clutched at desperate policy remedies such as virtually turning Britain into a seige economy etc. The fight within the Labour party can be expected to intensify in the months ahead; the right within the party balked by the higher echelons of the unions will (in an attempt to stop the SDP stealing their party's clothes) want to prepare for a speedy return to power on a 'moderate' ticket, while the left will want the party to retain its present policies, confident that in the fullness of time, it will eventually be called to the helm of the British state.

Whatever strategy is successful it is clear that the Labour party in opposition will try to corral outbursts of workers militancy into

support for its capitalist programme. It will be the task of revolutionaries to unmask this scheme.

Perspectives for the Coming Period

The election of June 9th was a major triumph for British Capital as yet again millions of workers trooped through the polling booths to choose their butchers. The government will claim it has a mandate for further austerity measures 'in the national interest'. The weakest sections of the working class, the unemployed and the old, will be hardest hit first, but as the crisis deepens we can all expect to come under the cosh. Spending on the repressive organs of the state will be heavily increased in preparation for fresh bouts of civil disorder and Britain will play its full part in the escalation of the the Western bloc's military arsenals.

A key part of the new government's legislative programme will be the proposed Union and Employment bills. Though they will doubtless be presented as attacks on "irresponsible trade unionism" it is clear that these measures will be aimed at outlawing wildcat strikes imposing severe penalties on strikers etc. The unions are worried that these measures could rebound and result in workers getting out of their control, a concern which will spread throughout the bourgeoisie if the class mounts a major challenge to the government. If Thatcher and her crew do come unstuck the SDP, Labour party and their assorted hangers-on will be waiting in the wings to step into the breach.

For the working class in Britain, as in every other country, the years ahead will only bring greater impoverishment. Perhaps one positive outcome of the election was that millions of workers weren't taken in by the blandishments of the Labour party and very quickly it will become clear that Thatcher can't deliver the recovery.

As we wrote in the last issue of the Bulletin the last few years have taught workers in Britain that union led strikes lead nowhere but the dole queue. At present that recognition has led to passivity rather than to workers taking the reins of the struggle into their own hands, but as it becomes clearer that there is not going to be a recovery and that the bosses will kick us in the teeth whether we fight back or not, we can expect to see the proletariat making the first tentative steps towards rejecting the logic of capitalism and fighting on its own terms. The job of revolutionaries is to ram these lessons home.

BEWARE OF ELECTION FEVER!

DOWN WITH ELECTION FRAUD

Its election time again! Once again the press and T.V. is full of the old lies and shit trying to get us to support one set of bosses against another. They've called the election now because they know they can't wait any longer before the myth of recovery is shattered and before workers' militancy (at present bubbling beneath the surface) explodes into a new 'winter of discontent'.

None of them - Labour, Tory or whatever - can hide the catastrophe facing the world any longer. All they can do is pretend they have a solution before it's too late for pretence.

INFLATION - AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The Tories present inflation triumphantly as their ace card. True, they've got it down to its lowest level in years, but what does this really mean? They know, and everybody else knows, that it's guaranteed to rise again. Every country in the world is plagued by inflation and no-one, right or left, knows how to deal with it. And we all know the real cost of this "triumph" against inflation: cuts in the 'social wage' of workers - in schools, in health care etc. and in the unspeakable desperation of mass unemployment. For the ruling class this is just an acceptable and necessary part of the price to be paid in the struggle to become more competitive in the capitalist jungle. And they're all on their knees praying that the misery the dole produces will create fear in the workers and not anger so that they can use it as a club to hammer workers into accepting MORE layoffs, MORE speed-ups and LESS wages.

THE CAPITALIST CRISIS IS WORLDWIDE - AND INESCAPABLE

For the truth is that NOBODY in the ruling class knows how to deal with unemployment. Like inflation it is worldwide and is an inescapable product of the most catastrophic crisis which has gripped the world since the '30's. Millions upon millions of workers in America, in Russia, in China, in Europe - in EVERY country - are on the dole. The conditions of working class life are worsening everywhere. Every day markets shrink and businesses go bankrupt. Entire countries like Mexico and Poland teeter on the brink of total collapse. There is no escape. Capitalism worldwide is collapsing. All the politicians offer us is lies, lies and more lies. They don't know how to stop the crisis. All they can do is try to impose policies which will make their own country more competitive on the disappearing world markets and that can only mean making our products cheaper by turning the screws on the working class. (They all neglect to mention, of course, that since sacrifices are being screwed out of workers in every country, we end up no better off).

THE LEFT, THE RIGHT AND THE UNIONS ARE AGAINST US

Make no mistake, the attacks on workers aren't just a scheme of the mad Tories. These attacks couldn't have been carried out without the co-operation of the bosses' cops on the shop floor - the unions. They agree that the national capital has

to be made more competitive. That's why they support the lay-offs and the speed-ups. That's why they destroy worker's resistance by channelling it into useless, token, one day strikes and marches. That's why they divide it into doomed sectional or local strikes and do anything to stop struggle spreading and linking up. Look at the tens of thousands of jobs lost in the shipyards and the car plants. Look at Steel - 140,000 out of 230,000 have been sacked over the past 3 years with the full co-operation of the unions. As for the Labour Party, their only real difference is that they worry about the attacks provoking uncontrollable struggle. That's why they take a "softer" line. But remember the last Labour governments started the "Tory" cuts. They put the screws to us with their Social Contract for keeping down wages. They will be no different next time.

WORLD WAR III

If the differences on economic policy between left and right are fake differences as far as workers are concerned, then so also are the squabbles they have about defence. What they are "squabbling" about are merely the details of HOW the workers will be slaughtered in the defence of the country when the time comes. So forget all the shit about Trident and Cruise etc. What's important is that they all agree that it is necessary for workers to die to defend capitalism. And if they have their way, the coming global slaughter will be unavoidable. Just like the 30's, the only end to the desperate struggle for the dwindling market will be global holocaust.

THE REAL ALTERNATIVE

That's why just refusing to vote isn't sufficient. There is an alternative to what the ruling class offers us, but we have to fight for it. We have to put our interests, workers' interests first and to hell with capitalism's interests. They want sacrifices which never end - we want work and a decent life free from poverty and fear. The choice this election is not giving us is the choice the Polish workers made at the height of their struggle - to hell with your system and your rule. If capitalism is collapsing, then good riddance. And every strike to defend our interests points the way forward to achieve this.

If capitalism is collapsing, then good riddance. We don't need it whether its of the Russian or Western variety and every strike to defend our interests points the way forward to achieve this. But we can't fight in isolation. An isolated struggle is a doomed one. It's no good sitting in our own yard, and our own industry. We'll just be picked off one by one. Each struggle must be linked up with other struggles and to other workers who haven't yet entered the struggle. The Michelin workers recently on strike in Aberdeen should have gone to the Michelin factory in Dundee to the Timex occupation and to Glasgow's Albion Plant. That's what the workers did in Poland. Each strike was immediately spread from factory to factory, from town to town and while the strikers linked up like that the bosses were powerless.

And above all, we must control our struggles ourselves and kick out the union policemen. They are against us and serve only to divide and weaken us. Mass working class struggle is the only answer to the Bosses' economic crisis: its the real contest for power that lies ahead of us, not the electoral farce on June 9th.

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This leaflet was written by the Communist Bulletin. Write to us at the following address: Box 85, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh.

Blast from the Past

In the wake of the election pantomime staged by the British bourgeoisie, the publication of the following text, the first in a series of reprints from the workers' movement, is particularly appropriate.

The extract has been taken from The Socialist of March 3rd 1921, the newspaper of the Socialist Labour Party. In it James Clunie argues that with the new period opened up by World War I and the Russian revolution, the working class has nothing to gain by participating in parliamentary elections.

Leftist historians like to portray the SLP as a syndicalist or anarchist group, a charge that is rebutted by the following passage from the Socialist of March 10th 1921:

" We belong to the Third Communist International and we are Bolsheviks, not because of "mouldy constitutions" but because of our view of revolutionary marxism have we stood opposed to the supposed British Communist Party of Great Britain, and we hope to be able to

continue that clear and clean attitude until we are able to establish a real united Communist Marxist organisation, and not a conglomeration of Labourist Reformists...."

Though the SLP had certain eccentricities and sectarian lapses, particularly when it refused to help form the anti-parliamentary Communist Party (British Section of the Third International) in Spring 1920, it was far clearer than the British Socialist Party (the organisation that provided the kernel of the Communist Party of Great Britain in August 1920) which wanted to strengthen the Labour Party and help it achieve reforms through parliament.

Thanks to the work of the German and Italian left revolutionaries in 1983 have a more theoretically developed anti-parliamentary position than that elaborated by the SLP in 1921 but between the two there is a clear continuity.

THE FUTILITY OF PARLIAMENTARY POWER

Back to the power of the ballot-box! Support Labour at all bye-elections, and give the lie to the Government! Show Lloyd-George and his gang that something is happening in the country! Enable the courageous Labour Party to block the business in the House until the unemployed get justice!

The latest paper decisions of the Labour Party gives rise to these sentiments.

It is not so very long since the same type of persons were telling the workers that they could not take from industry more than they put into it, and that by producing more they would get more; that unemployment is due to underconsumption; and that the workers should attack the cost of living because of a "vicious circle" in wages and prices. Now they complain for their weakness and jelly-fish character by telling the workers that the personnel of the House of Commons is just as they have made it. We are inclined to agree; if it were otherwise, most of the Labour men would either be with the Liberals, Coalitionists, or some other brand of capitalist party or else they would be still in the workshop working for their living. Many of the Labourists are in Parliament through the good graces of the capitalists in any case, and daren't act against Capitalism. Yet these are the men who constitute the party to which the "Communists" seek affiliation. Opportunism takes some curious twists. In any case, it is not a mere matter of party power, let alone class power, but one of expediency. The Labour Party is not a class organisation and never has been. It is, and always has been, a bourgeois political organisation of reformism. It has no class war basis, and the capitalists could place it in power during one month and discredit it by another.

Yet the vain, self-important Communists talk about helping the Labour Party into power in order to prove its uselessness, and then the masses will sway over to them! To them indeed. To whom, may we ask? To men who have not the courage of their own convictions? To a party that does not know its own mind because it thinks in a hundred and one different minds? To an organisation which fails to tell the workers exactly what their relations with the Labour Party are, and if they still want to affiliate thereto? To a party which has let down the revolutionary element in favour of a reformist element? To a body whose propaganda consists of stunts, lavish advertisements and a plentiful supply of money? We are afraid not. We are not going to win in that way. Our battle with the Labour Party is one between Reformism and Revolution; between class war and bourgeois social solidarity; between Marxism and Constitutionalism. Parliamentary power is futile. The only real power is economic power, and that forces the class struggle upon us. This struggle we must face.

REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

As Revolutionaries we must know where we stand and with whom we are fighting. Revolution is not a thing that can be brought in by a trick or by mere wriggling like finding out the secret of a Chinese puzzle. Nor can it be done with manifestoes and exclamations especially when these do not even convey correct economics and are signed by persons who fail to back up by deeds what they express in words. The elements of revolutionary progress in this country still points to the real need for Revolutionary Marxism; and the first thing we require is a class conscious working class. Unless the real power and desire comes from the ranks of the workers themselves revolution is hopeless. It must be strong and real and lasting. Hence we must educate the masses, and point out to them the message of our doctrine. Today they are being carried away with false hopes, and the great mass are totally indifferent and bewildered. To us the main principles of Revolutionary Marxism are in the following form:

To advocate the doctrines of class struggle.

To advocate revolutionary, industrial consciousness.

To advocate revolutionary, political action.

To teach the principles of Marxian economics and philosophy of history.

To stand clearly opposed to bourgeois Parliamentarism and the principles of reformism.

To clearly advocate that the political function of Labour is to crush Capitalism.

That the industrial power of Labour must back up its political power.

That the elements of revolution, its requirements and its probable characteristics, must be scientifically explained.

That the workers must be taught to think in terms of class struggle and Social Revolution.

These are some of the aspects of Revolutionary Marxism which impose themselves upon the workers who are now in the vanguard of Labour.

All power to the working class!

Such is the message of Marxism.

Note. In the above text the writer makes a sharp distinction between Labour and the 'Labour Party'. By the former he means the power of the organised working class and by the latter the bourgeois political party. Readers today in an era where, in Britain at least, the former is rarely used and where 'Labour' almost always refers to the Party should not imagine that Clunie has any illusions about the Labour Party. When he talks of the industrial power of Labour he is speaking about the power of the working class AS OPPOSED TO the the bourgeois reformism of the Labour Party.

Aire Valley Yarns

15.

Twenty two workers have been on strike since March at Aire Valley Yarns, a textile factory at Farsley near Leeds. The strike has been compared with the struggle of 150 workers at Grunwicks film processing plant in North West London seven years ago. Like Grunwicks the workers at Aire Valley Yarns are Asians employed for long hours and low wages in appalling conditions. The standard rate of pay is #1.10 an hour for 12 hour shifts and compulsory weekend work. The machinery is old and dangerous and there is no proper ventilation to deal with the thick dust produced by the yarn.

market. To make a profit these small firms have to exploit their workforce much more intensely than in the rest of the economy. To this end they recruit workers from the most defenceless sections of the working class: blacks, Asians and women. Because the owner of the firm is also the immediate boss of production and because the skills the workers have can easily be replaced there is little need for the disciplining role of the trade unions.

When workers in this sector go on strike they are essentially taking action against their conditions



Strikers picketing Aire Valley Yarns.

Like the workers at Grunwicks who joined a union, the Aire Valley workers joined the TGWU and elected one of their number, Liaquat Ali, as shop steward. When Ali was subsequently sacked the other workers walked out and were sacked too. In spite of a twenty four hour picket of the factory the company has managed to bus in replacements for the strikers, protected by a heavy police presence.

An attempt to black yarn for Aire Valley by workers at Busfields, a local dyeworks, was dealt with by writs issued against the shop steward at Busfields and one of the directors. Similarly at Grunwicks legal action was taken against postmen who tried to prevent all mail moving in and out of the plant. The Post Office workers union quickly bowed to the courts' decision.

There is some substance in calling the strike at Aire Valley Yarns a Yorkshire Grunwicks. But there have been many "Grunwicks" up and down the country.

What characterises this section of industry is a low level of investment and a highly competitive

of work. The Aire Valley workers return again and again to the low wages, the long hours, the dangerous nature of their employment. But because of their isolation and inexperience they are susceptible to the trap of trade unionism. The apparatus of the unions and the left holds out a false promise of a wider context for their struggle, solidarity and support from other workers and experience in organisation. As a worker at Grunwicks said "the union showed us how to organise our strike". Most immediately they can offer financial support with strike pay. Before the workers know where they are their courage, solidarity, and self-sacrifice become perverted by the unions into a struggle for 'union recognition'.

Small firms like Aire Valley Yarns seem like an anachronism in a period when the state is directly responsible for the major part of economic activity in the national capital and when the state regulates the activity of the largest firms which employ over 30% of all other workers. Precisely for this reason

continued on page 33.

Leaflet

The following leaflet was distributed at the 'Peoples March for Jobs' in Leeds by some members of the Communist milieu including a member of the Bulletin Group.

THE PEOPLE'S MARCH TO DEFEAT THE WORKERS STRUGGLE

A few people marching to London aren't going to do anything to change the fact that capitalism is on its last legs and cannot give us the means to live: workers, factories and raw materials lie idle though there are plenty of workers willing and able to produce wealth. Unemployment is real problem for the bourgeoisie today, and it's even more of a real problem for the working class, part of which is forced to subsist on the dole that gets less every year, and the rest of which accepts real wage cuts and production speed-ups under the threat of unemployment.

It's no good marching to capital cities begging cap in hand for jobs that don't exist. International revolution is the only way out of the crisis of capitalism. While the Tories impose austerity and prepare for World War Three, the Labour Party, the Communist Party and the Trotskyites devise all manner of useless protests to divert the working class from finding its own solution. The People's March is a sham!

We are asked to march with liberals and bishops and pray to end the "evil of unemployment", but it isn't up to Jesus Christ, it's up to us. We can't demand the right to work because there's no such thing as a right to work: we can only sell our labour power if the bosses can profit from it: we may as well demand the "right" to eat off gold plates. After an international communist revolution, in a worldwide communist society (the countries described as "communist" today are only variations of capitalism), work would be very different from the exploitation we know today. We'd welcome new technology for example as something enabling us to produce goods more easily, instead of seeing it as destroying our livelihoods by stealing our jobs. Even then, we wouldn't talk about work as a "right".

The Labour Party and the People's March, whatever the intentions of the individuals involved, are out to confuse the workers and contain their anger within the system, spreading illusions that if the system were managed differently it would be all right. Capitalism dictates to governments, not the other way round. The left in power would be forced by the crisis to take the same austerity measures as Thatcher, just as the Socialist government is doing in France.

The SWP adds to the confusion by denouncing the "popular front" of the People's March and calling for a "united front" of so-called workers parties, for example the Labour Party, Communist Party, SWP and Socialist Action. These parties are in this period as bourgeois as the Liberals and Tories, serving to disarm the workers ideologically and when this has failed, to openly massacre them.

Workers must not leave their own class terrain to ally with the bourgeoisie, whatever colours it wears. The struggles of the past have shown that workers must create their own class and political organs: the workers councils and the international communist party. Our struggles must break out of the stranglehold of the trade unions which, since 1914 and the inability of capitalism in its decadence to grant real reforms, have become unconditionally organs of the ruling class, acting to derail the class struggle.

There is no easy solution to the crisis. The working class must forge its proletarian solidarity across divisions created by capitalism between black and white, men and women, employed and unemployed, and it must break down national barriers. There is no alternative: the choice is war or revolution.

I.C.C. — Marxist Contradictions

In a recent number of the International Communist Current's newspaper, World Revolution 60, the Bulletin group are attacked for, among other things, failing to write anything on the Left in Opposition theory currently espoused by the I.C.C. In W.R. they claim that one of the central reasons for us splitting with them was the whole question of how to explain the fact that particular Social Democratic parties were no longer in governmental power.⁽²⁾ Whilst it is true that in the early discussions before the split occurred this was of some importance, very quickly the question was lost sight of as the whole problem of the organisational practice and politics of the I.C.C. came to the fore. In fact the way in which the Current responded to the criticisms made by Aberdeen and others on this question only served to highlight its complete failure to understand how discussions should be handled inside a revolutionary group. This is not the place to detail the sorry tale of the I.C.C.'s method of smothering internal opposition — suffice to say that it was typified by the technique of characterising positions which dared to reject the orthodoxy of the left in opposition analysis as expressions of an alien political philosophy. In practice once it had been decided that the left was the so-called natural party of opposition this was defended in a manner that a central tenet of the platform would have been. In retrospect this was not surprising, as it accords with the general organisational practice of the I.C.C. For the I.C.C. to berate us for not responding to the left in opposition is simply a device on their part to ignore the organisational problems highlighted by the splits and to avoid the detailed political criticisms subsequently made by the Bulletin group and others.

Our decision to state our positions on the I.C.C.'s theory of the Left in Opposition is not motivated by the demand of that organisation that we do so. No, the time is ripe because of the general lunacy which is increasingly found in their vision of how the bourgeois political system is organised and the immediacy of the British General Election. We do not believe that their conspiratorial vision finds any acceptance outside of the ranks of the I.C.C. itself (except perhaps in the crazed world of U.F.O. watchers), nonetheless it is important that it be combatted. Such a faulty view such as the I.C.C.'s, although it deals specifically with the ordering of the bourgeois political system cannot but have a corrosive effect upon its understanding of proletarian consciousness. This would prove doubly calamitous: killing off the I.C.C. as an effective political organisation and consequently profoundly weakening the whole milieu.

It would be extremely tedious to retell the whole story of the I.C.C.'s journey to its presently held position on the need for the Left to be in opposition but some indication of the nature of its journey is required if for no other reason than to serve as a warning to the rest of the proletarian milieu. The present position of the I.C.C. hinges upon the claim that the left is the 'natural' party of opposition and that this 'natural' position is achieved by one vast global conspiracy. However this analysis is of compar-

atively recent vintage. It was only a few years ago that quite the opposite position was held. For example, in WR 11 (1977) an article appeared called 'Callaghan's Stop-Gap Government' which was to typify the analysis of the I.C.C. up to and beyond the election of the Tory Party in 1979. We are told in this article that Labour is the best party for attacking the working class; that it alone has a "special relationship" with American capital; and that it alone has a developed state-capitalist programme capable of confronting (not surmounting) the economic problems of capitalist decadence.⁽³⁾ These three elements, the ability to mystify the class, the capacity to integrate the national capital into the American bloc and the state capitalist programme led the I.C.C. to the conclusion that the Labour Party was the natural party of government. In fact that organisation then believed that the extreme left of the party was an even more natural governmental team than that of the right wing faction led by Callaghan. If the I.C.C. had continued to hold to this analysis they would have seen it to be confirmed by the election of Foot to the leadership of the Labour Party. In 1977 Foot and Benn were said to be the future leaders of the British government. The I.C.C. did, however, note some weakness in their argument: for some reason, which the I.C.C. could not fathom, the left of the party did not have a "special relationship" with U.S. capital, quite the reverse. The left in the labour party in fact favoured reducing commitments to NATO, leaving the

EEC and erecting tariff barriers. Consequently the left was 'distrusted' by the U.S. State. Rather than attempt to resolve this difficulty in a systematic manner the I.C.C. ignored it and continued to assert that the left was the natural party of government.

THE ELECTION OF 1979

If we move forward to the eve of the election in May 1979 we find that change has yet to occur in the Current's position. In WR 21 the following gem is found: the Labour Party

"is now the natural party of British government. The domination of the Conservative Party by backward looking elements like Thatcher and Joseph underlined at the recent Tory conference only confirm that there is no serious alternative to the Labour government.... The Labour Party, therefore, answers the need not only of the most important sections of British capital, but also those of American Capital." (page 3.)

The comrades did speculate on the possibility of the Conservative and Liberal Parties coming to power (due to unspecified vagaries of the electoral system) but considered that if this did happen it could only be a "temporary, unstable phenomenon", a preliminary to the extreme left of Labour coming to power because "sooner or later, this faction must come to power." In WR 22 the possible election of the Tory Party would, claimed the I.C.C., be "disastrous given its total ineptitude in dealing with workers' militancy."

Despite the I.C.C.'s warning the disastrous happened. The Tories were elected in May 1979. Somehow an "unnatural" event had happened. At this stage the I.C.C. did not panic; the left was still "the most suitable (not natural?) faction to implement" state capitalist measures and to derail class struggle. In WR 24 the Current was still sufficiently alive to class struggle (despite its rigidity on the question of the Left in Power theory) to put forward a sensitive explanation of the fall of the Labour Party from government. Unfortunately since then paranoia has been substituted for sensitivity.

WHY DID LABOUR FALL?

So why DID Labour fall? Because it had been forced to push through measures - the Social Contract, the Concordat etc. - which were seen by the working class as inimical to their interests. This was reflected in the election result. The Labour Party lost a considerable part of its election base. Thus the current realised that the change had been brought about through the actions of workers, mediated through the mystifications of democratic elections, deserting the Labour Party. There was, as yet, no hint that the Left had abandoned its governmental position after consultation with the "bourgeoisie".

GIVING UP THE REINS

By the time of WR 25 the new line was to be found in the British Section of the I.C.C.; the left had not fallen from power. It had given up the reins of government after being informed by "the bourgeoisie" that its natural place was not to be in power but in opposition; the left, we are told, was "put into opposition", although for some reason the I.C.C. was unwilling to push this too far, saying that this move was "not made mechanically or even consciously". At best this can be said to be some sort of functional statement, at worst it is the I.C.C. obscuring its new conspiratorial vision. Previously the Current had insisted that only Labour could work with the U.S. state, could develop a state capitalist programme and derail the working class struggle. Now the I.C.C. discovered that the Left's "raison d'etre, is the containment of the working class". All other functions can be carried out by the Right. And, rather than being able to carry out its "function" in power "in fact the left's task is made more difficult when it is the governing team".

Even the I.C.C. had to come to terms with the new line and give some sort of explanation why they had previously got it wrong. From the citadel of orthodoxy, the French Section, the word came down that the failure to apprehend the real function of the left was a product of the conditions within which the I.C.C. had been born. The organisation had been formed in a period when the left was generally to be found in power throughout Europe - we are not told if this was because the bourgeoisie thought a revolutionary wave was about to break or if they believed Europe to be in the midst of a war - as a result the I.C.C. had taken the fact that the Left WAS in power as evidence that the Left SHOULD and MUST be there. This was, they now claimed, to be immediatist and empiricist. But, said the French Section, the I.C.C. should learn the lesson, throw off empiricism and penetrate beneath the mystified layers of capitalist relations. Now they could see that the left was out of power (in some countries) and what did this prove? Surprise, surprise, it proved that the left SHOULD be and MUST be out of power. This was the triumph of their new method which was committed to avoid "always remaining with generalities". As a general commitment this is laudable, in the hands of the I.C.C. it became laughable.

THE FRENCH ELECTION

In August 1979 the I.C.C. stood on its head and re-established that the world was the right way up. Unfortunately in this act of political gymnastics it subsequently suffered from prolonged concussion. The clearest expression of this political concussion is the extent to which the small beginnings found in WR 25 of a conspiratorial

view of the world has blossomed into a full blown belief that all, or almost all, bourgeois manoeuvres are centrally coordinated and directed. A belief which received a most crude expression at the time of Mitterand's election in France. The analysis of this event, which contradicted the newly discovered natural law of the left in opposition, was premised upon the belief that "the bourgeoisie" had made a 'faux pas' in allowing Mitterand to be elected. Nowhere in the article in WR 39 on this question are we given any notion of "the bourgeoisie" as a differentiated class. No, the analysis hinges upon the belief that in France, as in the rest of the globe, there is only one faction of capital which has, or should have, awareness of what is "best" for capital and, once having decided upon this, proceed to implement it. Thus, the argument goes, "the bourgeoisie" decide who is to go into power.

The evidence which the I.C.C. marshalled to demonstrate the validity of their claim that the bourgeoisie stage-managed the whole affair was the reaction of the "stupified Bourse" (whether, of course it was as stupefied as the I.C.C. was is a moot point.). The French money markets panicked and, rather than seeing this simply as a sign of the fear that private capital had of the 'socialist' Mitterand, the I.C.C. took it as evidence that "the bourgeoisie" had suddenly realised the mistake of putting him into power. At a public intervention the Paris section of the organisation demonstrated the full idiocy of the conspiratorial vision. Firstly we were told that the Left in Opposition was a "preventative, systematic, coordinated" strategy which was being put into operation on a "world scale". No half measures here! No nationalist analysis. It is the global bourgeoisie acting in a "systematic, coordinated" fashion which has decided to put the left in opposition. However, since the I.C.C. is committed to escheaving "remaining with generalities" they acknowledge that "exceptions" are found in this "general orientation", namely in Germany, France and Italy. This was in 1981. Two years later Germany is no longer an exception; this the I.C.C. take as validation of their theory, although they do not explain why the "exception" previously existed. It is an example of the lack of theoretical seriousness in the I.C.C.'s work that it has produced a "new, improved" version of its theory of the left in opposition to take account of the German move to the right. In WR 59 we are informed that the "key" countries are all confirmations of the correctness of their analysis. And the definition of a "key" country? Why, one in which the left has been "placed" in opposition. Tautology! That is what the I.C.C. gives us. They ignore the fact that previously the "key" country of Germany had not conformed to their analysis, when it would have been inconvenient for them to have called up their notion of key countries.

THE BERMONDSEY CONSPIRACY

In February 1983 the global conspiracy of the bourgeoisie was discovered on World Revolution's own doorstep. The Bermondsey election, Peter Tatchell, Michael Foot, the S.D.P., the Loonie Party, all were working to ensure the "defeat" of the Labour Party. From the way that the I.C.C. reacted to this by-election it would appear that it was a "key" constituency because the events there are taken as a proof of their analysis. Presumably when Labour WON at Darlington this was an "exception", a 'faux pas', but as in all the so called exceptions, no explanation is given.

In WR 58 we are told of the Labour Party:

"The last thing it, or the bourgeoisie as a whole, wants is for Labour to form the next government, because this would totally ruin its efforts to perform its main role by controlling the working class in a period when the crisis demands massive levels of austerity."

The evidence they give for the claim that the intention of all involved in the election was to make sure that Labour stayed in opposition was:

- (1) The dispute between Tatchell and Foot; this was presumably intended to set Labour up as a party with no credibility.
- (2) The 'Real' labour candidate, the Alliance and fringe candidates, who were to draw off potential votes.
- (3) The role of the Militant Tendency.

The I.C.C. do not give us any actual evidence of conspiracy other than the fact of the failure of Tatchell. This alone should make us sceptical of the I.C.C.'s claim of global conspiracy. What should make us wholly sceptical is the fact that these elements are explicable in terms of the struggle which is to be found within the camp of the bourgeoisie. The dispute between Tatchell and Foot, the role of the Militant Tendency, all are simply indications of the extent to which the failure of Labour to win the election of 1979 brought insipient antagonisms to the surface. The left of the Labour Party blamed the defeat on the Right and its failure to implement "real socialist" policies whilst in power; and the right denounced the left for alienating the electorate. After the defeat of 1979 the respective elements fought for control of the party, each claiming that it alone had the solution to its parliamentary isolation and the economic crisis of capitalism. At the end of the day power is sought by each faction because it is only in power that their respective political programmes can be implemented. For, despite what the I.C.C. claims, Labour is not solely concerned with derailing class struggle, it is a political party which represents a particular bourgeois programme which encompasses

all social and economic life.

S.D.P. CAPITALIST CONSTRUCT

And the S.D.P.? According to the I.C.C. this was produced by the British Bourgeoisie as a "spoiler", a party which would draw off support from Labour. Once again no evidence is given to show that this was the intention - of anyone - behind its emergence. The I.C.C. ignore the obvious, that the S.D.P. was a product of the internal crisis of Labour generated by the defeat of 1979. A new electoral programme was generated once again in order to overcome the general crisis of capital. Although bourgeois politics are full of mystifications and lies there is no evidence that the S.D.P. is fighting simply in order that Labour will remain out of office in order to carry out its real "function". Nor is there any evidence that they are uninterested in coming to power. Certainly there are mystifications, all the talk about classless society etc., but this is not what concerns the I.C.C.. And the Tory press smear campaigns; this should be no more difficult to understand than the panic at the Paris Bourse. It wasn't that the press wanted Labour to stay in opposition because this was where it could best function, rather it was because it opposed their political and economic programme; and of course because it wanted the Tories to WIN.

Surprisingly, perhaps, after arguing that the Bermondsey election was "self-sabotage" by Labour the I.C.C. inform us that one of the intentions of the campaign was to "encourage workers to identify" with Labour. Why workers didn't vote for Labour in their thousands because of the sympathy generated thus by the smear campaigns etc. we are not told. Maybe it was that only after the parliamentary defeat did the "identification" occur. An example of the good old British feeling for the underdog?

THE INADEQUACY OF CONSPIRACY

The central failure of the I.C.C.'s conspiratorial vision is a total inability to recognise the limitations of working abstractions. When Marxists speak, for example, of the "global bourgeoisie" this is not a direct representation of the organisation and movement of the complex articulations of the capitalist world but is a heuristic device, rooted in an understanding of the essential relations of the capitalist mode of production. To speak of the "bourgeoisie" should be just a starting point for a detailed analysis of the world of capital. Not so for the I.C.C. The global united bourgeoisie is a reality, nothing else need be said; that is the Current's position. Hence it can be imagined that all around is a gigantic conspiracy. When any empirical "exception" is presented to them they can only scream 'empiricist' at opposition. What the I.C.C. fail to realise is that Marxism is an empirical philosophy and that to be empirical is not to be empiricist.

The detailed analysis of social reality is an empirical enquiry informed by original abstractions. If as the I.C.C. claim, the conspiracy is all embracing then where is the evidence of collusion? The scenario they project is so vast that the degree of collusion required to ensure the desired end is achieved would demand a volume of communication which must surely become available in some instances. Maybe it's the case that, like the I.C.C.'s notorious actions in the Chenier affair⁽⁴⁾ they have the evidence but are not telling. This might be good enough for the I.C.C. but it is not something which can be tolerated by the proletarian movement. If the Current claims that it is only a 'minority' in the State which is conspiratorial then it should be able to specify the minority. This surely is an empirical question.

We are not denying that conspiracies ARE entered into by sections of the bourgeoisie - for example, Orangism was a deliberate conspiracy, a deliberate dividing of the working class in Ireland, or the treaties between capitalist states pre-1914. But we do reject the global theory presented by the I.C.C.. The logic of their analysis must surely see the liquidation of the Social Democrats in Germany after 1933 as another case (like Labour) of self-sabotage. But does the evidence really suggest that German Social Democracy conspired in their own physical liquidation. Or Allende in Chile, did he really conspire with the Right in order that he could remain eternally out of power?

THE METAPHOR OF FUNCTION

One escape clause which the I.C.C. often inserts into its theory, but which is never given an active place, is that of the 'objective function' of different parts of the state apparatus and the function of various actions and circumstances. This is used by the I.C.C. to explain away the obvious fact that it is impossible for individuals and factions to have connived in their own mutual humiliation and destruction. Clearly what lies behind this aspect of the I.C.C.'s analysis, although it remains unstated, is some form of biological-evolutionary metaphor. Such a metaphor can be useful, for example, when analysing the operation of the law of value between different capitals, but its use IS metaphorical and it cannot be legitimately applied to every aspect of social life. For a start, the law of value and the exploitation of labour power are conditions which operate irrespective of the desires of the bourgeoisie. This sets off the economic world from the world of politics. This is not to say that anything is possible in the world of politics, for political programmes are circumscribed by the economic parameters. But to what extent would the I.C.C. have us believe that the bourgeois political system at almost all points so 'functions' as to lead to the 'best' world for capital, in this instance to the left staying out of power? If the Bermondsey election is recast in the mould

of functionalism is it any more convincing an explanation than the conspiratorial conception? The I.C.C. could argue that Tatchell was not part of the 'minority' of the more 'intelligent' members of the state and as a consequence was not 'fully conscious of (the) need to keep the Labour Party in opposition'. But does the I.C.C. really expect revolutionaries and workers to believe that some overreaching bourgeois structure could so influence Tatchell, without him being consciously aware of it, that somehow it generated the correct response in him, getting leaflets printed by Militant, so as to ensure a Labour defeat?

This is pure mysticism. Let us see them specify exactly how this functionalism works, how it actually operates in the flesh. For too long they have got away with mouthing half-truths and concocting fantasies. If they are in possession of a theory which explains how social and political

phenomena are all functional for capital then they should not be so modest. Show it to the rest of the proletarian milieu, so that it too can find the "penetrating insights" gained by the Current. We doubt that they can.

We await with some trepidation the further evolution of the I.C.C.'s analysis of the bourgeois world. Today it is the Left in Opposition, yesterday the Left in Power, and tomorrow - only time will tell. The variety open to the I.C.C. is limited only by its dogmatism and its imagination. Doubtless we shall be denounced as empiricists for daring to criticise them and doubtless they will continue to take schematizations for reality. Unhappily this can only weaken the proletarian movement.

Flett.

note 1. World Revolution is the British section of the International Communist Current. Their monthly newspaper takes the name of the group. They can be contacted at BM Box 869 London WC1 N 3XX.

note 2. Some of the background to the splits in the I.C.C. can be found in previous Bulletins.

note 3. The notion of the present decadence of the capitalist mode of production is a central tenet of our political platform and is found

in all parts of the revolutionary milieu. As will be seen in the Platform published in this issue of The Bulletin the fact of decadence has wide implications for revolutionary intervention. Of particular immediate relevance in the debate is the passing of Social Democracy, the "Communist" parties and Trotskyists into the orbit of capital; and the necessity of capitalism to develop a state-capitalist form.

note 4. Details of the denigration of this militant and the I.C.C.'s despicable role in this were published in The Bulletin 1.

subscribe!

This issue of The Bulletin has been more widely distributed than our first three issues and as such represents the first issue of the magazine of the newly constituted Communist Bulletin Group.

It is also the first issue to be printed rather than duplicated, a process we have been able to use following the purchase recently of an offset litho machine.

We have thus been able to print the many more issues of The Bulletin we have needed to in order to extend our distribution.

All this however has cost much more money!

If you havent already subscribed please do so now. For £2.00 in cash or BLANK postal order (we have no account in the names either of The Bulletin or the C.B.G. we will send you four issues of The Bulletin. Write to our new address.

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Any contribution over and above the subscription will be gratefully accepted and, given the cost of producing The Bulletin is badly needed if we are to continue to be able to contribute to the process of political clarification within the revolutionary milieu and to intervene effectively in the class struggle.

Correspondence

We publish below an extract from a letter sent recently to us and an extract from our reply.

" Dear Comrades,,

....On the general question of organisation and what to do about it, I am not sure what you are advocating. I would agree with your affirmation of the need for a centralised party, but what conclusion do you draw from your examination of the internal structure of the Bolshevik Party in Bulletin 2? Are you saying it is correct to ignore the orders of the central organs of the Party, as happened in the Bolshevik party?

I find this hard to reconcile with your rejection of federalism. Also, are you in favour of permanent 'open questions' on issues or do you in general take the line that they must be debated and thrashed out until resolved, lest they cause splits in the party at important junctures? Would you not say that this is what has happened to the I.C.C.?"

Our reply contained the following:

We hope that the various texts on organisation in issue 3 of the Bulletin will have already gone some way to providing a fairly general answer to the issues you raise in your letter. In this letter we will try to make a brief, but more specific, response to your questions.

1. On the question of whether or not it is correct to ignore the orders of Party central organs.

Firstly we think its worth pointing out that, regardless of where we stand on this issue, one of our immediate reasons for writing the 'Bolshevik' text (Another Look at the Organisation Question - Bulletin 2) was to point out that an examination of the Bolsheviks' organisational practices, in tandem with a comparison of the I.C.C.'s leaves the I.C.C. high and dry on the hook of monolithism, hoist there by their own stated standards and intentions. On the one hand they overtly reject monolithism, but on the other, their own actual practice has evolved into a nightmare of monolithism, unknown to the Bolshevik Party until the days of counterrevolution post 1921. By their own lights they stand condemned.

As evidence of this we would put forward our own experience within the I.C.C., both before and during the splits which we've described at some length in the first two issues of the Bulletin. In case you think that this is just the jaundice of splitters at work we would refer you to their stated position on the emergence of tendencies - that they are a sign of 'immaturity or degeneration' - and

ask you to compare that position with the Bolsheviks. Its no accident that no tendency has ever emerged and managed to remain within the I.C.C. In addition we would point out the infrequency with which the many and valuable internal debates and differences within the I.C.C. appear in public and to the timidity which surrounds the occasional appearance, despite all the massive public rhetoric about the necessity for wide-ranging debate and its public expression.

To return to our position on centralisation, we think that we've defined fairly precisely in the last three issues of the Bulletin where we stand. We think it is inseparable from the broader question of the role of the Party within the struggles of the class. For us what is of crucial importance in the Party is not its ability to function like a disciplined General Staff in the organising of the class' activities but its ability to provide political leadership by the clarity of its positions and slogans. The organisation of the Party, its centralisation, is a reflection of this and must be constituted in a manner which both fosters the development of its political clarity and allows it to intervene rapidly and efficiently in the struggles of the class. For us the development of clarity, the development of consciousness, is something which can only involve the whole and can't be the product of just a part. Centralisation exists therefore to allow the active participation of all and not to impose the decisions and will of the centre.

In addition we think that centralisation exists not just for the internal benefit of the party but also as a mechanism for opening up to, being responsive to, the movement and advances of the class. Clarity doesn't emerge from a vacuum, or from the heads of revolutionaries (let alone from a central committee) but has its roots in the concrete experience of the class, both in the historical and in the immediate sense. We pointed out at some length in the 'Bolshevik' text how often the advances of the class left the revolutionary fractions floundering and how frequently the class itself played a vital role in radicalising the Party. Time and time again we saw that in the process there was a tendency for the central organs to lag behind the rank and file of the Party, precisely because they were more distant from the class than the rank and file. We don't think the class by itself and without the intervention of the party can ever transcend its own immediate advances, however momentous and radical they are, but conversely we don't think that the Party can ever take up its leadership role unless it has some way of responding to and absorbing these advances by the class. A centralisation, which weights everything

in favour of the central organs cant have any place in the process.

With this as a starting point therefore, it is clear to us that the issue of centralisation cant be fruitfully reduced to a question of who should obey who. Its a question of the development of political clarity, which of necessity involves the active participation of all the constituent elements of the Party, a sensitivity to the activity of the class as a whole plus the ability to intervene decisively in that activity. In an ideal world and an ideal party, of course, the central organs would always be able to carry out their political tasks in a fashion which always managed to express accurately the concerns and activities of the Party as a whole. However in reality we know that in any large and vital revolutionary organisation like the Bolsheviks, functioning as a living part of the class and confronted with all the complexities of the class' struggle. unceasing tensions and debates are generated. We know that there are bound to be, as there was in the past, occasions when the central organs lose touch with the class and their own party. It is unrealistic to expect to resolve these situations by simple constitutional formulae. We dont think that it is possible to lay down in advance some formal way for establishing a rule for when to obey central organs and when to translate disagreements with them into action. We think that its resolved in practice partly by the political vitality of the Party, partly by it being a living part of the class and partly by the operation of a Party discipline and loyalty which is tied essentially to the political programme - ie to the Party as a whole and might occasionally be in conflict with loyalty to the central organ. Certainly central organs are charged with the political responsibility of acting for the Party as a whole between Congresses but its mistaken to believe that it makes them synonymous with the Party as a whole. Lenin himself (on the odd occasion when he was in conflict with the Central Committee) made it clear that Party loyalty was to the Congress and its decisions rather than to the Central Committee.

More to the point Luxemburg defended Liebknecht's vote against war credits by describing him as being the only deputy who had actually observed party discipline. She went on to make her point crystal clear.

"The discipline owed to the Party as a whole, ie. to its programme, by its members is more important than the direct discipline to a particular organisation within the party. In fact it is this larger discipline alone which justifies the subordinate one and, at the same time, describes its natural limits....

(Quoted by Paul Frolich in "Rosa Luxemburg")

2. On "permanent 'open questions'"

We've already written at some length in issue 3 of the Bulletin since we received your letter on

our approach to the organisational taking up of positions so we'll restrict ourselves here to the question of issues having to be "debated and thrashed out until resolved".

Our general starting point would probably be shared by everyone in the revolutionary movement, that in the final analysis the issues which confront us are finally 'resolved' by the activity and experience of the class as a whole. Whatever political clarity we have today on questions like the class nature of reformism, trade unions, national liberation struggles etc. wasnt simply the product of an intellectual exercise by revolutionaries but was decided in an absolute and definitive manner by the actual experience of the class itself. Of course, thats not to say that revolutionaries must stand helpless and mute until that process is complete. On the contrary we play an active part in the process by which the class resolves issues: and that means that we cannot avoid committing ourselves in advance of the class. If we take the Bolsheviks' role in the events leading up to the last revolutionary wave as an example, we can see that when they took up a position, when they committed themselves even well in advance of the class themselves or the rest of the revolutionary movement, the act of commitment wasnt something done in isolation or simply as the result of an internal operation. Their links to the class, the fact that they were a living part of the class, vulnerable to all the pressures feeding back from the class meant that there was a real dimension to saying that the class resolved the issues. They had a real part to play in the process. The taking up of a position wasnt just a product of revolutionaries cogitations or of party votes. It was a part of, and an expression of, class action.

When we look at the situation today we have to understand that we are facing something qualitatively different. We are isolated from the class in a way almost unimaginable to revolutionaries of the last wave. We're no longer a living part of the day to day struggle in the way that the Bolsheviks were. Our positions are no longer tested in the immediate fire of the struggle and exposed to the penetrating scrutiny of the class itself. We dont have the same input or feedback. In this situation what is the reality of "thrashing out" issues to a "resolution"? Lets take the C.W.O. as an example since they're the keenest advocates of "thrashing out" issues and the strongest opponents of 'open questions'

When they thrash out an issue which confronts them it means a dozen people, or even less, discussing it in a situation completely remote from the class and in addition, isolated from the rest of the revolutionary milieu since, in general only the finished debate is ever publically presented. 'resolving' an issue in this situation becomes very close to an abstract process, a revolutionary debating society. If one argument doesnt sweep the board it comes down to a headcount of a handful of people. How can political clarity (as opposed to political certainty) be produced by a simple head-

24. count in such a situation involving such a tiny number of people?

As we've said before in this sort of situation there is no safeguard against arbitrariness. The most trivial of reasons can effect the outcome - a strong personality, a good debater, someone with a bee in his bonnet, the tendency of married couples to agree with each other etc. etc. It sounds silly but that is the reality of the revolutionary movement today. We've seen it happen and certainly in the C.W.O. Over the past ten to fifteen years the revolutionary movement has seen innumerable little grouplets emerge and disappear, focussed around and totally dependent upon their own guru type figure. In both the I.C.C. and the C.W.O., for example, we've seen how there is virtually nothing to stop the most trivial or erroneous of positions being fixated upon in an almost fetishistic

way and used as a sectarian cudgel against the rest of the revolutionary milieu.

As we've argued repeatedly in the past three Bulletins we don't think that the honest recognition of this situation means organisational paralysis but it does mean the exercise of the profoundest caution about when to commit ourselves organisationally and the absolute necessity for organisations to be able to contain within themselves, political differences and their public expression. We don't think that the I.C.C. splits took place because of their acceptance (in theory) of the principle of 'open questions' but rather because they never developed a practice in accord with their rhetoric. It was their refusal to allow the expression of political differences which lay behind the splits.....

An Open Letter To The ICC

Dear Comrades,

The transition of the Bulletin Group from a fairly loose discussion circle to a formally constituted organisation demands that we renew the effort to draw you into political debate and that we make as clear as possible our attitude towards you. From the discussions at your 5th Congress of W.R. as reported in WR 58 in "The ICC and the Crisis in the Revolutionary Milieu" and from your recent Public Forums on "The Present Tasks of Revolutionaries", it is clear that you also feel that the time has come when a balance sheet of the traumatic events of two years ago can, and should be attempted. To quote from the advert. for the Public Forum you held in Leeds in April:

"Political clarification can't come out of patch-up jobs, nor out of isolation. It can only be done with and in the revolutionary milieu. The spell of silence has to be broken by opening up a public debate, in the press, in meetings, to finish with the errors of the past, to ensure that a decantation takes place in a conscious way, to avoid the dispersion and loss of revolutionary energies. This is the only way to clear the ground for the regroupment of revolutionaries, which will contribute to the unification of the international working class. This is the task of the hour and this is the real lesson of the crisis in the revolutionary milieu as a whole" (original emphasis)

We think that the approach, the sentiments and the concerns expressed in this passage are entirely correct. Unfortunately however we think they are in complete contradiction to your actual behaviour and practice since the splits took place.

The Crisis in the Milieu

Your analysis of the crisis in the milieu, which we agree is a real one demanding serious explanation, has been superficial in the extreme. Although you ostensibly describe the crisis as a problem of the whole milieu when you come to deal with its expression in the ICC it is located entirely in terms of "alien political elements" penetrating the ICC and, out of malice, manipulating the weaker and more confused elements in a plot to destroy you. Implicit in this analysis is the contention that the essential kernel of the "real" ICC (in terms of theory, practice and personell) were entirely untouched by the crisis and completely adequate to deal with the demands of the situation.

Entirely lacking from this is any sign of understanding that the crisis was a product of a whole milieu, tiny, fragile and extremely immature, being confronted with a situation posing problems which were essentially new to us and which we all had to struggle to resolve, using resources which were barely adequate and which splintered under the strain. The reality is that the whole milieu was presented with questions we hadn't answered or had done so previously only in an inadequate manner. That was the material basis for the fierce debates which racked the whole milieu, including the ICC. The ICC, as a whole responded to the new demands of the situation in a necessarily confused and heterogeneous fashion. (Of course you now identify this process as the malicious raising of "non-issues" (?) by the tendency) That was the 'real' ICC. To identify the side of the debate which eventually "won" (by the scandalous abuse of our system of centralisation) as the "real" ICC makes it impossible to understand or gain from the experience.

Drawing the Lessons

Not surprisingly with this as your starting point,

drawing the lessons of the process becomes nothing but an exercise in self-congratulation. The "real" ICC triumphed, the foreign political elements were driven out and the ICC emerged even "stronger" than before. Nowhere do we find the slightest hint of self-criticism. In IR 28 in "The Present Convulsions in the Revolutionary Milieu" you argued that the milieu

"is going through political convulsions because its political positions and its practice are inadequate in the face of the new situation opened up by the mass strike in Poland."

We have waited in vain for you to tell us which of your positions and practices were inadequate. Comrades, do you really think that your actual practice of centralisation was entirely adequate to the task? Do you think it had only a positive role to play in the polarisations and frustrations in the debates which raged? Are all the criticisms of your internal practice made both then and many times before, entirely unjustified? Do you really believe that the handling of debate in the ICC is adequate, despite all the splits in your history? In the actual splits themselves is there no recognition of the role you played in creating a mood of hysteria? Do you have no political criticisms to make of your handling of the crisis - the ultimata, the loyalty oaths, the break-ins, the Chenier accusations, etc.? Do you feel no responsibility for the comrades who have left and been driven out of politics? Comrades it runs counter to our experience, and to plain common sense, that in such traumatic events, that your behaviour was impeccable.

For ourselves we don't pretend that our initial understanding of the process was anything other than confused and halting and that our contributions weren't always positive. We don't have any difficulty in recognising the role we played in the escalation of hysteria by the frequently intemperate tone of our responses to events we perceived as outrageous. Nor have we shrunk from characterising our threats to call the police in response to your break-ins as behaviour alien to revolutionary practice.

Sectarianism and Responsibility to the Milieu

Without even the semblance of self-criticism we don't think it can be possible for you to draw the lessons of the period, to overcome your own sectarianism and hence discharge your "...unique responsibility in helping the revolutionary movement to become conscious of its weakness..." and to "...intervene in the process and draw a maximum of lessons from it." (WR 58 - The ICC and the Crisis in the Rev. Milieu)

We accept wholeheartedly your conception of a revolutionary milieu and the fraternal responsibilities which spring from that, and equally we endorse your public pronouncements about the crippling weight that sectarianism plays in that milieu. Unfortunately, we don't have to look far to see how blatantly your practice contradicts your rhetoric. Let's look at how you have conducted your relationship with the Bulletin group:

- your response to our suggestion of a joint intervention denouncing the Falklands War was to

refuse, in principle, and in an absolute fashion, any possibility of political collaboration with us on the grounds of our 'unprincipled' behaviour in the past. (See correspondence in Bulletin 2)

- you have consistently refused our offers to place your publications in the bookshops in our areas of organisation.
- not only have you refused to allow us to sell your publications, you won't even allow us to BUY them, consistently refusing to honour our subscriptions on the ground that we left the ICC in arrears of dues.
- most importantly you have consistently refused to deal with the political issues that we have dealt with in the Bulletin: confining yourselves to nothing more than the passing insult.

We understand that there are considerable political disagreements between us but, as far as we understand, you still consider us to be part of the revolutionary milieu. In the light of this your behaviour makes it difficult to believe that your statements in rejecting sectarianism are anything other than an empty polemical device.

"With Comrades Like These"

It is impossible at this point to avoid a brief response to the above titled article which appeared in WR 60. We don't intend here a public, point by point, refutation of the article, not because we're unwilling, or unable to do so, but because it's very clear that to do so would obscure the political issues and contribute nothing to the wider debate. If we've learned nothing else from the past two years, we know that the public picking over of scabs benefits only those who wish to suppress debate.

However, inasmuch as the article attempts to silence us by discrediting us in front of the milieu, we feel obliged to comment on its central thrust. We think that this is one of the most blatant and scandalous attempts we have ever seen to avoid the political issues which confront us and which we have consistently raised in the Bulletin. The entire theme is

"never mind the politics look at the individuals"

It does you no credit in front of the milieu and we feel sure that it must have embarrassed at least some of your own members.

Firstly, it's necessary to say that your account of the events surrounding the tendency, particularly with regard to our role within that is both distorted and inaccurate. We'll say no more on that since we've already gone over the ground many times in the last three issues of the Bulletin. More importantly you go on to argue that our political positions and the critique we've made of the ICC, are to be ignored because the individuals involved are fundamentally dillettantes and localists. You've attempted to prove that by quoting the words of one of the Aberdeen Section reports made before the split. For those outside the ICC we think it is necessary to have a fuller look at the content of that report. It dealt with dislocations in the work of the Aberdeen section in the period very shortly before the splits which were located basically in the temporary demoralisation of two of the Aberdeen comrades. (In passing and

without making too much of it here it's not hard to connect the demoralisation with the then current state of the internal life of WR.) The Bulletin group is made up of all of the ex-ICC comrades in Aberdeen plus the comrades from Edinburgh Leeds and Lancaster and is not simply synonymous with the ex-Aberdeen section. Even if it were we think that the activity of the Aberdeen grouping within the revolutionary movement over the past decade is totally incompatible with charges of dilletantism or localism. They were founder members of the CWO and took a full and active part of the work of that organisation until they split to join the ICC. Again within the ICC itself, without claiming to be perfect militants or without limitations, they took a full and active part in all levels of the work of the ICC. They wrote for the magazine and newspaper, wrote, produced and distributed leaflets, contributed regular and serious texts to the internal bulletins, intervened regularly in the class struggle, intervened significantly in the libertarian and leftist milieu, held regular public forums and cultivated a lively milieu of contacts, some of whom eventually joined the ICC. Taken as a whole the Aberdeen comrades have constituted a regular and disciplined communist fraction for the better part of a decade. To point to a brief period of political demoralisation, not unconnected with the then general malaise within WR itself and hold that up as the norm to discredit the political issues raised by the Bulletin group can only be described as disgraceful.

Moreover we think that your treatment of us springs not from any alleged dilletantism but from the very opposite. You have avoided the political issues and attacked some of us personally precisely because of our seriousness. Its the fact that we have stuck to our political tasks, developed our critique and gone ahead with the foundations for a continued contribution to revolutionary work that disturbs you. We think this is quite consistent with the assertion we made right at the start of the splits, that your response to political dissent was firstly to drive dissenters out of the organisation and eventually out of politics altogether.

"....it would be better for everyone if the group (ie the Bulletin) disappeared as quickly as possible. It has no place in the revolutionary milieu." (in With Comrades like These WR 60)

Apart from the criminally irresponsible sectarianism involved in this we think that you are willfully and tragically missing the point. Whatever happens to the Bulletin group, or whether or not the individual members disappear is neither here no there. The

political issues that we are raising wont disappear. Hiding behind a screen of bluster and insults wont change that. If you think the issues we have raised are wrong, confused, dangerous or just plain trivial then we feel you are obliged to argue that and to deal with the issues on their own merits. Failure to do that is a simple abdication of your responsibilities within the milieu as a whole.

Concrete Proposals

While we recognise the bad feeling which exists, the mutual distrust and the political criticisms we have of each other, we think that we are both elements located squarely within the revolutionary camp and are both subject to the obligations and responsibilities springing from such a communist of interests. However deep our reservations are about each other we are both communist organisations and to be confronted with a situation in which one communist group wont even sell the other its publications is totally indefensible. Therefore our proposals are:

- (1) An exchange of publications and an honouring of our subscriptions. We have repeatedly made our position clear about the division of material left in ou possession following the split. We were, and are, happy to return all back issues of mags, papers and pamphlets plus all the other extant material. We dont have any hardware like typwriters etc which belongs (or belonged) to the ICC. And for political reasons, which we are prepared to defend, we're not prepared to return our copies of internal bulletins, nor to pay the arrears of dues owing at the split. We can't see that our disagreements here are sufficiently serious to preclude a formal and responsible relationship.
- (2) That you reconsider your unqualified rejection of any possibility of political collaboration in the future.
- (3) That you make a political response to the major issues we've raised in the pages of the Bulletin, as assessment of the recent splits in the ICC which includes a critique of your conceptions and practice of centralisation, an analysis of the current period and the material limitations in the possibilities for regroupment and a reassessment of the Bolshevik theory and practice of organisation. We're quite prepared to provide space within the pages of the Bulletin if you're unwilling to use your own publications for any reason.

fraternally,

The Bulletin Group.

(The ICC can be contacted in Britain at BM Box 869 London WC1N 3XX U.K.)

An Open Letter To The CWO.

Now that the Bulletin Group has formally constituted itself as an organisation we feel that we should try to put our relations with you on as clear a footing as possible and avoid some of the confusions of the past. This need has been highlighted by the series of extraordinary letters you've been sending to a single individual in the Bulletin group. We understand that the comrade concerned had had frequent discussions with you during the period when the Bulletin group was functioning as a discussion circle but at the time of your recent letters you knew of our change of status and that the comrade was a founder member. Do you not think it unusual for one organisation to approach individual members of another organisation in such an essentially private fashion?

For our own part we don't think that such an approach is a useful contribution to the open and fraternal political debate which is required within the ranks of the revolutionary milieu. We think it underlies the opportunistic and irresponsible nature of your essentially sectarian approach to the milieu. For us debate is the necessary expression of the process of clarification which underlies the regroupments of the future. We don't think it is something which is undertaken in a fashion dictated by the needs of narrow self-interest or simply as a recruiting device. Its impossible not to notice, for example, that although you've frequently expressed an urgent desire for debate with us since the splits with the ICC, it has always been offered in the most restricted form possible - private correspondence or face to face meetings with the rest of the milieu excluded. Despite private expressions of great agitation about the content of our polemics against you, you have never been prepared to take up the issues in a public fashion in the pages of your press. Nor have you accepted our offers of space in the Bulletin.

For our own part we want to strengthen the fraternal links within the revolutionary milieu and therefore welcome debate, discussion and, where possible, political collaboration in our interventionary work, provided only that it is undertaken in a fashion which recognises our responsibility to the whole milieu. Therefore we would like to make some concrete proposals to you about our future relations:

- 1) An exchange of publications.
- 2) We are prepared to service the bookshops for you in our areas of organisation - Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Leeds - and ask you to do likewise.
- 3) We remain open to the possibility of political collaboration with you when possible and would like clarification on your position on this.

To be frank we haven't understood your position in the past. Initially when we were still a discussion circle you refused it on the grounds that joint work with individuals wasn't possible. We were therefore somewhat surprised a few months later to read in VB10 that you had apparently turned your back on this 'principle' to allow you to invite individuals present at one of your public forums to participate in a joint initiative - the Iran/Iraq war. Now that we are a formally constituted organisation we gather that collaboration with us is impossible because you consider us to be a 'pseudo-group'. We don't understand what you mean by this term and don't understand the theoretical edifice which seems to underlie it (see Bulletin 3 p44. "Letter on the Aberdeen/CWO meeting") We think that it would be useful, both for us and for the milieu at large, if we could have some written elaboration on this point.

- 4) If you are serious about discussion then we invite you to respond to the issues that we've raised in the Bulletin - either the specific polemics we've made against the CWO or the more general positions we've developed on the question of organisation and on the natural limitations of the present period which constrains revolutionary activity and the possibilities for regroupment.

Again if you don't want to use your own publications for this our offer of space in the Bulletin still stands. Whilst we're not in principle against other more limited forms of discussion with you perhaps you can understand that we've a rather jaundiced view of their potential fruitfulness given your stated position that discussion with "pseudo-groups" is undertaken in order to "break their collectivity".

fraternally,

The Bulletin Group.

(The CWO can be contacted at PO Box 283 Clarence Drive Glasgow 12 U.K.)

"Unity of Communist Militants" | Breaking from Leftism — or Leftist Brake?

The appearance of the Iranian group "Unity of Communist Militants" and their Student Supporters has caused a considerable amount of consternation within the revolutionary movement and in recent months this consternation and confusion has been visibly increasing. When the first reports on and texts of this organisation appeared, most groups within the revolutionary milieu greeted them as a potential break from Leftism in a state which had seen the turmoil of the overthrow of the Shah and his replacement by the barbarism of Khomeini on the back of a massive wave of strikes and popular insurrections. The possibility of the emergence of proletarian fractions in this part of the world was looked on with some anticipation. However as more material, the UCM's Programme etc. appeared and as the UCM and their supporters in Britain came more and more into contact with the milieu, strong doubts began to emerge. However the doubts now are not merely about the class nature of the UCM. Severe doubts about the ability of certain organisations to discern the nature of proletarian and capitalist organisations have also arisen.

The Class Nature of the UCM.

The questions on the class nature of the class nature of the UCM still stand. What is it? Is it a proletarian organisation, a fraction involved in a definite break from leftism or merely a radical maoist organisation steeped in the counter-revolution whose very raison d'être is to lead workers into the hell of State Capitalism?

For the ICC, who originally responded favourably to the emergence of the UCM, a fuller explanation of its political basis and its programme have clearly shown them to be a left fraction of capital:

"We now have no hesitation in stating that the UCM is a bourgeois organisation."
(World Revolution May 1983)

For the CWO, on the other hand the situation is by no means so clear. Clearly identifying the UCM and their partners KOMALA as a break from Leftism the CWO's response has been to seek to engage in political discussion with the supporters of the UCM in Britain. Those questions which, for the ICC, brand the UCM as leftists, the CWO is content to explain as 'confusions' which, in time-honoured CWO fashion can be discussed "to resolution". However recently even the previously fawning CWO seem to have been having twinges of doubt. Far from being merely 'dangerously mistaken' in considering the overthrow of the Shah as a revolution the CWO now criticises the 'confusions' of the UCM on the question of defending this 'revolution' vis a vis the Iran-Iraq war and regards the new joint UCM/Komala Platform as:

"taking a step backward on the question of internationalism."
They now also consider "even more disturbing"

the bald statement that Komala conducts "temporary military actions....with the Kurdish Democratic Party"

the latter being a well known Moscow front group. This concern has now reached the point where the CWO can say:

"We are concerned to prevent the UCM and its supporters from entering the camp of counterrevolution."

We consider this concern misplaced. Our concern is why they are considered to have ever left it.

For us the UCM stand condemned as a capitalist group out of their own mouths. Their own political statements CLEARLY indicate their class nature. The surprise is that elements of the proletarian movement have been taken in by the vague way in which they have described themselves and by the omissions which they have seemingly purposely left out. It is true to say that every fraction in the milieu, on receipt of the first pieces of information expressed the hope that this was indeed a proletarian fraction, but very quickly groups like the ICC realised their error. The fact that the CWO and Battaglia seem still to be so unclear is a matter for concern to the whole milieu.

The Politics of the UCM.

Just as every other group ranging from the middle of the Labour Party to the most individualistic of anarcho-Modernists, the UCM can point to their general aims and their statements about communism in order to demonstrate their 'proletarian' character. They can point to statements telling us that:

"the emancipation of the working class is

the act of the working class itself."
that we are in:

"the era of the socialist revolution of
the proletariat"

that their goal is communism through the
"social revolution of the proletariat"
and that their task is:

"to organise the class struggle of the
proletariat and lead this struggle in all
of its aspects."

(all quotations from UCM Programme pp6-9)

They can even talk about recallable officials and
the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

But then so too does the programme of the Socialist
Workers Party along with the platforms of every
two-bit Trotskyist sect throughout the world. Where
we would like to get to gives no indication of HOW
they intend getting there. We might argue that we'd
all like to go to heaven, but that is no basis
upon which to assess the Catholic Church or that
other well known Christian Charles Manson.

It is the political programme of the UCM and now
KOMALA which we must analyse to determine the TRUE
class nature of this organisation. And we must do
this in a proper Marxist fashion, ie. not in terms
of absolute truths but with our understanding of
the reality of the experience of the class this
century DIRECTLY informed by that experience. For
we are not in the 1920's. If we were, then an
examination of the programme of the UCM and a
criticism of its failings, with its conceptions
of Democratic Revolutions, National Liberations,
Imperialism and Labour aristocracies, would be
an act, a fraternal act at that, of one part of
the proletarian movement towards another. When
these positions were discussed during the last
revolutionary wave it was a discussion between
those sections of the Communist movement like the
KAPD and the Italian Left who had clearly seen the
move of Capitalism into decadence and clearly seen
the political implications of such a move, and
those who were still trailing the afterbirth of
the conceptions of Social Democracy from the
period of capitalist ascendancy behind them into
the new world, into the era of proletarian
revolution. When Bukharin and Luxemburg, among
others, argued that national liberation struggles
were now redundant given the nature of decadent
capitalism, they were arguing with those in the
socialist movement who, failing to understand this,
would aid in the collapse of soviet power and the
comintern when the downturn came. When the Left
Communists argued that state capitalism was IN NO
WAY a transition stage towards communism with Lenin
et alia it was a discussion WITHIN the communist
movement.

But we are no longer in 1917, let alone 1921. We
are in 1983 and what could be fraternal discussions
then are fundamental dividing lines between
the proletarian and capitalist classes today. The
real effect of the defeat of the last revolutionary
wave has been to draw a clear line between the

camps of capital and the proletariat upon the
clarification of these positions, on the real
experience of the class during that wave and
during the sixty years of counterrevolution which
followed it. The defence of these 'incorrect'
positions has been transformed into the defence
of capitalism pure and simple. The defence of
national liberation struggles means IN REALITY
TODAY the defence of one faction of capital
against another in an inter-imperialist struggle
which daily massacres workers. The defence of
state capitalism and the 'democratic revolution'
IN REALITY TODAY is the defence of a faction of
capital, a faction which has, in the past sixty
odd years in various countries, massacred millions
of workers. EVERY SINGLE PROLETARIAN ORGANISATION
AND FRACTION WHICH FAILED TO UNDERSTAND THIS HAS,
WITHOUT EXCEPTION GONE OVER TO THE CAMP OF THE
BOURGEOISIE AND NOW DEFENDS, HOWEVER CRITICALLY,
THE RULE OF THE BOURGEOISIE AND PROPOSES MERELY
MORE POLITICAL PROGRAMMES FOR THE DEFENCE OF
CAPITAL.

Every political organisation in the proletarian
movement today understands this and the inter-
vention of proletarian groupings towards groups or
individuals breaking from leftism is always to
explain the contradiction in leftist programmes
between their supposed goal, communism, and the
political programme, TODAY, of leftism, which is
invariably a programme for the improvement (ie.
the defence) of capitalism, usually expressed in
the support of one capitalist bloc against another.

Invariably once the transparency of such is made
clear the individual or group breaking from leftism
either makes the break or doesn't, either disappear-
ing altogether or seeking theoretical justification
for remaining just another flea on the body of
capitalism.

The UCM does not come into this category at all.
Not only are they not confused about the contra-
diction between their immediate programme and the
final goal of communism, they have ALREADY a
definite conception of the correctness of their
political positions on these questions, already, a
developed political justification which theoretic-
ally defends their political positions and which
lies at the very root of their existence. They
are not a confused group potentially breaking from
leftism with an urge to move in the direction
of the proletarian camp, hampered by contra-
dictory notions regarding all these questions,
notions which will either drown them or be
discarded once their contradictory nature is
made clear. The UCM and KOMALA are clear
political organisations with developed political
positions which clearly are positions for the
defence of capitalism stemming directly from the
period of counterrevolution.

Lets look at these positions. Lets look at what

political notions crucially underpin the UCM.

What They Say

Fundamental to the existence of the UCM is the notion of the "Democratic Revolution". Like every other political organisation, proletarian or capitalist, it the analysis of the Present and the transformation of that Present in the Future which is the crucial underpinning of the organisation, together with the theoretical analysis which supports such political positions and proposals. For the UCM it is the analysis of capital, especially in Iran and the other 'dominated' countries which is the underpinning of their political *raison d'être*.

For the UCM the capitalist world is divided into the exploiter and exploited states, some states being imperialist exploiters and other being exploited by these. Backed up by a theory that the exploitation of the latter sector is essential to the existence of capitalism and by a notion which sees the workers of the industrialised states having been bought off at the expense of the workers in the exploited states the UCM proposes the transformation of these latter by means of a 'democratic revolution'. This will get rid of the last vestiges of feudalism and initiate a democratic regime which, they say, is the best situation for a development of proletarian consciousness. They base this on the fact that the proletariat are in a minority in the exploited countries and that:

"between the two poles of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie there exists a vast spectrum of petty producers.."

Many of these may join the bourgeoisie and others

"are prone to joining the ranks of the wage labourers." (UCM/KOMALA p 13)

Because of this mass of petty producers:

"the proletariat does not take part as a distinct social class and is led by non-proletarian forces."

The democratic revolution thus is not a war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but a national struggle between the mass of the exploited against the local bourgeoisie who are the local representatives of the bourgeoisie of the exploiter states, though in some cases they may also constitute the feudal remnants. In fact in some cases the local bourgeoisie is ranked on the side of the exploited masses against these exploiter states. Thus the 'democratic revolution' is a national liberation struggle in which the victory of that struggle produces the democratic terrain which is best suited to, sometime in the future, a further transformation to socialism.

As the UCM says in its programme:

"it is compelling for the conscious proletariat of Iran and its Communist Party to win, in the first instance, the most favourable economic and political grounds and preconditions for the ever

-tightening of its ranks, for the attraction of an extensive part of the workers and toilers under its banner... and for its ultimate move towards socialism through a victorious democratic revolution against the bourgeoisie."
(UCM Programme p.13)

Thus:

"the historical and material basis of popular socialism in these countries is not the struggle of a definite class - the proletariat - but is the national and democratic struggles waged in these countries"

As to the content of this 'democratic revolution' and state, it is a clear model of a state capitalist society and bears little difference from Cuba or Albania or any other non-existent 'post revolutionary' paradise. The programme of the UCM and UCM/Komala gives us a whole range of positions that would determine this 'democratic' state, positions which are in no way different from any other state capitalist 'workers' paradise in that they are unreservedly CAPITALIST.

Official minimum wages, 40 hour working weeks, no unfair dismissal, elective judges and bureaucrats, free speech and the ability to form trade unions, equality of sexes before the law, the 'direct participation of the people in the administration of the country's affairs', the prohibition of night work, and piecework, proper safety and hygiene at work, full work insurance, retirement at 50 and the prohibition of female work in physically hazardous jobs - all are to be found here. - and more. A programme which would warm the hearts of the left of the Labour Party even. The only crucial thing we can take from this pot-pourri of reformist measures is that they represent merely another version of CAPITALIST state. The programme of the UCM/Komala gives us not an alternative TO capitalism but merely an alternative capitalism. What is being posed here is a transformation indeed of capitalism into.....another form of capitalism and an attempt to involve the proletariat, and the exploited masses, in the reorganisation of their own exploitation under the guise of laying the groundwork for a further future move 'towards' socialism. This kind of nonsense is, of course, the common currency of every tinpot leftist faction throughout the world. Vote Labour Now and lay the basis for a further move towards capitalism: just get into this Siberia-bound cattle truck now and thus lay the basis for a move..sometime in the future.. towards socialism.

However history and the blood of millions of workers have shown that the exchange of one capitalist rule for another OF ANY KIND is no gain of any kind for the proletariat. There are NO progressive versions of capital. All feed on the bones of workers.

'We can thus see from the things the UCM says that they fall clearly into the left wing of capital - serving up a variety of the critical support/first stage dish which comes from the 'Marxist-Leninist Maoist, Stalinist kitchen with a version of capitalist reality we are all familiar with in the slow disintegration of the Maoist milieu which followed the move of China into the orbit of the American capitalist bloc.

Theoretical Back-up.

To back-up this reactionary programme and to mask it is the form of Marxism the UCM trots out all the old Stalinist and Maoist garbage. They even provide us with an economic analysis to try to substantiate their positions.

The key to the future, we are told, lies in the exploited countries. (obviously they cannot take their model from the west where there are ALREADY democratic capitalist states showing no possibility of any transition to socialism without proletarian revolution! Workers here in the west ALREADY have all the 'benefits' the UCM are pushing for in Iran and STILL need to destroy capital). To mask this particular glaring contradiction the hoary old myth of the labour aristocracy of capital is dragged out of the cupboard to allow the UCM to discount the experience of the vast mass of the world proletariat. The UCM explain:

"The unbearable poverty and destitution of the labouring masses in dominated countries is the material basis for the existence and survival of the labour aristocracy in the metropolitan countries and thus for the stagnation of the class struggle of the proletariat in these countries."

Its difficult to know where to begin with such nonsense, with the blaming of workers in the west for the continued existence of capitalism or with the nonsense of a supposedly decaying class struggle. For the proletariat in the metropolises are

"a section of the working class which benefits from these superprofits." and who are a "labour aristocracy" which "loses its revolutionary character and is transformed into the material basis for the infiltration of bourgeois ideology into the working class."

Thus workers in the industrialised countries are to blame for the present situation and the entire experience of the class in the metropolises can be discounted in favour of the UCM's counter-revolutions rantings about the 'dominated' lands.

Even history is rewritten to justify this nonsense. The UCM, more than willing to throw into the dustbin of history the whole experience of the world proletariat can even contemplate discarding the experience of proletarian revolution itself when it jars too strongly with their theories. And so the Russian Revolution, to suit their schemas,

is demoted to merely being a 'democratic revolution'. Thus does the bourgeoisie attempt to distort the experience of the world proletariat in order to destroy it.

But they have not done with the workers of the 'metropolises' yet.

Revisionism.

"Such conditions are the very basis for the formation of reformism and thereby reformist and revisionist organisations."

(ICC:Opportunism behind 'Left' Phraseology p 19)

What the UCM have to tell us about 'revisionism' is a very clear exposition of how the UCM views the other factions of capital. For all the murderers of the so-called 'Communist Parties' etc are, for the UCM, good comrades who have just 'got it wrong'. These blatantly capitalist thugs are for the UCM part of the communist tradition. As they say:

"One of the principle obstacles hindering the struggle of the proletariat for socialism is revisionism. Revisionism is an international phenomenon and though it may take a particular form and substance in each country it essentially means departing from the fundamentals of revolutionary theory and the programme of Marxism-Leninism."

The UCM doesn't like the fact that revisionism seems to dominate the communist movement and are proud of the fact that they have:

"waged an organised and relentless struggle against a variety of deviationist, revisionist and opportunist outlooks and trends dominating the communist movement"

(both quotes from UCM Programme p 9)

Nowhere is there any clue that these outlooks and trends are CAPITALIST outlooks and counter-revolutionary trends which for sixty years or more have been weapons of the bourgeoisie AGAINST the workers; not 'errors' of communists created by the so-called docility of workers in the metropolises. For the UCM the scum of the CPs are part of the communist movement. This tells us very clearly what the UCM considers the communist movement to be; and tells us even more clearly what the UCM is itself.

What They Dont Say.

If the UCM stand condemned out of their own mouths on what they DO say then they are even more so by what they DONT say. Look at this quote from page 11 of the UCM Programme: a quotation reaffirmed in the recent joint UCM/Komala programme:

"The dominance of revisionism over the Communist parties of the Soviet Union and China has resulted in the defeat and retreat of the world working class from its two important bulwarks in these countries. Now (our emphasis) the bourgeoisie in the Soviet

Union have succeeded in abolishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and reviving its political rule and the capitalist system of that country. Also in China with the decisive domination of revisionism over its communist party, the working class has been ousted (our emphasis) from political power and the power of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system have been consolidated"

This tells us a number of things:

1. There was a proletarian revolution in China and a dictatorship of the proletariat.
2. Khrushchevite revisionism in Russia and Three World revisionism in China have taken power from the working class.
3. Ipso facto, before these present regimes took power, ie in Mao's time and before Khrushchev, the working class held power in China and Russia.

It is this 'what they don't say' that puts the seal on the UCM and winds up our understanding of them as a bourgeois faction. Though they do indeed have a criticism of Stalin (he bent the stick too far towards the populist way), the terror state, the slave state he ruled with its destruction of millions of proletarians and peasants, with the destruction of proletarian political power he oversaw and the exposition of the most naked and brutal CAPITALIST rule he administered, is, for the UCM, an example of the success of the democratic revolution and the leadership therein of the proletariat. (we will leave aside the illogical nonsense of Khrushchev and Mao's successors carrying out a social revolution, or rather counter-revolution to place the bourgeoisie back in power without the hint of class struggle or any activity whatsoever of the proletariat.)

All the airy words about communism being the final goal, all the fine sounding stuff about democracy are revealed for the lies they are when compared with the ACTUALITY of the regimes the UCM defends when it talks about the proletariat holding power in Stalinist Russia and Maoist China. The regime they seek to create in Iran is made very clear by the regimes they tell us were once bastions of proletarian rule.

What They Do.

The final nail in the coffin of course is their defence of Komala taking part in bourgeois factional wars in Iran with its comrades of the Kurdish Democratic Party and its intention to defend the Iranian revolution (sic) against Iraq and Khomeini. One remembers Luxemburg fulminating against Polish Social Democracy for choosing sides in WWI, with different factions choosing different sides and mobilising Polish workers to kill Polish workers some in the Russian Army and some in the German and Austrian armies. One remembers Lenin calling for the World imperialist war to be turned into

a class civil war. And then one looks at the UCM and Komala butchering workers on behalf of one petty bourgeois nationalist clique against another. What the UCM DO, just as what they say and what they don't say, shows them clearly to be just another faction of the left wing of capital with just another capitalist programme to dupe workers and lead them to the inter-imperialist slaughter.

Two points remain. The first is the future for the UCM. Its future is either to continue as it is or to be destroyed. Any genuine proletarian militants within it should get out as soon as possible. This decaying maoist corpse has no life in it and never will. The only way for it to develop positively would be for it to develop a proletarian analysis of itself and its core political positions. And this would be for it to negate its very existence and the very basis upon which it stands. It would mean and necessitate its own self destruction. If the members of the UCM truly wish to join the proletarian camp then this is the only way.

The second point is more important and has important consequences for the proletarian movement. How is it that groups within the proletarian milieu can have deluded themselves consistently about the class nature of the UCM. Certainly we were all mistaken when we first heard about them but groups such as the ICC quickly withdrew their favourable response once more information was forthcoming. Why have groups like Battaglia and the CWO still to learn the lesson. For us the CWO has to ask itself some searching questions.

What is it, that in opposition to all the evidence, leads the CWO to STILL regard the UCM as a fraction of the proletarian movement?

Given that even the CWO is expressing strong misgivings now, what was it is the makeup of the CWO and its approach which allowed it, and still allows it, to make such fundamental errors about the nature of the proletarian movement and what it is constituted of?

For us it seems that the magic phrase 'organising role of the party' eradicated all the other statements and positions of the UCM about democratic revolution, creating unions, defending the Iranian revolution, etc etc in the mind of the CWO so that the clearly anti-working class positions of the UCM in these KEY areas were deemed less important than the fact that they used the same phraseology about the role of the party. The implications are enormous. In Britain the WRP never fails to tell whoever it is that reads the Newsline that the key problem is the problem of leadership and how they are going to solve that problem, reconstitute the communist leadership and lead us all to the Trotskyist promised land. They also have all the vast array of bourgeois positions (different ones from the UCM but bourgeois all the same) Does this mean

that we face the prospect of the CWO telling us that the WRP is breaking from leftism. Or what about the RCP. If the WRP is debarred because it supports Russia (with the good old Deformed Workers State nonsense) then surely the RCP would fit the bill of party builders with bourgeois political positions breaking from leftism. Would we then get articles in Revolutionary Perspectives or Workers voice on the potential of the RCP or its members for breaking with Leftism? Or the SWP's?

But enough! Let us not take fantasy too far.

The CWO who were once so proud of their ability

to clearly delineate the class lines, surrounded as they were by other fractions willing (according to them) to dilute their theoretical clarity in the search for 'unity', and to point to the huge barrier separating the bourgeois camp from the proletariat, now seem to lack any framework for determining the class nature of an organisation. In their headlong lurch towards Battaglia they seem to have jettisoned none of their dogmatism and sectarianism but a lot of their theoretical clarity. In this area the CWO seem to be heading for a cliff. It is to be hoped that they will stop before they hurtle over the edge.

Ingram.

Aire Valley Yarns. continued from page 15.

these firms become pawns in the ideology of the political factions of capital. To the right wing they represent the spirit of free enterprise, independent of the meddling of the state bureaucracy and the unions and surviving without the handouts which go to the big national concerns. This was the nonsense peddled by the National Association of Freedom which gave legal and financial support to George Ward the boss of Grunwicks. Even the Thatcherite wing of the Tory Party has taken up the cause of the small capitalists as the seed bed of economic growth. Behind this facade of concern and support lies the reality of state capitalism which will allow these firms to go to the wall if economic necessity dictates it.

For the left too the small sweatshops have an ideological use. They are taken to show that capitalism has not changed since the days when unions were first formed, a period which gave unions legitimacy in the eyes of the workers. The struggles of workers in this sector are a convenient punchbag for the Labour Party and the trade unions to show their aggression on behalf of the workers. They can then return to their main function in state capitalism as the agents of the peaceful and uninterrupted extraction of surplus labour. If the spirit of Grunwicks is invoked over and over again in strikes like Aire Valley it is because it was one of the most successful mobilisations of the left in Britain. Union leaders added to their radical image by appearing on the picket line, Arthur Scargill was even arrested. Labour cabinet ministers too found it useful to participate at a time when a Labour government was imposing the austerity of the Social Contract.

The left's message is only reinforced by the involvement in the strike of the Trotskyists. The RCP for example, which is particularly active in the Aire Valley Yarns strike, is critical of the methods of the union bureaucrats. But the main thrust of their intervention is never in doubt, that this is a struggle for the right to organise in unions.



Grunwicks was a long and bitter struggle for the workers involved and it ended in defeat. When the unions had extracted all they could from the strikers, when there was no more to be gained by supporting the strike they dropped it. The final pickets organised by the workers were not against the Grunwicks bosses but outside union headquarters.

It may not be too late for the Aire Valley workers to learn the real lesson of Grunwicks - to take their struggle back into their own hands and to appeal directly to other workers for their active support.

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