



## Defend asylum and immigration rights

National demonstration - Saturday February 27

Assemble 12 noon, Embankment tube

Called by the Coalition for Asylum and Immigration Rights

For more information contact the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns. Phone: 0121-554 6947; E-mail: CAIR@ncadc.demon.co.uk

This weekend's demonstration for asylum and immigration rights comes immediately after the publication of the Stephen Lawrence report.

Sir William Macpherson's document slams the Metropolitan Police for "pernicious and institutionalised racism", accompanied by an orgy of hand-wringing from the liberal media. While on the one hand official anti-racism has never been more pronounced and open, on the other hand the British state's assault on the rights of immigrants and asylum-seekers has never been more vicious.

At the same time as home secretary Jack Straw announces a new package of politically correct anti-racist measures, he is intent on forcing through his Immigration and Asylum Bill - in order to "minimise the incentive to economic migration, particularly by minimising cash payments to asylum-seekers", to quote the words of a home office document. Straw intends to disperse them across the country in barrack-style hostels set up for the purpose, and asylum applicants will have no say in where they are placed.

Others who are living with friends or family will have all rights to claim benefit withdrawn, with food vouchers introduced as their only means of state assistance. Even worse, anyone who has the temerity to challenge an immigration ruling in the high court will have even their right to food vouchers or accommodation withdrawn. All this is to be backed up by new state powers to fingerprint people with "inadequate documentation" and those turned away at ports.

For many on the left all this is further 'proof' of state racism. Some - Workers Power for one - even say that all immigration controls by their very nature must be racist. The capitalist state - presumably in its South African variant as well - so we are told, has an irrational aversion to people with dark skins. Or, if (as at present) many of the asylum-seekers happen to be from eastern Europe, it is simply foreigners in general the bourgeoisie despises. This too is labelled racism. And, as everybody knows, the state always hopes to set white worker against black as a means of keeping control. Therefore, according to the conventional 'wisdom' of the left, it must inevitably seek to stimulate racism. It is institutionally racist.

How strange then that the state itself has now adopted the very same terminology. In the wake of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the Macpherson enquiry announced: "There must be an unequivocal acceptance of the problem of institutionalised racism." And, just as the social-democratised left has been circulating petitions calling for the resignation of Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir Paul Condon for refusing to accept the growing consensus, so the enquiry report states: "Any chief police officer who feels unable to respond will find it extremely difficult to work with the community in the way that policing by consent demands."

Prior to the enquiry report, Condon had categorically denied that there was "institutionalised racism" in his force. He was using the definition of the term that Lord Scarman had given it after the Brixton riots - that the police must "knowingly as a matter of policy" be implementing racist measures. While there was no possibility

# Smash all immigration controls

National chauvinism, not racism, is today the bourgeoisie's main ideological weapon. And, for all their official anti-racism, the police remain an organ of the chauvinist state

that he would accept that this could be applied to the Met, Condon was looking for a way out through "a new and widely accepted definition". He said: "I hope, pray, anticipate that the judge will say something significant around institutional racism. I will embrace that with zeal."

Macpherson duly obliged. The term was redefined as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping."

Condon could live with that. To be guilty of "thoughtlessness" is hardly the same as being branded an agent of British-style apartheid. It is equivalent to an acceptance that the police's policy is basically well meaning, according to bourgeois anti-racist criteria. The commissioner had already accepted that racism was "widespread" and that measures would have to be introduced to tackle it.

But the enquiry's findings do not pinpoint any specific examples of individual or "institutional" racism in the conduct of the Lawrence case. The police "underplayed or ignored" the importance of race relations and were slow to acknowledge that Stephen's murder was a racist attack. There are many examples of "ineptitude", and a general conclusion that the only possible explanation for the "errors and incompetencies" is "pernicious racism", described as a "corrosive disease".

So 'race awareness' courses will become much more central in police training, and there will be a big recruitment drive to win more black and Asian

officers. Condon - if he is allowed to remain in post - will work even harder to achieve his "anti-racist police service", while John Grieve, head of the Met's violent and racial crimes unit, will continue to encourage his officers to "go out and nick a few racists".

The truth is that, far from the caricature of capitalist society portrayed by so much of the left, establishment figures are vying with each other to appear the most liberal, tolerant and anti-racist. That is why Straw, in a fit of pique, slapped an injunction on *The Sunday Telegraph* in a vain attempt to stop it stealing his thunder by leaking the Lawrence report. As Hugo Young wrote in *The Guardian*, "The report will be a catharsis. Nobody, either, seems likely to dispute it. Its language may be questioned, but its premise, that racism of every kind is an incontestable evil, is not challenged" (February 23).

How true. Even such ultra-reactionary newspapers as *The Daily Telegraph* hardly fit into the left's 'racist' categorisation: "The stabbing of this decent young man, with his ambition to become an architect, seems so wicked that it would be less than human to remain unroused. And the suffering caused to Neville and Doreen Lawrence by their son's death has surely moved every parent in the country" (February 20). Indeed Stephen Lawrence has become almost an icon for the establishment.

But the same paper lays into its fellow rightwing journal, the *Daily Mail*, for its "Murderers!" headline, over the article which first publicly insisted that the prime suspects for the murder were guilty, even though three of them had just been acquitted, in 1996. *The Telegraph* condemns the growing campaign to jail the five white men: "We would be horrified - and rightly -

if courts began to hand out guilty verdicts on the basis that the police had a pretty shrewd idea of who was responsible, or that the accused had noxious opinions."

Indeed, the establishment's horror at the five's bigoted racism has led to calls for some highly dangerous steps to be taken - a change in the law to allow a defendant to be tried more than once for the same crime; the banning of any expression of racist language or possession of an "offensive weapon" even *in private*. While we would be more than pleased to see the incarceration of Stephen Lawrence's killers, such measures would clearly lay a precedent for the state to use similar draconian curbs against other opponents in the future - not least the working class movement.

Clearly far-reaching changes will be introduced to further cement bourgeois anti-racism - among immigration officers for example, as well as in the police. But *Socialist Worker*, despite sharing the growing establishment consensus around "institutionalised racism" and joining in the chorus to "sack Condon", dismisses any such possibility. Hassan Mahamdallie asks, "Can the police be reformed?" and promptly answers his own question in the negative (February 20). He declares bluntly: "Police racism is not the exception. It is the rule ... we should not lose sight of the fact that the police can never be 'anti-racist'."

This 'always have been, always will be' mentality is no substitute for an analysis. Just why is it impossible for the bourgeoisie to adopt a new ideology? And why can it not be imposed on state organs, including the police? It is now more than clear that the establishment is determined to root out the many racist officers that its police force undoubtedly contains.

But in one sense it is true to say that the police force cannot be reformed. It can never be transformed into an instrument for the working class. Irrespective of newly found anti-racist credentials, it remains an organ of the bourgeois state. Workers need their own bodies, to defend us from the state as well as from racists. We need workers' defence corps.

However, the fact of the matter is that racism no longer suits the purpose of the establishment. Previously the alleged 'inferiority' of subject peoples was used to justify colonial conquests. Today, with the empire long dismantled, a rearticulated *national chauvinism* is a much more useful weapon. This anti-racist national chauvinism aims to cohere the whole population - black and white - around the class interests of British capital, defined in opposition to the interests of 'outsiders'. But modern bourgeois anti-racism, despite its aim of domestic stability, can be just as divisive as was its racism. Its 'positive discrimination', imposed from the top, serves to pit black against white in competition for jobs and resources ('black' and 'white' 'races' being political constructs - and having nothing to do with supposed biological groupings of human beings). We are meant to approach the state as 'ethnic' supplicants - state officials act to ensure 'fairness'.

Moreover, the aim of state anti-racism is to unite us negatively on the basis of nationality. It encourages workers to turn against the 'threat' of asylum-seekers, who are told to stay where they 'belong'. Straw wants to keep them out not because of their race or ethnicity, but because by and large they are working class and poor. In times of full employment and labour shortages the ruling class positively welcomed immigrants as 'worst paid labour'. Today they would be a 'burden'.

Bourgeois anti-racism has nothing in common with positive working class unity. By contrast proletarian politics is first and foremost internationalist. We have no interest in promoting the national state. Just as capital and its products pass freely across borders, so we demand the free movement of workers. We must have the right to live, work - and struggle - anywhere in the world ●

- Smash all immigration controls
- No support for the police
- For workers' defence

Alan Fox



# Party notes

## Inquiry

A commission of inquiry under the auspices of the London Socialist Alliance is being organised to look into events on this year's Bloody Sunday demonstration in London. As reported in last week's paper, Eibhlin McDonald of the Spartacist League/Britain was subjected to a violent assault by Ian Donovan, editor of *Revolution and Truth* and chair of the LSA (*Weekly Worker* February 18).

The commission will consist of comrades Bob Pitt (*What next?* editor and Labour Party member), Toby Abse (Independent Labour Network member), Tina Becker (Hackney LSA member) and Lee Rock (Socialist Perspectives member). They will meet on Saturday March 13 at a central London venue to take written, taped and verbal submissions from both sides in this particular dispute and from others who feel they have material worth consideration. Organisations and individuals will be approached for evidence over the next few days, but if comrades have information they think relevant, please contact Tina Becker, c/o London Socialist Alliance, Box 22, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS (0973 231620).

For our part, the Communist Party is quite clear. We have no hesitation in deploring comrade Donovan's action - it was intolerable. We condemn violence as a means of settling our political differences in the workers' movement.

But then Ian's method is *not* characterised by a resort to violence. The man is not a Tony Goss (a thuggish ex-member of the Socialist Labour Party given to launching himself at political opponents). Comrade Donovan has written coherently and comprehensively on his differences with the SL/B, an organisation he parted from acrimoniously in 1986, and with its United States-based parent body, the International Communist League. In the view of this writer, he has done rather a fine demolition job on at least one of the central pillars of Spart dogma - popular fronts (see *Revolution and Truth* No1, summer 1998). It appears that Ian resorted to his fists in frustration after being baited by an organisation which brands him a "dangerous lunatic".

In other words, it is impossible to consider this moment of madness in *isolation*. Just as juries - even as they find people guilty and worthy of punishment - can cite extenuating circumstances, the Communist Party urges that due weight is given to the *modus operandi* of the SL/B. We believe that it should be recognised as a contributing factor in this incident and also stands worthy of condemnation.

Here we have an organisation characterised by its own international leadership as inept liars. We have cited the comments of one Jon B, spokesperson for the ICL international secretariat, who crushingly observed that "if [the SL/B] have to lie about our opponents in order to deal with them it means we have no confidence in ourselves and our programme" (*Weekly Worker* February 18). However, it is precisely on the basis of such *fabricated* evidence that this group repeatedly launches campaigns against political opponents, branding them 'scabs', 'picket line crossers' or 'supporters' of loyalist terror gangs. Moreover, this abuse is often raised in political circumstances where the SL/B's opponents are in effect being set up for not just political attack, but physical harm.

The degraded form of SL/B external intervention is a more or less faithful replication of its delirious internal life. This is characterised by forced hysteria, a nightmarish atmosphere of denunciation and heresy-hunt designed to cohere the sect's adherents around the one great revealed truth embodied by the ICL. It is a sect *par excellence* in other words, an extreme manifestation of the general problem that cripples our movement.

Of course, none of this justifies physical reprisals against this organisation or its comrades - quite the opposite. Political *exposure* must be the chosen method and a degree of comradely patience shown to past and present SL/Bers that have been so obviously bent out of shape by the experience of membership. To this end, the CPGB will urge that the LSA commission conduct its work dispassionately, with evenhandedness, and with the wider interests of the movement as a whole uppermost in its mind.

Mark Fischer  
national organiser

## Check your facts

Don Preston did not ask the Alliance for Workers' Liberty for our view about our relations with Socialist Outlook inside the Welfare State Network before writing 'Economists fall out' (*Weekly Worker* February 11). Instead he used the opportunity to have a cynical sneer about Outlook in the first place, but also about the AWL.

In the case of the AWL he makes some unsubstantiated assumptions about how we have behaved in the WSN. Let me put some things on the record. I write both as an AWL member and as an editor of *Action*.

1. For over four years the WSN has been a collaborative effort of different groups, campaigns and individuals. That is a fairly unique experience on the British left.

2. Outlook have never been excluded from the campaign or from the campaign's paper *Action*.

3. Outlook's viewpoint has never been censored. From the point of view of developing political discussion and trying to shape a healthier left we felt, and still feel, that is a good thing to have political pluralism in the WSN's paper. As *Action* did, and *Action for Solidarity* will continue to do, we publish the views of Socialist Outlook on different, including contentious, subjects. The only obstacle to this is Outlook refusing to provide an opinion, as they did for the forum on left unity in Euro-elections in *Action* no48, to which the SWP, Socialist Party, Scottish Socialist Party, the AWL and John Palmer contributed.

4. Outlook have always had the opportunity to contribute to, sell and distribute *Action*.

5. However, for nearly four years Outlook, as an organisation, have not taken any copies of *Action*. From September John Lister's involvement in the production and editing has been minimal. To this extent Outlook have excluded themselves from the campaign and its paper.

6. The WSN democratically agreed by a majority vote to publish *Action* fortnightly. Socialist Outlook have gone off in a huff, complaining that decisions have been "rammed through". They have withdrawn from practical collaboration as a means of protest. They simply lost the vote!

7. Outlook knew the direction the AWL wanted to take with *Action* - making it a broad socialist newspaper - because we have debated and discussed these things!

8. The truth is Outlook did not want the AWL to be able to develop *Action* as a political paper for the labour movement, because they feared that if we did that the AWL would be able to use it as a political tool - not because the paper would be a closed AWL affair, but because AWL activists would be the most energetic in promoting it. If Outlook did not have the energy to sell both their tendency paper and *Action*, they were damned if the AWL were going to be allowed to. Outlook have proceeded on the basis of organisational jealousy.

I expect socialists to try to adopt a critical open-mindedness about any issue. So what kind of account is 'Economists fall out' from someone whose organisation claims to be in the vanguard of clear, honest, open debate? You should try checking some facts and make at least a rudimentary attempt to weigh up the veracity of people's claims, instead of making judgements based on prejudices.

Unfortunately I suspect this kind of reasoning is in keeping with your whole attitude to the labour movement, which I would characterise as a cynical standoffishness. Such an attitude leads you to try and insult us by calling us "economists". If seeking to agitate around what Marx called the political economy of the working class, the social gains made by our class over 100 years or more, is to be an "economist", I'll plead guilty as charged and be proud of it.

The AWL bases its practice on the idea of transitional demands: ie, we think demands "for state-of-the-art healthcare, free at the point of need" can mobilise our class, help strengthen the movement and educate workers about the need for socialism. Politics for us can be about making agitation - it isn't just about intra-left polemics, however important those may be.

Right now we are getting on with the job of producing *Action for Solidarity*. We invite anyone on the left, including Socialist Outlook, and the readers of the *Weekly Worker* too, to write for and provide debate for its pages.

Cathy Nugent  
Alliance for Workers' Liberty

## Scargill in power?

I would genuinely not wish to be "vile and offensive" to Bob Paul (Letters *Weekly Worker* February 11), especially in view of such reasoned arguments. Nor do I ignore the barbaric discrimination inflicted by capitalist society against homosexual orientation, racial minorities, etc; or *not* support the rights of all the oppressed to fight back to change all foul laws; or doubt that such campaigns aid the general struggle to defeat the capitalist state.

Communist revolutionaries are as welcome from the ranks of single-issue reformism (feminism, black nationalism, animal rights, ecologism, homosexuality, alternative lifestyles, etc) as out of any other struggles for justice and liberty, but my experience is that such ideological concerns largely coincide with, and help sustain, the most virulent anti-communism - invariably due to the extreme subjectivism of such interests and beliefs, leaving people totally disarmed when faced with the massive worldwide brainwashing power of CIA-masterminded anti-workers' state propaganda.

Subjective anti-communism has been a bad enough obstacle in the revolutionary movement. Non-political subjectivism has now blanketed the world in counterrevolutionary confusion of even daffier idealist philosophies. I say Tiananmen Square was a CIA counterrevolutionary stunt, correctly dispersed by the Chinese workers' state - and argue that in Marxist science it is the continued *strengthening* of the dictatorship of the proletariat that will alone see workers' states to the withering away of all state power in the future. Predictably, another *Weekly Worker* article (February 11) ignores the quotes from Engels and Lenin I gave and implies that I argue that proletarian dictatorship is the key to workers' state history solely because I wish to eliminate gays. Such subjectivism makes rational argument impossible.

Homosexual existence and lifestyle *as such* could not possibly be of concern to the fight for revolutionary communist consciousness. As with Engels' notoriously homophobic letter to Marx of June 22 1869, a polemical problem arises when any rationalisation of subjective idealist philosophising starts to play a reactionary role.

There were no less than three attacks in your February 11 issue on the damage done by 'politically correct' self-righteousness. That is all that I was attacking in the Mark Trotter case, which started off this whole argument. The same with the grotesque New Labour government lies in the Ron Davies affair. If that story had been *only* about one individual's sad search for emotional/sexual comfort, sympathy alone would have been the issue. But the huge web of hypocrisy, lies and deceit built up around Davies by New Labour before, during and after his tragic ordeal - solely to suit New Labour's political purposes - tells me that ridicule is in order.

Any single-issue subjective philosophy which used its reformist PC self-righteousness to block political ridicule (as *Weekly Worker* correspondents have done over the Trotter and Davies cases) should merit any communist's condemnation. Most counterblasts against the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* have been pure hypocrisy anyway, fired for completely different political motives, as with John Pearson's latest broadside (February 11). Such vengeful venom is exactly typical of this appalling epoch of anti-Marxist subjectivism. When is the *Weekly Worker* ever going to face up seriously to the huge central historical problem of how to understand the dictatorship of the proletariat, and deal with Engel's letter to Bebel ridiculing "the sheer nonsense of a 'free people's state'" and with Lenin's frank admission of dictatorship "unrestricted by any laws"?

You decry Stalinophobia occasionally on detail, but you never take on the really vast picture of worldwide shallow public opinion made demented by nonsense about labour camps, the Cultural Revolution, Pol Pot, etc, out of all proportion with the total reality of 20th century imperialist warmongering, tyranny and crimes, which account for 99.999% of the pain, terror and injustice which has befallen mankind.

No requirement of history says that socialist revolutions can only grow straight and true. They will come in all shapes and sizes. The 'democracy' postured about on the left is the biggest fraud ever. The entire swamp of 'so-

cialist alliances' and revisionist and Trotskyite sects produces zero results through this 'democracy' - and all accuse each other, with some justification, of being tyrannies in their internal affairs.

So what sort of workers' state would the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in Britain produce? Total backstabbing chaos. I would still back it unconditionally, but I would anticipate some very poor decisions and some very rough justifications for a very long time. What if "the whole stinking corpse of Scargillism" took power, to quote you? And in harness with even less enlightened remnants of the 'left' TUC bureaucracy? With state power in its hands, how much 'democracy' and civilised administration and organisation will there be, and how moderated would be your reactions to its absence, and how would that workers' state then respond to your further protests?

The *Weekly Worker* is part of a worldwide anti-Soviet drift to the right which ends up with the supposed 'left' saying 'no' to revolution as routinely as organised reaction does - undermining any possibility of a revolutionary movement by its endless factionalism. You will argue that my expulsion from the SLP has proved you correct for refusing to accept the Scargillite project on his terms because it would be stillborn. I think it could yet provide a centrist vehicle for reviving mass working class interest in socialism.

Bob Paul ridicules my guessing at what a transformed stable society under an established workers' state might conclude about same-sex relationships. He might be right. Human relationships may go off in all sorts of unexpected directions. I only remain convinced, however, that the huge subjective concentration on single-issue politics continues to be a total distraction from anti-capitalist *revolutionary* science.

Royston Bull  
Stockport

## Latter-day Sparts

Mormons believe that the devil and his alternative to god is such a threat because of their similarity. The Spartacist League operate off a similar formula - the closer you are to their creed without being part of it, the more dangerous you become, the more you must be ruthlessly denounced.

Your article on the Sparts (*Weekly Worker* February 18) brought back unhappy memories - of invites to public platforms simply to be set up for public attack on the most obscure of points. My own NUM branch was accused loudly and publicly of organising a racist march and rally at a scab wharf! The truth was that in response to the South African NUM's call for a boycott of apartheid coal we had targeted the wharf at which the coal was being shipped in.

The Sparts picketed our local branch meeting selling newspapers, denouncing me and asking one of our few Caribbean miners what he thought of the "racist Hatfield branch". He responded by turning a fire hose on them. The following edition of the paper talked about the anti-red witch hunt attack upon their innocent paper-sellers.

Worse than that, during a strike pickets from Frickley turned up at my pit, which was on holiday, and tried to persuade safety workers not to work. Someone told the men that all the other pits were being allowed safety cover and they should proceed to work. One malevolent Spart paper-seller started the rumour that this bloke was me (I was actually on holiday).

None of my members crossed the line, but the following issue's headline shouted that Dave Douglass "talks left but walks right", took his men across a picket line and encouraged the pit to scab! This was the most serious and disgusting accusation anyone had ever made against me and of course was utterly untrue. I would rather be found dead on a picket line than cross one.

I have ceased all contact with the Sparts to this day until they lift that vile and scandalous slander against myself and my branch.

Dave Douglass  
Doncaster



# Free Kurdistan!

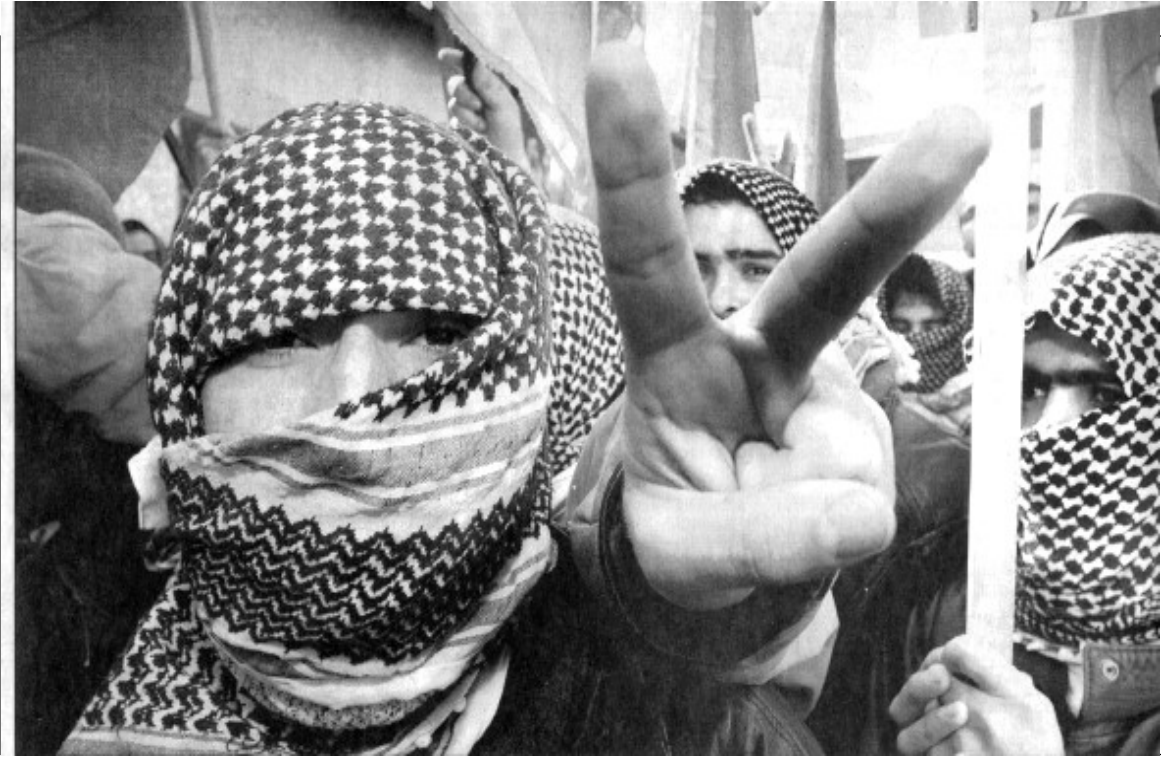
**action**

**A**ngry demonstrations and protests filled the streets of Europe - and beyond - last week. This display of political fury was ignited by the abduction and arrest by Turkish troops in Nairobi of "Apo" (Uncle) Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Ocalan was indicted by a hastily assembled Turkish court with "high treason" and "attempting to divide the country by force". He now languishes on the prison island of Imrali and faces either the death penalty or 22,000 life sentences.

The circumstances surrounding the seizure of Ocalan only added to the bitterness and passion of the protests. Ocalan was the victim of an elaborate cloak-and-dagger operation to capture Turkey's 'public enemy number one'. This plot, codenamed Operation Safari, which saw Ocalan lured to Kenya, involved extensive cooperation with the CIA and - it seems - the Israeli secret service, both of whom have a heavy presence in that country. A senior Washington official bluntly stated: "We as a government tried to figure out where Ocalan was, where he was going and how we might bring him to justice." This involved causing Ocalan to flee Syria, persuading numerous countries to refuse him sanctuary and then driving him into a desperate search for refuge. Anywhere - Kenya even.

The final humiliation came when his slightly pathetic figure - in chains, blindfolded, possibly drugged - was presented to the triumphalist Turkish media. A drowsy looking Ocalan was heard to mumble, "If the truth needs to be told, I love Turkey and the Turkish nation and I want to serve it. If I have the chance, I would be pleased to serve. Let there be no torture or anything. I would be happy to serve."

The political fallout from this episode has been considerable. Pas-



sions are running particularly high in Greece, where Ocalan is a popular figure. It does not help that the PKK leader was seized from the Greek ambassador's residence in Kenya. Three senior ministers who were behind the bungled operation to hide Ocalan were sacked by the Greek prime minister, Costas Simitis. The role played by the CIA in the capture of Ocalan by Turkish troops has added salt to the wound. Nationalistic MPs threatened to withdraw their support for Simitis's government unless the sackings took place. Memories of Greek resistance to the Ottoman Empire run deep.

In response, well organised and disciplined demonstrations convulsed Europe - and there were also pro-Ocalan marches in Tehran, Moscow and in the Armenian city of Yerevan. In London we saw the three-day occupation of the Greek embassy by 77 Kurds and the demonstrations in support of the occupiers - all of whom were arrested and charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Three Kurds were shot dead in Berlin, as they attempted to storm the Israeli consulate. In Turkey itself 2,000 people have been arrested in connection with Ocalan and the PKK, and in the city of Diyarbakir pro-Ocalan demonstrators have been fired upon. In south-east Turkey 14 members of the PKK have been killed by government forces. PKK bases in Northern Iraq have been attacked by 4,000 Turkish troops, backed by air support and assisted by the Iraq-based Kurdistan Democratic Party of Masoud Barzani.

The Turkish prime minister, Bulent Ecevit of the Democratic Left Party, has responded aggressively to European criticisms of the Ocalan affair. Of course Ocalan will have a 'fair' trial, and Ecevit has warned foreign governments "to refrain from attempts to put pressure on our courts. We would consider such attempts as an unacceptable affront." Indeed, official circles in Turkey have described Greece as a "rogue state" for its pro-PKK sympathies and has demanded that the EU investigates Greece's 'illegal' activities.

But Turkey does have strong allies in Europe too. Otto Schily, the German interior minister, has declared that Germany's 'counter-terrorist' service will step up its efforts to "smash" the PKK, which is firmly entrenched among the 500,000 Kurds living in Germany and it has been

suggested that Kurdish militants found guilty of criminal offences should be deported.

Naturally, this explosion of passion has baffled the cold-blooded and etiolated bourgeoisie. Why do the Kurds need to be so 'violent' and militant in their protests? Our rulers find it difficult to understand *real* conviction and beliefs - standing in sharp contrast to the dehumanised 'post-politics' politics of official discourse, where a lifeless consensus reigns supreme and all we see are fake arguments over spin. The fact that the Kurdish masses identify with the struggle of the PKK is just beyond them.

In particular, our scribblers are baffled by the dramatic action of Nejla Kantepir, the 15-year-old who set fire to herself on the first day of the occupation of the Greek embassy in London. Good grief - teenagers passionately engaged in *politics*. This is of course not a new phenomenon. For example, the Soweto Uprising of 1976 was a mass rebellion by school students against the compulsory imposition of Afrikaans - ie, the oppressor language.

The distinct message from the establishment and the foreign office is that Ocalan deserves his fate. We are supposed to blame the PKK for the 40,000 deaths witnessed over the last 15 years. What revolting hypocrisy. Responsibility lies squarely with the Turkish state and its terror campaign to suppress the Kurds' struggle for self-determination.

Ironically, at this time the west is looking for more moderate leaders to deal with - a Kurdish version of Gerry Adams (we have seen the same process in Kosova with the KLA). Fantastically, it is being mooted that with Ocalan out of the way, it will be easier to nurture such a figure in the PKK. What foolish illusions. Obviously, such a quest will now be a lot harder - Ocalan *was*, potentially, a Gerry Adams.

For years the PKK professed to be Marxist-Leninist and its programme was for an 'independent socialist' Kurdistan. However, in recent times Ocalan has distanced the organisation from its more ostensibly Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and he dropped references to independence several years ago. Ocalan now calls for 'autonomy' within Turkey. In fact, Ocalan faced radical opposition within the PKK and the most likely consequence of the whole af-

fair is to increase the organisation's intransigence - and of course gain it thousands more recruits.

But Ecevit and the Turkish state will not give ground. He has aggressively stated: "Autonomy or federalism for the Kurds are not on the agenda. We will not allow it and we can't afford it." Ecevit even gave a hypocritical lecture on the evils of racism: "Turks and Kurds of Turkey are one nation. In contrast to the racist heritage and tendencies of certain European nations, we have no concept of racial differentiation, and there has been no instance of racial conflict or discrimination in Turkish history." The most Ecevit is prepared to offer the Kurds is "economic development" for their impoverished areas.

The Kurds must have the right to determine their own future. Therefore, communists resolutely defend Ocalan and the PKK from the ravages of the Turkish state.

This is more than could be said for the mealy-mouthed defenders of human rights in the liberal press. *The Guardian* pontificated on the need for "a full and fair trial - it's in the Turks' own interest", adding: "And that, practically speaking, must mean that the Ocalan trial is an object of international interest. If the evidence against Ocalan is as strong as Turkish ministers have been saying, the more open and transparent the judicial process which exhibits it, the more convincing any eventual condemnation. Due process is a human right even in the fraught circumstances of civil war. The Turks have won a tactical victory. What is needed now in Ankara is a sight of strategy - not magnanimity, but a clear view of national self-interest: that must lie in admitting foreign observers and ensuring full legal representation for the accused" (February 19). Sound advice for the ruling class in Turkey.

Communists call for the *right* to self-determination for the Kurdish masses - whether they be in Turkey, Iraq or Iran. How that right is exercised - whether it takes the form of autonomy, independence/separation or even complete integration - is a matter to be *decided* by the Kurds. Central to their struggle is the consciousness of the Turkish masses themselves, who must break from all manifestations of Turkish chauvinism and champion the democratic rights of the oppressed ●

**Eddie Ford**

## ■ CPGB seminars

**London:** Sunday February 28, 5pm - 'Dictatorship of the proletariat in Marx and Engels', using Hal Draper's *The dictatorship of the proletariat from Marx to Lenin* as a study guide. For details phone 0181-459 7146.

**Manchester:** Monday March 1, 7.30 pm - 'The general law of capitalist accumulation', in the series on Karl Marx's *Capital*. For details phone 0161-798 6417. E-mail: cpgb2@aol.com

## ■ Party wills

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

## ■ London Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact Box 22, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS, or ring Anne Murphy on 0973-231 620.

## ■ Socialist Alliance

*Launch meeting* of Socialist Alliance, formerly known as United Socialists: Tuesday March 9, 7.30pm at Friends Meeting House, Euston. *Trade union rally:* Saturday April 17, 2pm at South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, NW1.

## ■ Glasgow Marxist Forum

Public meeting - 'Marxism and the national question' - should socialists campaign for a federal republic? Speaker - Mary Ward. Wednesday March 10, 7.30pm, Partick Burgh Hall. All welcome.

## ■ March for jobs!

There will be a major demonstration in Cologne on May 29 to coincide with the heads of government summit of the EU. This will be a protest against unemployment, job insecurity, social exclusion and racism. It will be the follow-up march to the 50,000-strong demonstration in Amsterdam in June 1997. The Cologne demonstration is expected to be at least the same size, if not bigger.

To organise effective participation from Britain under the banner of Cologne '99 a meeting has been called, open to all interested organisations and individuals. It will be held on Saturday March 6 at ULU, Malet Street, London, 11.30am-4.30pm (nearest tube - Goodge Street). For more details contact Andy Robertson (secretary of Euromarch Liaison Committee). Tel: 0191-222 0299. E-mail: EUROMUK@aol.com.

## ■ Justice for Diarmuid

Picket - Sunday February 28, 11am at the headquarters of SO19, 337 Old Street, London. Justice for Diarmuid O'Neill - shot dead by British state forces.

## ■ Dover Residents Against Racism

For details phone Patrick on (01304) 216102 or Martin on (01304) 206140.

## ■ Support Tameside careworkers

Support Group meets every Monday, 7pm, at the Station pub, Warrington Street, Ashton under Lyne. Donations and solidarity to Tameside Unison, 29 Booth Street, Ashton under Lyne.

## ■ Strike Support Group

Solidarity with workers in struggle. Meets every Monday at 7.30pm. The Cook Tavern, Phoenix Road, Euston. For more information call 0171-249 0041 or write to SSG, 145 Imperial Avenue, Victorian Road, London N16 8HL.

## Where to get your Weekly Worker

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**G**eographical determinism and 'revolutionary centralisers' are unconsciously relegated to the back-burner when Jack approaches the period of capitalist ascendancy. Instead, 'objective' economic forces take their place. The key sentence in Jack's analysis of the seemingly 'inexorable' rise of the 'British nation' is the following: "The industrial revolution and the fruits of a worldwide British commercial empire cemented a merger of the main peoples in Britain." Class struggle and the nature of the politics involved in cementing "a merger of the main peoples in Britain" are largely airbrushed out of his analysis.

Jack adopts the Whig view of history. Under the impact of the Enlightenment and the rise of liberalism, the early Whig political theories associated with the rise of the UK were given a new social and economic historical underpinning by David Hume, William Fergusson, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mills, in the 18th and early 19th centuries. This provided the basis for viewing firstly the rise of commercial society, then the industrial revolution, as the major contributors to the development of the British 'nation' through "a merger of the main peoples".

But industrial development did not automatically lead to a merging of peoples in the new factories, mills or workshops. Certainly, many industrial centres in the UK did witness a wider mixture of peoples (and not from the constituent nations of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales), but also black ex-slaves and Asian (for example Lascar seamen) settlers and refugees from Europe. In some cases, workplaces employed very ethnically mixed labour forces; in other cases specific jobs were reserved for particular ethnic groups; whilst in yet others - for example, the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast - there was institutionalised 'ethno-religious' exclusivism. Similar divisions could also be seen in the residential areas serving the major new industrial centres.

A much clearer understanding is gained by seeing that developing capitalism, itself continuously contested through class struggle, transforms the conditions of possible state and nation formation. The actual outcomes were not the result of some 'objective' process which followed inevitably from the industrial revolution. Class struggle determined whether it was greater national unity or continued and increased disunity which prevailed. Internal class struggle or external conquest decided the social and political character of new nations and states.

Jack does get nearer to the real reason for the development of a 'British nation' when he also states that this was the result of "the fruits of a worldwide British and commercial empire". For, it was the possibilities of colonial exploitation which led to the creation of a genuinely British ruling class, made up of English, Scottish and later Irish and Welsh components. It was this British ruling class which promoted a top-down 'British nation'.

However, this emerging British ruling class was unable to form an incorporating British state. They opted instead for a union state, which constitutionally, and hence administratively, recognised the existence of separate English, Scottish and Irish nations. The Scottish and Irish-born sections of an increasingly British ruling class still jealously guarded remnant national 'property rights', whilst pooling their resources for the more effective exploitation of the ever-widening British empire. But the more the 'lower orders' fought for and gained greater political representation, the more devolved the administration became - in Ireland in particular, but also in Scotland and increasingly in Wales too. The political 'reappearance' of

# 'Union' Jack and defence of the British 'nation' - part 2

## Conquest, class and

**Allan Armstrong** of the SSP completes his response to Jack Conrad's 'Unenlightened myths' (*Weekly Worker* November 19 1998)

Wales in the 19th century, after the extension of the franchise to a Welsh-speaking, or recently Welsh-speaking, middle class happened despite Wales having politically 'disappeared' as a result of the earliest and only fully incorporating Act of Union in 1535!

All of this is very hard to explain if you adopt Stalin's theory of nation-building, with its "common culture" following directly as the result of a growing "common economic life", greater "economic cohesion", and the "development of the means of communication (not least in print)". For, all of these largely economic developments were far more advanced in the UK than in Georgia, the example given by Jack. The unionist, as opposed to unitary, nature of the UK state is much easier to understand, when you see that an emerging British ruling class had to struggle to promote its top-down 'British nation' identity through its UK state. The British ruling class had to confront widely held English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh (and other) national and ethnic identities. Ironically, the wider development of national consciousness associated with the rise of democracy also gave a more coherent form to the subordinate nations too. This was particularly the case with Wales.

Each subordinate nation was divided by class too, with popular traditions, which also allowed for 'internationalism from below' and more conservative traditions, which made alliances with the British ruling class. This made the conservative wing of the subordinate nation more receptive to the top-down promotion of 'British nation' identity. So resilient were the popular vernacular traditions that a 'British nation' identity never fully displaced these other national identities, even at the height of the British empire. Instead there were hybrid British and English/Irish/Scottish/Welsh/Indian/West Indian/black identities. This left the British ruling class along with its UK state and 'British nation' very much a 'hostage to fortune'. When circumstances changed and the British empire declined, so too did the wider 'British nation' identity.

The rise of anti-imperialist movements within the British empire - of organisations of black and Asian minorities in 'Britain', and of national movements in Ireland, Scotland and Wales - have all forced an increased questioning of the top-down 'British nation'. Their struggles have helped to expose the contradictions underlying the 'progressive' development of the UK. They have reopened the fault-lines in the state of a 'nation' created top-down.

Jack even stumbles upon the real nature of the UK and its 'British nation', but he has to immediately deny it! The 'British nation' is just another example of the "state communities such as Belgium, Spain or the former Soviet Union". As an older, more established state, the UK may have been more successful in promoting the English language, but there still remain Welsh, Gaelic (and now Asian) language minorities, whilst the states Jack mentions have each tried, at times, to impose French, Castilian or Russian throughout their territories.

Jack's social democratic theory of

nation formation is also highlighted in his lofty referral to "a spreading English language", associated "with the development of capitalism". This decidedly economic view downplays the role of state oppression. Official English did not just 'spread', but was often imposed by the state at the expense of Gaelic, Welsh, Scots and, as many working class kids in England, Scotland Wales and Ireland would also be able to testify, through the attempted suppression of local dialects in schools.

Also, because the UK rose to be the dominant world power in the 19th century, it had the economic, social and political clout to more effectively promote 'Britishness'. But even the Belgian state, now federalised, had some success in the 19th and early 20th centuries in promoting 'Belgian' nationality. For a long time the largest Belgian political parties were organised on an all-state basis. As a relatively new state with minor and declining imperial influence, it is not surprising that Belgian identity should more easily give way to Flemish and Walloon identities. The UK state may have been around for longer and been more successful in promoting a 'British nation' identity, but this too is undergoing a process of reversal with the decline of British imperialism.

At each and every stage, the greater territorial unity of the UK state was brought about by either conquest, as was the case in Wales and Ireland, or through a deal between ruling classes, as happened in Scotland in 1707. There were no struggles from below of a British 'nation' trying to constitute itself as a British nation-state. This is different from those national movements which led to revolutions for Italian and German unity, particularly in 1848-9, some time before Cavour and Bismarck pursued their campaigns for Italian and German unification by 'revolution from above'.

Furthermore, if a particular ruling class resorts to conquest to increase its territories, then the brutalisation involved in this process leaves its mark on the state. It has severe consequences for the subordinate classes among the conquering nation too.

The US state, for example, was moulded by a legacy of the bloody conquest of native Americans and the enforcement of black slavery. This can perhaps explain the particularly difficult conditions under which labour, socialists and communists have tried to organise in the USA. The USA has unfortunately produced too many heroes of the class struggle who were also martyrs, like the Wobblies, Joe Hill. In the USA, conquest and enslavement have been such central parts of the state and nation's territorial formation that brutality remains a very visible feature to this day. This is highlighted by the lengthy imprisonment of American Indian activist Leonard Peltier and the threatened execution of black activist Abu Jamal Mumia.

In the case of the UK, conquest was mainly a feature of the territorial incorporation of the 'peripheries', particularly Ireland and the Highlands, and this left its mark both on the UK state and in its methods of operating, particularly in Ireland. But it was in the British colonies that brutalisation became central features of the colo-

nial administrations, as capitalism was introduced from above, through conquest and enslavement.

The UK state has been formed by a combination of external conquest, 'revolution from above', and even 'counterrevolution within the revolution'. This has involved various class struggles depending on the period of history under examination. We can also see periods when classes and peoples, previously viewed as 'backward' or reactionary, were transformed by struggles in new historical circumstances.

When Henry VIII brought about the incorporating Union of Wales in 1535, it was partly associated with the ending of the remnant communal landholding. This was also very much a feature of the conquest of Ireland and the incorporation and military suppression of the Highlands. In Tudor England, however, Ket's Rising against enclosures contributed to the successful defence both of freehold land and a yeomanry. This helped to make Norfolk a major centre of revolution in Cromwell's time.

The 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland followed from a complex century of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary struggle involving a variety of classes. The first period of revolution was initiated in Scotland by the cross-class alliance of the Covenanters in 1638 directed against the growing royal absolutism of the Stuarts. This inspired a revolt in Ireland in 1641 against the recent conquest of the old Gaelic order and seizure of remaining communal land. The Scottish example also spurred on the rise of the Puritan party in England, based on the rural gentry, merchants and manufacturers from 1642. As the revolution intensified, the Covenanter alliance in Scotland split, producing more revolutionary leaders and drawing more support from the 'lower orders'. The more revolutionary wing was drawn into closer alliance with the puritans in England, whilst the moderates split off and joined the royalist counterrevolution.

A similar process took place in England. However, here, not only the gentry, merchants and manufacturers were drawn in, but also yeomen, artisans and apprentices. This helped to create a clear revolutionary republican force, the Independents, led by Cromwell. However, in Ireland, the English and Scottish 'revolutionary' forces revealed their 'counterrevolutionary' aspect, since like the crown before, they had no interest in ending the yoke over the Irish - wanting only their land or enforced labour. It was this which drove the 'native Irish', or 'woodkerns', into the arms of reaction.

Seeing the possibility of greater enrichment at the expense of the Irish, many Cromwellian supporters increasingly turned their back on their previous near-millennarian revolutionary ideals. They began to lord it over their fellow Independents too. This produced the decisive struggle within the revolutionary forces, putting the Levellers in opposition to Cromwell. The Levellers drew their support from the 'lower orders'. They opposed Cromwell's attempt to send them to Ireland and instead saw the 'native Irish' as possible allies against the attempts both of the old crown forces and the newly rich revolutionary elite, now represented by Cromwell, to reimpose the 'Norman yoke'.

The Levellers were crushed at Burford in Oxfordshire in 1649. The

possibility of an alternative path of development, based on a mixture of freehold and common proprietorship, and of a completely different relationship between the peoples of these islands, was aborted. However, later struggles for Irish national liberation, drawing in the mass of downtrodden Irish peasantry, were still marked by their desire to overthrow the legacy of Cromwell. This highlights the earlier point that states formed by conquest or 'revolution from above' leave deep scars. These are likely to be 'picked over' again and again, when new historical opportunities present themselves.

The revolutionary forces in England outstripped those in Scotland, forcing Cromwell to invade the country of his former allies, to prevent royalist reaction taking root. He created an English imperial republic. However, by suppressing the Levellers and enriching his supporters in Ireland, he gave new impetus to the larger landholders and merchants, and set the pattern for England's agricultural development. Instead of a freeholding yeomanry there was to be increased economic, social and political domination by large landowners. Cromwell represented the 'counterrevolution within the revolution'. His actions paved the way, after his death, for his former allies, now also fearful of challenges from below, to invite back the Stuart monarch, the better to unite the old ruling class with the new. Former revolutionary republican General Monck became Lord Albemarle under Charles II.

However, under the restoration, reaction pushed things so far back, particularly when James II took the throne, that the Covenanters were forced to reorganise in self-defence in Scotland. Only this time the majority were now drawn much more clearly from the 'lower orders'. They formed the revolutionary United Societies in the 1680s. They led the revolution from below in Scotland in 1689. Monmouth's failed rebellion of 1685 in England, also consisting mainly of the 'lower orders', had seen the reappearance of the Levellers' sea-green emblem. However, when the 'Glorious Revolution' did arrive in 1688, Monmouth's prior defeat ensured that it was very much a 'revolution from above' in England. The new constitutional monarchy of William of Orange was largely the creation of the new Whig section of the ruling class. But its rule was strongly contested in Scotland - not just by the Jacobite right, but more importantly by the Covenanter left.

Ireland, however, once more experienced 'revolution' in the form of conquest. The resultant massive land transfers, permitted under the draconian penal code directed at Catholics, helped to greatly increase the overall power of the large landholders and create a new reactionary political force to replace the old Jacobite and Catholic lords. These landlords have remained a continuing reactionary block with wider UK influence. They were responsible for setting up the counterrevolutionary Orange Order, which not only confronted the United Irishmen, but had cells in the armed forces used at the time of Peterloo and the radical rising in Scotland. The continued existence of a huge, unassimilated, constantly resentful, Irish Catholic peasantry, coupled to the official Catholic nature of the infant UK's prime colonial competitor, absolutist France, also contributed to

# federalism

what was to become a central feature of the new 'British nation' identity. The UK state continued to promote protestantism. The fading legacy of this still remains in the established Church of England and the constitutional requirement for a protestant monarch, even though civil society has moved on. In the 'Six Counties', however, British national identity remains virtually inseparable from protestantism. The Orange Order is still 'defending' a 'protestant Britain' at Drumcree.

But in the 1690s a UK state-promoted British 'nation' identity could only begin to take place through crushing the recent legacy of Scotland's 'revolution from below'. If the increasingly powerful Whig landlords and merchants were to enjoy the fruits of their 'Glorious Revolution' from above, this legacy had to be dealt with decisively. The immediate counter-revolutionary Jacobite threat had been contained by the actions of the United Societies at Dunkeld in 1690. Later, to consolidate his rule and overawe both enemies and 'friends', William authorised the Glencoe Massacre of 1691. There were many features of the new Scots parliament, which William and Anne and their landlord supporters found objectionable. The landlords were particularly incensed at the loss of direct patronage over the clergy, which greatly weakened their social and political power and could block their attempts to evict their tenants.

Therefore, the main thrust of the 1707 Act of Union was to eliminate the more revolutionary legacy in Scotland. The voting on the union of parliaments, after extensive bribery of the 'parcel of rogues' in the Scots parliament, divided on clear class lines. The more rich and influential, the bigger the majority for abolition. However, amongst the 'lower orders' the response was clear. The Act of Union was met by rioting in the streets, particularly in the recently revolutionary Edinburgh and Dumfries.

When the War of American Independence took place from 1776, it is again possible to identify the class conflicts involved. Although the more revolutionary farmers and tradesmen formed the vanguard of the revolution, they were marginalised and repressed. Instead the new United States were consolidated under the control of large land and plantation owners and the big merchants. The more radical 'lower orders' failed to ally with the black slaves or native Americans. Refusing to support a wider emancipation, they helped to strengthen the position of the new rising ruling class over them. The USA was able to establish itself as an imperial republic. Cromwell's English imperial republic, defeated over a century before, now took firm root, but on American soil.

However, although further revolution was aborted in the USA, the republican example still provided impetus for revolutionary challenges in France and in Ireland, Scotland and England. Here, what began as noble-led movements for constitutional reform gave way to consecutively more revolutionary challenges from the 'lower orders', particularly after 1789. Those peasants who had been written off by the upholders of 'the great Whig tradition' as bearers of the deepest catholic reaction, particularly in France and Ireland, now showed their revolutionary ardour. And the struggle to overthrow the UK state increas-

ingly took the form of 'internationalism from below', particularly with the formation of the United Irishmen, United Scotsmen and the London Corresponding Society.

With the defeat of the naval mutinies in England and the Strathtay Uprising in Scotland in 1797 and the crushing of the United Irish Rising of 1798, the state-promoted British 'nation' took on a new impetus. Already built up as a consciously counter-revolutionary identity against the French Revolution, the British 'nation' was now extended across the Irish Sea, with the 1801 Act of Union. The fact that the largely landlord parliamentary representatives from Ireland could join the same political parties - Whigs and Tories - as their English and Scottish class brethren, shows that a British ruling class was being further cemented.

However, with the extension of the franchise, as a result of the massive suffrage campaigns, including that of the Chartists, it became more necessary to emphasise the subordinate nation identities in the UK - particularly Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The newly enfranchised middle class too wanted to enjoy the fruits of the British empire, but they also wanted 'protection' on their national 'patch'. This is why the Liberal Party, the great middle class party of the 19th century, was increasingly forced to adopt home rule for these three nations, either through mainly external pressure in Ireland, or internal pressure in Scotland and Wales.

However, the Liberals represented the many successful industrialists who rose from the middle class to join a widened British capitalist ruling class. These people saw little need for the national career protection advocated by the middle class in the Liberal Party. Their sights were clearly empire-wide. Faced with the prospect of home rule, they 'jumped ship' and became first the Liberal Unionists, before merging into the Conservative and Unionist Party. In Ulster, south Wales and Clydeside, the Liberals were split and eclipsed as a result.

With the extension of the franchise to male skilled workers, it became even more necessary to emphasise the multi-nation nature of the UK. The top-down promotion of British 'nation' identity might deeply penetrate the working class, particularly in the heyday of British imperialism. The Conservative and Unionist Party and the Orange Order made considerable inroads into the working class in this period. In the latter years of Queen Victoria, an imperial monarchy was revamped along populist lines, the better to extend the 'British nation' to the 'lower orders'. But, even when it came to whipping up support for imperial war, another prime device for promoting a common 'Britishness', the army recruiting posters, still had to appeal to Paddy, Jock and Taffy.

Trying initially to relate to those growing numbers of workers disenchanted with the Liberal Party, the newly founded Independent Labour Party also found it necessary to adopt home rule all round. This was to reflect and contain the much stronger remnant national identities amongst the working class, not yet displaced by the imposition of 'Britishness', or being recreated to meet new conditions. The Independent Labour Party itself had quite varied characteristics according to which nation or region it was organised in. Keir Hardie, the Scots-born christian socialist and paci-

fist leader of the ILP, displayed all the characteristics of this hybrid British/Scottish national identity. It was 'Britishness' born out of imperialism which allowed racism to colour his politics. When oppressed Lithuanians fled the tsarist empire to seek work in the Lanarkshire coalfields, "Hardie demanded their removal on the grounds their presence is a menace to the health and morality of the place"! Rightwing Labour historian Kenneth O Morgan states that "Hardie had been linked ... with British socialism, not with the Glasgow parochialism of the Clyde or the very Celtic communism of John Maclean"! It was 'Britishness' too which led Hardie to seek compromise with the Liberals and to emphasise reform through Westminster in his many campaigns to be elected MP in Scotland, England and Wales.

From Keir Hardie to Tony Blair, 'Britishness' has been a prime conduit for the subordination of the vernacular radical and revolutionary traditions of the working class in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. Furthermore, since the British 'nation' is an identity promoted from above by the UK state, it invariably pulls its advocates amongst the 'Brit left' and the British Marxists into a defence of the British state too. 'Internationalism from below' is completely foreign to this political current.

Their most 'advanced' defence of the British state is support for a 'federal republic'. Yet federalism and constitutional republicanism represent the ruling class's last ditch attempt to hold on to their state. It is at this point that the previously abstract politics of British Marxism joins with the politics of the 'advanced' section of the British ruling class to oppose any real revolutionary challenge from below aiming to break up the UK state. What differentiates the 'revolutionary' British Marxists from their merely radical brethren is the former demand a higher price for their accommodation - a federal republic; whilst the latter will settle at a cheaper price - monarchist devolution.

Any examination of federalism in the history of the UK, British nation and empire highlights its counter-revolutionary role. Thus, as early as the American War of Independence, the radical reformer, Major Cartwright, "handed the king an address pleading for 'American legislative independence within a renovated empire'." Then they "would gladly take their new place as members of 'the grand British League and confederation'" (G Newman *The rise of nationalism* Routledge, p201). Faced with colonial revolt in British North America in 1837, James Roebuck, MP for Bath, advocated a federal republic to offset US interests. Lord Durham met Roebuck and, acting on behalf of the government, drew up a federal scheme which preserved "the supremacy of the crown of England" (J Kendle *Federal Britain* Macmillan, p22). During the turbulent years of the Irish Land League campaign and Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party, the Radical MP, Joseph Chamberlain, proposed a federal solution with an imperial parliament for Westminster, a supreme court and subordinate legislatures for England, Scotland, Wales, Ulster and the rest of Ireland. In 1920 a federal solution for the UK was drawn up by the Speakers Conference, involving Tories, Liberals and Labour; to deal with the rising challenge of the Irish national movement. And today, the more far-

sighted ideologues of the British ruling class, such as Andrew Neil, are also contemplating a federal republican future for 'Britain'.

Now in 1891 Engels advocated a federal republic for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Earlier both Marx and Engels had advocated Irish independence. However, by 1891, the powerful Irish Land League, representing the tenant farmers, had been outmanoeuvred and sold short by its parliamentary advocates, whilst the Irish parliamentary party itself had been hopelessly split over the Parnell affair, marginalising the once strong home rule movement. It appeared possible that the new land reforms might take the 'sting' out of the British connection. The revolutionary impetus of the Fenians or Irish Republican Brotherhood appeared to have exhausted itself. British socialists were beginning to organise in Ireland. The popular classes in Ireland were at a low ebb.

However, more concerted class struggle did arise again. It was mainly based on the new working class, including unskilled and women workers. James Larkin and James Connolly found that, in order to organise at all, they had to break the stranglehold of the British trade union bureaucrats and found the heroic Irish Transport and General Workers Union. Connolly also had to fight the 'Brit left' of his day to win recognition for the Irish Socialist Republican Party at the Second International Congress. In Paris the Irish delegation formed part of the revolutionary wing, whilst the British joined the compromisers. Developing class struggle made Engels' 1891 formulation redundant.

Lenin recognised the right of Ireland to exercise self-determination and break from imperial Britain. Lenin was also fairly scathing of those who advocated federalism once the issue of self-determination had been raised in a concrete situation: "The right to 'self determination' means neither federation nor autonomy (although speaking in the abstract, both come under the category of 'self-determination'). The right to federation is simply meaningless, since federation implies a bilateral contract" (VI Lenin 'The right of nations to self-determination' *Questions of national policy and proletarian internationalism* Progress, p91). Put in another way, 'it takes two to tango'! Those who try to prevent workers breaking up existing states (including imperial reactionary ones like the UK) on the grounds that 'working class unity' must be preserved, are behaving like the worst trade union bureaucrats who try to stop members taking action in one area, by telling them to wait until everywhere else is ready. Often it is precisely decisive local action which is needed to provide a catalyst for wider action.

When it came to World War I, both the 'Brit left' ILP and British Marxist SDF split between openly pro-war and pacifist factions. In contrast, Connolly, who had been organising amongst the most oppressed sections of the working class, began to turn the Irish Citizen Army towards insurrectionary plans, against Irish home ruler John Redmond's attempts to recruit the Irish Volunteers for the services of British imperialism.

John Maclean, on Clydeside, also worked amongst the most oppressed workers. He campaigned amongst a very mixed working class. In contrast to the "British socialist", Keir Hardie, the "parochial" Scottish John Maclean, campaigned tirelessly on behalf of the Lithuanian miners, and of course for the Irish too. Least affected by notions of Britishness, they helped to give Maclean the political strength to organise against the war.

After the failure of the 1919 40-hours strike, Maclean looked to what was being achieved instead through a political challenge in Ireland. Following Connolly, he took up the slogan of a workers' republic, in his famous 1920

address, "All hail, the Scottish Workers Republic!" Maclean had not become a Scottish nationalist, but a Scottish internationalist, joining with the struggles in Ireland, India and Egypt for the break-up of the UK and British empire, which he wanted to push on to world communism. The international revolutionary wave of 1916-21 clarified the truly revolutionary road for communists living in the UK. Although this view was marginalised and apparently lost after the defeat of the international revolutionary wave from 1921, it points the way in a future revolutionary challenge to the UK state. The choice lies between the 'British road to socialism', with its bureaucratic, top-down 'internationalism' and its successive rearguard attempts to shore up the 'British nation'; and 'the break-up of the UK road to communism' and its championing of 'internationalism from below'.

Jack, however, still sees the creation of the 'British nation' as an undoubted plus for humanity. Unfortunately, for Jack a hiccup has occurred. The 'objective, inevitable progress' of the British 'nation' is now under threat. "It has only been with the visible decline of British imperialism that Scottish nationalism has seriously emerged. The closure of the old steel, shipbuilding, engineering and mining industries, the discovery of North Sea oil and the election of four successive Tory governments created genuine nationalist sentiments amongst the Scots, and not only those who voted SNP." Now perhaps if British imperialism was not allowed to go into decline the 'progressive British nation' could be allowed to continue until 'the revolution'!

There is not a word in Jack's particular analysis here that most current British social democrats, whether of old or New Labour allegiance, could disagree with. Their prescriptions, of course, differ in the face of recent political challenges. New Labour wants to boost British imperialism by bombing Iraq and imposing the 'pacification process' on the 'Six Counties'. It also wants to reform the UK state through 'devolution all round' and a modernised second chamber to replace the House of Lords - all this to be fronted by a populist monarchy.

Jack, to his credit, opposes the bombing of Iraq - but then, so do those old Labour social democrats, Tony Benn and Tam Dalyell. Jack, along with the majority of British Marxists (SWP and Socialist Party) and increasing numbers of the old left Labour, seems to accept the partition of Ireland now that Sinn Féin has gone constitutional nationalist. Furthermore, along with Andrew Neil, Peregrine Worsthorne and an increasing number of the Tories, the Liberals and no doubt soon the Labour Party too, Jack can see that Blair's devolution policy is unlikely to hold the line for the UK. The unity of the UK state will instead need a federal response.

Last year, when confronted with Blair's rigged Scottish devolution referendum, the CPGB-PCC came up with a stay-at-home abstentionism on September 11. This did not exactly chime with the rest of the British Marxists and the 'Brit left'. But the CPGB-PCC's federal Britain position leaves it well placed in the future, as the crisis facing the UK unfolds, to play a similar role to that Militant played over Blair's devolutionary proposals - critical cheerleaders for the British ruling class's political project to maintain the unity of their state and the 'British nation'.

Faced with such a crisis, will the CPGB-PCC ignore the white and the blue and try to rescue the red in the 'butcher's apron'? Maybe 'Union' Jack would like to consider why it is that two of the crosses in this flag are red? Just which class is being martyred when it gives its loyalty to the 'British nation'?! ●



# Determinist dogma

**Phil Sharpe** replies to the economistic inevitabilism of *Socialist News* writer Don Hoskins

In the *Weekly Worker* (January 21) Don Hoskins, a supporter of the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review*, makes another attack on my criticism of its views.

His polemic seems to be based around two main issues: firstly, that practice is the main criterion of defining the explanatory nature of a theory in contrast to the alleged epistemological relativism and scepticism of my views; secondly, that my views about science express an adaptation to bourgeois ideology in relation to the question of predictability.

Lenin is utilised by Hoskins in order to uphold the connection of practice to theoretical development with regards to the dispute in 1908-1910 about the new physics. The participants in this dispute were Bogdanov, Lenin and Plekhanov. Contrary to Hoskins, Lenin unlike Plekhanov did not try to minimise the development of a new physics and was not against the objective necessity to develop new theories to explain more succinctly what was occurring. Unlike Plekhanov Lenin did not reject a connection between scientific advance and philosophical advance, but he was also critical of Bogdanov, who adapted to the new science in relation to the idealist justification of the new scientific progress with his theory of collectively organised experience.

If anything, Lenin was biased towards Bogdanov and was still an orthodox Plekhanovite materialist, but contrary to Plekhanov he recognised the importance of scientific practice for showing and developing truths about reality. In contrast, Plekhanov was seemingly content to criticise Bogdanov's 'mentor', Mach, and thereby had nothing substantial to say about Bogdanov's accommodation to existing scientific practice.

The point being made here is that it is necessary to clarify what is meant by practice. This is something that Hoskins does not do. Bogdanov's practice was similar to the spontaneity of the workers in relation to the new development of trade unions, in that the workers and Bogdanov have a common uncritical view towards this new phenomenon. Plekhanov's approach is similar to that of the rightwing Mensheviks in the 1905 Russian Revolution, who disliked the new forms of class struggle - the establishment of soviets - and instead wanted to have strict party control over the static and antiquated bourgeois revolution. Lenin's approach to practice was to acknowledge the importance of new scientific progress, but to maintain it was still necessary for the party and proletariat to guide these advances in dialectical materialist terms and to oppose the rival bourgeois idealist approaches and perspectives.

Thus Lenin denounces the god-seekers as an ostensibly left social democratic extension of Bolshevism in a situation where the proletariat had become demoralised by the defeat of the 1905 revolution, and progress seemed to be restricted to the new science and the supposed new ideas about religion. The mythology of the relation of the proletariat to god seemed to be a superficially attractive way in which the morale of the proletariat could be restored and

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 spontaneous class practice would then be revitalised. This class practice was idealist in that the power of the proletariat was projected onto an unknown entity, with related idealist conclusions that consciousness could autonomously realise the philosophical character of the proletariat.

Lenin rejected this idealism in his steadfast emphasis upon the revolutionary character of the proletariat in a period of reaction. For the adverse balance of class forces meant that the proletariat and sections of the party were inclined to project their potential economic and political power onto idealist phenomenal forces, such as religion and upholding idealist views about science. Lenin, in contrast, showed that the importance of practice was connected to explaining and confirming new ideas about an objective reality that was independent of consciousness. In other words, revolutionary practice was about demarcating materialism from idealism that upheld the primacy of consciousness over the material world.

Lenin's *Materialism and empirio-criticism* is a flawed work in relation to its one-sided criticisms of Bogdanov, but it is still invaluable in relation to its defence of materialism as against the rejuvenation of idealism caused by the advances of the new science, and the equation of observation with scientific practice in an autonomous and relative world of energy that displaces matter in motion.

So how can the EPSR's conception of practice be characterised? It is very similar to the Bogdanov of 1908-10 and the classical economists of 1900-1903. For the EPSR relies upon economic and political crisis to

spontaneously realise a revolutionary consciousness and to bring about a revolutionary situation. This economism means that practice becomes instrumental: any type of opportunist political practice and theory becomes justified for bringing the revolution chronologically closer to fulfilment.

This economism is regressive in comparison to Bogdanov's over-optimistic call to abstain from participation in duma elections in a non-revolutionary situation, because Bogdanov was still a partisan Bolshevik leader who was trying to understand a complex and changing political situation. He was trying to find the appropriate tactics for a difficult period of class struggle expressed by the aftermath of the revolutionary situation. But the end result was a type of political determinism that replaces economic determinism as the basis for his practice, in that the call for a radical rejection of political work orientated around the duma was considered the basis to reactivate the proletariat after 1905. This meant Bogdanov was trying to impose the political tactics of 1905 onto the situation of a changed balance of class forces in 1910.

The EPSR is not even close to aspiring to realise the one-sided limitations of Bogdanov's tactics. Instead it continues to support the illusion that economic crisis will spontaneously resolve the problem of developing revolutionary class consciousness, and so imminent revolution is the only practice that is possible and principled. Thus practice and its connection to perspectives is primarily the justification for rigidity and dogma, rather than a profound expression of historical materialist analysis.

To Lenin the concept and actuality of revolutionary practice was not an excuse to be dogmatic, or an abstraction with no meaning, but instead practice is the end result of theory that has attempted to dialectically analyse the world. Thus Bukharin and Lenin showed from their studies of imperialism that the attempt to analyse imperialism showed how inter-imperialist war indicated the necessity of proletarian internationalist revolutionary practice. This analysis was based upon an understanding of the structural mechanisms of capitalism that was able to transcend the misleading phenomenal forms of the capitalist nation state and show the interdependent and international development of the productive forces.

In contrast to this type of analysis Hoskins and the EPSR seem to label as Kautskyite anyone who mentions the stability and organisation within contemporary capitalism. They conveniently gloss over Lenin's equation of state monopoly capitalism, supervised by the dictatorship of the proletariat, potentially starting the process to realise socialism. (It could be argued that Lenin is accommodating to the theory of socialism in one country in this economic definition of socialism.) To the ultra-radical EPSR monopoly capital is nothing more than chaos, instability and the inability of capitalism to overcome its inter-imperialist contradictions. The possibility that the major capitalist powers could develop as an ultra-

imperialist phenomenon, united in exploiting the rest of the world does not deny the necessity of world revolution, nor does it deny the terrible choice of socialism or barbarism. Ultra-imperialism is barbarism, and expresses the evolutionary development of capitalism in the post-war period. But the EPSR cannot accept this possibility because it prefers the literal, formal word of Lenin and Marx, rather than attempting to develop the method and spirit of Marx and Lenin as the basis to define practice.

The EPSR concept of practice ignores the importance of ideological struggle, and regards it as an expression of pessimism in contrast to the constant repetition of empirical facts about the economic crisis leading to revolution. For example, the hegemonic economic role of American imperialism is not linked to its powerful ideology of individual initiative, social improvement and the aspiration to realise equality of opportunity. In order to oppose this form of bourgeois ideology, and its connection to reactionary social practice, it is necessary to constantly develop and modify dialectical philosophy in order to oppose this spontaneously generated bourgeois ideology within the proletariat in favour of a dialectical philosophical consciousness. This requires the contrasting of the hegemonic and sceptical post-modern consciousness with the alternative of dialectics.

If this theoretical and political task is not carried out the proletariat will continue to have a consciousness of fragmented impressions and will not be able to realise its revolutionary potential. In contrast, the EPSR seems to believe that the proletariat will one day develop revolutionary consciousness based upon a single momentous qualitative leap from reformist consciousness, as a result of economic crisis. This idealist approach cannot explain the possible approach from A to B, because it uses a leap from A to C as its methodology.

Does my approach give primacy to theory over practice, as Hoskins suggests? The answer to this question is 'yes' in the sense that without theory revolutionary practice is not possible. Obviously this definition does not bring out the necessity of practice as an appropriate corrective to theory - as was shown by Lenin's significant modifications to his 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' theory in the February-October period of 1917. But we still get to know the material world through evaluating competing theories, and Lenin's changes in practice in 1917 would have been unintelligible without his theoretical explanation to the party and proletariat.

In order to try to polemically defeat me the EPSR attempts to deny the importance of theory, which formally is opposite to the intentions of the EPSR. This contradiction becomes a dominant factor the longer the time scale of the polemic around the EPSR's theoretical claims, and shows that dogma, not science takes precedence in their approach.

Is my approach anti-scientific in its stance on predictions and sexuality? Apparently my standpoint is similar to the epistemological relativism of Karl Popper, who tries to deny the historical durability of the theory of Newton, Darwin and Marx. I lack an in-depth knowledge of Popper, but I have profound disagreements with what I do know about him. Popper's falsification approach that suggests

new facts can relatively undermine existing theories is a relativist standpoint that cannot explain anomalies as an important part of a theory. For example Marxism has tried to explain how Stalinism could develop out of a revolutionary Marxist party, but to Popper Stalinism equals the realisation of Marxism, and the historical dominance of capitalism.

My own approach to science generally defends the standpoint of Gaston Bachelard, whereupon the epistemological break explains the struggle between old and new, and it is necessary to break with old conceptions if science is to be differentiated from what has become its antiquated form. Hoskins upholds the antiquated standpoint in his uncritical support for Newton, in that he refuses to differentiate between Newton's law of gravity and his adherence to a mechanical conception of the universe, which was being superseded by the new physics of the late 19th and early 20th century.

This failure to demarcate between old and new is not a political surprise; it is based upon the continued attempt by the EPSR to defend and uphold antiquated and counterrevolutionary Stalinism, and it is in this context that makes them theoretically consistent whilst being seemingly paradoxical and ironic in their defence of an old economistic third period-type of Stalinism.

In his article Hoskins does not elaborate upon the previous criticism of my views about prediction - except, that is, to locate the repudiation of prediction within bourgeois Popperian science. In reply, it is important to emphasise that Popper apparently repudiates prediction in order to uphold the capitalist system, whilst I am trying to show that prediction is not the main or even secondary aspect of revolutionary class struggle. What is being argued about prediction by Popper and myself is from different class standpoints. However, the approach of Hoskins and the EPSR represents the mundane repetition of the approach of the bourgeois enlightenment about uncomplicated historical progress.

On the question of sexuality Hoskins takes an extremely defensive standpoint, and labels all criticism of the EPSR perspective as being politically correct. Apparently to disagree with the EPSR does not merit a serious reply, because it is an expression of Labourist PC reformism. Rightwing PC (Labour Party bureaucracy) does tend to support censorship as the administrative method to suppress dissident views, but the *Weekly Worker* is entirely opposed to such methods, as the very publication of EPSR articles indicates. This attempt by the EPSR to give itself a martyrdom status is nothing more than a manoeuvre to avoid any real discussion on the rightwing Freudian nature of its approach towards understanding homosexuality.

The rightwing stance of this approach was summed up in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: 'Four legs good, two legs better'. In other words the EPSR formally attempts to be egalitarian and 'generously' tolerant in its standpoint, but it still refuses to accept that diversity and equality is the real basis of a revolutionary approach for understanding sexuality.

Increasingly the EPSR tries to put the same label onto the varied groups opposed to its politics, but presently only in the *Weekly Worker* is the opposition to the EPSR of an explanatory and revolutionary content ●

A new scientific and technological revolution is imminent. Biotechnology, the science of the new century, is already starting to have an impact on our lives, with the appearance of genetically modified food and the controversy surrounding it.

Genetic engineering involves introducing genetic material from one organism into the cells of another, maybe quite different one. The foreign DNA can be made part of the genome of the host organism, which then synthesises the protein coded for by the inserted gene.

The design of the £2 coin indicates the potential importance for the bourgeoisie of the new technology. It shows in the centre circle cogs and gears representing the first industrial revolution, while in the second circle electronic circuits symbolise the age of computer technology. The outer circle contains pictures of chromosomes, the tiny packets of genetic material contained in every living cell which are modified by the techniques of genetic engineering.

The biotechnology industry does have the potential to manufacture many useful products. Scientists currently developing the techniques of gene transfer, and the biotech companies which hold the patents on their discoveries, are keen to advertise these benefits to consumers. We hear of plants modified to produce in photosynthesis not sugars and starches, but hydrocarbons which could be used as fuel when the world runs short of oil. Gene therapy is attempted, whereby the normal equivalents of faulty genes are introduced into the cells of sufferers from metabolic disorders such as cystic fibrosis. There are plans to insert genes for human vaccines into plants, which would simplify the process of vaccine production and increase the supply.

These applications of biotechnology are still mostly experimental, but the production of genetically modified food is already well advanced. Of course, for thousands of years humanity has been slowly improving its livestock and crops through selective breeding, but genetic engineering is a faster, more direct method capable of producing organisms with characteristics which could never be achieved by breeding. Again, the biotech companies promise huge benefits from GM food. Their 'smart foods' will apparently be genetically modified to contain more health promoting 'nutriceuticals'. GM wondercrops will, they claim, eliminate hunger from the planet, thanks to their massively increased yields and ability to grow in a wider range of environments. And GM varieties with inbuilt resistance to insect pests and plant pathogens are promised, reducing the need for insecticide and pesticide treatments.

As with all advertising, this tells only part of the story, and leaves a lot of questions unanswered. It need hardly be said that the principal motive of biotech companies is not to feed the world and enhance health, but to make profits and outsmart their competitors. First of all, their claim that GM crops will overcome famine. In fact the world already produces enough food to go round, if only it was rationally distributed. The charity Action Aid estimated, in a letter to *The Guardian* (February 13), that in 1994 world food production could have fed 6.4 billion people. It makes the point that "it is inequitable distribution of food that keeps millions hungry: the result of landlessness, unemployment, debt repayment and poverty" - in other words, it is capitalism.

In fact reliance on genetically modified crops may increase the poverty of third world farmers. The biotech companies try to make the GM crops incapable of setting their own viable seeds, so that instead of being able

Genetically modified food

# Challenge for working class

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“It need hardly be said that the principal motive of biotech companies is not to feed the world and enhance health, but to make profits and outsmart their competitors”

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to save seeds for subsequent years farmers have to continually buy them from the company. The GM food giant Monsanto has produced a GM strain of soya which is unharmed by herbicide. Monsanto also produces the herbicide and, as farmers can use more on their fields of soya, the company sells more.

Most of the GM strains of crops such as oil seed rape currently being grown in the fields of agricultural research stations across Britain have been modified to be more resistant - not to disease, contrary to the promises of their developers, but to pesticides and also to herbicides used as weedkillers. This raises three concerns that the biotech companies have not adequately addressed. First, the resistance of these crops to pesticides means farmers will use more chemicals on them to eliminate pests and weeds, which means higher levels of toxic residues in the final food product. Secondly, high levels of herbicides could mean wild flora such as hedgerow plants being eliminated, destroying the basis of the food web supporting bird and animal wildlife and impoverishing the natural ecosystem. Thirdly, modified genes conferring resistance to herbicides could be transferred to other plants: either plants of the same species by cross-pollination, or - less probably, but more seriously - to other plants, such as weeds, by viral gene transfer.

Concerns have been expressed recently about potential damage to the environment because of the use of genetically modified crops. But it is the possible direct threat to human health these 'Frankenstein foods' might pose that has really caught the attention of both the public and the press. As the *New Scientist* put it (February 20), "Nothing sets a nation's pulse racing like a food scare."

People naturally feel suspicious of GM food, especially after the experience of the BSE/CJD cover-up scandal. When Tony Blair stated that he is sure GM food is safe and he and his family are happy to eat it, he was ridiculed in the tabloids and compared to John Gummer getting his daughter to eat a beefburger. The public does not trust the government, at least on food safety, which is an encouraging sign.

The recent explosion of hostility in Britain to GM food was triggered by the fate of Arpad Pusztai, a biochemist at the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen. He is an expert on lectins - proteins which are toxic to insects and produced by some plants as a defence against insect attack. It is lectins which make some beans unsafe to eat raw. He transferred the gene for a lectin from snowdrops into potatoes, and fed these genetically modified potatoes to rats. Other rats he fed ordinary potatoes laced with lectin extracted from other plants, and a control group of rats were given just ordinary potatoes. The rats in the second group fared as well as the control group, but the rats fed the GM potatoes developed abnormalities in their gut lining, liver and other organs, grew poorly and had weakened immune systems. This suggested to him that it was not the lectin itself - the product of the transferred gene - that harmed the rats, but something involved in the process of genetic engineering. This alarmed him so much that on August 10 1998 he warned on a TV documentary that GM foods were being sold without adequate testing.

Obviously the worst nightmare is that genetic material that has been transferred from another organism could be unstable and interfere with the DNA of the organism eating food containing it. But a more likely explanation of the harm suffered by his experimental rats is that potatoes forced to synthesise alien protein suffer disruption to the rest of their biochemistry and are consequently of poor nutritional quality. This in itself has alarming implications for GM food intended for human consumption.

Four days after appearing on TV, Pusztai was forced to retire from his post at the Rowett Institute, which published a distorted account of his results, pretending that no GM potatoes were used. Earlier this month a group of 20 scientists from 14 countries who examined Pusztai's work called for a moratorium on the commercial development of GM crops, and accused the Rowett Institute of bowing to political pressure in its treatment of him. The government rejected the call.

Three interesting facts came out in the subsequent press reports. First that the Rowett institute received £140,000 pounds in funding from Monsanto, and that the government had given away millions of pounds to biotech companies to encourage them to invest in Britain. Secondly, it was revealed that a member of the government, science minister Lord Sainsbury, owns millions of pounds worth of shares in biotech companies. So shameless is New Labour about its links with industry that its Invest

in Britain bureau now boasts that the UK "leads the way in Europe in ensuring that regulations and other measures affecting the development of biotechnology take full account of the concerns of business" (*The Guardian* February 13). This was done partly by filling the advisory committee on releases to the environment - the quango which gives companies permission to set up GM crop test sites - with people closely linked to the biotech industry - although as a sop to public concern environment minister Michael Meacher has promised to appoint three ecologists or experts on farmland diversity to the committee. Finally it was also revealed that Europe imports from the USA soya protein manufactured by Monsanto, which refuses to separate the fraction derived from GM plants from the rest, and that the EU backed down from insisting on this, as it knew it would come off second best in a trade war with the US.

Given these facts, the public are perfectly justified in distrusting both the biotech industry and the government. To complete the *New Scientist* quote, "Nothing sets a nation's pulse racing like a food scare, especially one spiced with allegations that a whistle-blowing scientist has been unfairly sacked and gagged as part of a government-inspired cover-up."

The *Weekly Worker* welcomes the debate around GM food, and endorses the call for an independent commission to investigate what dangers they pose to human health and the environment. While companies like Monsanto keep the results of their research secret for commercial reasons, we insist on openness and a full discussion of the issues to enable people to come to an informed decision about whether to eat GM food. We also demand that all food containing GM ingredients be fully labelled, so that people can put this choice into effect.

Choice about individual actions is a straightforward demand. The more complex question of how much potential damage to the environment ought to be tolerated in exchange for improved quality (not to mention company profits) must be decided democratically within society.

In the current conflict between biotech giants like Monsanto and their government backers on the one hand, and an alliance of greens and environmentalists, on the other, most people are siding with the greens. In my view, given the potential hazards of biotechnology, they are probably right to do so, until the risks have been properly assessed. But we ought not to support a permanent ban on GM food. Such a ban would probably be impossible to enforce in any case, given the momentum of the advancing technology.

One thing seems certain: biotechnology will be one science to develop with great speed in the new century. Whether it is used wisely by society collectively in a planned, democratic way for the benefit of humanity as a whole, or irresponsibly by capitalists to make profits for a few at the expense of the many, depends on whether the working class as a movement champions this question ●

Mary Godwin

## 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.

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## Liaison Group proposes another truncated meeting for the Network of Socialist Alliances

# Second time farce?

The March meeting of Socialist Alliances must not end without agreement again

*Keep left unity on track*

History, as a well known German once said, happens the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Unfortunately, the founding conference of the Network of Socialist Alliances to be held in Birmingham on March 27 is in danger of confirming this maxim.

The latest issue of *The All Red and Green*, the bulletin of the Network's Liaison Group, contains the options proposed by various affiliated organisations and local alliances. The Rugby founding conference in September last year agreed by a slim majority that the Liaison Group's proposals for an elected Liaison Committee should be operated on an interim basis. However, as no elections were held, the self-appointed Liaison Group of John Nicholson, Dave Nellist, Pete McLaren and Dave Church continued to rule over things.

Because there was such polarisation, with a 40% minority proposing an inclusive, delegate-based structure, it was agreed that an all-day recall conference should be held to settle the question. Unfortunately, comrades will see from *The All Red and Green* that the Liaison Group is proposing an agenda - in contravention to the decision of the Rugby conference - which will make it almost impossible to deal adequately with the Network's structure/rules for a second time.

In their wisdom, the Liaison Group is recommending that the (second) founding conference of the Network only put aside two hours to consider 17 different proposals around four structural questions: aims and background; name; membership and subscriptions; and organisation. Given the five minutes allocated to each proposer, a total of one hour and 25 minutes will be given over to presentation and only 35 minutes for subsequent debate - or two minutes per proposal. This can only be a recipe for confusion and disaster.

At the Rugby conference, the CPGB moved a motion to alter an equally pinched agenda so that the whole business of the day could be devoted to arriving at clarity on the essential question of the Network's structure. Unfortunately, this was defeated, and the unworkable interim agreement was the result. Yet now the Liaison Group proposes to curtail the discussion yet again, filling up the remaining two hours with report-backs of campaigns and an "exchange of information regarding socialist slates in each regional constituency" for the European elections - information which could easily be shared through a regular bulletin.

It is ironic that life has passed the Liaison Group by. Through its failure to move beyond the organisational issue at Rugby, real forces have come together - including, significantly, the Socialist Workers Party - which has to a large extent left the Network on the sidelines in the developments around joint slates for the European Union elections. This is not

entirely unconnected with the question of structure. The United Socialists - who have ironically now adapted the title 'Socialist Alliance' - were able to move forward because they are an alliance of organisations. The Liaison Group's proposals for a party-type structure based on pink-green individuals, clearly unsuitable for a federal alliance, is a recipe for exclusion and impotence.

What is most disturbing at the bottom of these shenanigans is the fact that there are those in the alliance who - in the name of 'inclusion' - actually cannot countenance different approaches to building the Network of Socialist Alliances. In effect, they deem proposals which are different from their own as being inadmissible. Open and honest political debate and comradely discussion are anathema to their political method.

In the latest *All Red and Green* the falsification of the CPGB's position continues with our proposal being given the subheading, "A central committee?" Anyone who has read the proposals of the London Socialist Alliance and the CPGB can see that they are diametrically opposed to such an interpretation. Instead, they are based on maximum flexibility, recallability and the automatic inclusion of all political forces on a national Liaison Committee of the Network.

The latest revised proposals from the Liaison Group are far more restrictive. Their proposed five 'functional officers' would be elected for a whole year - despite their name they would inevitably act more like the politburo of a political party than the functionaries of an emerging and fluid alliance. The officers and indeed the Liaison Committee need to be flexible, responding to changes at the grass roots. If, under the Liaison Group's proposals however, an elected officer fails in their duties or is obliged to drop out, perhaps through illness, then it would be a full year before they could be replaced - either that or we would have to go through the fuss of a special conference.

The CPGB's proposals, subsequently amended and adopted *unanimously* by a well attended general meeting of the LSA, call for officers to be elected by and accountable to the Liaison Committee, where each affiliated organisation and local alliance is represented. If justice is to be done in considering all the various structural proposals, there must be the maximum time allowed for democratic, open debate on March 27. The experience of the SLP and the Labour Party shows we need an end to backroom deals and the steamrolling of clique agendas.

The CPGB has written to the Liaison Group requesting that it reconsiders its proposed agenda and, in the spirit of cooperation reached at the expanded Liaison Group meeting of January 16, agrees to abide by the decision of the Rugby conference ●

Marcus Larsen

Every initiative to forge working class unity seems to be dogged by sectarian attempts at exclusion. The moves towards a left slate to contest the European elections have proved to be no exception.

As usual it is those to the right of the tentative alliances who want to break up what has been achieved. We have already reported how a section of the the Independent Labour Network around Mike Davies is far from happy with the idea of sensible 'realists' like themselves actually cooperating with 'hardened revolutionaries' like the SWP or the Socialist Party. And, of course, groups like the CPGB are simply beyond the pale.

Comrade Davies has called a meeting this weekend on his home patch of Leeds, to which only a select few were invited. Unfortunately for him news of his exclusivist gathering leaked out and it looks as though his attempt to form a rival, more 'moderate' slate will be thwarted - at least on this occasion - by the presence of just those organisations he hoped to keep out.

Similar problems have occurred in other areas. As reported by John Pearson (*Weekly Worker* February 4) the attempt to initiate a united socialist challenge for the European elections in the North West was to have been discussed immediately after the Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance's 'Time for united action' conference on February 13. Regrettably, this proposed meeting did not take place. It is now to be held on March 6, hosted by the Merseyside Socialists.

Comrades in the CPGB suspect that our exclusion from an initial forum in Preston was due in no small part to the machinations of the GMSA steering committee, whose members appear to be determined that our views shall be silenced on this vital issue. At the 'Time for united action' gathering GMSA convenor John Nicholson and company were faced with a different balance of forces. Tony Reid, convenor of the Radical Preston Alliance, had expressed his regret at our absence from the Preston meeting. Similarly, leading members of the Merseyside Socialists made it known that they were not interested in excluding anyone from discussions. Faced with this, the GMSA steering committee simply shelved things, presumably hoping to stitch up a deal later in the absence of the CPGB.

On the other hand, there are very good practical reasons why the GMSA steering committee does not seem eager to discuss the subject of the European elections. Conservatism and inertia plague its

work. It has little or no public profile, a chronic lack of finance and a snail's pace of activity. Even the 'Time for united action' conference (attended by somewhere in the region of 80 people) had a distinctly 'national' feel to it, being billed as sponsored by the Network of Socialist Alliances.

Convenor Nicholson also has the maintenance of his anti-CPGB bloc on the GMSA steering committee to consider. The Manchester sections of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and Socialist Outlook are rife with knee-jerk pro-Labourism. Therein lies the reason why they are prepared to stomach Nicholson's exclusion of the CPGB from the steering committee. Nicholson is well aware that if he shows too much interest in an electoral challenge to their beloved Labour Party, he risks exposing the fragile nature of his alliance.

Manchester AWL appears to be at odds with its national leadership. In London, their organisation has been an enthusiastic participant in the Socialist Alliance unity slate for the European elections. In Man-

chester, the AWL comrades seem intent on waiting for the Independent Labour Network's right wing (presumably around Mike Davies) to make an authoritative pronouncement. When confronted with the absurdity of such arguments, AWL members in Manchester plead poverty. The idea of deciding your political tasks and then raising the finance - using your own organisation as a lever in the development of an independent working class challenge to Labour - is utterly alien to our AWL comrades.

Thus far the Merseyside Socialists, the CPGB and the Radical Preston Alliance are the only organisations who have intimated a desire to initiate a unity slate in the North West European elections. It is imperative that other interested parties break from the conservatism and inertia of the GMSA steering committee. Time is short, and we urge comrades from organisations involved in unity slates elsewhere - and any other group interested - to attend the Liverpool meeting ●

Phil Watson

## United Socialists recall conference

Saturday March 6 - 12 noon at YMCA building, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool  
Meeting to plan European elections campaign in the North West

## Fighting fund ..... Fascinating

"The *Weekly Worker* is a fascinating read," says one of our regular readers - a long-term Labour Party member to boot. Comrade BT sends £20 to our fighting fund, along with a pledge to make it a regular donation.

Thanks also this week to comrades TR, CN, YR and BS. Our total now stands at £238 - wor-

ryingly short of our monthly £400 target. Let's make sure we don't end February with a shortfall. Rush in your donations to reach us by Monday March 1.

Robert Rix

Ask for a bankers order form, or send cheques, payable to Weekly Worker