



**Rosa Luxemburg
and dictatorship of
the proletariat**

- Stop the War Coalition
- Iraqi regime
- Unions oppose Blair
- Rifondazione Comunista

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Towards a Socialist Alliance party

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Anti-establishment challenge to Blair

On September 28, a week after the disenchanted wing of the establishment, in the shape of the Countryside Alliance, marched through London, it was the turn of the anti-establishment to take to the streets.

Up to 300,000 marched from the Embankment to Hyde Park - one of the biggest left-wing demonstrations for decades. While Hyde Park was rapidly filling up, thousands had yet to leave the assembly point, where those waiting to march were queuing all the way back to Waterloo Bridge. Although the anti-establishment's numbers did not quite match those claimed by Blair's reactionary opponents, it was undoubtedly an historic mobilisation. Under conditions of an bloated New Labour majority in the House of Commons and rigid discipline in the Parliamentary Labour Party, discontent - from the right and the left - has found extra-parliamentary expression.

On September 22 the pro-foxhunting brigade were met with applause and waves of encouragement from the occupants of the exclusive clubs and five-star hotels in Park Lane, but on Saturday the members and guests could only look on sullenly and complain about the noise and inconvenience. Killing foxes and Iraqis is what the establishment likes to do.

The Countryside Alliance had taken care to embrace almost every conceivable rural cause - hunting, farm incomes, post office closures and poor public transport, etc. But the fact that Iain Duncan Smith joined the march along with many front bench Tories said it all. Indeed some 83% of those who protested on September 22 were Tory Party members or supporters. With the Conservative Party marginalised electorally, the most reactionary sections of the population are being drawn towards extra-parliamentary methods of class struggle.

September 28 represented the antithesis of the Countryside Alliance. The left-led Stop the War Coalition joined forces with the Muslim Association of Britain (whose original demonstration had been called in support of the Palestinians) to field the other opposition army to Blair and New Labour. While the Countryside Alliance mobilised aristocrats, the squireocracy, farmers big and small, and those retained by them or who ape them, our march attracted large numbers of ordinary workers - disenchanted Labour voters, liberals, pacifists and religious people, as well as leftwing groups of every description, both revolutionary and reformist, British and international. The placards of the STWC were everywhere, with those of the Socialist Alliance also prominent. The muslim contingents were particularly numerous, perhaps accounting for 20% of those who attended.



300,000 take to the streets

The crowd in Hyde Park listened to trade union leaders, including Bob Crow, Mick Rix and Mark Serwotka. Among the Labour speakers were Alice Mahon, Tam Dalyell, Jeremy Corbyn and George Galloway. London

mayor Ken Livingstone also spoke, as did representatives of muslim, jewish and christian faiths. Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter addressed the demonstrators to loud applause.

Political ideas are in flux. Lessons are being learnt. Change is palpable. Many of the young muslim protesters would have come into contact with the organised left for the first time. Around 1,000 *Weekly Workers* were taken on the day, along with CPGB leaflets and other literature. And of course the publications of other left groups were also widely distributed.

An ideological battle is being fought. There were for example a number of muslim fundamentalists, carrying banners reading "Palestine for the muslims" and "From the ocean to the sea" - the equivalent of the Zionist 'From the Nile to the Euphrates'. But overwhelmingly the islamic contingent was made up of mainstream muslims who do not want to be associated in any way with al Qa'eda or the Taliban. Significant numbers of muslims carried copies of *Socialist Worker* or Socialist Party leaflets many with the top folded over or ripped off, but most without. The tide amongst them flows to the left.

Some on the left, most notably comrades from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, have argued that the left should not organise joint events with the Muslim Association of Britain, since it is a reactionary, fundamentalist organisation. Evidence presented for this has consisted of a link to a Pakistani islamist group on the MAB website.

However, this is unconvincing. Listed amongst its aims, for example are: "to make muslims aware of their duties towards the society within which they are living"; "to broaden the scope of dialogue between the different cultures and faiths in order to serve society and humanity"; and "to improve the relationship between the muslim community and British institutions". The MAB newspaper *Inspire*, which was distributed by the thousand on the march, featured articles by John Pilger, Scott Ritter and Robert Fisk and talked of the "atrocities" of September 11 2001.

The fact that so many muslims came along is extremely positive. The Muslim Association of Britain has provided the left with a new mass audience, but there is no chance of the MAB dominating the anti-war movement. Leave aside the fact that less than two percent of the British population owes any affiliation to islam. What would happen if, for instance, North Korea was next in the firing line? The MAB could hardly portray that as part of an anti-islamic crusade. The anti-war movement would be led by the left.

The real question is, under what programme? Is the anti-war movement *simply* an anti-war movement? Or must it become something deeper, something more dangerous? A movement that does not simply protest at different phases of the war without end, but aims at causes and proposes cures. This is where, of necessity, socialism comes in ●

Peter Manson

LETTERS



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

Auto-SPD

Mike Pearn's letter on the recent German elections elevates critical electoral support to mass social democratic parties - which is a tactic for Marxists in seeking to set the base of mass social democratic parties against the top - into a principle (*Weekly Worker* September 26).

Comrade Pearn states that "electoral support is not given to a mass party ... due to its stand on this or that issue. Rather, revolutionaries call on their supporters to vote for reformist parties despite their politics. That the reformists take a more or less progressive stand on any particular issue will only determine how critical we should be and not the principle."

This newly discovered "principle", independent of time and space, is illustrative of the mechanical, passive attitude of many leftists towards the existing workers' movement, not of any political insight. In a period when significant layers of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries have been so attacked by social democratic parties in power that in despair they increasingly abstain from politics, in some cases even turn to reactionary rightwing populist demagogues, some like comrade Pearn support the reformist bureaucratic apparatus and its layer of political careerists that (in Britain at least) aspire to become the bourgeoisie's chosen representatives, no matter how far to the right their politics drift.

It is worth asking what is the purpose of critical support in elections? It was developed by the Communist International in its early, revolutionary period. The whole point of it was as an active tactic to drive a wedge between the working class base of the mass reformist party and the misleaders and bureaucrats at the top. It involves exploiting a contradiction between the aspirations of the base, and the real, anti-working class actions of the reformist leadership when placed in office. In order for this tactic to be in any way effective, there has to be a contradiction between the promises made by the reformist leaders and what the pro-capitalist leadership will be forced to do when placed in power.

If there is no real contradiction to exploit on any important question, there is no point to the tactic of critical support. If a social democratic party runs in elections agreeing with their bourgeois opponents on every real question of importance to the masses, differing only in petty details, then there is nothing with which to set the base of the party against the top. Electoral support to a social democratic party in such circumstances is in no way a revolutionary tactic.

In practice, for the left to refuse to even try to construct an alternative, while arguing for an unconditional vote to a party that, on every question, openly and brazenly trumpets its fundamental agreement with its rightist bourgeois opponents, would mean that the left will simply be identified as a hypocritical agency of the Blairites. Far from being smart tactics, keeping the powder dry until a "credible" alternative to the Labour Party emerges ready-made, this is a capitulatory perspective that will simply ensure that no alternative will ever be built. While we need to develop tactics to politicise and develop those currently or formerly in the Labour Party who have progressive aspirations that are fundamentally at odds with the Blairites, telling such people to swallow their anger and keep dutifully supporting a leadership that openly declares its hatred for everything they stand for is not a recipe for building anything. It is merely a recipe for demoralisation.

A stopped clock is, as has often been noted, right twice a day. And comrade Pearn is certainly right to advocate that socialists should have advocated a vote

to the SPD in the recent German elections. But in order to make it appear as just another routine election, he has to utter bland truisms and play down the differences between the SPD's posture in this election and other elections in recent history where mainstream social democratic parties have contended for power. When he states that "if and when the USA tries to fuck over Iraq, Schröder will happily feast on the corpses of the Iraqi people", he manages to combine a truism about the treacherous nature of social democracy with a blithe dismissal of the impact of such a betrayal on those who were won to vote for Schröder out of agreement with his pledge that his government would oppose war against Iraq, whether or not it has UN endorsement.

This promise produced a hysterical response both from the Bush administration, and from the CSU candidate, Stoiber, who accused the SPD leader of wrecking European unity with his outrageous statements. For comrade Pearn, of course, this is of a piece with voting for Tony Blair when he proudly stands for re-election on his record of having sent British troops into at least five armed conflicts since he came to power in 1997, and promising more of the same in the future.

In the real world, as opposed to the schemas of devotees of the Jesuitical religion of auto-Labourite Trotskyism, there is a significant difference between the expectations of those attracted to two such very different social democratic election campaigns. A difference in consciousness that socialists and communists must take due note of with different tactics.

Ian Donovan
London

Military support

The Iraqi people and those of us who side with them against US and British imperialism will be duly heartened by Liz Hoskings's call for "military support" (*Weekly Worker* September 26). Can we expect to see 'La Pasionara' Hoskings despatching a division of volunteers from the British left to the front, or should we prepare for a second front nearer home? At least the pacifists who are pledging themselves to 'non-violent direct action' intend participating in the action, rather than just offering generous and unsolicited advice to the masses in Iraq.

It's a long time since working class militants in Britain took on the forces of the capitalist state and won. Maybe when we've rebuilt our own working class movement, rid it of class traitors and enemies and experienced a few victories, we might have something real to offer. We must also pay attention to the experience of working people, oppressed nationalities and communists in Iraq, for whom the issue has long been not

whether to train hypothetical guns on the army, but how readily the regime turns its weapon on them. (Incidentally, if Saddam Hussein cared about the Palestinians, how come he marched his army first into Iran, and then Kuwait? Or did the commanders have their maps upside down?)

Under sanctions and bombing the working people and poor have suffered most, while the rich and the top officers in Saddam's regime enriched themselves. Iraq's formerly proud health service now only treats those with money. Of course the chief blame lies with the imperialist powers who have waged war on the Iraqi masses under the pretence of fighting Saddam Hussein. Our nice, civilised rulers provided Saddam Hussein with the wherewithal to gas Kurds at Halabja, and they have caused the cruel death of thousands of Iraqi children by denying them food, clean water and medicines.

But when the essentials of life are in short supply, the right of ordinary people to organise and take control of resources, to ensure fair provision and distribution, is not some remote utopian demand. It is necessary now. Similarly, the right of conscript soldiers to discuss politics and keep an eye on their officers is not a luxury, to wait till after the war, it is the way to see that the people are not betrayed. And if, as happened in Iraqi Kurdistan in the previous war, working people form shuras (revolutionary committees akin to soviets); and if meanwhile the regime has dared to arm the masses, should not these shuras, with communist participation, attempt to lead the masses and hold on to the weapons? In other words, to defend both their country and their rights? And would that not lead to the decision to wrest power from Saddam Hussein's bourgeois clique?

This would certainly not be what Bush and Tony Blair have in mind by 'regime change'! After the last Gulf War they chose to leave Saddam Hussein in power - now they just want a change of officer to one who will keep order for them, and do as he's told. Balfour Beatty are probably drawing up competitive tenders for rebuilding palaces after the bombers have done their bit.

But rather than trust Saddam and his officers, the Iraqi working class is entitled to prepare its own, complete 'regime change', and to decide the order in which it takes on its enemies according to circumstance. As for us, in the imperialist west, recognising that the main enemy is at home doesn't have to mean pretending our enemy's enemy is our friend.

Charlie Pottins
email

Against Saddam

I would like to make three points in connection with Liz Hoskings's dispute with the CPGB majority over 'military support' for Iraq.

Firstly, Liz accepts an untenable piece of 'orthodox' Trotskyist/Leninist scholasticism when she insists that 'revolutionary defeatism' is the policy applicable to inter-imperialist wars. As both Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg pointed out in opposition to Lenin during World War I, being for the defeat of one's own government logically implies support for the victory of an (equally imperialist) enemy state. Thus 'defeatism' makes a fundamental concession to the political methodology of social chauvinism - if, for instance, Lenin supported a German victory, why shouldn't Ebert, Noske and the right wing of German Social Democracy? The independent working class position in inter-imperialist conflicts is thus refusing military support to both or all sides, while seeking to end the war through militant labour movement action up to and including socialist revolution.

As Hal Draper notes in *War and revolution - Lenin and the myth of revolutionary defeatism*, Lenin was forced to redefine 'defeatism' to the point of meaninglessness in order to conceal the glaring lack of logic in his original position. Indeed, the defeatism slogan had almost disappeared by the end of World War I, and was only revived as part of the early Stalinist campaign against the revolutionary socialist politics represented by Trotskyism - though typically Trotsky accepted the political substance of the Stalinists' slander by insisting that he, too, had been a defeatist!

Secondly, Mark Fischer's front-page discussion of the issues involved in a probable US attack on Iraq is a devastating and entirely apposite indictment of the politically sterile 'anti-imperialism' of which Liz Hoskings's argument is an example (*Weekly Worker* September 26). However, I believe that Mark confuses the issues when he states that "in the absence of democracy talk of Iraqi self-determination is meaningless". If the US actually were trying to subjugate and conquer Iraq, I believe socialists would be right to support Iraqi self-determination even under Saddam Hussein.

National self-determination even under a profoundly undemocratic leadership is a democratic demand, because it 'clears the decks' for further democratic and working class struggles. Or, to put it another way, self-determination is a key component of the 'consistent democracy' (Lenin) essential to building a workers' movement capable of taking power. This is why (as Liz points out), Trotsky said that he would support fascist Brazil in a war with bourgeois democratic Britain - and why, to take a modern example, we reject the argument that Israel's parliamentary democracy legitimises its denial of the Palestinians' national rights. If we support Palestinian self-determination regardless of the character of the Palestinian leadership, why not Iraqi self-determination too?

Of course the point is that the US is not trying to conquer Iraq, which is why (as Mark puts it) "the call for 'military' defence of Iraq amounts to the same thing as politically supporting Saddam Hussein". In the very unlikely event that the war for 'regime change' as part of an attempt to patch up the fabric of the capitalist world order was transformed into a war of conquest (a long-term military occupation to gain direct control of Iraqi oil) the implications of 'military defence' would change. Though even then I wouldn't advocate the Workers Power line of shouting 'Victory to Iraq', which rightly or wrongly strikes me as implying political support for Saddam's regime).

Liz is right, then, to advocate the military defence of nations involved in a war to secure their right to self-determination against a colonial oppressor. What she obviously fails to show is that a US attack on Iraq would fit this pattern. Unable to prove that Iraq's national existence is under threat, she is forced to resort to the ridiculous claim that Iraq is a "semi-colony" - as if Saddam Hussein's regime

was anything other than a powerful, independent capitalist state with regional imperialist ambitions of its own.

As someone relatively new to revolutionary socialism, I find it bizarre when apparently rational people insist that the world is essentially the same as when Lenin wrote about imperialism in 1916. Is it really so hard to see that, since the victory of the colonial liberation movements in the 1940s-70s, old-style imperialist/colonialist wars have largely been replaced by wars to mend and reinforce the network of national and international institutions which underpins the dominant 'imperialism of free trade'?

Wars of colonial subjugation/liberation have not disappeared, but are now more likely to involve the aspirations of regional 'sub-imperialisms' such as Serbia in Bosnia and Kosovo, Indonesia in East Timor or indeed Iraq in Kuwait. In wars where there is no issue of national self-determination at stake, to advocate military defence of a state in conflict with advanced capitalist imperialism (as Liz does) can only mean giving support to its political regime. One need not accept Liz's risible view of the US as an old-style colonial power to reject the right of the US or other big capitalist states to act as the gendarme of world order wherever and whenever they choose.

We do indeed reserve the right of 'regime change' for the working class and oppressed peoples of Iraq. But to advocate military defence of Iraq when its self-determination is not under threat is to betray the Iraqi people by giving political credit to Saddam Hussein.

Sacha Ismail
AWL

Pointless

Liz Hoskings's support for Saddam wouldn't work. It just doesn't happen like that really, does it? I don't support the war, but supporting Saddam is pointless. You know it is. You sound strangely like you are attempting to be unique for some reason with a 'new view'.

This is similar to what the US do, and it doesn't work. A more realistic option would be for all the trade unions to threaten strikes.

Roger Conway
email

Capitulation

In reply to Jack Conrad's response to my original letter - I'm no expert on Arabic names but I have done some research (September 26).

Saddam Hussein's full, formal name is Saddam bin Hussein al Takriti (Saddam, son of Hussein of Takriti). According to usual practices adults are seldom called by their given names. Socially it is considered a slight to use the first name of an elder or parent.

Referring to Saddam Hussein as Saddam is just such a slight. You could rightfully argue that Saddam Hussein deserves to be so slighted, but would then need to apply this equally to all presidents, more equally to imperialist presidents. References to "Saddam" have always been associated in my mind with US propaganda. It is a diminutive used to demonise and belittle the Iraqi president.

To continue using this diminutive is indeed a capitulation to US and British war propaganda, in my opinion.

Jairaj Chetty
email

No platform

In Leeds on September 20, our comrade, Sean Matgamna, was 'no-platformed' - excluded on grounds of his political views (on Israel) - from a debate in which he had previously been invited to participate.

Naturally we oppose, and protest against, ourselves being excluded from

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political debate. We also support open debate, and oppose political bans and proscriptions, within the labour movement in general. We hope you do too. However, the exclusion on September 20 was decided on and carried through by CPGB/Weekly Worker members.

The original move for the exclusion came from Mike Marqusee, who said he would refuse to share a platform with Sean Matgamna because he was “fed up of being called an anti-semite”. This was not an intemperate overreaction to some personal conflict - Mike Marqusee and Sean Matgamna have never had a face-to-face argument on Israel - but a move for political exclusion.

However, ultimately Mike Marqusee is not the person responsible for the exclusion. He has a right to choose where he will and where he won't speak. If he doesn't want to speak, and doesn't mind serious activists considering him to be petulant and unreliable, it is his right to refuse. The movement scarcely loses so much by that refusal as to override his right to choose.

What transformed Mike Marqusee's exercise of his rights into a 'no-platforming' was the decision by the meeting's organiser, Ray Gaston, to respond to Marqusee by excluding Sean Matgamna. Ray Gaston is a member of the CPGB/Weekly Worker. The office and the central leadership of the CPGB were involved and informed. They arranged a member of the CPGB central leadership, Jack Conrad, to speak in place of Sean Matgamna. They advertised the meeting in the September 19 Weekly Worker with Jack Conrad as the speaker “replacing Sean Matgamna”.

The exclusion was thus, essentially, an exclusion carried out by the CPGB, and, politically, the responsibility of the CPGB alone. This is out of order on general principle. It is especially out of order as behaviour from an organisation engaged in serious discussions and collaboration with the AWL.

Please explain.
Martin Thomas
AWL

Faith undermined

On reading a report in *Solidarity* of a debate on Marxism and religion in Leeds, I was shocked to discover that Sean Matgamna (editor of *Workers' Liberty*), a speaker advertised in the *Weekly Worker*, was excluded from the debate following an ultimatum issued by Mike Marqusee (Socialist Alliance 'independent').

This conduct undertaken by your members seriously undermines my faith in the possibility of joint work between our organisations, in which I previously held great hope. I have always considered the CPGB to be a democratic organisation committed to serious political debate. Surely there must be an explanation?

Ruth Cashman
AWL

Orwell's PC

Many PC users may not realise it, but Microsoft Windows is bringing your computer into the Big Brother world of George Orwell's novel.

When you use the latest version of this, you give permission to Microsoft to disable any other software they don't like. In particular, these programs may disable programs which convert a CD track to an MP3, even though it's both legal and very convenient to play some music while you work. To be exact, you agree: "These security-related updates may disable your ability to copy and/or play Secure Content and use other software on your computer."

It is like having your own personal policeman sitting in your computer, except the policeman enforces Microsoft's laws, rather than your government's. Microsoft should publicise their new policy: 'What will we prevent you from doing today?' We finally know Big

Brother's name. It is Bill Gates.
Tom Trotter
email

Labour lefts

Looking for Labour lefts in my part of the world is a pointless exercise (Marcus Ström *Weekly Worker* September 26). You lot were inside the moribund Communist Party during the 80s when there was a Labour left. You now seek to tilt at windmills by calling on some sort of approach to the fictitious Labour left.

The CPGB is a London-centric rump and no longer exists outside the capital. You, the SWP and Socialist Appeal all tail New Labour.

John Malcolm
Teesside

State-sponsored CPGB

Since coming into contact with the CPGB for the first time about two years ago, I have at times seriously harboured suspicions that you are a state-sponsored organisation whose aim it is to disrupt the possible growth and coming together of socialist organisations and individuals.

The reasons for this lie both in some of your policies, which concur with the establishment's view, and your methods of intervening.

Some brief examples of this are:

- Environmental issues: you appear to dismiss global warming, changing weather patterns. Coupled with this, your apparent view of more unregulated industrialisation as a way forward for the developing world suggests you share the establishment's view on this, particularly the American right.
- Afghanistan: Despite detailed examples in books such as Ahmed Rashid's *Taliban* about the west's motives for their new great game in the area and the involvement in recent years of oil companies, including one that employed one Hamed Karzai, and the issue of oil pipelines, you continue to deny that there are economic issues involved in the west's thinking. Surely someone in the CPGB has read this book, so why the continued denial of these facts?
- The national question: under the guise of attempting to appear clever you basically do not accept that class is the fundamental divide in society. This leads you to conclude that Jews and Arabs cannot live peacefully together, again echoing the establishment's view. You are at least consistent in your approach to this question, as you also conclude that Catholics and Protestants in Ireland cannot live together - hence your extremely bizarre position on Ireland.

In addition to this, your attempts to impose demands such as for the abolition of all immigration controls on organisations such as the Stop the War Coalition are either a deliberate attempt to reduce the possible size and inhibit the growth of the coalition or, to be charitable, is a complete misunderstanding of what it entails to build such coalitions.

Coupled with this, your method at any sort of meeting of first and foremost raising disagreements immediately in what usually appears to be an attempt at petty point-scoring leads to many people being repelled by the approach.

I hope my suspicions are because of the above and not because of some malign MI5 influence!

Ian Thomas
South Wales

Kiwi Labour

Paul Harris's letter is quite extraordinary (*Weekly Worker* September 26). The New Zealand Labour Party is not only Blairite: it invented 'Blairism'.

Paul tries to present Labour as some kind of workers' party, but this has long since ceased to be the case. There are only three unions in the entire country which remain affiliated to Labour and

they organise something like a mere three percent of the workforce and 15% of the organised workforce. Even this tiny wee band of union affiliates have no power in the Labour Party.

Labour received the endorsement in July of most of the capitalist class and a great deal more business money than the National Party. Indeed, Labour's sources of funding are another indication of how it has no organic connection with any sizeable section of workers. The vast bulk of Labour funding - at least 90%, I'd say - comes from business and the capitalist state. National this time around was left whinging about being 'cash-strapped' because most business money was going to Labour.

Paul paints a rather strange picture of what Labour in power has done since 1999 as well. We should perhaps recall that in the 1980s Labour here carried out a neoliberal economic slash-and-burn policy that would have made Margaret Thatcher blush. Labour was the darling of the bourgeoisie. National actually stood to the left of Labour economically throughout that entire decade.

During her brief stint as minister of health in the 1980s Labour government, current Labour leader and prime minister Helen Clark closed more hospitals than all the ministers of health in New Zealand history put together, introduced prescription charges and drove through as much privatisation as she possibly could. Hardly the traditional social democratic programme.

The current Labour government, in its entirety, voted 'full support' for Bush's 'war on terror' and despatched SAS troops to Afghanistan. The Labour government continues to participate fully in the barbaric sanctions on Iraq. Its Employment Relations Act bans political strikes and makes it harder to strike in general.

Labour's election ads this year never once mentioned class or the poor. Instead they featured presidential shots of Clark with sound bites from people like Colin Powell describing the relationship of Washington and her as "very, very, very good friends". After returning from a US trip Clark told New Zealanders what an intelligent man George Bush was.

Labour has also been very successful in holding down wages and generally increasing the inequality gap for the capitalists whose interests they serve. Under Labour, real wages have risen a meagre 0.1% - under National they rose at 60 times that rate! On the other hand, the wealthiest people in the country, those on the New Zealand Rich List, saw their wealth rise 17% in just the last year.

One of the best indications of what a miserly capitalist party and government Labour is can be seen by the plight of the poor. In 1991 the National government cut unemployment, solo parents' and widows' benefits by around 25%. When it got back into office, Labour announced that no way would it even return these benefits to 1991 levels. Clark also turned down a proposal from the Greens in 1999 that beneficiaries get an extra week's benefit for Christmas.

The total detachment of Labour from workers and the poor is not hard to fathom when we look at the social composition of the Labour Party. Numerically, Labour is now tiny, with only a few thousand members and most of these are middle class. You'd be hard pressed to find even a few dozen manual workers active in the party these days. Even lower-rung white-collar workers are few and far between. Labour conferences are social events of the liberal middle class. If you look at Labour's party list in the elections, of the top 10 you find half or more are well-heeled academics. The rest are business managers and a farmer. The 10th person on the list is a trade union bureaucrat.

Labour's transition from a social democratic party into a liberal-bourgeois party also explains why large sections of workers and poor no longer vote for it. Paul is living in a fantasy world on this one and it's therefore not surprising that he leaves

out some rather important statistics. The July election here saw the highest abstention level in NZ recorded electoral history. A bit less than 75% of voters went to the polls - down from about 84% last time, in a country with historically among the highest voter-participation levels in the world. Moreover, in the Maori seats, which are among the poorest in the country, if not the actual poorest, almost half the voters stayed away.

Contrast this to the support Labour got in Tory seats. National only won 22 constituency seats out of 60 - but in 16 of these 22 seats, the party vote went to Labour. Labour has basically shed a massive chunk of working class and poor voters - who now largely abstain - and replaced them with Tory middle and upper class voters who rightly see in Labour MPs people just like themselves.

We urgently need a new political movement to challenge the capitalist Labour Party. The group around *Revolution* magazine (www.revolution.org.nz), I guess, could broadly be labelled as 'pro-Trotsky' - although we certainly do not describe ourselves as Trotskyists. The Workers Party, which is pro-Mao - but doesn't identify itself as either Maoist or Stalinist - and ourselves have launched the Anti-Capitalist Alliance to begin this process.

We have found a great deal of political agreement on contemporary issues, which has allowed us to substantially expand our collaboration. Small as our election campaign was, it amounted to the biggest far-left campaign in decades and the ACA is becoming a small pole of attraction for people who want to fight back against the yuppie Labour government and its big business backers.

Philip Ferguson
New Zealand

Tribunal success

Comrades may like to know that I have now received the findings of my employment tribunal. Over a year after I was downgraded from driver to ticket collector the employment tribunal has now found in my favour. Their findings quite clearly exonerate me and are a damning indictment of South West Trains management.

The unanimous decision of the tribunal is that "the complaint of unfair dismissal is well-founded". Commenting on the original cause of my discipline, they "see no pattern of recklessness or general disregard for the rules and think that the case is best categorised as one of minor inadvertence". They go on to assert: "We are entirely satisfied that (notwithstanding the exceptional wording of the speeding charges) the applicant's errors did not cause the train or its passengers any danger."

Instead they are forthright in declaring that it was my trade unionism that led to my downgrading: "In circumstances

where no other coherent explanation suggests itself, the excessive form of punishment, the absence of any credible explanation for it and the numerous unsatisfactory features of the respondents' case combine to point very clearly, in our view, to the applicant's past trade union activities and the prospect of his engaging in such activities in the future as being the true cause."

They turn the spotlight on South West Trains management. Of the manager who took the original disciplinary hearing they comment: "The mental processes which Mr Cook claimed to have followed disclose as clear a case of unfair dismissal as one could imagine. We found him a deeply unimpressive witness who appeared to give his evidence without regard for truth and solely with an eye to where the advantage lay. We found much of his evidence implausible, and even absurd."

The senior manager who subsequently took the appeal fares no better: "Mr Marsden struck us, like Mr Cook, as a witness with no regard for truth, willing to say whatever he thought might improve his own position. Like that of Mr Cook, and in striking contrast with the frank and straightforward testimony of the applicant, we found much of Mr Marsden's evidence incredible, and some of it risible."

Summing up the evidence, the tribunal concludes: "Those factors also suggest to us that the dismissal was part of a concerted manoeuvre involving several influential members of the respondents' management."

South West Trains now has 28 days to come up with an agreeable form of restitution. We will continue to press for my full reinstatement as a driver. Thanks to all those who have supported me in the campaign against SWT victimisation.

Greg Tucker
London

Corrections

I was flattered that you published my talk on oil (*Weekly Worker* September 19).

Perhaps, however, it might have been wiser to have had it proof-read by me to avoid some howlers which readers will blame on my ignorance. These include the statements that Iraqi oil deposits exceed those of Saudi Arabia, for example. Further, in talking of the colonisation of the state in the US, I was careful to use the Marxist term 'privatised state' to draw attention to the almost exclusive grabbing of the state apparatus by one particular faction of capital, thus partially usurping the function of the state as the 'executive committee' of capital in general to that of 'capital in particular'.

But I am still grateful and flattered to be in print in the best journal of the left in Britain.

Mehdi Kia
email

Fighting fund

Web readers

Comrades are well aware of the importance of the web for us. And our internet readership is currently going from strength to strength. Last week 6,374 individual sessions accessed 12,311 pages on the Communist Party website and 828 copies were downloaded in pdf format.

While the web is a relatively cost-effective way of getting our message across, it does not, of course, negate the importance of your donations: internet readers do not pay subscriptions, yet we still incur full production costs for the printed version. Thanks this week got comrades PS (£30), CP

(£20), MD (£15) and JB (£5). Their £70 lifted our total for September to £421.

We were tantalisingly close - £29 short - to making our £450 monthly target for a second month running. Our aim for October is not only to reach our monthly target but also to wipe out the September deficit and eat into the shortfall accumulated during the year ●

Robbie Rix

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

STOP THE WAR

Foot - help wanted

Paul Foot's campaign as Socialist Alliance candidate for mayor of Hackney has been going very well. We have put in a first leaflet across much of the borough, Paul has done literally dozens of successful meetings, we have received some good publicity and our campaign is streets ahead of the Labour Party's, the only other party which is even making an attempt to leaflet and campaign across the borough.

We are now distributing our eight-page tabloid, which includes a major article by John Pilger opposing the war and endorsing Paul. We want to try to get this through 100,000 doors by the end of Sunday, as ballot papers are being sent out from Saturday October 5. This is, as you may imagine, a formidable job, even with the resources we have in Hackney. That is why we need your help.

We have two events we would like to invite you to.

Battle bus: We will be touring Hackney on Saturday October 5 in an open-top red bus. We need as many people on the bus as possible to go out to leaflet when we stop. We will be taking people on board outside Hackney town hall, Mare Street at 10am and 1pm. This is also potentially lots of fun for children and there will be balloons and biscuits! If you want to come please get to the town hall in plenty of time as we have to move off promptly. If you can help prepare the bus please arrive at 9 to 9.30am.

Leafleting: On Sunday October 6 we are asking all London Socialist Alliance members to come to Hackney to help finish 'tabloiding' the borough. We have two meeting points:

- For those coming from the south and west we would like you to come to Hackney Community College, Falkirk Street, off Kingsland Road (Shoreditch end) between 12 noon and 2pm.

- For those coming from the north and east please meet on Hackney town hall steps between 12 noon and 2pm. We need you to distribute tabloids, etc for at least two hours to make it worthwhile.

If you can help and/or encourage other SA members to come, it will make an enormous difference to the campaign and significantly boost Paul's vote ●

Rob Hoveman
Socialist
Alliance national
secretary

For a democratic anti-war movement

The huge anti-war demonstration of September 28 has put its stamp on political life in Britain. The war against Iraq featured as one of the main issues debated at the Labour Party conference this week. Tony Blair got the vote he wanted. But the 300,000 anti-war demonstrators have reinforced the view that the majority of the population opposes his policy of unconditionally sticking to the US and George W Bush's war without end.

Wide sections of the labour movement and around 50 Labour MPs have made known their doubts about the anti-Iraq war. The fault line in the cabinet is there for anyone to see - Blair Short, Robin Cook, etc. In the context of Blair's de-Labourisation of Labour the anti-war movement is strategically placed. If the war with Iraq starts and goes badly then conditions exist where the Labour Party could cleave into two with the government going one way and the trade union bureaucracy and rank and file another.

Therefore it is vital for the left to address the question of what sort of anti-war movement we build. The Stop the War Coalition was established in the shadow of September 11 2001 to oppose the blood revenge sought by president Bush, backed by prime minister Blair, which led to the invasion of Afghanistan.

The formation of the Stop the War Coalition was positive. In effect it saw the passing of the anti-war mantle from the avowedly pacifist CND to the left. However, while the coalition formed itself on the basis of being "a democratic organisation" which "welcomes participation by all those opposed to the war", its foundation conference saw the CPGB and Alliance for Workers' Liberty excluded from the steering committee due to nothing more than our support for secularism and our intransigent opposition to reactionary political islam (*Stop the War Coalition* No1, November 2001).

The 'war on terror' has taken a new turn. With the hawks ascendant in Washington and Blair following loyally behind, a military strike on Baghdad looks highly likely. Given the changing nature of the war and the massive increase in anti-war activity, the Stop the War Coalition needs to redress its priorities and political demands. To do this, a full debate followed by a democratic conference is needed.

Chris Haman looked at the prospects for the anti-war movement in *Socialist Worker* (September 28). He concluded that the best way to link all the struggles is to join the socialists - and no, he does not mean

the Socialist Alliance, but the bureaucratic centralist sect known as the Socialist Workers Party.

Comrade Haman recognises the changing nature of war under Bush. He says: "When the war against Iraq is over, the madmen in the White House are planning to set their sights on new targets - Iran, North Korea, perhaps even China." While a direct military conflict with China can be considered hyperbole at present, there is no doubt that the imperialist war planners



Welcome participation of muslims - we can win them to the ideas of socialism

in the Pentagon are using the 9/11 effect to press home and extend US global power.

However, comrade Harman draws a parallel between the movement against the Vietnam war and the present situation. In the 1960s things began small.

Today, even before a single shot has been fired or a single soldier killed we mobilise hundreds of thousands. I think he misses the point. It is because the Taliban collapsed virtually without a fight, it is because US-UK forces are not engaged in a costly street by street battle for Baghdad that we have the possibility of organising big demonstrations. If large numbers of dead soldiers were brought home in body bags, then for a whole period anti-war protestors would be treated as enemy agents - driven off the streets in a wave of chauvinist-fuelled rage.

Let us remember what happened before World War I. The Socialist International - of Kautsky, Bernstein, Jaurès, Longuet, MacDonald, Plekhanov, Lenin, Alder, etc - voted to oppose the war with revolution. In Britain the TUC and the Labour Party staged big demonstrations and pledged total opposition to involvement in a European war. But as soon as war began - shots fired, soldiers killed - that stance was transformed into its opposite. Only a tiny minority stuck to its principles.

The US war in Vietnam escalated from the employment of advisors and only became full-scale under Johnston and Nixon, who took the fight into Laos and Cambodia. The anti-war movement grew according to that pattern. Another factor needs to be mentioned. Ho Chi Minh

and the National Liberation Front enjoyed massive popularity throughout the whole of the conflict. By fighting a people's war they inspired a generation of leftists from Calcutta to Sydney, from London to Rio, from Paris to Istanbul.

That cannot be said of bin Laden and the Taliban or Saddam Hussein or Kim Il Jong. Finally Vietnam could not lose. The US never set its sights on overthrowing the Hanoi government and Vietnam also had the active backing of China and the Soviet Union.

The slogans and orientation of the Stop the War Coalition were formed in the immediate aftermath of September 11 2001. As that 'war on terror' has transformed into a permanent war against the perceived enemies of the US, so the tactics and approach of the anti-war movement must be adapted in consequence.

The permanent war will shift and shift again. And to be effective opposition to it must combine flexibility and long-term vision. Opposition to war against a particular target, or a particular phase, has to become opposition to the cause of war in the present epoch and a movement to reorganise the world in the interests of people, not profits.

The coalition's steering committee must be held accountable. Its slogans and approach to a US-UK war on Iraq must be democratically developed. The growing support for the anti-war movement provides the democratic basis for such accountability. A mass anti-war movement needs mass democracy.

It is this that will provide the best basis for a strong left and working class leadership. We welcome the highly vis-

ible presence of muslims, especially muslim youth, on the September 28 demonstration. Nor do we fear the involvement of reactionary forces - the jihadists, anti-semites and fundamentalists - though we have no truck with them being placed in the political leadership of the anti-war movement.

On September 28, we can safely assume that not one leftwinger or trade union militant became attracted to the ideas of political islam. However, thousands of muslims - not least young men and women - were exposed to the ideas of mass democracy, secularism and socialism. For mullahs and imams something to be feared and fought. Yet the left must sharpen up its message - merely articulating the general 'stop the war' slogan is not good enough. The left - the Socialist Alliance in particular - must stress its universal programme of socialism, democracy and internationalism. That does not mean keeping quiet on or alibiing the crimes perpetrated by the Taliban, Saddam Hussein's Ba'athists, the Iranian theocracy or Kim Il Jong's Stalinist monarchy. We must aim to win the movement to recognise that the main enemy is at home - whether you are in London, Washington or Baghdad.

The Stop the War Coalition should convene a conference to debate the way forward for the anti-war movement. Coalition branches have been built across the country. We need a movement led by the working class, where revolutionary socialism is the hegemonic idea, but where all consistent anti-war forces are organised ●

Marcus Ström

SA candidate Paul Foot

PARTY NEWS

CPGB aggregate

Call for Socialist Alliance political paper reaffirmed

Two rival motions concerning the CPGB's relations with the Alliance for Workers' Liberty were presented to the September 29 aggregate of CPGB members. After a lengthy and intense debate, the following motion, formulated by John Bridge, was adopted with no votes against and one abstention: "This aggregate of CPGB members reaffirms the existing position regarding the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Namely that fusion will be sought through the struggle in the Socialist Alliance and the successes made towards establishing a Socialist Alliance party. An important stepping stone in that direction is a Socialist Alliance political paper - official if we can, unofficial if we must."

An alternative motion was presented at the start of the debate by Martyn Hudson: "This aggregate of CPGB members must affirm not a project of fusion with the AWL, but the construction of a CPGB-AWL bloc with regard to the Socialist Alliance. A political paper is a necessary part of that project. This bloc is necessary to undermine the misleadership of the Socialist Alliance by the Socialist Workers' Party." Comrade Hudson's motion attracted some support during the discussion, but was defeated in the vote with only three comrades in favour.

Opening the discussion, comrade Bridge gave a brief account of the history of the AWL and its involvement with the Socialist Alliance. Like other left groups, the AWL celebrated Blair's election victory in 1997, and anticipated a "fructification of hope", a "crisis of expectations". When this did not materialise, this caused another crisis - this time for auto-Labourism - resulting in a welcome, if untheorised, gravitation towards the Socialist Alliance.

Two loose wings can be discerned within the AWL, which are primarily characterised by the comrades' attitude towards democratic questions and their importance. We should encourage the victory of the political wing - despite its half-formed nature - over the economic wing which is at present dominant and colours the whole organisation.

Comrade Bridge described our relations with the AWL as healthy: we can fight alongside them in the Socialist Alliance despite political differences. The kind of disagreements illustrated by the debate at Communist University on Palestine (reported in *Weekly Worker* September 26) cannot be allowed to be made into a barrier preventing the co-production of the political paper mentioned in both motions. Such differences ought to be debated out within its pages.

AWL purpose

Comrade Bridge pointed out the crucial reason why it would be a mistake to aim for fusion with the AWL now, despite the open, democratic culture of both groups. The uniting goal of CPGB members, and the overriding aim of our work in the Socialist Alliance, is to bring together the revolutionary left into a single democratic centralist organisation. Both the old and new versions of the 'What we fight for' column in the paper make this clear, and the comrade rebutted claims that the new version represents a watering down of this goal with the aim of facilitating unity with the AWL.

However, the reason for the existence of the AWL seems to be to build the AWL, in the hope that one day the masses will join them. While the AWL calls in the abstract for the unity of the revolutionary left, such a notion does not guide its practice - and certainly not its participation in the Socialist Alliance. At the SA national conference on December 1 2001 the AWL took an anarcho-liberal position, standing against steps that would take the alliance in a partyist direction and instead voting for a loose form of organisation in a

futile attempt to prevent the Socialist Party in England and Wales walkout. Leading AWL comrades openly state that the alliance is mainly useful in that it provides them with the opportunity to attack the SWP.

It is this difference in fundamental aim which makes immediate unity with the AWL impossible, comrade Bridge concluded. We positively engage with the revolutionary left as a whole, and regard groups like the SWP as part of the solution. The AWL regards the SWP purely and simply as part of the problem.

Comrade Hudson, in presenting his alternative motion, pointed to two areas in which he agreed with the AWL against the CPGB majority. First, there is nothing positive in the history of the old CPGB - at least for the last 60 or 70 years. Reforging the CPGB and uniting the revolutionary left are not the same process, he said, but mutually exclusive concepts. Second, he did not think the SWP are objectively revolutionaries. He characterised them as Stalinist with rotten politics and an authoritarian internal culture which stamps on dissent. The SWP is a "machine to maim revolutionaries". Therefore he proposed a CPGB-AWL bloc which would be aimed at undermining the SWP and winning the leadership of the Socialist Alliance. He said such a bloc would unite two democratic centralist groups against a bureaucratic centralist authoritarian regime which is paralysing the SA.

Fusion talks

A range of different views emerged in the debate. This was a natural consequence of comrades from different regions who do not regularly have the opportunity to thrash out ideas face to face. Comrades attended from Wales, Scotland, Manchester, Peterborough, Liverpool, North East England, Surrey, Herts and, of course, London. Many intervened in the course of the debate.

Cameron Richards from South Wales claimed that comrade Bridge had given a distorted impression of the AWL in his opening: it is still a horrendously economic organisation, but has improved in recent years, and we could benefit from cooperating with it in trade union work. Comrade Richards regretted the way the quality of debate with the AWL has declined in recent months. He did not agree with comrade Hudson's dismissal of the history of the CPGB, but thought the resumption of "fusion talks" with the AWL would be valuable - "we should give the bloc a go". He added that on the ground very little is happening in the Socialist Alliance, which may not remain the focus of our partyist project in the way comrade Bridge's motion implies.

Replying to comrade Richards, Mark Fischer said there never were "fusion talks" - what took place were exploratory discussions with a view to cooperation. He criticised the AWL leadership for using differences over the history of Afghanistan to avoid serious debate about the party question, and for attributing to the CPGB political positions it quite clearly does not hold. Similarly, others criticised the AWL for using the excuse of the so-called independents in the Socialist Alliance to back out of their initial support for an unofficial Socialist Alliance paper. At the fringe meeting on a SA paper, jointly organised with the AWL and Revolutionary Democratic Group at the SWP's Marxism 2002, the AWL refused to provide a platform speaker.

Stan Keable said that the way the Socialist Alliance has developed means that the SWP needs the participation of other groups, which gives us the opportunity to polemicise and work with them in a way we could not in the past. The partyist project is aimed at organisational unity among all those who share our aim of building the revolutionary party the working class needs, irrespective of their par-

ticular ideological differences. He made the point that the closest organisational unity both facilitates and necessitates clarification of differences, and added that our aim of reforging the CPGB does not mean we have illusions in the old CPGB tradition.

Lee Rock, a PCSU militant from east London, said that the two motions have elements both for and against a fusion with the AWL, so the situation is unclear. He was opposed to fusion now, but thought a bloc with the AWL would be more useful and more likely than a joint paper with them, as it would mean unity and cooperation at all levels rather than just among the leadership and editorial boards. If a joint paper was published, he advocated maintaining our own separate publication alongside it.

Marcus Ström, a member of the Provisional Central Committee and the SA's executive, argued that a joint paper would facilitate cooperation at all levels of the party. In reply to comrade Richards, he said the AWL cannot teach us much about trade union work. All they do is ape the sectarian methods of the SWP at a lower level. He rejected comrade Hudson's motion, saying it focuses not on what the class needs but on the sectarian aim of bashing the SWP. He agreed with comrade Bridge that to dismiss thousands of leftists as part of the problem is both sectarian and pessimistic. He hoped to recruit the SWP and other groups to the partyist project.

Peter Manson, *Weekly Worker* editor, said we can cooperate with the AWL on particular questions within the SA, as with any other group - such as over a motion on the euro for the forthcoming conference. However, what would be the aim of comrade Hudson's bloc, apart from opposing the SWP? The AWL does not agree with our aim of fighting to transform the Socialist Alliance into a revolutionary party. In fact, as comrade Ström pointed out, it does not even meet its commitment to help pay for the SA office.

Bob Paul said he broadly agreed with the motion put forward by comrade Bridge but would have preferred it to have contained some mention of the positive aspects of the AWL - its openness, willingness to debate and democratic internal culture. John Pearson from Manchester said he was reassured by the motion and the discussion, having previously suspected that the Provisional Central Committee intended to subordinate the CPGB to the AWL in the editorial board of a joint paper.

In reply to comrade Hudson's description of the SWP as Stalinist, Ian Donovan said the phenomenon of revolutionaries being damaged or "maimed" is a characteristic not only of Stalinist groups but some of the more bizarre Trotskyist sects too, such as the Spartacists or Gerry Healey's Workers Revolutionary Party. Despite its democracy and openness, the AWL retains traces of the same Trotskyist sectarianism, as demonstrated by their ranting denunciation of the SWP as anti-semitic, comrade Donovan claimed.

Replying to the debate, comrade Bridge said the Trotskyist groups on the left today embody the worst errors of Leon Trotsky, a sect mentality adopted as orthodoxy as a consequence of their lack of a partyist perspective. This mentality can be overcome by winning comrades to the perspective of building a revolutionary party, not by joining forces with the AWL in some sectarian hostility towards the SWP. He called for a clear vote from the aggregate and a clear message on the idea of a joint paper.

The decisiveness of the vote for the resolution moved by comrade Bridge indicates that the long discussion helped to clarify in comrades' minds their own ideas and the position of the leadership •

Mary Godwin

ACTION

CPGB London seminars

Sunday October 6, 5pm - 'MacDonaldisms without MacDonald', using Ralph Milliband's *Parliamentary socialism* as a study guide.

Sunday October 13 - no seminar. All readers are invited to our day school on the lessons of the Russian Revolution (see ad p10).

Sunday October 20, 5pm - 'New pluralism and the politics of identity', using Ellen Meiskins Wood's *Democracy against capitalism* as a study guide.

Palestinian rights

Protest on the steps of St Martin's in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, every Wednesday, from 5.30pm to 6.30pm.

Immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories. For an independent Palestinian state with the same rights as Israel. For the right of both peoples to live in peace in their own territories. Condemn Israeli state terrorism, and Islamic terrorism against Israeli civilians.

Organised by Justice for the Palestinians. Supported by Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Communist Party of Great Britain, Worker-communist Party of Iraq, International Federation of Iraqi Refugees, Worker-communist Party of Iran, International Federation of Iranian Refugees, International Campaign for a Referendum for Kurdistan.

SA euro conference

Socialist Alliance national conference on Europe, Saturday October 12, 11am. Registration from 10am. South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London NW1 (nearest tube - Euston). £10 waged, £6 unwaged. Crèche available.

Marxism and education

Day seminar, 'Renewing dialogues': Tuesday October 22, 9.30am-5pm, room 642, School of Education Foundations and Policy Studies, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, WC1.

Sessions on 'Lifelong learning - the dialectical method'; 'Neoliberal strategies and counter-strategies'; 'Mentoring: a Marxist-feminist critique'; 'Education - postmodernism or Marxism'; 'Postmodernism and the dynamics of reproduction'; 'Commodification of teacher training'; 'Making and meaning of humanisation'.

Speakers: Tony Green, Glenn Rikowski, Shahrzad Mojab, Les Levidow, Helen Colley, Amir Hassanpour, Elizabeth Atkinson, Mike Cole, Rob Willmott, Paula Allman.

Admission free, but entry tickets required, as places are limited.

Glenn Rikowski: rikowski@tiscali.co.uk; 020 85141069.

What Next?

Issue No24 out now. Featuring Norm Dixon on how the US armed Saddam Hussein; John Sullivan on the banning of Batasuna; Rod Quinn on the first Palestinian intifada; Dave Renton on the future of the internet; Vladimir Derer on the Labour Party NEC elections; Jim Mortimer on Communist/Labour MP, Shapurji Saklatvala; Martin Sullivan on the London mayoral election; Letters about the French elections, the fall of Militant, the Socialist Alliance.

Artists against the War

Postcards - 50p each.

- artistsagainstthewar@hotmail.com
- www.artistsagainstthewar.org.uk
- www.stopthewar.org



Party wills

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

RDG

To contact the Revolutionary Democratic Group email rdg120@hotmail.com

European Social Forum

Fly with the CPGB contingent to Florence for the European Social Forum. Depart Wednesday November 6. Return Sunday November 10. £160 - places limited. For more information contact esf@cpgb.org.uk

By train organised by ESF mobilising committee: Depart Tuesday November 5. Return Monday November 11. £150. www.mobilix.org.uk

IRAQ

Saddam Hussein's reactionary regime

An examination of the present dictatorial elite in Iraq ought to make it very clear why our mobilisation against the imperialist war drive does not prevent us expressing opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime. Whilst we unreservedly condemn the Bush-Blair preparations for war, we *do* support the notion of 'regime change' in Iraq - at the hands of the Iraqi people, with the working class leading the way. We do not support the replacement of the Baghdad butchers with an imperialist client regime. We are for democracy and the liberation of the Iraqi people. This is not what the US administration is proposing.

To gain a clear idea of the nature of the Iraqi regime it is worth examining its origins. Founded in 1951, the Ba'athist Party was always single-mindedly devoted to smashing the influence of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Iraq. Originally in the forefront of the opposition to western imperialism in the Middle East, like so many 'official communist' parties the CPI ended up tailing the worst aspects of the 'third worldist' national liberation movements. However, unlike the Ba'athists, the CPI had a real social base in the working class, and its Ba'athist opponents had to rely on extensive material and financial support from pan-Arab nationalists elsewhere in order to engineer an assault on it.

The programme of pan-Arabism entailed not only the political union of the Arab states and peoples, but also the destroying of independent working class organisation. The radical rhetoric of Nasserism was a smokescreen to hide its onslaught against the left. In Iraq the Free Officers movement, led by Abd al-Salam Arif, had by the end of 1958 begun attacking the CPI which would culminate in the Ba'athist Party's intimidation and murder of communists following the military coup of 1963.

An organisation of white terror and counter-revolution, the Ba'athist Party could be understood in the same way as the Nazi movement of the 1930s. It set itself the precise aim of crushing the left, whose physical elimination in the 60s was carried through amidst unparalleled savagery. A series of mock trials and massacres effectively terminated the political influence of the CPI. Ironically the surviving remnants, still tailing the nationalists, formed a 'progressive coalition' with the Ba'athists during the 1970s, which only served to aid their further decline, when 21 communist 'agitators' were executed for allegedly forming secret cells within the Iraqi armed forces. Back in Britain Gerry Healey and his Workers Revolutionary Party alibied these killings.

The Iraqi regime is best understood as a force which emerged from that gang of cut-throats - the post-colonial indigenous ruling classes of the Middle-East. A second successful coup in 1968 had ensured the further consolidation of the Ba'athist Party, which like all nationalist groups of the period 'borrowed' the programme of the left - while depriving it of any emancipatory content. The Iraqi regime strove for and achieved a degree of economic and political independence from both western and Soviet imperialism by playing one off against the other. What resulted was an oil-based reworking of the old themes of oriental despotism - a nationalised economy with a strong state and a robber bureaucracy to boot. Whilst an indigenous petty bourgeois class continued to operate, it was at first largely controlled and then dispossessed by the centralised state machine.

Large-scale capitalist investment and exploitation was replaced in the early 70s by the bureaucratic state. The economic underpinning was, of course, provided by the country's huge reserves of oil and revenues derived from oil, which dwarfed all other forms of industrial and agricultural production. Because of this, and because of the Islamist threat to



In Iraq, as in Britain and the US, the key is independent working class action

the nationalists from the Iranian revolution, the early 1980s saw the emergence of a working relationship between the US and Iraq. The expansionist ambitions of Saddam's regime were aided and abetted by the US - not only as a bulwark against the Islamists but also against the left. The oppression of the Shia population in the south and the Kurds to the north was passed over in silence.

Over the last period the despotic nature of military rule in Iraq has been obvious. The artificial sustaining of the political dictatorship has its key in oil production and, until the invasion of Kuwait, the support of the United States. What is clear is that support for this brutal regime cannot be defended from the point of view of anti-imperialism. The murderous nature of the regime is displayed in its hostility to any form of democracy or working class self-emancipation.

There are some lessons here from the last Gulf War. The uprisings which took place in Iraq after Saddam's defeat in Kuwait were contradictory. On the one hand they were an expression of new forms of national consciousness, asserting themselves in the face of the regime - such as that of the Kurdish people of northern Iraq. On the other, Islamic fundamentalism was evident in the uprisings of the south. Nevertheless, students and industrial workers supported the uprisings, including in the city of Basra, around their own demands. For a short time power slipped from Saddam Hussein's regime into the hands of the people.

These revolutionary events were unique in Iraqi history, in that they were revolts from below rather than the Ba'athist state-building nationalism from above. The revolts were spontaneous and exceeded the expectations of the Iraqi left in exile and other oppositional forces. In Basra and Kurdistan people rose against Saddam - the product not only of military defeat, but also of the regime's social, economic and political contradictions and its unwillingness to tolerate any form of democratic dissent. Saddam's repressive apparatus was very fragile. The Ba'athist party and the security services collapsed or were overthrown.

The uprisings revealed several features of the current Iraqi order. It is necessary to understand these in order to assess the kinds of movements which may emerge in the aftermath of any military defeat or regime-change inflicted by US-UK imperialism on the dictatorship. Firstly, the uprisings exposed the extremely narrow social base of Saddam's regime - largely military and state-bureaucratic. There are obviously no democratic mechanisms in place which could allow broader forces to be drawn in. Secondly, they demonstrated the hatred felt by the working masses for the dictatorship. Saddam rules as a military despot with all the techniques of barbarism at his disposal - we are not talking about a form of populist authoritarianism. Thirdly, they displayed the contradictory nature of the opposition to the regime. In the wake of a military defeat of Saddam the US will want to impose a client regime of some sort on the Iraqi people. There will be many vying for the US franchise.

There are all kinds of contending ideas amongst the forces which could lead a struggle against the regime - ethnic, religious, nationalist and socialist. The fundamental question, however, is a democratic one. What ever happens, if the regime is defeated, the victory should lie with the people of Iraq. A truly democratic settlement can only be achieved by the masses themselves - in opposition to an imperialist settlement.

The forces ranged against the dictatorship in March 1991 were fractured by two things. On the one hand, the regime itself divided the opposition using the weapons of chauvinism and political 'negotiation'. Opponents were neutralised and eventually eliminated. On the other hand, these forces were compromised by offers of help from the US which served Saddam's goal of presenting the opposition as dupes of imperialism and outside intervention. In any case, the US betrayed the opposition and stood aside as the Iraqi republican guard crushed the uprising.

In Iraq, as in Britain and the US, the key is independent working class action. For workers in London, Washington or Baghdad, the main enemy is at home ●

Martyn Hudson

Apology

Last week we published an article entitled 'Defending Iraq', which in the printed version of the *Weekly Worker* appeared under the name, Martyn Hudson (September 26). As the reader can see from the above piece, comrade Hudson adopts a very different approach to the Iraqi regime from that expressed in 'Defending Iraq', whose author was in fact comrade Liz Hoskings. We quickly corrected the error on the web edition. We apologise for any misunderstanding this might have caused.

Call for Socialist Alliance paper

An appeal for a regular Socialist Alliance newspaper has been launched by three leading members, **Dave Church, Marcus Ström** and **Martin Thomas**. To add your name to the appeal please email your support to: marcus.strom@ntlworld.com

We, the undersigned, believe that the Socialist Alliance must launch a regular, campaigning newspaper as an urgent priority. This publication should:

● **Fight to build the agreed actions of the Socialist Alliance, maintain our public profile between elections and give news, analysis and practical guidance to our activists on the ground.**

● **Reflect the diversity of views in our alliance. A Socialist Alliance paper must have space for the open exchange of ideas, for comradely polemic and the presentation of minority views. Wherever possible, we should afford the right of reply in our paper.**

● **Strike a balance between agitation and propaganda in its pages. Working class readers should not be patronised or talked down to. Our paper must carry longer theoretical pieces, as well as snappy, factual, socialist reportage.**

If the majority of the SA continues to block an official publication, the minority should fight for the launch of an unofficial paper.

Additional signatories

Nicola Bent (Lambeth)
Janine Booth (Hackney)
John Bridge (Camden)
Alison Brown (Sheffield)
James Bull (Teesside)
Peter Burton (SSP)
Matthew Caygill (Leeds)
Jane Clarke (Bedfordshire)
Steve Cooke (Teesside)
Lawrie Coombs (Teesside)
Tim Cooper (Nottingham)
Chris Croom (Teesside)
James Cunningham (South Birmingham)
Mathew Danaher (Southampton)
Mervyn Davies (Colchester)
Ian Donovan (Southwark)
Arthur Downs (former mayor, Tower Hamlets)
Jim Drysdale
Laura Duval (Bedfordshire)
Pete Edwards (Bedfordshire)
Mark Ferguson (Bedfordshire)
Alf Filer (Brent)
Janice Fowler (Southwark)
Steve Freeman (Bedfordshire)
Ray Gaston (Leeds steering committee)
Darrell Goodliffe (Cambridgeshire)
Andy Gunton (Lambeth)
Billy Hodson (Teesside)
Chris Jones (chair, Merseyside)
Eryk Karas (Bedfordshire)
Sarah Lawlor (Bedfordshire)
Terry Liddle (treasurer, Greenwich)

Ron Lynn (Lambeth)
Lesley Mahmood (executive committee, coordinator Merseyside)
Rob Marsden (Leicester)
Laurie McCauley (North Yorkshire)
Anne Mc Shane (chair, Hackney)
Sam Metcalf (Nottingham)
Duncan Morrison (Lewisham)
Paul Nicholson (Southampton)
Harry Nugent (Bedfordshire)
Dave Osler (Hackney)
Dave Parks (Exeter)
Harry Paterson (Nottinghamshire)
Mike Perkins (Southampton)
Peter Pierce (Greenwich)
Phil Pope (Southampton)
Charlie Pottins (Brent)
Peter Radcliff (Nottingham)
Daniel Randall (Nottingham)
Lee Rock (Waltham Forest)
Mike Rowley (Oxford)
Dave Spencer (Coventry)
Alan Stevens (chair, Greenwich)
Danny Thompson (Bedfordshire)
Steve Turner (Bedfordshire)
Mike Wagstaff (Colchester)
Pete Weller (Lambeth)
Geoff Wexler (Cambridgeshire)
Paul Willoughby (East Kent)
Jay Woolrich (Leicester)
Patrick Yarker (Norfolk and Norwich)

EUROPEAN LEFT

Italian comrades play host

In September, Rifondazione Comunista held its annual *Liberazione* festival, named after its daily newspaper. For over a month, the comrades booked the pavement zone around the San Angelo castle in Rome. Every night, the illuminated castle formed an impressive backdrop for 100 or so stalls, cafes, stages and even a cinema.

In true southern European fashion, thousands of visitors wandered amongst the stalls, sipping cappuccinos and cold beer. Now and then, they stopped to listen to a debate on gay and lesbian rights or the Palestinian liberation struggle. Licking an ice cream, they might flick through the works of Lenin and Marx in the huge book tent, before moving on to buy fair-trade coffee and Rifondazione merchandise. If the planned festival of the Socialist Alliance in 2003 is only half as ambitious and inspiring, we would have reason to be very proud of ourselves.

The Italian comrades invited a number of foreign delegations to attend the last day of the festival, September 27, in order to take part in two debates on 'European left unity'. There was one representative each from the communist parties of Portugal, France, Greece and Germany, Left Party (Sweden), Izquierda Unida (Portugal), the Greek Left Party and a comrade from Cyprus.

With two delegates from the CPGB, Rob Hoveman and Liz Davies from the Socialist Alliance and Chris Harman from the Socialist Workers Party, the British left was somewhat over-represented. Even the RMT was present: Alex Gordon and Patrick Sikorski were indeed the only trade union representatives amongst the foreign delegations.

The Scottish Socialist Party was invited, but did not attend - without giving its apologies, it seems. The German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) had sent greetings: after its failure to keep its official party status in the German parliament. Down to two MPs and with talk from its right of merger with the SPD, it understandably had other things on its collective mind.

The morning session discussed the European Social Forum, and the evening session was titled 'The challenge of European left unity'. Unfortunately, neither was a debate. It was more of an opportunity to deliver your organisation's prepared statement. Both meetings ended after each delegation had spoken once. There was very little real interaction, few suggestions about how to move forward. It looks to me like Rifondazione is keen to establish a certain hegemony over the rest of the European left - without saying where it wants to lead it.

The morning session was strangely organised in a chamber in the high-security Italian parliament, which was surrounded by dozens of policemen. Surely, a less 'prestigious' room would have helped to create a friendlier atmosphere, maybe even something of a real discussion on a highly important subject.

In the huge, cold room with oil paintings of Italian kings staring down on us, two speakers from Rifondazione addressed the delegates. Alfio Nicotra, the organisation's official delegate to the ESF, told us about the struggle with the Italian rightwing bureaucracy which is still trying to prevent the ESF from hap-

pening. Apparently the Italian government has raised the idea that the ESF would have to be cancelled if an attack against Iraq started. "They want to use 'security reasons' as a way to shut down the ESF," said comrade Nicotra. "But the region of Tuscany was a former stronghold of the Communist Party and is now firmly in the hands of the centre left, so Berlusconi cannot prevent us from meeting."

Salvatore Cannavo, vice-editor of *Liberazione* and a member of the ESF commission that deals with its programme, updated us on the progress of the forum, which will be launched in November in Florence. He informed us that the European Trade Union Congress has now become an official participant. There are now over 250 organisations which will take part in the first ESF. Also, a number of groups have expressed an interest in setting up networks around certain issues - anti-war, anti-racism and anti-privatisation were the ones mentioned by comrade Salvatore.

In my contribution I welcomed the setting up of such networks, but I stressed that in the face of a strong, increasingly integrated EU, we need to unite our forces on a higher level than just networks. My suggestion of working towards a Socialist Alliance of the European Union and, eventually, a Communist Party of the EU, was greeted by muffled laughter from the SWP comrades. Other European comrades treated the suggestion more seriously, however.

Only two people spoke after me, but both picked up on the proposal. The comrade from the Left Party in Sweden called the suggestion "very interesting indeed", but feared it had "still a long way to go". The problem, he said, was that "we all disagree on lots of important questions and it is crucial to allow differences". He obviously believes that a party-type organisation would require the application of the bureaucratic centralist line of 'one organisation, one voice'. As the reality of the SA in England proves, groups with very different political ideas can work closely together. In fact, with a modicum of effort we could work together a lot closer than we do at the moment. Democracy, transparency and the right to publish minority viewpoints are crucial for this. This is something that the CPGB has successfully fought for - and won - in the Socialist Alliance. Crucially, we must recognise that coordinating our campaigns and activities is not just a nice idea, but vital. The bourgeoisie have united in the European Union and are turning it into a super-state.

The next speaker, the representative from Izquierda Unida Portugal, criticised the Swedish comrade for being too hesitant. He made a useful practical suggestion towards left unity: "We need to work out a joint programme for the left in Europe - for the European elections, but also for our everyday work. The bourgeois leaders of Europe can unite and work out their programme and are now starting to work on their own constitution. What about us? Working out a joint programme could help to unite our forces," he suggested. "It does not mean that we cannot have differences."

It is of course this experience of uniting different political trends that makes



Rome, September 28: the left must unite

the SA's presence at the ESF so unique. The comrades from Rifondazione recognised this and made Liz Davies the first speaker in the evening session.

This was even stranger than the morning session. It took place around an open air stage and by the time it started the temperature had sunk to a shivering 10 degrees. Every foreign organisation was asked to speak from the platform - apart from the CPGB and SWP, because we are part of the SA. This turned out to be a good thing: by 11pm only three of the 10 comrades listed had spoken and I retired to bed before I heard even half of the speakers.

However, I do not think I missed much: The little I heard in the evening, combined with comrades' contributions in the morning, painted a rather disheartening picture. Most of the representatives of mainstream 'official communism' have little to offer in the face of the challenges presented by the EU. They typically bored the audience with contributions about the level of exploitation in their own

country and how brilliant their national mobilisation to the ESF will be. Nobody offered any vision for the future of the ESF or the left in Europe.

It looks like Rifondazione will have to make up its mind about its own vision for the European left. At present no other organisation has the influence, cadre and political strength to lead the process of uniting the left. However, Rifondazione's role is still not clear. For example, the organisation initiated the Alternative Left in Europe, with the aim of a joint challenge in the 2004 European elections. But its meetings only take place every six months and have so far been little more than talking shops. It has been instrumental in organising the ESF and moving it to the left, but it joins in the pretence that political parties will not be there. At the moment, it seems there will be no speaker from Rifondazione, no RC workshop - in fact no official RC presence at all. The comrades prefer to claim that their organisation is simply part of the Italian anti-capitalist movement.

But nothing is set in stone. Things can change. I was told by a full-timer that Rifondazione is "still discussing if we will take part in the ESF under the name of our organisation". He said that there will definitely be a workshop on left unity in Florence - "but we might want to organise it outside the framework of the ESF".

If the ESF and the project of European left unity are to succeed, Rifondazione must start to take a bold lead. The European left *must* set up structures that allow us to debate how we can challenge the EU of capital and the bureaucrats, as well as our own national bourgeoisies. We *must* begin to debate a joint programme for the EU parliamentary elections. We *must* move towards a democratically elected and accountable leadership of the ESF that can take decisions and move things forward.

The European left is facing a huge test - but if we are not ambitious enough we could very easily fail ●

Tina Becker

Rifondazione leads Rome anti-war demonstration

On the same day as 300,000 demonstrators marched in London in protest against the war on Iraq, up to 100,000 also took to the streets of Rome. The demonstration was originally organised to mark the end of Rifondazione's month-long festival in the Italian capital, but in light of the imminent war on Iraq the focus of the demo had changed.

Many of the posters and placards carried anti-war slogans, along with messages of Palestinian solidarity. There were also placards

in support of Cuba against the American blockade and the odd rainbow flag of the Christian charity-type organisations. Overall, however, the red flags of Rifondazione by far outnumbered any other groups or campaigns. The demonstration was evidently leftwing, rather than the sort we see in Britain where the organised left makes up a minority section - often under the banner of some 'broad' group: eg, the Stop the War Coalition.

The mood was very upbeat and

lively, with singing and music blaring from vans. The march was composed of people of all ages marching from the Coliseum to a rally at the Piazza del Popolo, where there were various speakers, including Liz Davies representing the Socialist Alliance.

The demonstrations in London and Rome are the start of a succession of mass anti-war demonstrations across Europe - the next one is called in Paris for Saturday October 5 ●

Sarah McDonald



Keeping the red flag flying in Italy

SOUTH AFRICA

Jeff Radebe cuts off workers' electricity



Break with capitalist ANC

On October 1 hundreds of thousands of workers went on strike across South Africa against the privatisation policies of the ANC, fronted by Jeff Radebe, one of six government ministers who are members of the South African Communist Party. Reporting from Johannesburg, **Dale McKinley** of the Anti-Privatisation Forum exposes ANC-SACP double talk

For the workers, and the working class community organisations such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) that came out in full support of the strike, it has become crystal clear that privatisation strengthens and consolidates the control and ownership of society by the capitalist class at the direct expense of the entire working class. The results, which South African workers and communities have been experiencing on a first-hand basis, are that profits decide the needs and rights of the people, and democracy becomes something to be bought and sold.

The target of the strike, the ANC government, has shown, time and again, that it is completely committed to privatisation in all its various forms. It is the ANC government, in class cooperation with the capitalist bosses and multinational corporations, which has privatised basic services, such as water, housing and electricity. It is the ANC government that continues to pursue the privatisation of key public sector utilities.

The ANC government's drive to privatise has resulted in hundreds of thousands of workers losing their jobs and millions more having to struggle just to earn a living wage and enjoy decent working conditions. This is the direct result of the 'growth, employment and redistribution' programme. Meanwhile, the capitalist bosses and multinational corporations have gotten rich and fat, taking the wealth that workers produce all for themselves. Now they want to extend this oppression to the entire continent of Africa through the 'New Partnership for Africa's Development'. It is the same privatisation programme of the ANC government that forces working class communities to suffer water and electricity cut-offs and housing evictions.

For the APF, the fight against privatisation in both the workplace and in the community is a fight of one class against

another: the working class against the capitalist class. Such a fight can never be won if the working class is divided.

In South Africa, the ANC government and its capitalist friends are doing all they can to ensure that we are divided. The ANC government has deliberately set out to caricature the legitimate struggles of workers and communities against privatisation as nothing more than misplaced political antics that will hurt the economy and "sacrifice workers' wages and production of the wealth needed to fight poverty". The ANC has attempted to sow division by accusing a so-called "ultra-leftist" clique of misleading workers and communities against the 'people's' government. And the ANC has tried to depoliticise working class struggles by claiming the virtual impossibility of an alternative left political organisation contesting for fundamental political and socio-economic change in South Africa.

Despite the blatant fabrication and hypocrisy that is the hallmark of these tactics of division, they will succeed as long as key sections of the working class continue to give political support to the capitalist ANC government, in the vain hope that this will eventually lead to the end of privatisation and to the defeat of capitalism.

The failure of the Nactu and Fedusa union centres to come out in full support of the strike only serves to play into the hands of the ANC government and its capitalist allies. Likewise, the continued insistence by sections of the Cosatu leadership that workers can simultaneously support the ANC politically and win the struggle against privatisation and capitalism is at best naive; at worst, political and personal opportunism. The Cosatu leadership must ask itself a simple, yet fundamental, question - who are the real allies of the workers in South Africa?

Are they to be found amongst the ranks of a government that revels in its

attacks on workers, whilst mouthing meaningless rhetoric about a "national democratic revolution", "patriotism" and "nation-building"? What about the new black capitalists who grow filthy-rich on the backs of the workers whilst hiding behind the smokescreen of "black economic empowerment"? Or are the real allies to be found amongst the very working class communities where workers themselves live and who suffer from, and struggle against, the capitalist policies implemented by the ANC government?

Cosatu's strike is a positive sign that organised workers are sick and tired of the cheap rhetoric, endless 'consultations' and political hypocrisy that have been the staple diet of an ANC determined to organisationally contain and politically defeat the forces of the working class in South Africa. It should be quite clear from the events and pronouncements of the last few days that this determination is only going to intensify.

What is now needed is for the entire working class to draw a clear class line - politically, economically and organisationally. There are real, working alternatives to this capitalist system and the political and economic forces that drive it. The APF calls upon all Cosatu workers to stand on the left side of the class line so that we can, as a united working class, fight and win. This is the only way we are going to bury the privatisation monster and move forward in our struggles for a new society in which people come before profits and in which the basic needs and rights of the majority are not simply privileges enjoyed by a rich minority.

We have suffered long enough. We have been divided for too long. Let us join together and move forward to another South Africa, another world. It is more than a possibility - it is a necessity! •

Weapon in class struggle

Mike Wayne **Political film - the dialectics of third cinema** Pluto

Press, 2001, pp176, £14.99 pbk, £45 hbk

Film-making committed to social and cultural emancipation, of course, did not start in the 1960s, when 'third cinema' announced itself. Mike Wayne's welcome study traces the relevance of earlier "critics and cultural producers" - Eisenstein, Vertov, Lukács, Brecht and Walter Benjamin - "crucially informed by the revolutionary turbulence between 1917 and the late 1930s" (p2).

Political cinema is about much more than politics in the narrow sense: "Social and cultural emancipation," he rightly asserts, "cannot be achieved merely in the political realm of the state," but "needs a much more fundamental and pervasive transformation..." (p2).

Wayne edited *Dissident voices - the politics of television and cultural change* (1998) and lectures on third cinema at the West London Institute of Higher Education - now part of Brunel University. With refreshing modesty, he claims to have been "taught by some very good students" and attributes "whatever merits" the book may have to that "classroom experience".

It was the Argentinians Solanos and Getino, makers of the groundbreaking 1968 documentary *The hour of the furnaces*, who coined the term 'third cinema' to indicate the school of both film-making and criticism, largely Latin American, which emerged after, and was influenced by, the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Glauber Rocha, founder of Brazil's Cinema Novo in the 1960s, spoke of a 'cinema of hunger' "desperate for social and cultural justice" (p5). One-time director of the Cuban Film Institute Julio García Espinosa advocated an 'imperfect cinema', rejecting the technical and aesthetic criteria dominant in the medium.

Third cinema contrasts itself to first cinema (commercial, mainstream) and second cinema (art, authorial, auteur). It cannot be a simple rejection, however, says Wayne, but a "dialectical transformation" of them. He emphasises the "complex relations of interchange and difference between first, second and third cinema" and the necessity to fully grasp first and second in order to defend and develop third cinema (p7).

Here is how the Argentinian filmmaker Fernando Birri made the point: "... 'Commercial' cinema won its audience by any method going. We cannot support it. The 'cinema of experience' uses the best methods, and scorns the mass audience. We cannot support it either. Once again, the contradiction between art and industry is resolved very badly ..." (p7).

Third cinema should not be conflated with third world cinema, as has frequently been construed from the title of Teshombe Gabriel's 1982 *Third cinema in the third world*. Indeed, Wayne underlines that Gabriel himself insisted it "is not ... defined by geography; it is a cinema primarily defined by its socialist politics"



(p1). Wayne extends third cinema theory into analysis of first and second cinema, challenging the hegemony of some "ivory-towered paradigms", particularly "Lacanian psychoanalysis, post-colonial studies and postmodernism", academic theoretical currents "prone to overestimating the power of ideas and underestimating the importance of social forces which make or break ideas" (p7).

Wayne makes his argument in the context of a wide range of case studies, taking us on a fascinating tour around "the most advanced and sophisticated body of political films" (p1), from an extensive study of Italian communist Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 classic *The battle of Algiers* (1965), through Patricio Guzman's *The battle of Chile* (1973-76) to the Indian *Bandit queen* (1994), the Turkish *Eskiya* (1997) and the Irish *The general* (1998), to name just a few.

The "revolutionary conjunctures" which gave birth to third cinema have given way to the "dark times of neo-liberalism's hegemony" (p8). Wayne recalls a 1996 British Film Institute-sponsored conference on African cinema, where there was no dissent when British filmmaker John Akomfrah declared third cinema dead. But the cultural offspring of those revolutionary struggles is not dead, and has a crucial role to play in turning the tide of history.

Wayne's serious Marxist polemical treatment of the practice and underdeveloped theory of third cinema seeks to rescue it from "what EP Thompson called the condescension of posterity" (p4), and sharpen it as a revolutionary weapon for the struggles to come: "Inspiration, political tradition and memory are the umbilical cord that nourishes third cinema in a time of reaction and barbarism. When the time comes, as it surely must (the very survival of the human race depends on it), for new revolutionary upheavals, then any interim developments in the theory of third cinema may make a small contribution to subsequent practical interventions" (p8) •

Stan Keable

ANTI-CAPITALISM

Corporate muscle and state power

Kicking off a discussion about the state, it is worth considering the dominant view in the anti-globalisation movement, a major political influence at the moment. Two currently influential books are by George Monbiot and Noreena Hertz.

In fact they are two remarkably similar books, as if the same rather limited brain got together to write them both. Two very similar titles: *The captive state: the corporate takeover of Britain*; and *The silent takeover: global capitalism and the death of democracy*. Their central theme is the way the state has been captured by the corporations.

To quote Monbiot's introduction: "The government will reassert control over corporations only when the people reassert control over government." Noreena Hertz asks rhetorically in her concluding chapter: "Can protest reinvent the state? Can protest force politicians to put people first and return to true democracy?" This is an idealised view of the state as true democracy - from which it has been diverted by the influence of the corporations. You see a set of simplistic notions of the relationship between the state, the people and capitalist enterprise expressed in those two quotes, which sum up the outlook of the contemporary anti-globalisation movement.

This is a useful point of departure from which to go back to the Marxist theory of the state, which emerged in the 1840s amid notions not dissimilar to this. We can see the anti-globalisation movement as a regression to theoretical ideas often characterised in previous left discussions as 'going beyond Marx'. This kind of discussion of the state has a very strongly pre-Marxist character.

In his twenties, Marx was working in Cologne - an advanced area economically, socially and politically of the emerging Germany. It was a moment of political liberalisation that did not actually last very long. He was involved in writing for a periodical at the time and one of the main controversies was about the freedom of the press. This was not an academic issue: the paper he wrote for was suppressed within months of the controversy starting. The dominant theoretical influence on discussions of the state at that time was Hegel and the radical Hegelian movement out of which Marxism emerged.

The concept of the state widely held by the Hegelians was not merely of the state as a narrowly political institution, but something which represented the totality of humanity's communal concerns. The state was something elevated over conflicts concerning other kinds of issues. There was a conception of a rational, ethical state against which other states could be compared, and that society was attempting to move towards that ideal.

Hegel grasped the notion of a distinction between the state and civil society - the latter being the sphere of private economic activity of capitalist enterprise and conflict with workers. For the Hegelians civil society was the sphere of economic activity rather than the sphere of political activity.

In the controversies around the freedom of the press that Marx was engaged in, there were a number of developments that took place. The first was that pursuing democratic demands to their logical

Has corporate power distorted 'true' democracy? Can protest 'reinvent' the state? **Mike Fitzpatrick** presents his defence of Marx's theory of the state and takes issue with the fashionable anti-globalisation ideas of George Monbiot and Noreena Hertz

conclusion brought Marx and his collaborators into conflict not just with the regime, but with the liberal bourgeois democratic forces who were around at the time. These liberal forces were not prepared to go as far as the radical wing of the movement and constantly tried to restrain it. The recognition grew that, if freedom was to mean democratic control from below and the advance of liberties generally coming from the popular movement, that would have consequences not only in politics, but also in the sphere of civil society, the economic sphere. These liberal bourgeois democratic elements began to get cold feet about it.

Marx had started off with this Hegelian idea of the state as ideal entity. First of all, it was thought that external forces were distorting the rational, ethical character of the state, strikingly echoed in George Monbiot: "Corporations, the contraptions we invented to serve us [did we?], are overthrowing us. They are seizing powers previously invested in government and using them to distort public life to suit their own ends."

Marx's recognition was that the state was these distortions. They were not externally imposed - they were the very essence of the state. The metaphor used was like peeling the layers of an onion - the layers were actually the onion itself. The gradual result of this process was that the radical character of the movement acquired a more socio-economic content. The struggle for democracy became a struggle for social transformation.

An inversion of Hegel took place. Hegel was based on a lie: that the state was the people's interests or that the people is the interest of the state. This is precisely the confusion articulated by Monbiot and Hertz. The consequence was a recognition that outright revolution, not gradualism through existing state structures, was required. From a very early stage in Marx's political development came the recognition that fundamental social change required the dissolution of the political state itself.

As Marx summed it up somewhat later in *A contribution to the critique of political economy*, "My investigations led to the result that the legal relations as well as forms of the state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life. The sum total of which Hegel, following the example of the Englishmen and Frenchmen of the 18th century, combines under the name of civil society. That, however, the



Monbiot: corporations should serve us

anatomy of civil society, is to be sought in political economy."

That is the central theme of my *Revision, imperialism and the state: the method of capital and the dogma of state monopoly capitalism*. Rather than go through that in a lot of detail I will draw out three essential elements of that theory, in order to grasp the particular nature of capitalist domination which is the basic problem mystified and misunderstood by so many of the radical opponents of capitalism.

These are (1) the concept of capital as social power; (2) the separation of the political and the economic spheres; and (3) the apparent autonomy of the capitalist state.

Capital as social power

According to the anti-globalisation movement, all the problems and evils of society - the exploitation and the oppression - can be put down to fat cats, corrupt politicians, greedy corporations and spineless governments giving into them. This is a trend that goes back to the 1840s. The real problem that Marx focused on was the domination of capital exercised through the process of capital accumulation. In capitalist society, those who own capital are able to invest in labour power and means of production in the process of producing and expanding value and producing surplus value. The drive to accumulate is the essential feature of capitalist society and it is a drive which imposes itself as an external necessity on capitalist and worker alike. The whole character of capitalist social rela-

tions takes the form of apparently external forces which impose themselves on individuals.

This compulsion is obscured and mystified - a product of the fetishisation of commodities. Individuals are reduced to personifications of social relations. The capitalist is an agent of capitalist production; the worker is a functionary within the process of capital accumulation.

Political and economic spheres

This follows on from the notion of capital as social power. Something that has always been misunderstood in the whole reformist tradition is that the nature of capitalist control through the accumulation process is spontaneously reproduced; it does not require on a day-to-day basis external forms of compulsion and coercion. Workers go to work every day; capitalists continue the process of capitalist exploitation in a way which follows their own volition.

When the domination of capital does require, as it may do in particular situations, some external political interference, such as at a time of social conflict, it appears as an external political act rather than something which arises from the capitalist system itself. It seems to be an abuse or a corrupt policy, a distortion of the use of power. Because the coercive character of capitalism is mediated through economic relations, politics appears to be a separate and autonomous realm.

The apparent autonomy of the capitalist state

From this separation arises the particular character of the capitalist state. A number of its features are detailed in this article. For one thing, some form of state is common to all forms of pre-capitalist society. The particular functions of the state in capitalist society are:

- to provide the preconditions for capital accumulation;
- to maintain the conditions for capital accumulation, in the sense of providing services to capital that perhaps could not be done profitably in terms of infrastructure;
- a role in reproducing capitalist social relations where there appears to be some threat as a result of class antagonisms in some form or other, while accepting that this is exceptional rather than routine.

So the apparent autonomy of the state emerges out of the separation of the political and economic spheres: it appears that the state operates autonomously from the process of capital accumulation. Indeed, that appearance of autonomy is reinforced by the activities of the state. It seems occasionally that the state makes concessions to the working class or takes actions which seem against the

interests of at least sections of the capitalist class. All those actions reinforce the idea that the state can play an autonomous role or act according to the subjective wishes of some section of society.

That indeed is the basis of the idea that the state can stand above society acting as a convention between, traditionally, different class forces and all sort of competing social forces. The policy that the state pursues seems to be the outcome of contending forces and subjective influences. This idea is pithily summed up by Noreena Hertz: the problem of the *Silent takeover* is a silent nullification of the social contract. The corporation is king, the state its subject, its citizens consumers.

What is interesting in the discussion of reformism in that article - which seems like ancient history now - is that a century after Marx was working and writing, the dominant notion was of the state having the potential to regulate and organise production, and that was the strategy of reformism. This was given particular encouragement by the transformation of the relationship between the state and the economy in the imperialist epoch and different stages of it.

Today we see a rather different picture, where it is not so much a case of the state directing the economy as the state being taken over and its autonomy being crushed, subordinated to corporate power. The theoretical substance is the same: it is just a question of where the balance of forces lies and the sense of the balance of forces today lies very far in the direction of corporate power over the state.

I will conclude with another common theme that struck me in reading Monbiot and Hertz, which expresses the contemporary attitude to the state very well. Both of them in their final chapters make the following points. Monbiot: "The corporations are powerful only because we have allowed them to be. Their power is the artefact of our acquiescence." I have not come across this formulation quite so blatantly before. It is our individual responsibility: we have allowed this to happen; it is down to us to do something about it. In remarkably similar terms, Hertz writes: "If we do nothing, if we do not challenge the silent takeover, do not question our belief system, do not admit to our own culpability in the creation of this new world order, all is lost." You can almost feel the call for counselling taking shape!

What this expresses is a sense of unmediated confrontation between the very isolated and vulnerable individual and what Monbiot calls the giga-corporation, the corporation that is emerging through mergers and acquisitions and world domination to become an all-powerful force. The whole thing is expressed in the context of an emerging globalisation movement but expresses a tremendous sense of individual vulnerability before these forces. What really comes through forcefully is an expression of despair rather than a real political strategy.

You can see the consequences of the disappearance of any notion of political agency in challenging the state. This leads to a theoretical regression and a sense of impotence in the face of the state which is in a way superficially covered up by the bravado about rather insignificant protests ●

DEBATE

Dictatorship of the proletariat and the Second International

In the third of his articles discussing peaceful and violent revolution Jack Conrad examines the use of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' after Marx and Engels

So far over the course of this series of articles I have proven beyond reasonable doubt two fundamental propositions.

Firstly, Marx, Engels and Lenin discounted neither the desirability nor the possibility of peaceful revolution. Leftist critics - including those featured in these pages - who, citing some supposed universal law, damn peaceful revolution and contemptuously dismiss it as a "concession to left reformism" veer dangerously close to anarchism. The Marxist approach is clear and is accurately summed up in the ninth formulation of the *Weekly Worker's* 'What we fight for' column - the working class comes to power "peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must".

The second proposition which has been proved is that Marx and Engels used the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a term synonymous with the 'rule of the working class'. Nothing more and nothing less. It had for them no special meaning and carried no connotations of violence, let alone the "destruction" or "smashing" of so-called bourgeois democracy.

Following Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* volume three and its companion *The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from Marx to Lenin*, my last article located, quoted and put in context every single site in the entire Marx-Engels corpus of books, pamphlets, programmes, articles and letters where the term the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was employed or discussed. There are a mere 12 such sites.

We proved that in the 1850-52 period Marx counterposed the dictatorship - or, to update the terminology, the rule - of the working class to the elitist notions of Auguste Blanqui, who envisaged the rule over the working class by a select revolutionary minority. When Marx again took up the term in the 1871-75 period it was once more in order to distinguish his democratic politics from Blanquist elitism and, in the case of the *Critique of the Gotha programme*, the Lassalleans. Ferdinand Lassalle was himself notoriously hostile to democracy - "Who speaks of universal suffrage utters a cry of reconciliation" (F Lassalle *Workers' pro-*

gramme quoted in E Bernstein *Evolutionary socialism* New York 1961, p138).

Engels reiterated Marx's position after the latter's death in 1883. In his *Critique of the Erfurt programme* Engels savaged "philistine" party members in Germany, who, cowering before the kaiser and Prussian legality, denounced the dictatorship of the proletariat - that is, a republic, the abolition of the monarchy and the rule of those below through universal suffrage and winning the battle for democracy.

Of course, some can never be convinced. Sectarian blockheads and leftist windbags will in the name of Marx, Engels and Lenin continue to angrily dismiss the possibility of peaceful revolution. It is all a devilish plot hatched by revisionists, they monotonously insist - blithely ignoring, of course, the actual stated positions of Marx, Engels and Lenin themselves. By the same measure, in order to sustain their cut-price political myths or as a means of excusing the high crimes of bureaucratic socialism, Trotskyite and Stalinist doctrinaires alike carry on cluelessly referring to the dictatorship of the proletariat in terms of terror and denying democracy. Perhaps such people are beyond reason and rational debate. However, others will ponder, as I have done, and surely rethink.

Disciples

In part three of this series we shall examine the spin and counter-spin put on the dictatorship of the proletariat by the direct inheritors of the Marx-Engels tradition. Once again what I write rests heavily on Draper's *The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from Marx to Lenin*.

Perhaps the best indication of the shape of things to come is to be found with Georgi Plekhanov - who later became the leading figure in Menshevism. A fellow social democratic revolutionary, Alexei Voden, visits an aged Engels in London. In his hand he carries a letter of introduction from Plekhanov - though a recent convert from Narodnik politics, he had already established a formidable reputation as Russia's foremost Marxist thinker. The date is 1893. Some 30 years later Voden published an account of the meeting in his memoirs.

Engels asks what Plekhanov thought of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Voden recalls: "I was forced to admit that GV Plekhanov had repeatedly expressed his conviction to me that when 'we' come to power, of course 'we' would allow freedom to no one except 'ourselves'" (quoted in H Draper *The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from Marx to Lenin* New York 1987, p39).

There is no reason to doubt the veracity of Voden's story. Plekhanov simply took as good coin the elitist approach espoused by Blanquists and Mikhail Bakunin's followers in Russia. Here lie his intellectual antecedents and what passed for common sense amongst other revolutionaries. Needless to say, this elitism does not derive from Marx. Furthermore let us stress that conditions in 1890s Russia tended to confirm and reinforce such ideas in Plekhanov's *Weltanschauung*.

Tied body and soul to pre-capitalist modes of production, the peasant multitude could not be trusted. Or so thought Plekhanov. The first generation of workers in Russia's nascent industries were not only a tiny minority, but were illiterate and woefully ignorant too. For Plekhanov such human material had to be remoulded and that would take many generations. The enlightened revolutionary party must carefully guide them. Meanwhile Marxists should hold a decidedly "equivocal" attitude when it came to democracy.

How did Engels respond? Voden recounts that Engels feared that, burdened with such an awful outlook, the party in Russia was in danger of either "turning into a sect" or suf-

fering a "series of splits from which Plekhanov would not benefit" (quoted in *ibid* p40). Prophetic words indeed.

Engels reportedly remarked that Plekhanov seemed to him to be a Russian version of Henry Hyndman - the leader of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain. Plekhanov took the news as a complement. He was presumably unaware that Engels (and Marx) despised this top-hatted labour dictator and his contempt for basic democratic norms.

As Draper remarks, this obscure exchange in Engels's house takes on its full significance when one considers that on the initiative of Plekhanov the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party later included the dictatorship of the proletariat in its programme. Plekhanov did not have in his mind the triumph of democracy, but minority rule and an educative dictatorship. That is what he meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This profound misunderstanding of Marx was not confined to Russia. Virtually the whole Second International spectrum misunderstood the Marx-Engels position. Why? Certainly not because of stupidity or because the writings of Marx and Engels were dense and esoteric so that form obscured content. Put in historical context, their meaning is not hard to fathom. Draper pointedly explains the failure of post-Marx-Engels Marxism not in the relations of disciple to teacher but in the greater influence exerted on the disciples "by their own environments, socialist and capitalist, than by Marx's ideas" (quoted in *ibid* p42).

Draper samples some of the Second International's leading personalities. He shows that the Marxist idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat died with Engels in 1895. There is no continuity. Let us illustrate the point.

Paul Lafargue - Marx's son-in-law and one of the founders of the Workers Party in France. Lafargue entertained strong illusions in the revolutionary potential of a certain general Boulanger - a populist figure who in his day gained a mass following amongst those alienated by parliamentary corruption and procrastination. Essentially Lafargue proposed - as did many other leftists - to give Boulanger's movement critical support in the naive belief that socialists could ride the "wave of the future" and find themselves a shortcut to power. Shades of the SWP and political islam. Lafargue aped Boulanger's anti-parliamentarianism. From the back of his mind he also doubtless recalled that Marx had on some occasion or another written in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Hence he blunderingly writes of the proletariat taking "possession of the state" and going on to "rule society dictatorially until the bourgeoisie has disappeared as a class" (quoted in *ibid* p43).

Lafargue is publicly telling the followers of Boulanger that the Marxists too would sweep away parliament and institute special *dictatorial* measures that would crush bourgeois resistance and really get things done. Trains would run on time.

While Boulanger's star remained high in the firmament, Lafargue continued to peddle such dangerous nonsense. This despite the long to-and-fro correspondence with Engels who time and again urged him to reconsider. Lafargue knew exactly what Engels was saying. He could not fail to understand. But the pressures of French political reality and his appetite for quick popularity proved far stronger. In that sense Lafargue both prefigures the future and reflects the elitist Blanquist past of revolutionary thought in France.

Edward Bernstein - Engels's secretary and, along with Karl Kautsky, executor of the Marx-Engels literary archive. In 1898 Bernstein announced his revisionist turn in a letter to the Stuttgart congress of the German Social Democratic Party. Elaborating upon his theme a short while after, Bernstein proposed to drop

the "dead weight" of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Inevitably from then on the term became embroiled in the revisionist-orthodox dispute which dominated the proceedings of the Second International till its ignominious collapse into social chauvinism in August 1914.

Though Bernstein worked in London under Engels's close supervision for a number of years, his attack on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' shows that he has only the vaguest grasp of its meaning. First he says it is incompatible with the SDP working in the parliamentary arena. He then links the "antiquated" phrase to a lower civilisation: its use can only be looked upon "as a reversion, as political atavism" (E Bernstein *Evolutionary socialism* New York 1961, pp46-47).

Bernstein feels no need to directly refer to Marx or Engels. He invents his own definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to deny the need for any form of *class* rule. His offhand treatment of the issue comes from the right and is designed to smooth the path for conciliation with official society and exclusive concentration on parliamentary deals and trade union bargaining.

Wilhelm Liebknecht - one of the main founders of the German SDP. Liebknecht was eager to repudiate the charge that his party intended to introduce the dictatorship of the proletariat. The term is a wicked bourgeois invention! Using a neat trick, he claims that the SDP stood for the "destruction of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", not the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (quoted in H Draper *The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from Marx to Lenin* New York 1987, p48).

Jean Jaurès - rightwing social democratic leader in France. Jaurès basically claimed that despite his revolutionary reputation Liebknecht agreed with Bernstein - and went on in his turn to also decry the dictatorship of the proletariat. He quotes the *Communist manifesto* to the effect that the proletariat "conquers democracy", and bizarrely then says - "that is, in fact, suspends democracy", since it "substitutes the dictatorial will of a class for the will of the majority of citizens" (quoted in *ibid* p50). Evidently Jaurès is completely mystified by Marx-Engels because he chunters on about why democracy is better than dictatorship. Draper is doubtless right in assuming that Jaurès did not bother to actually read either Marx or Engels and simply lumped them together with Blanqui and his scheme for a minority coup.

Karl Liebknecht - son of Wilhelm. From the left this Liebknecht polemicalises with Jaurès and defends the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is "consistent with democracy" and it "presupposes a victory by the majority of the people". Yes, and yes again. However, Liebknecht then links the dictatorship of the proletariat to the "energetic" means used to stabilise this "class rule" - that is why the *Communist manifesto* speaks of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (quoted in *ibid* p51). Clearly he is wrong about the *Communist manifesto*. There is no mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat in that document. Nor when they used the term did Marx or Engels imply particular means.

Karl Kautsky - the 'pope' of Marxism. Draper locates four representative pre-1917 examples of how Kautsky deployed the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Kautsky disagrees with Franz Mehring, who, in leftist mode, wrote of socialism coming about only "when the faith of the masses in bourgeois parliamentarianism is entirely dead". Kautsky replies on behalf of what he calls "the representative system". He then says that the "parliamentary system" can be just as good an "instrument" of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as it can of the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" (quoted in *ibid* p54).

There is a muddle of right and wrong here. Kautsky is plainly wrong to equate parliament

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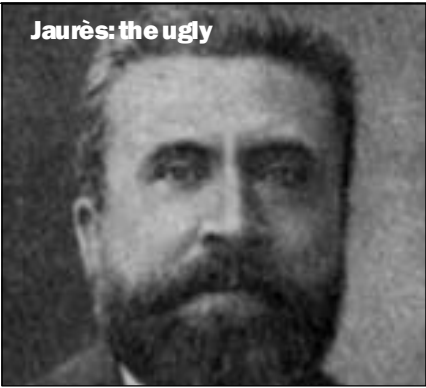
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Luxemburg: the good



Bernstein: the bad



Jaurès: the ugly

with the “representative system”. Parliament is merely one form of the “representative system”. The Commune is another. And, according to Marx’s *Civil war in France*, it was a superior form because it combined executive and legislative functions, paid delegates only the average of a skilled workers’ wages and enshrined the right of electors to instantly recall them.

As the reader may know, Marx also stated in his *Civil war in France* that the working class could not simply lay hold of the “ready-made state machine” and use it for its own purposes. Kautsky was proposing to do just that. Yet, as we have already shown in the first article of this series, both Marx and Engels thought that it was quite possible in Britain and the United States for the working class to come to power using parliament and legal and peaceful means.

I too have held out the prospect of a working class parliamentary majority and a peaceful revolution. Not because of any universal law but merely as a possibility, given historically shaped conditions and traditions in Britain. Predictably this brought forth the accusation from one of the usual suspects that any such suggestion amounts to rehashing the old CPGB’s reformo-nationalist programme, the *British road to socialism*. Communists aim to “smash” all “bourgeois democratic” states, and parliaments too, because they “cannot truly represent the masses”, we are blusteringly told (Letters Weekly Worker September 26).

So did Marx contradict himself? Have I become a worshipper of the bourgeois parliament. Not at all. Firstly let us recall that the 1871 Paris Commune began in effect as a representative institution little different from the Greater London Authority. The Parisian working class laid hold of it as their *first revolutionary act* by returning a clear Blanquist, Proudhonist and Marxist majority ... and then they proceeded to transform the Commune into a working and thoroughly democratic body using revolutionary methods. The ready-made state machine was not left intact, but remade.

The working class in Britain could conceivably do the same. Surely that is what Marx and Engels had in mind when they wrote about the *possibility* of peaceful revolution. Or were they backsliding rightists? The first act of the revolution would be to secure a majority in the House of Commons. But what would the second act of the revolution be? As explained in our first article, we would proceed in the manner suggested by Comintern in December 1922.

Everything must be done to ensure that the working class exerts its extra-parliamentary power. Arm the workers and disarm the forces of counterrevolution. The bourgeoisie is bound to promote a “slave-owners’ revolt”. Force must be met with force. Meanwhile what happens to parliament? Do we smash it? Do the workers leave it intact? Neither would be in our interests. Instead at a stroke we abolish the second chamber, the monarchy and all other such encumbrances. What is a talking shop must be transformed into a Commune-like body which embodies substantive democracy and combines legislative and executive functions.

Of course, things might not happen that way. But it is beholden on Marxists to seriously discuss such a possibility. Kautsky, of course, did not present his argument in the framework described above. He was right to counter leftists who dogmatically refused to admit that parliament could be an *opening* form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But he was wrong not to consider other possibilities. For him the Reichstag - which was still a “fig leaf” for kaiserdom - simply needed an SDP majority.

Kautsky did not use the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ in the manner employed by Marx

and Engels: ie, the rule of the working class. He wanted to sound orthodox and revolutionary by bandying around the phrase. But simultaneously Kautsky had no intention of upsetting the SDP’s Reichstag faction.

In 1895 Kautsky depicts the popular movements in medieval Europe as being examples of “proletarian communism”. Apparently like the SDP they set themselves the aim of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (quoted in H Draper *The ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ from Marx to Lenin* New York 1987, p56). Draper is of the opinion that Kautsky inserts the phrase into his study, *The forerunners of modern socialism*, not for reasons of historical authenticity, but in order to reinforce his revolutionary credentials.

The third instance cited by Draper comes in 1899 when Kautsky took up the cudgels against Bernstein. Here he writes of the “rule of the proletariat” taking on “the forms of a class dictatorship”. Without doubt he uses the term ‘dictatorship’ as a form of rule rather than, as Marx and Engels did, simply “rule” itself. He implies violence and terror.

Lastly Draper quotes Kautsky from 1909. Inspired by the 1905 Russian Revolution, he took on his most leftwing manifestation in the pamphlet *The road to power*. Kautsky can be read as saying that ‘rule’ and ‘dictatorship’ are synonymous. So did he finally understand Marx and Engels? Draper thinks it unlikely.

Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg - the outstanding Polish-Jewish Marxist who also worked closely with both the RSDLP of Lenin, Plekhanov, Martov and Trotsky and the German SDP. With good reason Draper announces that Luxemburg alone “consistently and without exception” used the term ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ in the same manner as Marx and Engels (*ibid* p59). At least that is how Draper interprets her.

Let us provide a few examples. In her pamphlet *Reform or revolution* Luxemburg replies to Bernstein’s miserable revisionism and the hopeless plan to bring about socialism through gradually reforming capitalism. Towards the end of the pamphlet there is an instructive reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat. She cites Marx recommending that in Britain the working class should peacefully buy out the landlords. Where Bernstein uses this passage to shore up his reformist programme, Luxemburg has little trouble in showing that what Marx was referring to the period *after* the conquest of political power: “The possibility envisaged by Marx,” she notes, “is that of the pacific exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat and not the replacement of the dictatorship with capitalist social reforms” (R Luxemburg *Reform or revolution* New York 1978, p53).

In other words the rule (dictatorship) of the working class could involve both the mailed fist and the velvet glove.

Notsomany years later, in 1903, when commenting on Polish developments, Luxemburg says the following: “The first act of socialist transformation must ... be the conquest of political power by the working class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is absolutely necessary for effecting transitional measures” (quoted in H Draper *The ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ from Marx to Lenin* New York 1987, p60). Conquest of political power and the dictatorship of the proletariat are correctly treated as being virtually synonymous.

In the immediate afterglow of the 1905 Russian Revolution Luxemburg writes with insight on the relationship between democracy under capitalism and the struggle for socialism. The workers in Russia, she says, struggle against “both capitalism and absolutism”. This class “only wants the forms of bourgeois democracy, but it wants them for itself, for the purposes of the proletarian class struggle. It wants the eight-hour day, the

people’s militia, the republic - demands that simply point to bourgeois society, not socialist. But these demands at the same time press so hard on the outermost borders of the rule of capital that they appear as transitional forms to a proletarian dictatorship” (quoted in *ibid* p60).

In her 1906 pamphlet *The mass strike* she mocks any suggestion that Germany requires a bourgeois revolution. The goal can only be “the dictatorship of the proletariat” (R Luxemburg *The mass strike* Colombo nd, p72). What Luxemburg means by this can be seen from her 1910 comments of Engels’ *Critique of the Erfurt programme*. She cites his demand for a democratic republic and writes of the proletariat “struggling for its dictatorship” again in terms synonymous with the conquest of political power (quoted in H Draper *The ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ from Marx to Lenin* New York 1987, p61).

Lastly Draper refers to Luxemburg’s agreement in 1917 with Trotsky’s call for the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia “supported by the peasants”. Draper contrasts this with Lenin’s Bolshevik slogan: the ‘revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’; and by extension the Menshevik perspective of a bourgeois revolution supported by the working class. We have dealt with this whole tangled dispute elsewhere and we shall touch upon it again later in this series (eg, J Conrad *Towards a Socialist Alliance party* London October 2001, chapter 9). Suffice to say, what is important for Draper is that Luxemburg writes of “a purely socialist government” as being the “actual and formal dictatorship of the proletariat” (quoted in H Draper *The ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ from Marx to Lenin* New York 1987, p62).

In short Luxemburg understands ‘dictatorship’ to mean ‘rule’. Others on the left thought about dictatorship in terms of crushing bourgeois counterrevolutionary opposition. She was hardly unaware of this necessity and freely discussed the problem on many occasions. However, as Draper stresses, “she did not” do so “under the rubric of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’” (*ibid* p63).

Luxemburg apart, misunderstanding the term ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ was the rule. Draper rightly declines to put this down to intellectual failure. People misunderstood because they wanted to misunderstand. They either held to earlier, elitist conceptions, or they were signalling their conciliation with bourgeois society and its cribbed and cramped parliamentary institutions. Hence they attacked or ignored Marx’s term in “accordance to their own leanings” (*ibid* p44).

Meantime, in the late 19th century and into the 20th century, the term ‘dictatorship’ gradually metamorphosed. Dictatorship came to mean tyranny and a denial of democracy. Every time the Marx-Engels position was quoted, its original meaning escaped more and more readers. Add to this the following. Blanquism, which first caused Marx to take up the term, has disappeared.

As a result the left in the workers’ movement implicitly or explicitly fielded what they claimed to be the Marx-Engels position in terms of the exceptional methods needed to overcome bourgeois reaction after the revolution. Others on the right rejected the dictatorship of the proletariat because they believed that terror, minority rule and abolishing rights had no place in the programme of a respectable socialism. Either way, the actual Marx-Engels position disappears beneath the accumulated debris of two self-interestedly wrong interpretations.

Draper has no time for those who either credit or blame Lenin and Leninism for resurrecting the Marx-Engels position on dictatorship. But we must leave our discussion of the Russian movement and the politics of Lenin and Trotsky to the next article ●

What we fight for

- Our central aim is the organisation of all communists, revolutionary socialists and politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without such a party the working class is nothing; with it everything.
- The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many leftwing ‘parties’, but in reality most are mere confessional sects. Those who disagree with the prescribed ‘line’ are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.
- Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through the fullest, most open debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support democratically agreed actions, members have the right to form temporary or permanent factions.
- Communists are committed to building the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales and the Scottish Socialist Party into a single revolutionary party. Communists advocate the principle, ‘One state, one party’. We oppose every manifestation of sectionalism.
- Communists are internationalists. It is an internationalist duty to fight for revolution against the existing state. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state, then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions, a Socialist Alliance of the EU and a Communist Party of the EU.
- The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.
- Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.
- Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with pollution, exploitation, crisis and war. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist ‘socialism’ are reactionary and anti-working class.
- Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away through a parliamentary vote. They will resist, using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be ready to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.
- We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.
- Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.
- Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women’s oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.
- Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic, as with Stalin’s Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.
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Blackpool rumblings show potential

Unions oppose Blair as revolt develops

Two debates at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool saw a flexing of muscles by the trade unions for the first time in more than a few years. First there was the defeat for the government on the private finance initiative by 67% to 33%, followed by a fairly narrow victory for Blair on the question of the war drive against Iraq.

In the latter case, around 40% of the conference voted for complete rejection of the planned war. Though the motion passed was the standard social democratic fare insisting on the alleged authority of the UN in military action, which succeeded in mollifying enough trade union officials and delegates not to go the same way as the vote on PFI, nevertheless the results are a reflection of the growth of discontent, particularly in the trade unions, with the Blair government's aggressive warmongering and plans for semi-privatisation of large elements of public services in the guise of 'investment' and 'renewal'.

Indeed, particularly on the PFI vote, what was notable was that the majority against the government was to a considerable extent based on the trade unions - most constituency delegates voted for the government's position. This somewhat reverses what was often the situation in the past, where in the days of 'old Labour' union officialdom would use its block vote to defeat motions from left-wing constituency parties. Nowadays, thanks to the prolonged purging of the Labour left under Kinnock and Blair, and the pronounced shift in Labour's formal policies away from such nostrums as strong trade unions and public ownership, the unions' political centre of gravity has shifted well to the left of the constituency Labour Parties.

However, this should not be overstated. For instance, the trade union PFI motion, put in place after last-minute horse-trading and compositing on the urging of John Edmonds, centrist leader of the GMB, did not even explicitly condemn PFI. It merely called for an independent inquiry into whether it gave 'good value' for government money handed over to the various firms involved.

Thus, while the defeat for the government on this was an important symptom of a shift in the trade unions away from complete prostration before Blair, it is also important to note that we really have a long way to go before the unions act even as an effective force for defending their members against Blair's attacks. Certainly within the framework of New Labour, as 'modernised' by Blair and co, the leadership really has little to worry about in terms of any threat to its hegemony. Thus Brown was able to immediately make clear that he would simply ignore the vote on the proposed PFI inquiry.

What the government does have to worry about somewhat, though, is rising



John Edmonds: "good value"

hostility to its activities among the ranks of the trade unions themselves. The fact that such a normally servile rightwing bureaucrat as Edmonds, though in reality gutting the motion of any real principled position, nevertheless feels compelled to make serious-sounding noises against the government, is a sign of something shifting at the base of the trade unions. The fact that pro-Blair union leaders have proved virtually unelectable in union elections over the last couple of years have put people like Edmonds on notice that if they do not try to adapt to this new mood among ordinary union members, they will be ousted by them.

The election of Bob Crow in the RMT, Mark Serwotka in the PCS and, most shockingly for Blair, the defeat of arch-right-winger Ken Jackson in the newly merged Amicus union, whose dominant component is the former AEEU, bear witness to the new mood. The AEEU was at the heart of the rightwing bureaucratic forces that assisted Thatcher in inflicting a strategic defeat on militant trade unionism in the 1980s - a defeat which paved the way for the major shift to the right in the un-

ions and Labour Party, and which eventually brought Blair to power. Unseating Jackson from the top position in the Blairites' most important union stronghold is a key indicator of the beginning of a new

fluidity in British trade unionism and the politics that interacts with it: a real potential starting point for the recovery of the fighting capacity of the British working class if the correct political and organi-

sational lessons can be learned.

Indeed, a certain fear was palpable in the running of the conference. For the first time since Blair came to power in 1997 he has faced something like an effective revolt against his government. The PFI defeat was not unexpected, of course, though in fact the victory was purely symbolic - even if implemented, Edmonds' 'inquiry' would probably have been rigged by the government.

But defeat on Iraq would have been pretty damaging, in the lead-up to what is quite a big political risk. Blair is enthusiastically promoting a military venture with a US president whose support from his 'own' ruling class is far from unanimous - all kinds of leading US political figures, from Brent Scowcroft to Al Gore, have questioned Bush's wisdom in pursuing war with Iraq in current conditions. As some were reportedly asking in the lead-up to the debate, 'How did we manage to end up on Bush's side in an argument between him and Al Gore?'

Thus the Iraq debate was blatantly rigged by the platform - speaker after speaker got up to spout forth gushing praise for the government line on Iraq, while those who wished to speak against the war were deliberately not called, to the point where the bias looked simply ridiculous. The reaction to this control-freakery may in fact have fuelled the somewhat surprisingly high vote for the motion against the war.

But Blair is right to be nervous - knowing the high level of popular opposition to the war and the likelihood of that forcing its way through Labour's mass base, creating a catastrophically split party. The leadership has, for the moment, averted this, but last weekend's huge, 300,000-strong demonstration shows that there is enormous potential for the building of a movement capable of throwing Blair's whole project into the waste bin of history ●

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