



All London Socialist Alliance

Thursday February 5 - 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square WC1 (Holborn - Central Line tube)

All welcome at the launch meeting - plenty of time for discussion and questions. Speakers include: Michael Hindley (MEP for Lancashire South), Julia Leonard (SP Hillingdon councillor), and strikers from the Hillingdon Hospital dispute.

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Bloody Sunday

Blair's announcement of a new judicial enquiry has already provoked tensions within the British ruling class

hypocrisy

Twenty-six years after British troops shot dead 14 people in Derry's Bogside, the government claims to have discovered "compelling evidence" which necessitates a new enquiry.

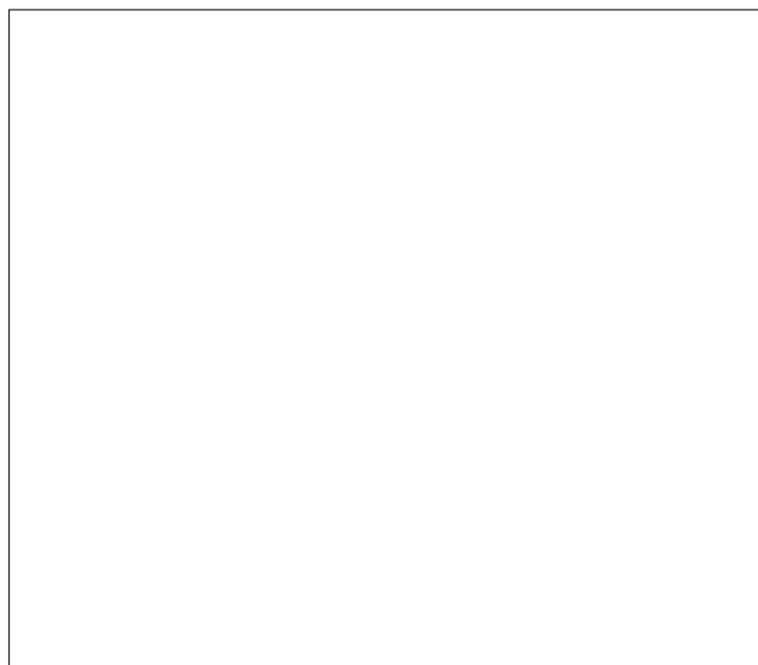
On January 30 1972 thousands of nationalist residents attempted to march to the city centre, demanding the end of internment and the release of republican prisoners held without trial in British concentration camps. The Stormont government, with the backing of London, had declared the procession illegal and troops prevented the peaceful marchers from continuing.

The fact that scores of youths hurled missiles at the occupying soldiers came as no surprise. But on this occasion the state had prepared its reaction. It had planned to provoke just such an incident so as to use it as a cover for smashing Free Derry - the Bogside no-go area with its rebellious inhabitants. They were to be taught a lesson about the nature of British democracy.

Troops from the 1st Parachute Regiment, especially brought in from Belfast, entered the Bogside in armoured vehicles. They shot at the unarmed marchers who tried to escape the onslaught. The firing continued for a prolonged period - from the ground as well as from army snipers at their vantage points high on the city walls. Deaths and injuries occurred in several different areas of the Bogside. Some people were shot while trying to help those already wounded and at least two others were killed while they had their hands in the air.

The state propaganda machine was ready with its official line. Soldiers had fired only in self-defence, it was claimed. They had come under fire from IRA gunmen mingling with the demonstrators. At first army statements alleged that all those killed had been firing, but subsequently it was admitted that this was not the case. Some of them might have been caught in the crossfire, according to the amended version of events.

The youngest victim was 16-year old Gerald Donaghy. Residents tried to rush him to hospital in a car, but they were stopped by troops who removed the fatally injured youth, denying him medical assistance. Having left him to die, they planted two nail bombs in his pocket and flaunted his



Derry, 1972: Bogside residents carry away a dying victim

photograph before the media as 'evidence' of the lethal weapons allegedly used to attack the soldiers. No other weapons of any description were found, despite the fact that the army claimed to have shot dead several "gunmen".

A whitewash tribunal was set up under Lord Widgery. After 11 weeks he produced a report of just 38 pages, which exonerated the army. Not a single civilian could be found to back up claims that the army had opened fire immediately after being shot at, but Widgery pretended to believe the soldiers. He said that there was "reasonable evidence" that at least three of the dead men had been using firearms and that others had been behind barricades alongside gunmen.

As a concession to the overwhelming barrage of evidence from Bogside residents that the army had deliberately shot all the 14 dead in the full knowledge that they were unarmed, the judge conceded that some of the army's actions "bordered on the reckless".

There is nothing "new" about any of this, as the state now claims. What is new is the changed political situation: the ending of the IRA's military resistance to the British occupation

of the Six Counties and the delicate state of the current stage of the 'peace' process. In a carefully choreographed move, Blair's announcement of a fresh inquiry was timed to coincide with the Irish government's publication of a 178-page report detailing all the army falsehoods and the compelling civilian evidence that Widgery chose to ignore. In this way the state cynically implies that it had previously been unaware of the true facts, which have at last been brought to light in Ireland.

The media have undergone a remarkable transformation in their coverage of the annual marches held in London and the Six Counties to commemorate Bloody Sunday. After more than two decades of either studiously ignoring them or painting them as a cover for terrorism, the BBC actually publicised this year's London march in advance. The sole purpose of the event, according to radio news bulletins, was to demand an enquiry. In previous years the marches have been characterised by militant calls to support the IRA, to drive out the British imperialists as the only way to ensure that the events of 1972 are never repeated. This year however, the marchers, including elements of the

revolutionary left, took up the cue: "No more Bloody Sundays - public enquiry now!" was the most frequent chant. Within days the government could be presented as having acknowledged a legitimate request.

Another change has been seen in the attitude of army establishment figures. Last weekend BBC television showed a documentary, *Remember Bloody Sunday*, first screened in 1992. At that time the commanding officer in Derry, Lt Col Derek Wilford, was asked if he considered the victims to be innocent. "Oh no," he replied, "I can't believe that. That would be to believe that my soldiers were wrong ... There is no innocence in a riot."

Six years later he is singing a different tune: "One cannot help thinking we were taken there to teach them a lesson, to go in knocking a few heads and show them they cannot have a no-go area." Already laying the groundwork to pass the buck back to the government, he added: "[Such an action] has to come from higher than the brigade commander. The germ of it must have started in London."

If the result of the Widgery report had been a foregone conclusion, so too will be the findings of the new enquiry set up under judge Mark Saville. He will declare the 'innocence' of all the victims, criticise the 'mistaken' actions of the armed forces and perhaps even apportion some blame (the more serious the 'overreaction', the lower will be the rank of its perpetrator).

This will entail risks for Blair. If blame, or even neglect, is established in bourgeois law, that will leave individuals or the army itself open to civil proceedings. Indeed the government has so far refused to rule out "blanket immunity" from prosecution. For that reason army officers like Wilford are feeling distinctly edgy. This was reflected in the reluctance of George Robertson, the secretary of state for defence, to go along with Blair's move. He admitted he had initially opposed a new enquiry.

However, in order to keep the 'peace' process on track the government now needs to take 'pro-republican' initiatives. After last month's unionist-oriented 'propositions on heads of agreement' Blair has breathed new life into the Anglo-Irish 'framework document', a move welcomed by Sinn Fein. That has restored

the balance at the all-party talks, introducing a stronger all-Ireland element into the proposals for a settlement, while still leaving in place the Ulster Unionist Party's 'council of the isles' as a guarantee of continued British hegemony over Ireland.

Viewed in the context of the talks, a new Bloody Sunday enquiry does not involve costly concessions. It is a gesture towards the nationalist population aimed at winning over republicans through the 'good intentions' of the government. And, as *The Independent* pointed out, "The enquiry should destroy the value of Bloody Sunday as propaganda for the IRA". The 1972 slaughter did indeed give the IRA its biggest ever recruitment boost.

However, the changed policy could have serious repercussions within the British establishment. The upper ranks of the armed forces will not take kindly to having their true record exposed and sections of the Tory Party are outraged by what they view as criticism of an operation undertaken to re-establish 'law and order' in Derry. For these elements the questioning of a 'successful' military action is nothing short of an assault on British values (and the existing UK constitution). The Hague leadership itself is unenthusiastic.

The *Daily Mail* has for its part launched a campaign to defend the army's record, along with its condemnation of "IRA apologia" in the shape of recent films based on events relating to Ireland - *Some mother's son*, *In the name of the father* and now *Resurrection man*.

This latest film recounts the story of the 'Shankhill butchers' who kidnapped Catholics at random and tortured them to death in Belfast. While the *Daily Mail* was complaining that such 'one-sided' representations give a distorted picture of reality, the Loyalist Volunteer Force threatened to launch another "unholy war against the nationalist community".

Blair's strategy carries the risk of provoking damaging splits within the British ruling class. At present most sections continue to back him, but events - in Britain as well as in the Ireland - could yet conspire to create deep schisms capable of throwing up a crisis, not unlike the Tory-backed Carson rebellion before World War I

Jim Blackstock

This line 5mm beyond crop



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

Party notes

One step forward

On Saturday January 31 the fight for communist rapprochement took a small but very important step forward. In an aggregate convened under the auspices of the Revolutionary Democratic Communist Tendency, members of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Revolutionary Democratic Group debated and passed unanimously - after minor amendments - three resolutions (see *Weekly Worker* January 22 and 29 for the unamended texts).

This aggregate is the first in a series intended to draw together all revolutionary democratic communists. While I am sure that this process will not be without its controversies and arguments, this first joint meeting was marked by a high degree of agreement and common approach. Indeed, the sharpest notes of discord were introduced by the observers from the Open Polemic group.

The meeting started with apologies from a number of organisations and individuals that represent a diversity of approaches to this question of revolutionary unity. The presence of these comrades at future aggregates as at least observers will ensure that the meetings will be lively. However, characteristic of these potential participants - whether from a Trotskyist background, or like OP from the detritus of 'official communism' - is the abject failure of their method of winning revolutionary unity.

Of course, the fact that the January 31 meeting was marked by a degree of unanimity on the three resolutions on the table indicates a degree of programmatic convergence between ourselves and the RDG. In contrast to what various philistines charge against the CPGB, we believe that this is an entirely healthy process. We welcome the fact that the majority of comrades from our organisations share a similar approach to communist politics. This stands in vivid contradicts to the dull-witted economism that dominates the majority of the British revolutionary left and we welcome the fact that our two organisations are merging on solid political foundations.

There are two processes taking place here, however. The particular political parameters of the fusion between the RDG and the CPGB are one thing; the more general question of principled revolutionary unity, the fight for Partyism and democratic centralism is another part of the equation.

While we welcome the points of political commonality between our two organisations, we have stressed over and over again that there are no ideological passports that other organisations and individuals must have stamped before comrades or organisations are granted access to the process. Other comrades interested in the project of principled communist unity are welcome to participate.

Thus, there remain many important theoretical disagreements between the two organisations now moving closer to unity. Indeed, many others would call our points of contention "programmatic" (although this in my view displays a fundamental misunderstanding of what constitutes a 'programmatic' question). That said, they certainly are important questions - for example, on the nature of the USSR and eastern Europe, on the united front in practice, perhaps even on the nature and structure of the revolutionary Party itself.

In most other sections of the revolutionary left, any one of these differences would be sufficient to either keep organisations apart or perhaps even - farcically - to provoke a split. The latest micro-products of this fatally fractious method are the contending sides resulting from the split in the already nano-Workers International League.

I note from the first issue of *Workers Action* (December 1997-January 1998) - the new journal of the former majority - the frivolous reasons cited for adding to the myriad sects cluttering the left. The "political differences" that "threatened the group with paralysis" developed over the course of a year, we are told (although - typically - no one outside the ranks of the WIL knew anything about them). These "centre on interpretation of the united front and the transitional method, and regroupment orientation."

It continues: "While both sides are in favour of relating to left-moving currents and individuals critical of the existing centrist tendencies, the minority emphasised the need to engage in detailed programmatic discussions with such elements and establish a liaison committee for international regroupment at the earliest opportunity. This led to a dispute over how much time and energy a small group could afford to commit to such a project without jeopardising the development of its own politics in struggle alongside other militants in the mass organisations of the working class."

I have quoted this at length because I find it such a breathtakingly dizzy excuse for forming yet another tiny revolutionary sect. The comrades appear to agree on everything apart from pace of work and nuance of emphasis. Ostensibly, they have formed two new organisations less on profound and irreconcilable political disagreements, more on the basis of personal temperament.

We hope that the serious-minded fight for unity between the RDG and the CPGB and the process of the Revolutionary Democratic Communist Tendency both are fighting to build will play a part in ending this type of giddy sectarian method.

The minutes of this first joint aggregate will soon be available to interested comrades. We call on others to join us in the project of principled communist unity ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Both wrong

Almost incredibly, the protracted debate between Tom Ball and Alan Fox on the question of 'institutionalised racism' contrived, while representing totally polar views, to be wrong on both sides of the argument.

Ball argues that the "British imperialist state is inherently racist, has not changed its spots, nor will it ever do so". While Fox insists that the state in fact "encourages the notion that multi-ethnic diversity ought to be the norm in a civilised society: indeed it is positively desirable". According to Fox "social stability" is the motivation: "That is why television in particular - the most popular and powerful of all mass media constantly and consistently pushes the same theme." Interesting phrase that, "pushes the same theme", when you think about it. Might even contain a clue.

Ball's argument is easily dismissed. Racism was never the basis for slavery: rather racism was introduced to explain it and justify it. Britain's ruling powers were never inherently racist to the point that judgement became clouded in regard to economic interests or political survival. It never made a fetish out of it. British ruling class racism was always opportune. It proved useful time and time again in promoting divisions and was exploited for this reason. To argue otherwise is dogma.

Fox, who should have won the argument hands down, totally over-stretched himself with the statement that: "White workers are never encouraged to think of themselves as having separate and distinct interests as opposed to black workers." So why do they continue to do so then? Why indeed are race attacks on a rising curve since the late 1970s? 170,000 race-related incidents annually and still rising. Why is Britain, with a politically negligible far right, on a par with Germany, which has 50,000 registered Nazis. Can it be that race hatred, as some liberals contend, is inherent in the lower orders and therefore genetic - that fascists are born, not made?

How else to explain it? Particularly as Fox acknowledges the theme of anti-racism is continually promoted by councils, companies and schools. If the multi-cultural strategy was working, should it not by now have resulted in some race relations gain, particularly for the black working class. But it has not done so.

In America 'affirmative action' has simply created a black middle class, at the expense of the majority black population who live in abject poverty and are arguably worse off in all key areas than they were prior to the civil rights agitation in the 1960s.

Why is this? The answer is simple. Racism was used to divide the workers. Today the multi-ethnic celebration of diversity, championed by even the most reactionary institutions, is fulfilling the same role. How? There are a number of critical factors. One, the project is conceived and implemented from the top down. As such, it is entirely divorced from any concept of social justice. More fundamentally, at its theoretical core, race has displaced class as the primary dynamic within society. Working class communities are routinely invited to choose sides in any dispute over diminishing resources along racial lines - in the name of anti-racism.

Why funding is continually being cut is never addressed. Of sole concern for the multi-cultural mindset is that the meagre resources are distributed proportionately. Horizontal resentment and violence is the outcome.

Multi-culturalism is promoted and endorsed by the ruling elite precisely for this reason. It is not the job of communists, insists Tom Ball, to pretend "that the state is somehow now positively anti-racist ... otherwise we are no better than the liberals, social democrats ... who kidded themselves that the state could be a means to achieving progressive ends in society". With this line of argument, Ball's entire motivation is exposed. He simply

does not want to be accused of being a liberal, so he picks a fight with them by taking an ultra-liberal stance. So how formally anti-racist would he like the state to be? And what would it have to do gratify his anti-racist demands?

In reality, the state can be positively anti-racist. It can make it a point of honour to discriminate *in favour* of ethnic minorities and still not be 'progressive'.

For the *Weekly Worker* the primary concern should not be that it appears to be caught on either side of a liberal argument which it has passed off as communism. Rather, the real danger lies in the fact that the liberal position is becoming increasingly untenable - morally, theoretically and in practice.

Be warned. When, rather than if, the contradictions manifest themselves politically, the multi-cultural ship will go down with all hands, and it is the left rather than the liberals that will pay the heaviest political price.

Joe Reilly
Red Action

Odd reply

Jack Conrad's reply (Letters, January 22) to previous letters by myself and Kevin Graham was rather odd. I certainly agree that limitations of space can preclude in-depth philosophical discussion. Which is why I was rather surprised at Jack citing Karl Marx's *Preface to the critique of political economy* at me as if it were scripture.

This habitual practice of quoting from the 1859 *Preface* has been criticised by one Franz Jakubowski: "Marx's own problematic springs from [his] dispute with Hegel and Feuerbach, whom he saw as the typical representatives of the idealist and materialist philosophies. Nothing has obscured our understanding of Marx's problematic more than the habit ... of quoting one paragraph from the *Preface* along with a few similar passages, while ignoring the question of where Marx and Engels found that problematic and how they developed it from that point."

On re-reading the *Preface* I find it an immensely problematic text. It could be argued that the passages Jack cites could be utilised in a reified, anti-humanist reading of Marx. Obviously this is of some concern now that the Party is engaged in the task of clearing away the rubble of 'official communist'/Trotskyite ideology. An isolated consideration of the *Preface* has for too long been used as a lifebelt for the latest brand of opportunism.

I have more sympathy with Jack Conrad's critique of Althusser, who is rightly upbraided for his methodological neglect of Marx's earlier works. However, Conrad writes: "Althusser places Marx's 'epistemological break' not, as I would, in 1844 with the *Paris manuscripts*. Rather it was with *Capital* or even his *Marginal notes on Wagner* ..."

Jack does not seemingly address the question of whether the idea of an 'epistemological break' is theoretically acceptable. In *For Marx* Althusser argues against the formulation of 'analytico-teleological' concepts in his essay. Althusser's polemic is a worthy one.

Such abstract approaches can certainly lead to a self-imposed inability to grasp the *dynamic* of a particular writer's output. Rather unfortunate then that Althusser repeats this teleology in his own construction of the 'epistemological break'. Dividing Marx's work into 'ideological' and 'scientific' periods introduces a mechanical perception whereby texts are treated as the preconceived functions of these concepts and not as a totalised process. In this scenario, it matters little whether 1844, 1845 or 1857 is used as a boundary line.

Phil Watson
Liverpool

Voluntarism

I will ignore the John McEnroe-style tirades against Linda Addison by Jack Conrad and come straight to the point of

his views about Lukács and Althusser. Conrad seems to be pro-Lukács and implicitly dismisses answering any criticism about Lukács's alleged voluntarism.

My own view is that Lukács's voluntarism was based upon a crude identity of the party with history. Historical truth equalled philosophical truth. This idealist approach facilitated a voluntarist glossing over of the objective problems facing proletarian revolution, such as his dismissal of the counterrevolutionary role of social democracy.

Adorno's comments on the subject seem appropriate to describe Lukács. The subject projects its own objective impotence into mental omnipotence, and this self-exaltation cannot comprehend the object which remains elusive.

Concerning Althusser, I would contend that, far from being a Stalinist philosophical hack, he was essentially trying to break with the idealism of Stalinism. Althusser's utilisation of the conception of the epistemological break is not the result of his own theoretical practice - rather, it originates with his doctoral supervisor, Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard was concerned to show the ideological limitations contained within any scientific revolution. Althusser extended this approach to Marxism and showed that Marx's early works, such as the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts*, represented the hangovers of Hegel's and Feuerbach's idealism and mechanical materialism respectively. The *Manuscripts* contained a view of history similar to Hegel's master-slave approach, in which the loss of self and its recovery expressed alienated labour and its ultimate negation. From Feuerbach, Marx took the view that the essence of the human species is contained within labour.

In contrast to the early works, Marx in *Capital* no longer equates alienation and labour with particular concepts of idealist philosophies of history. Alienation is now linked to the commodification of human labour power. Marx's epistemological break probably originated with the *German ideology* and *Theses on Feuerbach*. These works, which elaborate the materialist conception of history, break with the Hegelian dialectic of the loss and recovery of consciousness (labour) and also reject Feuerbach's transhistorical view of human nature as a static essence.

Stalinism has been quite comfortable with the humanist view of Marx, as witnessed by Althusser's own philosophical isolation within the PCF. This is because Althusser's Marx is a proletarian revolutionary at the level of philosophy and historical materialism and not the expression of humanist popular frontism.

Phil Sharpe
Nottingham

Correction

In last week's *Weekly Worker* (January 29) you published my article, 'Workers Power quits SLP'. In the process of editing, some additional phrases were introduced. I stated: "By mid-1996 at least a dozen cadres with several years' experience in WP were inside the SLP ... Some of them had differences with the WP leadership, but most of them were loyal to it." However, it was added: "They retained their WP membership." This is not true. Not all of them remained under WP's discipline. In fact a significant proportion of them started to be influenced by the LCMRCI.

I stated that WP was so incapable of recruiting anybody from the SLP that it could not even persuade half of its former members (ie, those no longer under WP discipline) to rejoin. Unfortunately this was rephrased as: "Half of the WP entryists have now decided to leave WP too." John Stone
London

This line 5mm beyond crop

From The Call, paper of the British Socialist Party, January 31 1918

All power to the soviets

The opening of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets has special interest for the BSP.

Our comrade John Maclean was elected one of the honorary presidents, and comrade Petrov conveyed the fraternal greetings of the BSP in the speech he delivered to the delegates. It is interesting to note also that comrade Chicherin has been appointed under-commissary for foreign affairs, for which post his abilities make him fully qualified. We are conscious of the honour brought to ourselves in being so closely associated with the glorious movement in Russia.

The suppression of the constituent assembly has seemingly caused some perturbation among those who are no doubt sincere friends of the Russian Revolution. These friends do not yet appreciate that in Russia today we have the dictatorship of the proletariat, and it is this that some of those who pose as 'revolutionaries' describe as 'appalling'. Some people imagine that to make a revolution is as easy as moving into a new house.

The elections for the constituent assembly took place before the subservience of Kerensky, and the parties supporting him, to imperialism was discovered. When it was discovered, these parties were discredited, and the Bolsheviks took power, backed by the will and the bayonets of the vast majority of the people. The majority of the deputies of the constituent assembly no longer represented those who had voted for them. Its suppression was absolutely justified.

The soviets are the direct expression of the will of the soldiers, workers and peasants. The Russian Revolution is a working class revolution, and the workers must rule until it is no longer possible for capitalists and landlords as a class to lift up their heads. When that time comes, and classes are abolished, the Russian people will devise the most democratic form of administration best suited to the circumstances. In the meantime, "All power to the soviets!"

[Editor's note: Chicherin and Petrov were active members of the British Socialist Party during their enforced exile from Russia.]

1918

Russian Revolution this week 80 years ago

History lessons

James Baque, *Crimes and mercies - The fate of German civilians under Allied occupation, 1944-1950*, Little, Brown and Company 1997, pp288, £18.99

As a young German, I was taught a particular fairytale. Once upon a time there was a country where the people had a democracy, but nothing to eat. A real bad man came, promised them the world and they all followed him. But thankfully there were also the good guys - the Allies. They fought the Nazis and saved the world. Then they taught the Germans real democracy and brought them sunshine, prosperity and everlasting happiness.

Or some of them, at least. James Baque, author of *Crimes and mercies*, objects to this facile view of German history. In his book, he tries to reveal the 'real story' behind the Allied policies after World War II, primarily their crimes against the German population. But he tilts at windmills instead of uncovering the big secrets he claims.

In fact, it is common knowledge that this view of the Allies as 'saviours' is a myth. Even Konrad Adenauer, the first German chancellor after 1945 who was a forceful proponent of the integration of Germany into the west, did not argue anything so stupid. He wrote shortly after the war that the policies of the Allies (including those of his American friends) led to the expulsion of 14 million Germans from Eastern Europe and death on a huge scale.

But despite the fact that the plot is so well known, Baque cannot resist hammering it up. "Here was the outline of a moral struggle so vast it defied definition," he breathlessly tells his audience. "This seemed to me to be the same struggle between good and evil that had gone on in the mind of Jesus Christ, as he stood on a hillside in the desert and was tempted by the devil" (p xxii).

But there was very little by way of redemption. James Baque encapsulates the 'mercies' bestowed upon German civilians with just two words: Herbert Hoover. Over 80 pages he celebrates the "inventor of universal human rights" (p32), who organised food relief after both world wars.

But Baque is definitely more interested in the dark side of post-war politics and this is where the book starts to

become interesting. His main argument is that the Allies purposely let millions of Germans die after the war as an act of revenge on a nation that had supported the Nazis: "For several years the Allies wreaked a vengeance on the German such as the world has never seen. A whole nation was converted to a starvation prison" (p57).

He calculates that between nine and 13 million Germans died as a result of Allied starvation and expulsion policies in the first five years after World War II. The Allies confiscated 25% of the arable land and expelled nearly all the inhabitants into the damaged and shrunken remainder. Germans were prevented from growing sufficient food to feed themselves; they were forbidden to use fertiliser; were not allowed to manufacture goods to pay for food imports; and no foreign food relief was permitted in the year immediately following the war. "By autumn 1945, industrial production was deliberately reduced to around 25-30% of pre-war levels, thus preventing the chance of buying food imports. This was not a consequence of the bombing or the military campaign. In Germany as a whole, 80-85% of the machinery and plant survived intact, but in 1946 in the US zone, exports were forced down to only three per cent of pre-war levels" (p124).

These are certainly facts that post-war USA in particular - the 'liberator' of Europe - does not like raked up. I would not go so far as to call their politics a 'war of propaganda', as Baque does. But US politicians certainly do not boast of the real effects of the occupation of western Germany. The description of US post-war policies and the conditions in Germany make this book really worthwhile reading.

Unfortunately however, Baque revels in the role of 'truth-bringer'. It is not enough for him just to present the damning facts. No, he insists on uncovering imagined conspiracies. For example, he alleges that the 'Morgenthau Plan' which anticipated a divided, agricultural Germany, has in reality never been withdrawn: "Although the American peo-

ple had been told that the Morgenthau Plan had been abandoned, Roosevelt now told Keynes [Lord Keynes, British economist - AW] in secret that the plan would be implemented. The German economy would be reduced to a level not quite 'completely agrarian', he said" (p26).

Despite the fact that his only proof for this is a "memorandum of conversation, Lord Keynes, August 1944" he repeats this accusation over and over again

And this is the real weak point of the book - the unreliable sources of the author's material, combined with his own over-wrought feelings to make the facts prove his own assumptions. The book is consistently and annoyingly emotive.

Despite the title (concerning the fate of German civilians) he describes in three chapters the fate of German prisoners of war in the allied camps, where POWs were kept till long after the war. Apart from the recollections of ex-prisoners, his main sources are Allied official documents. "On 4 August 1945, 132,262 prisoners were reported by the prisoner of war section of Eisenhower's command to have been 'transferred' to Austria. The responsible political commissioner reported that in the month of August a total of 17,953 prisoners arrived in Austria. If the 114,309 missing prisoners were transferred away as 'other losses', but never arrived in Austria, what happened to them? There is only one way to leave a place and not arrive anywhere else, and that is to die" (p59).

Of course, he mentions the other possibility to this "only way" a few pages earlier: falsification of documents. In contrast to the Soviet Union, which believed it would never be brought to account and therefore did less to hide the truth about German war prisoners, the western Allies falsified such documents. Mainly because of pressure from charity organisations in their home countries, they revised the numbers of deaths downwards.

But Baque takes every opportunity to amend these numbers upwards. This tendency to exaggerate Allied crimes, while failing to mention at all the Nazis', gives the book the feel of contrived revisionism. Whereas Daniel Goldhagen's 1996 book *Hitler's willing executioners* equates all Germans with Nazis, *Crimes and mercies* tends to see all Germans as just innocent victims. This impression is reinforced with comments like this: "Many people who have cast doubt on German crimes were jailed. But everybody who denies our post-war crimes is celebrated" (p158).

But I do not think that Baque is a British Nazi. Rather he dives over-enthusiastically into a previously neglected area of research. More than once he loses the thread of his argument and is often trapped by details. This is a real pity, because the subject is worth serious study instead of this rather moralistic and subjective effort

Anna Weber

Fighting fund

It could be you

Millions have been seduced by the remote chance of a big win on the national lottery and a way out of the daily grind of making ends meet. However, recent events have shown us that for some the lottery was no gamble at all - they were winners every time.

Richard Branson's libel victory against Guy Snowden reveals the shabby truth behind the glitzy facade. Ordinary people throw away billions of pounds in the forlorn hope of a better life. All the while the government uses 'charity' cash to subsidise its spending and corrupt fat cats line their own pockets.

Snowden amassed a fortune. Via his company G-Tech he not only holds 22% of Camelot's shares, but is also running more than 70 lotteries all over the world. They generate £500 million annual profits.

Two of his ex-'employees' were the former Conservative MPs Colin

Moynihan and John Maples, who were 'purchased' for £60,000 a year to help ensure the government took the 'right' decisions. Bribery - whether official and 'above board', or the offer of a quiet backhand - lubricates the entire capitalist system, not just the lottery.

Don't throw away your money. The lottery is not only a con but the odds are impossible. Back the sure cause of human liberation. You can't lose. The *Weekly Worker* fights for a world where nobody has to gamble on 'good times', but instead actually lives them!

Send your donations now. Thanks for last week go to VP who donated £80, GB (Liverpool) £15, IT from Manchester who raised £25 through street collections and PN (London) who gave £20. Thanks to all these comrades, our £500 monthly fighting fund starts with a magnificent £140

Katrina Haynes

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action

CPGB schools

Dundee: The national question and the federal republic, February 21-22

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

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

CPGB Manchester

Communist Manifesto - 150 years. Monday February 16. Speaker: Jack Conrad. For details call 0181-459 7146.

CPGB London

Communist Manifesto - 150 years. Sunday February 15. Speaker: Jack Conrad. For details call 0181-459 7146.

Party wills

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

Hillingdon hospital workers fight on

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

Support Magnet workers

To support the 350 sacked Magnet contact the Strike Committee. For more information on 01325-282389.

Irish political prisoners campaign

London benefit, including live music and food. Saturday February 7, 8.30pm, £3. Downing Street picket - first Sunday of every month, 12 noon to 1.30pm. Release the prisoners! For more details contact: Fuascait, PO Box 3923, London NW5 1RA. Tel: 0181-985 8250 or 0956-919 871.

For a workers' budget

Lobby of parliament, Tuesday March 17, 1.15pm. Chuck out the cuts! Organised by the Welfare State Network.

The end of social democracy

25th anniversary conference organised by *Critique*, Saturday February 7, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Registration 9-9.30am. £10 or £5 concessions. Speakers include Bob Arnot, István Mészáros and Hillel Ticktin.

Glasgow Marxist Forum

Public meeting - What is socialism? Speaker - Hillel Ticktin. Wednesday February 25, 7.30pm. Patrick Borough Halls (Patrick tube). Sponsored by Glasgow SLP and SSA. All welcome.

Thesis on revolutionary openness

This thesis was discussed at the CPGB's aggregate last weekend. Comrades from Manchester opposed it and presented an alternative motion. The thesis, itself the result of intense discussion and amendment, had the backing of the Provisional Central Committee and was overwhelmingly carried, but with the Manchester comrades voting against. Their own motion was then carried by a large majority. The *Weekly Worker* will be discussing this important question over the coming period

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

2. Members of the Communist Party of Great Britain accept the principles of the organisation, as outlined presently in the 'What we fight for' column, and abide by majority decisions on practical actions. Members are though by no means necessarily united on theoretical questions, including matters of strategy and tactics. Even when it comes to the programme of the reformed Party it is perfectly legitimate to criticise points and formulations.

3. For communists such differences and their open expression are not signs of weakness but strength. The Communist Party strives to organise and contain within itself all partisans of the working class, because that unity can only strengthen and intensify revolutionary practice - which alone provides the ultimate proof about truth or error in theoretical matters.

4. Communist unity, the unity of communists within the CPGB, does not in the least mean members should hide disagreements on strategy and tactics or refrain from fully explaining their views whenever and wherever appropriate. The political struggle for what a communist regards as correct should be carried on openly, straightforwardly and resolutely.

5. In the communist press different ideas contend, criticisms are made and answered. The open battle of ideas is the best assurance of the functioning of democratic centralism, even in circumstances of illegality where formal democracy may not be able to function.

6. The CPGB is not only the most honest organisation on the British revolutionary left: it is the most open in British politics in general. We have never been afraid to honestly discuss our weaknesses and mistakes. We have already enshrined in resolution form - passed unanimously by the sixth conference of the Leninists of the CPGB on September 4 1993 - the right for open factions, even ones highly critical of the majority positions of the Party. Our tolerant and candid treatment of the Open Polemic faction - which was allowed a faultfinding weekly column in the Party press - underlines that this was not simply a

formal stance. Both our theory and practice demonstrates our commitment to openness in the workers' movement.

7. We understand that this approach is not the result of a concern for liberal sensibilities. The Communist Party is a process and like every dialectical process it contains "the seeds, admittedly in a primitive, abstract and underdeveloped form of the determinants appropriate to the goal it is destined to achieve..." (Lukács). Thus, just as Summer Offensive campaigns anticipate - albeit in "primitive, abstract and underdeveloped form" - the nature of work under communism, so too the openness of the Communist Party anticipates communism, a world association characterised by transparency and the conscious regulation of the laws of nature and society.

8. It would be foolish and highly dangerous to make absolutes out of our principles, however. Just like a workers' state of the future, our Party operates in the field of politics and is thus in a daily relationship of unity and conflict with other political organisations, both on the revolutionary left and beyond it. Our principles are subordinate to the fight for world revolution.

9. Thus, we use openness as a weapon in the class struggle, driving it into the hearts of our opponents and enemies to underline that our organisation is fighting neither to preserve intact some sect-orthodoxy or to defend bourgeois society. Our method both exposes their hypocrisy and exemplifies the type of politics and society we are fighting for. We have wielded this implement of war with deadly effect against others. But precisely because it is a weapon it must be used with great care, precision and with a mature eye on the needs of the broader struggle. As a weapon, it can potentially be used against us.

10. Within the principle of revolutionary openness, in raising differences

comrades must be guided by revolutionary morality. Actions which facilitate the fight for world revolution are moral; anything which harms that fight is immoral.

11. Serious criticisms of our organisation should in general be raised firstly with Party comrades and committees. In this way we have the opportunity to either resolve the problem to everyone's satisfaction, or at least take some of the 'sharp edges', bad formulations and false charges out of the debate.

12. The *Weekly Worker* as the central organ and weapon of the Party as a whole must act as the collective organiser, agitator and educator at the highest possible level. All Party members have a responsibility to contribute to and develop the paper with this aim. This of course includes a responsibility to engage with debates in the paper and to develop criticisms in print. However, we must avoid flip polemics and ensure that debate between comrades in the pages of our paper is as rounded and informed as it possibly can be.

13. Thus there can be no absolute right of publication for any viewpoint in the open Party press. The leadership of the Party or the bodies delegated with editorial functions must have the right to refuse contributions they consider harmful or ill-considered. At certain times for instance, the open discussion of our tactical orientations can constitute a breach of Party security. Disagreements over such decisions should be raised with the relevant Party committee and if necessary at an aggregate of the organisation.

14. Comrades must however have a greater degree of latitude to distribute material internally, though this itself cannot be unbounded. Individual comrades or groups have the right to publish outside the Party to advance the struggle for revolutionary communism ●

Manchester motion

Revolutionary openness is a principle and practice of the CPGB. The principle of democratic centralism implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action.

Comrades raising criticism of our organisation should first raise the question with Party comrades and committees. In this way, we have the opportunity to either resolve the problem to everyone's satisfaction, or at least take some of the 'sharp edges', bad formulations and false charges out of the debate before it may spill into the pages of the paper. In this way, we ensure that debate between comrades in the pages of our paper as rounded and informed as it possibly can be.

The leadership of the Party or the bodies delegated with editorial functions must have the right to refuse contributions they consider disrupt a definite action or of low political merit. Disagreements over such decisions should be raised with the relevant Party committees and if necessary at an aggregate of the organisation ●

Dave
Douglass

Dave is a former Yorkshire NUM activist who now runs a community advice centre

Miserly payouts for miners

The recent High Court victory trumpeted in the press as a record breaking settlement of damages, although running into billions overall, is actually worth no more than £10,000 per miner. £10,000 for a crippling, terminal illness, which slowly and ever more painfully kills you, is hardly justice by anyone's measure.

What is clear is that the Blair government's hand is working strings in the background of all these mass industrial disease cases. Take 'vibration white finger', a crippling disease which kills the grip and robs the fingers of power and dexterity. Caused by prolonged use of pneumatic picks and burrowing machines, it affects possibly 25% of all former and current mine workers.

Prior to the last election, British Coal were on the ropes. In High Court cases they mostly had to concede to us. The initial figures for compensation ranged from £3,000 to £40,000. Conscious that such payouts could be multiplied by tens of thousands of mining victims nationwide, and that the government would have to pick up the tab in the absence of a British Coal which was now formally wound up, their lawyers were given time to appeal against the size of the sum.

With the new Blair government in office, cutting and stealing back benefits, their lawyers came back and appealed the whole case - they have not been given a blank cheque to say that the government was totally innocent of blame. Blair's mob know that every £10 they can nick back off the compensation adds up to tens of thousands saved overall from the crippled miners.

Mind, they have already stolen £40 per week from every miner with pneumoconiosis, broken backs and other disabling injuries. This they took off everybody with industrial injuries benefits in the country who had reached 65. Despite the award notices, which stated "for life", they did the same thing with hardship/reduced earnings allowance, withholding £40 from workers impoverished by industrial injury and disease.

Of course, it was the outgoing Tory government that did this - but did the incoming Tory (New Labour) government give it back? No, of course not. So if they have kept stolen goods, and they know who those goods belong to, they are thieves too.

Then we have had the alteration of back payments for injuries and disease. We used to be able to claim back to the date of the accident or the onset of the disease - which is logical, isn't it? But this of course cost the state millions. So the outgoing Tories reduced it to a maximum of three months' money, no matter how long the disease had been active and crippling the person. Take a miner with chronic bronchitis. He tries in 1993 to claim the benefit and is turned down as having no dust in his lungs. He tries every year until he dies and is told that he does not have the disease. After the autopsy we discover large amounts of coal dust and evidence he had had the complaint back to 1993, as he thought. The DSS doctors now record the date of onset of his disease as 1993. Previously his widower family would have been paid disablement benefit to which he has always been entitled back to the date of onset. Now, after the outgoing Tories and despite the incoming New Labour ones, you can only claim money for three months.

The whole picture cries out injustice - and it is injustice against those crippled, diseased and killed by the greed of big business. Of course, Blair has taken up where they left off: attacks on single parents benefit, not "unmarried mothers benefits", as Labour spin doctors have circulated. That benefit was paid to either parent, left to bring up the kids alone for any number of reasons. "Single parents want work, not benefit," they tell us in a shower of misinformation, failing to mention that you get that benefit when you *are* in work.

I got it as a single parent working in the mines, and it was a godsend in offsetting the demands of a young teenager in terms of clothes and school stuff. Likewise, disability living allowance - "Disabled want work, not benefits". More misinformation. That benefit is paid to disabled people who *are* working, as a recognition that their disabilities are more of a financial burden than other able-bodied people face.

The numbers of people - hard working ordinary people of every description - being robbed blind by this and the former government runs into millions. Most families are entitled to one benefit or another. That is why we paid our national insurance contributions. That is the deal we signed up to with the state when we worked our bollocks off and paid the money every week.

We must not allow them to spread the lie that somehow *we* are scrounging something off *them*. As we have seen, we have caught them with their fingers in our till, robbing our contributions and leaving us peanuts. This is the real benefit fraud. Working people, disabled and abled alike, must react with fury and determination to stop and reverse the robbery.

Tough on state theft, tough on the causes of state theft ●

Simon Harvey of the SLP

On party censorship

Despite the guarantee of a 3,000 block vote at his disposal, the modus operandi of our general secretary continues to be one of near-paranoid secrecy. In response to the party's ongoing troubles, our would-be labour dictator detects plots and places blame on all except himself.

The most recent example is an attempt to enforce censorship on party members. A new design for the SLP letterhead has emerged. Recent correspondence has been headed as normal with the party's name, office bearers and address. Nothing unusual there. But a casual glance at the foot of each page reveals a new addition. There is a grim warning that the contents of the letter are not to be disclosed without the general secretary's permission and that "unauthorised publication" will be viewed as "detrimental to Socialist Labour".

No doubt cautious after his experience of treachery by MI5 agents during the miner's Great Strike, Scargill is now renowned for trusting only his closest collaborators. Of course, security is a consideration in the workers' movement. Yet when such a consideration gets used to curb or ban normal democratic debate and discussion, it acts as a cancer on internal life. It becomes the duty of members to rebel, publish openly divergent views and attempt to pare back the bureaucratic intrigue, despite routine warnings about 'privacy' and 'security'.

In today's world of photocopiers, faxes, e-mail and computer-based text and photo manipulation, such banning of distribution of correspondence is next to useless. Its only intention can be to intimidate.

Speaking of censorship, poor old Terry Dunn has been airbrushed out of the list of those elected to this year's NEC. To avoid having to explain his subsequent resignation, the formulation in the current *Socialist News* announcing our elected leadership curiously reads: "The SLP national executive committee, elected at the Congress, includes ..." Comrades Imran Khan and Roshan Dadoo have also been Tippexed out of the list. Readers will recall that they refused to take up their seats after the vote to abolish the black section. You just cannot cover these things up, comrade Scargill. When three members of the NEC resign over issues of political principle, surely the party and its supporters have a right to know what is going on.

London manifesto

The London regional committee of the SLP has produced a draft London

manifesto in the lead-up to the May 7 local elections. This draft, along with an 18-page background document, is currently being distributed to members across London. Constituency parties as well as individuals are being invited to submit comments, amendments or alternatives by February 20. There will subsequently be a special regional conference solely to discuss a final draft on March 14.

This process gives party members the opportunity to debate exactly how Blairism should be challenged. It is unfortunate then that we have been given such poor material to work from.

Where to begin? I am at a loss in comprehending the thought processes behind the authors' work. This manifesto, subtitled "for a fair and beautiful city", makes the party's general election statement seem a diatribe of leftist rhetoric.

The central refrain of the document is that "people want London to be a beautiful, safe and happy place". No doubt true. The proposed vehicle for obtaining this, as envisaged by the Fiscite scribes dominating the capital's regional committee, is a "democratic London City Council" which amazingly "puts people first". Another theme concerns the referendum for a council and mayor which is to run concurrent to the local elections.

Perhaps my central criticism is the method. It is not an action plan for our class. Its anodyne language aside, the manifesto posits what a Socialist Labour GLC mark II would do for a passive electorate, not what we could collectively achieve through mass action. That would have required a militant class-struggle manifesto - a revolutionary minimum programme, in other words.

No doubt members of the regional committee feel they are presenting the electorate with a vision, without diverting the audience's attention with bogey words like 'socialism' or 'revo-

lution'. I have no objection to comrades presenting their views in whatever way they feel best. However, in this case it seems as if the very views themselves are a world apart from what our party should be fighting for.

Nowhere does the document make a case for socialism. Indeed, the only mention of the word is in the party's name. Instead, what is presented is a sub-reformist vision. At least Bennite social democracy had the 'merit' of illusions of transforming society into socialism through winning control of the bourgeois state. This draft manifesto sets it sights below that.

Yet illusions in the bourgeois state remain. The preamble to the document concludes: "A Socialist Labour LCC would put the needs of London people first. Employment, housing and pollution, policing and our services, all of them can be transformed by a council that puts the people first. That is Socialist Labour's commitment to London" (emphasis added).

Wow. Such drivel could easily come from any of the three mainstream bourgeois parties. This hankering for bourgeois respectability seems to stem from a combination of old Labourism and new Scargillism: a mix of Brian Heron and Tony Goss.

The manifesto reads like an amateur, yet oh-so-earnest, Liberal Democrat treatise. Some examples. Point two of the draft tries to explain how the SLP will pay for its proposals. In part it states: "LCC and borough councils should be able to set up local businesses where needed to provide cheap essentials and services for London families. With this and other policies to support small businesses we will put the heart back into the high street and challenge the superstores. Any profits from LCC business would be ploughed back to the people".

This proposal is a call for socialism in one borough. Or it could be a policy for reinventing the British shopkeeper

and artificially high prices for the consumer. Either way, it is completely daft.

Another means of financing what are actually very modest proposals, according to the document, is to utilise VAT. I kid you not. The SLP's policy on VAT is clear. It is to abolish it. Yet the draft manifesto states: "We would take some of VAT to pay for local needs. This Euro-tax must be abolished. Until it is, a percentage could go to local government. We need housing, jobs and services, not billions of pound of tax money to unelected Euro-quangos." Fighting words, them.

This proposal exemplifies the thinking behind the document. It is not a programme of action for what the workers need. It is the programme of a slave class, ever so humble. VAT can hardly be abolished if we are aiming to include it in the funding proposals of the London City Council. And how is VAT a 'Euro-tax'? Is it a 'Euro-tax' in the USA? They even have VAT in New Zealand.

The draft manifesto proposes a number of 'workers' quangos' to ensure the LCC does a 'good job'. On employment: "A special agency will be set up involving councillors, trade unionists and consumers to plan economic change ... We will put our city back to work." On transport and the environment, a permanent greenie quango: "We will pay for a standing conference for all environment groups and agencies in London ... This conference will be another watchdog on the environmental progress of the LCC." And on racism and discrimination an "equality commission ... composed of representatives from all unfairly treated groups and elected councillors. The commission would speak out against discrimination wherever it found it. It would be another watchdog on the progress of the council."

On the police, the document is am-

biguous: "The people need to bring the police to order," it states. This is to be done through a democratically elected police authority. It is unclear just what this means, but given the tenor of the rest of the document it seems a recipe for a reformed police force, not the abolition of standing bodies of armed men, separate from society. Placing an elected authority at the top of the pile of a culture of corrupt, violent and anti-worker coppers is just so much window dressing. In many US cities, police authorities are elected. District attorneys are elected throughout the USA. To paraphrase the leader of an elected authority, "It's the system, stupid".

This draft Socialist Labour London manifesto is a joke. It is more right-wing than current SLP policy. It does not put forward any of the central aims of existing policy such as a four-day week, 32-hour day, retirement at 55, abolition of VAT or abolition of tax below £10,000, let alone constitutional questions such as abolition of the monarchy and fighting for a republic.

Its only merit concerns the manner in which the question for a London-wide authority is being put forward. It is rigged with one question alone, which proposes a strong, New York-style mayor to head a council with relatively weak powers. Apart from this, Paddy Ashdown could have come up with something more promising.

Democratic Platform

I have recently been sent a copy of a selection of papers from the January 10 Democratic Platform conference which was held in Reading. A precursor to a new *Democratic Platform* bulletin, due out in March, it is refreshing to see that the struggle to organise democrats and revolutionaries in the SLP still continues. I look forward to reading the next issue ●

Around the left Glorious isolation

The latest issue of *Socialist News* (February/March), newspaper of the Socialist Labour Party, makes for disappointing reading. It clearly represents a step backwards from the previous edition, which in spite of itself had a little more edge to it - such as the start of a debate on China. A polemical quality had crept stealthily into the paper, even if it was semi-disguised and opaque.

This is not the case with the new issue of *Socialist News*. Its contents are mainly non-political and extremely anodyne. Instead of coming across as a paper which is genuinely trying to raise the level of debate and educate its readers, it looks more like the result of a desperate search to fill its pages. Hardly surprisingly then, *So-*

cialist News is characterised by vapid eclecticism and individual eccentricities.

The Jimmy Nolan article, 'Flame of resistance', was an unfortunate front page choice - and one SLP members will be saddled with for at least another two months. Its stirring report of the Liverpool dockers' continued determination to fight adds to the paper's air of unreality, the impression that the SLP is an organisation seriously locked in the past. This is an inherent danger, of course, in any irregular publication. But even more so if the editorial team are afraid of politics and want to promote 'official optimism'. As past experience tells us, this is only sowing the seeds for future disillusionment and cynicism.

A quick dig through the articles in *Socialist News* reveals their somnolent nature. Dot Kelly tells us how busy SLP members are in Bolton trying to revive the 80s. They are "planning a local campaign around the Greenham Common Women's Millennium Pledge to work for peace" and "contacting organisations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament".

Most of the other articles are just as fossil-like. Ken Thornton decides to see how the other half lives and goes to meet some New Age travellers - "Yes, I did come away with a different point of view, and I'm pleased I did it." Stewart Emms went to East Germany "on a journey of discovery" as part of a four-man Ucatt delegation. John Haynes uncritically interviews Sinn Fein executive member Jim Gibney. Royston Bull of the homophobic *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* castigates capitalism for having "no serious anti-drugs policy" and worries about how "all sorts of prejudice are encouraged and will flourish" as governments face the world economic slump. 'Don Hoskins' (*EPSR* pen name for one Adrian Greenman) writes a bland article on

Afghanistan, denouncing the "weird and obsolete" ideologies of countries like Saudi Arabia. Nell Myers gives us her views on contraception ("To me, the pill was a miracle"), and so on. In other words, we have a collection of utterly unfocused, individualistic contributions, all written in glorious isolation.

The old-time spirit of *Socialist News* leads to incongruous juxtapositions. Thus, in one article Lila Patel, described as "secretary of the Korea Friendship and Solidarity Campaign" (she is also a member of the Stalin Society), catalogues the grisly crimes of US imperialism during the Korean War and praises the role of the 'great leader', Kim il Sung. In a separate and unnamed article above, we are informed that the "German Red Cross has called the situation in the north of Korea one of worst the world has seen since the Second World War, and recently estimated that around 10,000 children were dying of starvation every month". Apparently "malnutrition is now affecting all of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's 2.6 million children".

How ironic. For years Lila Patel and

organisations like the KFSC have loudly insisted that North Korea provides us with a 'model' for socialism - if not of an actual paradise on earth. To doubt this claim was enough to be condemned as a "counterrevolutionary" or "Trotskyist". Yes, North Korea has recently been hit by natural disasters. But its *juche* (ie, so-called 'self-reliance') ideology, combined with the anti-democratic and obsessively secretive nature of the regime, has been the prime force behind the unfolding calamity in the DPRK. Bureaucratic socialism invites disaster, whether natural or non-natural.

The truth about the North Korean regime cannot be denied, even by *Socialist News*. If it was doing its job properly, *Socialist News* should of course be using this as an opportunity to encourage an open and honest debate about the nature of North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, etc.

The bureaucratic 'unity' that reigns in the SLP means that in the realm of theory the lowest common denominator becomes the ideal - the result is reflected in the pages of *Socialist News* ●

Don Preston

Facing the fire of Korean unification

How has a divided Korea impacted upon the working class? Lee Min Young - a former partisan of Cliffism - looks at the relationship between the class struggle and unification

At the start of 1997, two months of general strikes in South Korea demonstrated clearly that capitalism, so long as it exists, cannot avoid being challenged by workers' struggle, and that the working class cannot help but struggle. This simple and clear truth once again inspired the world's working class and made the blood of the ruling classes everywhere run cold.

South Korea has often been cited as a model of rapid economic growth, nicknamed the 'little tiger'. Over recent years it has also been in the spotlight because of the struggle for democracy against the old repressive regime. However, much of what has been said is totally superficial. Thorough and precise Marxist analysis is required.

First of all, it is essential to understand the situation of the Korean peninsula as a whole: ie, the relationship between South Korea and North Korea. The division of the peninsula into two hostile states determines the political situation and conditions both north and south: the decisive question being unification.

This relates directly to the question of revolutionary strategy. In no time at all, unification will become a practical question of the day. Having a correct strategic grasp of the tasks in the Korean peninsula is therefore an essential precondition for the development of a socialist movement in the south.

Such matters are the concern of socialists the world over. Obviously the identification of socialism and communism as the expression of the proletariat's political will is an international phenomenon, transcending national borders.

To understand the politics of the Korean peninsula, we must first appreciate the significance of its division into two separate states over the last half-century. The 'dual' liberation from Japan in 1945 marked the end of the Yi feudal dynasty. However, the historic task of building a bourgeois state, the bourgeois democratic republic, was determined by the flow of world history, the so-called Cold War. Instead of a unified state, two incomplete bourgeois states were born. North Korea has been called a workers' state, but this is a myth. Following scientific socialism, I argue that it has nothing at all to do with workers' power. The ruling system in the north is designed to exploit the proletariat.

On the one hand the former Soviet Union and its eastern European state capitalist allies backed the Democratic People's Republic of Cho-Sun (North Korea), while on the other hand the Republic of (South) Korea was supported by US imperialism and the other western capitalist states. Naturally both north and south claim in their constitutions to be the only legitimate government of the whole peninsula.

The DPR of Cho-Sun identified the South Korean government as a colony of US imperialism and regarded itself as a "democracy base", a springboard for the southern revolution. Here was its founding identity - the application of the 'national liberation people's democracy revolution' to the Korean peninsula. The first government of the Republic of Korea, in its turn, argued that the North Korean government was a puppet regime of the Soviet Union, and declared the whole peninsula to be its own territory.

With this situation of 'dual power' - each claiming the other's territory - the seeds of the Korean War (1950-53) had already been sown from the very beginnings of the two states. The formal end of the conflict changed nothing. The war was not over: merely interrupted.

Hence, the boundary between north and south was not a border dividing two sovereign nations, but the ceasefire line of dual power in one nation, one territory. This meant the war was continuing by other means, and was likely to break out again so long as dual power remained. So the ceasefire line was not simply a dividing line, but shows clearly the irreconcilable antagonism between North and South Korea.

In the situation of dual power, each state must prove the superiority of its system. Having passed through war, their conflict assumed an alternative form. Each strove to propagate and prove its legitimacy to govern the whole peninsula through a concerted drive for the accumulation of capital - ie, exploitation of living labour.

This was life or death for both powers. They put all their energy into industrialisation and economic development. The political tension caused by military confrontation provided excellent conditions in which to make profit and to exploit, particularly through the low pay policy in the south. Vicious state repression was intensified. It was easy to smash any movement against the system. South Korea achieved sustained economic growth at a rate probably unparalleled in the world.

This capital accumulation, led by the state, fully integrated South Korea into the world economy. At the same time it meant the most severe exploitation of the working class of South Korea, as well as the brutal suppression of democracy. The proletariat thus cannot help but challenge the system. During the course of the 1970s South Korean capitalism slowly began, bit by bit, to come up against the fundamental hostile relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. If the basic contradiction of capitalism began to surface in the 1970s, by the 1980s it was unmistakable.

In May 1980 a popular uprising

against the regime in the southern city of Kwangju resulted in a bloody massacre. The revolt was a milestone in the history of South Korea. It exposed the system's true nature, and turned out to be a catalyst for the massive, violent democratic struggle of 1987. After Kwangju, political groups began to appear. The struggle of Kwangju was heroic, but its ending was indeed a horrific tragedy. It cried out for a conscious revolutionary movement based on scientific socialism.

There were a variety of schools: but mainly 'official communist' and Kim il-Sungist (after the founder of North Korea, who died in 1995). There was nevertheless a consensus in their strategies: they were all based on carrying out a revolution in South Korea as a political unit.

Firstly the South Korean revolution would be made by the working class and people of South Korea. Then, after victory, it would be united with the 'democracy base', North Korea - which had already been liberated from US imperialism. In the process, a unified socialist state, or a federal socialist state would be built. In essence this strategy considered North Korea a workers' state and a supporting or allied force. The North Korean state was certainly not regarded as an enemy, not something which must be smashed.

Based on this view of the relationship between the South Korean revolution and North Korea, two trends began to appear in the mid-1980s.

Firstly, the National Liberation trend in the South Korean student and labour movement. It accepted North Korea and its ideology at face value. Thus the South Korean revolution must be led by North Korea's Cho Sun Ro Dong Dang (Workers' Party). This would be so even if a workers' party existed in South Korea. In fact this trend thought a workers' party of South Korea was superfluous.

The other trend - called People's Democracy or National Democracy - was different because it emphasised the South Korean revolution rather than 'national liberation': ie, it put South Korea's working class struggle against the bourgeoisie above the national struggle or the anti-imperialist struggle. Hence, it thought the decisive role in the revolution would be played by a workers' party. So the major task was to build a separate workers' party of South Korea.

Although differing in approach and practice, both trends shared a common premise - the South Korean revolution. The difference lay in the fact that one tended to depend on North Korea completely (it was actually directed by North Korea), while the other looked to the Soviet Union for inspiration and authority. But the Soviet Union was the womb of the North Korean regime. It was the Soviet Union which had made North Korea. Hence differences over the South Korean revolution were not in fact fundamental.

Meanwhile, at the time when discussion of strategic questions among socialists was beginning, a great mass movement swept South Korea in June 1987. This was the culmination of the

democratic struggle begun in the 1970s. Until then, the South Korean ruling system had not allowed even the minimum of democracy or political freedom: eg, freedom of assembly and association, speech and press. With North Korea dubbed the cause of all evil, anti-democratic laws completely prohibited 'normal' political activity.

The Great Struggle produced a partial victory over the system, in the sense that it resulted in an easing of the dictatorship. It was a fake democracy, but the political space won threw up new opportunities.

The Great Strike of July, August and September followed the democratic struggle of June. The proletariat came to the forefront of history. Despite suffering unbelievable exploitation and having been hidden by the democratic struggle for political freedom, the proletariat of South Korea clearly demonstrated its existence as a class.

Unexpected, unpredicted by anyone or by any political trend, the spontaneous general strike demonstrated the latent power of the working class - ultimately, the only force capable of eliminating the exploitation and oppression endemic in capitalism.

Just as South Korea was going through this turning point, an epochal change of world history began. Gorbachev's perestroika policy, followed by the collapse of eastern European 'communist' power, the Tiananmen revolt in China, the unification of East and West Germany, etc - these great events changed the world. While 'communist' power in most eastern European states was overturned by popular revolt, the pro-democracy demonstrations centring on Tiananmen Square were put down by the 'communist' power of China. The former Soviet Union was dismantled. 'Communist' power was exposed as a system of exploitation of the proletariat, not a system of self-liberation of the proletariat.

The essential hypocrisy of these states stood revealed. For the proletariat it was an invaluable moment in freeing itself from a fraudulent ideology, thus making possible genuine, meaningful international solidarity. That is the true meaning of those events.

The changes of 1989-91 ended the so-called 'confrontation between camps' - state capitalism, centred on the former Soviet Union; and western capitalism, centred on the US. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the most important task for socialists was to grasp the new situation - ie, the remade conditions faced by the movement of the world proletariat. What was not needed was the absurd, stupid view that 'socialism imploded', nor the tendency to flippantly dismiss these events, as did the SWP in Britain.

The new world order impacted particularly sharply on the Korean peninsula, one of the symbols of the old world order. A new analysis of the dual power relationship in Korea was needed. For South Korean political groups active in the space created by the 1987 democracy struggle, the new world order came as a complete shock.

They had no effective response to the ideological onslaught of the capitalists. One by one they fell dumb, and began to disintegrate.

The revolutionary movement needed to prepare a precise analysis of the new situation in order to construct a long-term strategy. That demanded self-criticism and self-rectification. But South Korea's socialists had the greatest of difficulty in grasping the significance of what had happened.

In terms of ideology they could not but be disarmed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their whole politics was based on a South Korean revolution with the Soviet Union and North Korea acting as allies. Their future was the Soviet Union.

Without correctly considering the relationship with North Korea, any revolutionary strategy for South Korea makes no sense. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the umbilical cord was cut. Its collapse presaged the collapse of North Korea. That the collapse of North Korea was now only a matter of time was understood intuitively. Hence, the very foundation of their strategy for the South Korean revolution was seen to have fallen away under them.

The National Liberation group still functions. But its political line and activity remains very harmful. Because it sees North Korea as the only legitimate power in the peninsula, it concentrates its energies on the unification movement, which corresponds to North Korea's plan for federal unification. Its fundamental problem however is that the working class struggle of South Korea is treated with contempt.

Its interventions in every struggle since the Great Strike of 1987 have been agitation and propaganda supporting North Korea's unification plan. This provided the perfect excuse for the ruling class of South Korea to undermine the workers' struggle in terms of ideology. Instead of helping to develop the workers' movement, it has therefore been a negative influence. No wonder it is now in danger of extinction. Its demonstrations, mainly of students, have become isolated from the masses, reflecting the general view that the North Korean regime is doomed. What it does simply becomes the object of criticism and recrimination. The only reason it has continued to be active, while its rivals, Peoples Democracy and National Democracy, have withered, is that North Korea, for the moment, still hangs on. But the collapse of North Korea is now a kind of established fact, admitted by almost everyone. Hence the unification movement *in support* of North Korea is, ultimately, simply reactionary.

The key point I want to emphasise in summarising the political movement of South Korea is the limitations of its theory. In the situation of dual power, the South Korean revolution was a non-starter, as history has proved. The 50-year dual power shows that a nation state in the Korean peninsula cannot help being 'one'. In 1991, by joining the United Nations simultaneously, North and South Korea were accepted as two sovereign states. In

Civil war at Morning Star

The 'official communist' *Morning Star* is in crisis after its journalists, including the whole editorial team, held a seven-hour union meeting on February 4 about their dispute with management — the Peoples Press Printing Society, in the person of its chief executive Mary Rosser. The National Union of Journalists chapel is up in arms over the suspension, on "trumped up charges" worthy of Rupert Murdoch, of *Star* editor John Haylett.

As usual, *Star* readers have to look elsewhere to discover what is going on at the very heart of the paper they are told belongs to them — "the only daily paper owned by its readers".

In the paper which prattled on in favour of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, not a word has yet appeared about Haylett's suspension, nor his replacement by Rosser's son-in-law, Paul Corry - a loyal family member of the Hicks-Rosser clique which, so far, still controls the PPPS.

Haylett's removal has been covered in *The Guardian* (January 28) and *Tribune* (January 30), but was predicted in the *Weekly Worker* (January 22) as a likely retaliation to Mike Hicks' removal from general secretaryship of the Communist Party of Britain. Haylett had led the attack on Hicks within the CPB executive committee.

The swiftness with which this prediction came true, however, was matched only by the characteristic ineptness and stupidity with which Rosser made her counterattack. This casts doubt over the ability of the Hicks-Rosser clique to maintain its hold over the paper for much longer. I would offer not a prediction, but an odds-on bet, that the days of Hicks, Rosser and Corry at the *Star* and PPPS are numbered. Even if they make Haylett's suspension stick, it is difficult to see how they will survive a CPB mobilisation in his defence at the PPPS annual general meetings in early June, where six of the fifteen seats are up for election. This will be crucial for the survival of the new leadership of the CPB under Robert Griffiths.

Haylett may well live to edit another day. The misdemeanour with which he is charged does indeed seem trivial, but in fact touches directly on the central question at the heart of the *Star*'s and CPB's struggle to exist - whether the paper serves the party or the party serves the paper. He is evidently 'guilty' of giving permission for a CPB member to use *Morning Star* equipment to scan in a CPB document, something quite natural for a communist leader working for a communist newspaper, but anathema to any capitalist employer or small minded bureaucrat like Rosser.

The handling of the disciplinary action has been equally mind-blowing for anyone who believes the *Star*'s rhetoric in defence of workers' rights.

The loyal employee who, having personally witnessed the squandering of the newspaper's scarce resources for the selfish purposes of the CPB, lodged a complaint against the editor, was advertising manager Bob Newlands. Mary Rosser had no doubt primed toads like Newlands to look out for such an opportunity to get her own back on Haylett for leading the attack on her husband and collaborator Mike Hicks on the

executive committee. She seized her chance, presenting the matter, without prior notice, to the PPPS management committee meeting on Saturday January 24. The charge against Haylett had not been sent out with the agenda, so only management committee members loyal to Rosser and Hicks would have been alerted. Haylett's suspension - for "gross misconduct" - was carried by seven votes to four, with another four absent. The next ordinary meeting of the committee is due at the end of March.

Having suspended the editor, they appointed a tribunal to "investigate" the charges - Bob Newlands, the complainant and witness; Mary Rosser, the real instigator of the charge; and management committee member Carolyne Jones, who has already, to her credit, resigned from the tribunal.

The journalists' industrial action on February 4 circumvents the inordinate delays required by the anti-trade union laws before official action can be started. Eighty percent of the chapel have voted for an official ballot on industrial action. After the result on February 17, a further seven days' notice is required before industrial action can legally begin.

The chapel's demand that all sides of the dispute be reported in the *Star* has, until now, fallen on deaf ears, so the dispute is unknown to the readers. Mary Rosser has refused to talk to the union representatives.

The industrial dispute over the editor's rights as a worker, as an employee, however, is in reality only the form taken by the civil war between trends or fiefdoms within the CPB/*Morning Star* camp of 'official communism'.

The tit-for-tat conflict which has come to a head with the removal of general secretary Hicks and the reciprocal suspension of editor Haylett threatens the alliance between 'party' and paper, and therefore puts a question mark over the future of both.

The new CPB leaders have, like the Eurocommunists before them, taken the first step towards mobilising its membership for a showdown with PPPS shareholders, should that prove necessary, by explaining their side of the dispute in a circular to members. Their explanation, however, is decidedly unconvincing. Instead of rallying members to defend 'party' control over the paper, they seek to play down the politics of the dispute.

According to some executive committee members, Haylett's suspension is "very much a trade union issue", and is "not linked" to the removal of Hicks. The CPB has previously expressed its "full confidence" in Haylett's editorship, and sees no reason to change that view.

This presumably refers to the time when Tony Chater retired as editor, and John Haylett, as deputy editor and therefore heir apparent, was not automatically promoted. Though Rosser's attempt to install Corry failed then, she is trying again now.

Undoubtedly, the Griffiths camp favours a more electoralist CPB as opposed to the plodding economism of Hicks, Rosser and co. Installed as general secretary to save the moribund CPB, he has perhaps provoked the final crisis ●

Ian Farrell

rean working class, as its implacable enemy. We must not fall in behind the South Korean petty bourgeois unification movement, which supports Kim Jung-il power in the North. It is not the bourgeoisie of South Korea that the proletariat should fight on this issue, but the Kim Jung-il power of North Korea and its follower, the petty bourgeoisie of South Korea.

"The communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement," said Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*. The working class movement of South Korea must begin solidarity work with the North Korean working class, criticising the Kim Jung-il regime and urging the working class of North Korea to fight against it. Because of the dual power situation, the working class movement of South Korea has been brutally oppressed. The opportunity to fully realise class consciousness has been blocked by division. Naturally, this has also squeezed the political space open to the working class. It goes without saying that this applies to the socialist movement too. In addition the North Korean working class, which has until now been infused with *juche* as proletarian ideology, could, with the collapse of Kim Jung-il power, begin to realise its self-consciousness as a class.

The working class as a whole has been victim of division. Due to their respective ruling ideologies, workers of North and South Korea have come to regard each other with hostility, instead of recognising each other as parts which must be united. Hence, the collapse of Kim Jung-il power and the process of re-unification of the Korean peninsula will be a kind of historical purgatory through which the working class will have to pass in order to realise itself.

How soon will the working class come to view itself as a detachment of the international proletariat, not as a constituent part of a nation? This will depend on the South Korean working class, which already in 1987 woke from its long sleep. The key is the political independence of the working class of South Korea. The working class movement must separate itself from the petty bourgeoisie's campaign and movement for unification in support of North Korea's line. This is the precondition for consolidating its own independent class power and escaping from petty bourgeois hegemony in the so-called progressive movement of South Korea.

Can the working class of South Korea achieve political independence and make itself into an independent class force, before unification of the Korean peninsula? If unification comes very soon, will it be ready to receive the working class of North Korea as brothers and sisters, not as atomised citizens of bourgeois society, and prepare itself as a class political force looking to the future alongside the working class of the world?

Perhaps Marx gives us an answer here: "Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present, or at least in the course of formation" (K Marx *Preface to A contribution to the critique of political economy*) ●

international law, at any rate, they relate to each other as separate states, just like the relationship between the UK and France.

But has the ceasefire line between north and south turned into a border dividing two sovereign states? Has each recognised the other as a separate sovereign state? Clearly not. Each of the two powers, in its constitution, still declares the whole peninsula to be its own territory. Each still denies the other's existence, and thus still claims to be the only legitimate power in the peninsula. This situation can be interpreted in no other way than dual power. So, even in the new, changed world order, the dual power situation continues - thus far.

We do not think dual power will last long. Following the defection of the high ranking North Korean Workers' Party official, Hwang Jang-yop - founder of the *juche* ideology - several North Korean diplomats have defected. The exodus of ordinary North Korean people has also been continuing. North Korea is beset by severe starvation and economic dislocation. The collapse of North Korea, especially since the death of Kim il-Sung, is only a matter of time.

What will this mean? Could the collapse of the Kim Jung-il regime see a new substitute power appear in the north? This seems very unlikely.

Firstly, North Korean people would be faced with the immediate problem of obtaining food merely to survive. Secondly, North Korean workers have been deprived of the chance of realising themselves as a class by the imposition of the *juche* ideology, which was supposed to be a direct reflection of proletarian class consciousness. Consequently, after the ending of *juche* power (Kim Jung-il power) they will be able to begin to realise their consciousness, their historical mission as the proletariat. I cannot imagine they would want another state separate from the south.

The collapse of East German 'communist' power did not give rise to a separate state, but led directly to unification with West Germany. So the collapse of Kim Jung-il power will in all likelihood result in immediate unification - ie, the annulment of dual power. From the incomplete republics of South and North Korea will come the complete republic of the Korean peninsula.

While North Korea shows all the signs of collapse, in South Korea the petty bourgeoisie has been alienated by the process of capitalist development, and dreams of turning the wheel of history backwards, by campaigning for unification in support of North Korea's line. As to the bourgeoisie of South Korea, it is already focusing on the north as a market, weighing up the profits obtainable in a unified Korea. Meanwhile though, the new proletariat sired by South Korean capitalism has begun to be aware of itself as a power.

The first duty of the Marxists of South Korea must be to unite the ranks of the working class of South Korea. This is more important than any other task and has already been begun by the proletariat themselves - its class struggle has been going on since 1987.

With the changed situation, our attitude towards unification has to be clarified once and for all. The socialist movement of South Korea must identify Kim Jung-il power, which is using feudal methods to impose the worst possible conditions on the North Ko-

What we fight for

- Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.
- The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.
- Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.
- We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.
- The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.
- Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.
- We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.
- War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

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

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CPGB London seminar series

February 8: Toward a theory of the proletariat: Engels' contribution in the series studying Hal Draper's 'Karl Marx's theory of revolution'



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

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As Clinton sinks deeper in the mire, a diversionary strike is on the cards

Threat to Iraq grows

Events over the last few weeks have given us a shocking glimpse of the crazy - and sick - morality that pervades all aspects of American life.

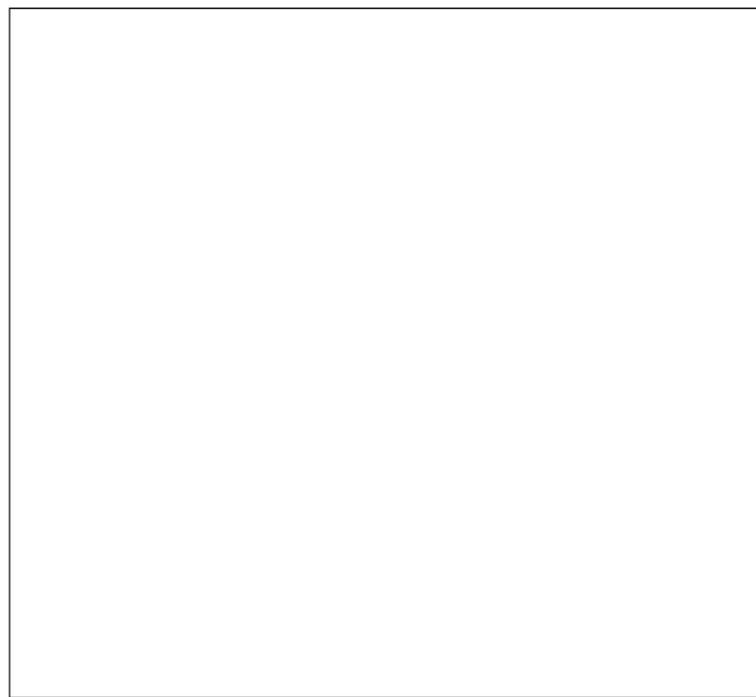
On Tuesday the Texas state - in cold blood - killed Karla Faye Tucker, the 38-year old former prostitute and drug addict. She was executed by lethal injection. She has become the latest sacrificial victim for state vengeance. Tucker, despite admitting to murdering a former lover with a pickaxe, was by any definition, clearly a reformed woman. So much so that even the Christian evangelical right, normally the most zealous advocates of the death penalty - were praying for her sentence to be commuted to life imprisonment.

Texas state governor George Bush, son of the former president, brushed aside all objections - and hence turned his back on even the most basic humanity. So much for Christian repentance and forgiveness. At her execution, the moral sickness that lies at the heart of America was on display. Ghoulish voyeurs congregated outside the prison gates in Huntsville. Demonstrators waved placards which said, 'Forget injection: use a pickaxe'.

Then we are confronted by the sordid and morally draining saga of 'Zippergate', 'Fornigate', etc. In the land of 'mom 'n apple pie', the bible, 'family values', in a country where it

is seriously proposed that 'chastity lessons' be imposed on children, the US president is revealed - quite clearly - to be a serial adulterer who has cynically used his position to sexually harass and intimidate young women. The White House machine was used as a tool to satisfy his amoral and alienated sexual desires - regardless of the consequences for his chosen 'partners'.

Clinton's unedifying sexual mores fit into a more general picture of a man willing to use his considerable powers of patronage. The president has enormous executive power, it should be remembered, to manipulate and screw - quite often literally, it seems - all those around him and all those who have the audacity to stand in his path. To this immoral end he has ruthlessly - with zero consideration for any degree of truth, honesty or consistency - utilised all the power myths of American society and culture. Over two election campaigns, he played the 'family man' card - to quite some effect, it has to be said. During the last election campaign even the 'power feminist', Hilary Clinton, was enlisted to this cause and became semi-transformed into the obedient and loyal wife. She was "making cookies" now, we were led to believe, unlike before when she was climbing the very greasy pole of bourgeois success.



Your cheatin' heart

To add insult to injury, an enormous propaganda campaign has gone into operation behind the 'victim', Clinton - the sweet innocent under attack from politically motivated women. The poor old president. Of course, for Clinton and his minions to portray himself as the underdog being enveloped by a "vast rightwing conspiracy" is just insulting. Clinton has an army of agents, spies, informers, etc, swarming the country, investigating and digging the dirt on his opponents. This perverse legion of 'truth seekers' have been unearthing, for example, long forgotten boyfriends of Monica Lewinsky, the 24-year old White House intern who is the current focus of presidential opprobrium and media fascination. If anyone is involved in a "vast" conspiracy, it is Clinton and his loyal Clintonites.

Power, subjugation, domination. Clinton's behavioural pattern - in his so-called private life - reflects the actual social reality of political relations in American society. Clinton's instinctive preference for *unequal* relationships with women is no individual aberration - it is firmly embedded in bourgeois society as a whole. Even the 'strong' and 'independent' Hilary was forced to prostitute herself on prime-time television, making out Bill to be a paragon of virtue. Additionally, the backdrop to Clinton's philandering is a vicious campaign against single mothers, who have been vilified and turned into society's scapegoats. The war against Monica, the war against women, the war against drugs, possibly the war against Iraq - here we see the Bill Clinton philosophy and methodology at work.

This reminds us of the overtly political dimension of this scandal. Historically, it is not unusual for a Republican president to be faced with a Democratic majority in Congress - ie, the 'Nixon syndrome' - but it is for

a Democratic president to be faced by a Republican majority. The cards are on the table and the Republicans are out for blood.

However, not even this elementary fact of political life in the corridors of power can entirely explain the degree of personal animosity directed against Clinton by the Republicans (and the conservative/Christian right especially), which is extraordinarily intense. This is not due to Clinton being regarded as too 'progressive' or 'left'. Quite the opposite, in many respects. In fact Clinton has appropriated their rightwing agenda - and all this from a former draft-dodger and (incompetent) dope-smoker. The Republican quandary has been how to support him and oppose him at the same time. 'Monicagate' has been a godsend for them - though a delicate line still has to be walked. Thus, Newt Gingrich, the Republican speaker in the Senate, was visibly and enthusiastically clapping Clinton when he gave his 'state of the union' speech last week.

Not that bourgeois amorality and hypocrisy when it comes to 'personal politics' is confined to the United States. Robin Cook's obviously shabby treatment of his wife and former private secretary, Anne Bullen, is distinctly Clintonesque - and very New Labour.

The astounding hypocrisy of bourgeois politicians - especially when it comes to matters of a sexual nature - is nothing new. Marx and Engels noted in the *Communist Manifesto* that the bourgeoisie, all good Christian folk and 'family men' of course, were using prostitutes left, right and centre - not to mention their colleagues' wives. Women factory workers were routinely sexually intimidated - and raped - by the pious, church-attending factory owners: all part of the job. Marx and Engels were well aware of this - hence their scorching attack on the sexual hypocrisy of the bourgeois-

sie. For all their own conduct, the bourgeoisie and anti-communists of all hues have constantly attacked communists/Marxists for wanting to 'abolish' the family - even 'nationalising' women. What a vile slander coming from their lips.

Even more outrageous is the plain and cruel fact that, because of Bill Clinton's wandering penis, many thousands of Iraqis may have to die. US officials are currently making very bellicose statements. Earlier this week US officials were talking about the possibility of the "biggest action to be taken since the Gulf War", of military measures that will deal a "serious blow to Saddam Hussein". Madeleine Albright, not for the first time, has been scouring the Middle East trying to drum up support for US warmongering. Like the previous occasion she went on such a mission, her reception has been unenthusiastic - though this time round the Kuwaitis have declared their support for any US bombing of Iraq, while Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have blamed Saddam Hussein for the current "impasse", as they call it.

Without a massive intervention of ground troops, any bombing of Iraq will prove to be futile - it will not overthrow the Saddam regime. In reality, any US bombing will only increase the Iraqi masses' *identification* with Saddam - just as the B-52s in Vietnam helped to solidify support for the National Liberation Front forces of Ho Chi Minh. The US administration knows this of course: it has openly stated that the overthrow of Saddam is not on the agenda.

The US administration has a different agenda - get Slick Willy out of trouble. Any future military strike will be an initiative designed to appease the Republicans and curry favour with 'public opinion' - take the heat off Clinton and his current predicament. This is not leftwing paranoia. A mainstream Hollywood film, *Night of the dog*, features a president who starts a 'virtual war' against Albania in order to deflect attention from domestic problems. It is playing to packed houses.

Perhaps Clinton can get away with military strikes on Iraq. Perversely, Clinton's opinion poll ratings have shot up - he is at the height of his popularity amongst a section of American society.

The American dream seems destined, condemned, to turn into its very opposite. The puritanical ideal becomes moral/sexual incontinence. Forgiveness becomes revenge. It is not too hard to find explanations for the profound alienation and estrangement that suffocates American society - crime, self-damage through drugs, rightwing militias, survivalists, UFOologists, the hippie counter-culture, cults and religions, etc.

Until the working class becomes the driving force, a hegemonic power, in society, the American nightmare is set to roll on. Which means a permanent threat to world peace and humanity ●

Danny Hammill

London Socialist Alliance launch

Tonight (Thursday February 5) sees the launch of the All London Socialist Alliance in Conway Hall, central London. This exciting new initiative has the support of Hugh Kerr MEP, recently expelled from the Labour Party for criticism of Blair. His political organiser, Pete Brown, will attend to speak on the expelled MEP's plans for involvement in the alliances. Michael Hindley MEP will travel from Strasbourg to speak.

Blair has produced a crisis within the left of the Labour Party. Many can no longer stomach the anti-working class, anti-single parent, anti-unemployed, anti-democratic policies of the new government. The Socialist Alliances - especially if they are organised on an all-Britain basis - can provide a vital pole of attraction for those looking for an alternative. With the support of rebel MEPs they have already begun to do so. But we need to start building now so as to inspire others and build a real mass movement. We must make plans for the London local elections on May 7. Various socialist alliances have already been launched or re-launched in recent weeks.

Socialist Party councillor Julia

Leonard will also speak tonight, as will representatives from the Hillingdon strikers and the Liverpool dockers. It is important that the lessons of both these strikes are taken on board.

We in Brent Socialist Alliance want to involve a broad swathe of leftwing forces in this initiative. We want it to be as inclusive as possible. Its main focus at the moment is on building an anti-Blair coalition that begins to act now, while not excluding those who are not yet ready to make the break.

Sinking local roots is vitally important, but it should not be seen as separate to the task of building and coordinating across London, and indeed nationally. The more effective a national profile we create, the more local people will learn about our existence and the more new forces will be attracted to our banner.

We need a political forum that can bring the left and other forces together to discuss the important political issues of the day. Through debate and united action we can further the necessary fight for a mass revolutionary working class party ●

Anne Murphy