

weekly **worker**



George Galloway: witch-hunted by Daily Telegraph or on Saddam's payroll?

- Iraq's shi'as move
- Greg Tucker interview
- SSP nationalism
- Beating the BNP

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Regime change begins at home

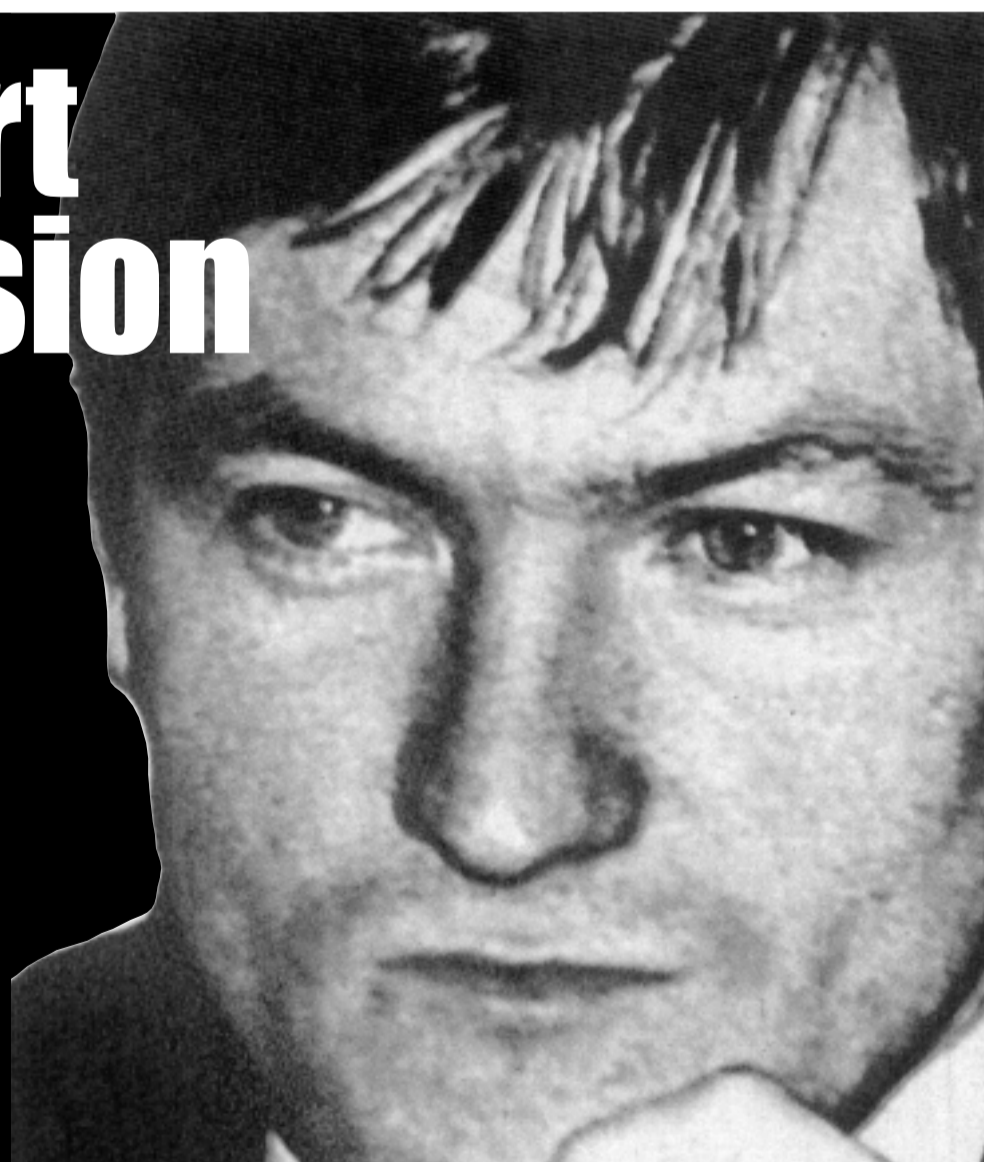
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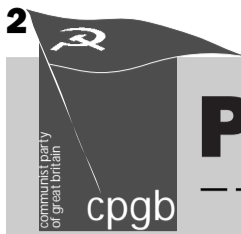
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Pat Finucane: victim of the British state

Stevens report reveals collusion with loyalist terror gangs

● **Michael Malkin looks at
the murky world of Special
Branch - see page 8**





PARTYnotes

Theory and practice

The anti-war movement drew many hundreds of thousands into direct political activity for the first time. That movement has momentarily faded from public view. But it has not disappeared. The 2003 anti-war generation is evaluating its experiences, weighing-up the lessons, looking at the various groups and factions and thinking about the big questions.

And there are plenty of big questions.

- If a two million-strong demonstration failed to halt war against Iraq what can? Why did the Stop the War Coalition doggedly pursue a numbers strategy?
- Why, when the majority of the population opposed the war, did Tony Blair and his government command such an overwhelming parliamentary majority? Can Britain really be described as fully democratic?
- What lies behind US attacks on rogue states? Is it oil?
- What causes war? Are all wars the same?
- Is there an alternative to capitalism?
- Has socialism failed? Were the Soviet Union and similar type societies the antithesis of socialism?
- How should anti-war activists organise after Gulf War II?
- Do we need a Communist Party? Under democratic centralism, should minorities be gagged in public? Should differences be kept secret?
- Etc, etc.

Undoubtedly Marxism alone provides satisfactory answers to these and the countless other such questions which are on the lips of the 2003 anti-war generation. Marxism - not its 'official communist' or 'official Trotskyite' perversions - but the authentic Marxism which shuns all dogmatism and is renewed and expanded through constant testing and investigation - is powerful for one simple reason. It is true.

That is why our organisation will be putting a particular emphasis, in the forthcoming period, on educating our ranks in Marxism and providing communist forums for the wider movement.

All geographically based Communist Party organisations are being asked to put on at least one public forum every month. Topics can, of course, vary considerably given local conditions and sudden and unexpected developments. A useful starting point would be taking a particular keynote article in the *Weekly Worker* as the basis for a short opening and a general discussion and debate. Any comrade worth their salt can easily do that.

Reaching out to the new generation is the main thing. Undoubtedly it will not be easy or quick. Patience is required. So is imagination. But the rewards for the whole communist and anti-war movement will be enormous and enduring.

The ongoing process of Marxist education and debate finds a particularly intense expression at this year's Communist University over August 2-9. The intention is not to preach. Every educator needs education and



Anti-war movement: thinking

re-education. There must be an honest dialogue and the enlightening clash of different viewpoints.

Our aim is to promote and generalise a mature, civilised, Marxist culture in which no serious leftwing viewpoint is shunned, silenced or dismissed as unworthy of proper consideration. That impoverished approach - epitomised by the Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Party in England and Wales, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, etc - has damaged, discredited and disgraced the left for too long. These comrades ritualistically debate ... but only with forces *safely* to their right. Communist University 2003, by contrast, features not only well known CPGB names but a whole range of other leftwing voices too.

We earnestly desire the unity of the left. Fragmentation does no good, except for the enemies of socialism. Not diplomatic unity though. Unity that lasts, unity that is not merely a lowest common denominator marriage of convenience, cannot be built on suppressing, ignoring or belittling differences. Argument and hard polemics are vital to any serious rapprochement between communists and revolutionary socialists. Indeed argument and hard polemics are essential if we are to achieve and sustain unity that is revolutionary. For anyone who might doubt, take a look at Bolshevism. The history of Bolshevism was of endless argument, the clash of differing opinions, schisms and unifications.

Any 'party' which routinely projects an unquestioned leadership and seamless unanimity is not worthy of the title 'party'. Such an organisation is nothing more than a bureaucratic sect. A primitive form of political low-life which is neither capable of absorbing nor sustaining the vibrant, questioning and self-activating mass produced by the anti-war movement.

While it is correct to strive for theoretical clarity, that is done with a straightforward aim - the unity of communists *in practice*. That for us is primary. Communists do not offer platonic answers, explanation for its own sake. Far more worthwhile than any speculation is actually struggling

to carry through practical changes in the real world. That is the only way to advance theory that is *revolutionary* and reveal what is useful and what is useless.

Practice not only steels individuals. It highlights the true significance of theoretical differences. What is secondary, what is fundamental can only be properly judged in the light of joint work in which all energies are pooled and all talents valued.

Pundits, academics and religious gurus offer various, competing, interpretations of events. Marxists, by contrast, organise to actually bring about the complete overturn of all existing social conditions. Marxism unites profound theoretical insights into the nature of reality with a boundlessly energetic drive to bring about a profoundly better, thoroughly human, world.

Communists therefore fully involved themselves in the anti-war movement. We had no time for those who loftily abstained from the living struggle of millions using 'sophisticated' excuses - SWP domination, *Morning Star* promotion of popular front politics, the Muslim Association of Britain, etc.

By the same measure, faced by the ugly reality of Britain's quasi-democracy, communists are duty bound to come out with a programmatic answer - eg, a federal republic and extreme democracy. But they also do all in their power to bring about that aim. Equally we might second guess which country US imperialism will attack next. However our main, overriding, task is to build a powerful party, a Communist Party, which unites all advanced workers, all revolutionary socialists, all anti-war activists, including those in the Labour Party, on the basis of freedom of debate and unity in action. Without such a party nothing permanent can be achieved.

Such a party fights not simply to stop this or that war. Communists dedicate themselves to finally ending the capitalist system which engenders modern war and threatens to engulf the whole planet in an orgy of perpetual destruction ●

Jack Conrad

LETTERS



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

Regroup

How can the tiny Trotskyist and semi-Trotskyist groups, and indeed any half-way genuine Leninist-Trotskyist grouping, relate to the huge anti-war movement that is now in evidence?

A massive anti-war movement exists, but the forces of revolutionary socialism are weak and seemingly too feeble (not through lack of trying) to offer a way forward to it. The Socialist Workers Party is probably the only organisation that is big enough to make an impact. If a breakthrough could be made in terms of its internal organisational norms, this might be a possible locus for regroupment of the left. There is certainly no hope for tiny groupuscules.

We simply *have* to regroup. If the SWP were to change its rules, allowing tendencies to exist, and embracing the concept of international democratic centralism, this would be a big step forward.

To complicate matters, there is this resurgent muddleheaded left-liberal/anarchist/autonome layer that simply echoes and parrots the conventional anti-communist lies of the right wing about the history of Leninism and Bolshevism; and to make matters worse, international democratic-centralism is now a dirty word in many ex-Trotskyist quarters - like the USFI (and of course the British SWP/IST has never really accepted this idea up to now. I wish it would.

The USFI has just rewritten its rules to make it explicitly clear that local sections can basically do as they please without even any consultation with the international organisation. And the USFI Brazilian section has just joined the Lula government, committing the same stupid popular frontist error as the POUM during the Spanish civil war. The recent USFI world congress decided, in its wisdom, to give them a pat on the back rather than try to make them see that they had committed a classic popular frontist betrayal. This was despite the fact that many people criticised them at the congress and despite the fact that some in the Brazilian section are genuinely trying to limit the damage.

No one is arguing that international socialist organisations should order their local sections around like the tin-pot despots of the Comintern (or indeed the old ICFI/OCRFI of Healy-Lambert), but the USFI has now fallen, completely, into the opposite, left-liberal, hole.

The original conception of international democratic centralism in Lenin and Trotsky's time, was never one of bureaucratic centralism as it later became under Stalin. It was a relationship of political dialogue, political counselling and guidance, based on positions arrived at democratically by international delegate meetings. Only in the case of open betrayals of the class was disciplinary action contemplated. National sections are always vulnerable to local chauvinistic pressures. That is the very reason why it is essential that socialists should establish an international organisation from day one. If there were only five revolutionary socialists in the whole of the world, they should immediately form an international tendency, wrote Trotsky in the early 1930s.

An example of real democratic centralism was the correspondence between Trotsky and his supporters in Britain in the early 30s over the question of entry into the Independent Labour Party. I do not have the exact quote, but the drift of Trotsky's approach was that we cannot issue "a bare instruction" about what you must do, but we ask you to consider the following arguments. It is all there in Trotsky's writings on Britain, available at the Trotskyist Internet Archive.

We have to rescue the concept of democratic centralism from the disingenu-

ous caricatures presented, not just by left-liberal bourgeois democrats and anarchist muddleheads, but also by ex-Trotskyists. Democratic centralism is an essential weapon to strengthen the ranks of the left. Those who lie about what it means do a disservice to the workers movement.

The CPGB, and the Trotskyist left in general, should be more active than it is in sticking its oar into discussions about this and other questions, in the alternative, non-corporate newsmedia websites like UK Indymedia - even if it means doing a quick cut and paste job from our own publications. That is the very least we can do. If we want to develop something from the huge anti-war movement, we have to fight the left-liberal/anarchist blockheads tooth and nail in arenas like this where many anti-war activists are looking for answers.

John Petty
email

Fallacious

It would have been helpful if comrade Julian Lewis (letters April 10), had explained a little more clearly what my "fallacious logic" actually was and what it is I need to "come off".

Let us consider the Socialist Workers Party's approach to the very real question of how the anti-war forces should organise themselves tactically.

What is required is to pose the Marxist understanding of necessity. While there is plenty of access to information via the capitalistic bourgeois media outlets - ie, the BBC, ITV, numerous national newspapers and so forth - what approach should socialist take to this?

Simply to call on people to watch another capitalistic bourgeois media station like Al Jazeera, with an Arabic outlook, is disastrous politics. What is required is to call for and actively engage in developing our own capacity to have daily newspapers, television stations and radio outlets.

This is my central charge against the SWP - that they fail to raise these reasonable demands with working people, not only practically as an immediate task for the working class, but also theoretically. Only once the working class not only addresses but masters these questions is there any possibility of a revolutionary situation being forced on to the agenda of mainstream politics.

James Frazer
Manchester

Atrocities

In recent weeks one international peace activist in the occupied territories of Palestine was killed and two others maimed. All were working with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM).

Rachel Corrie, 23 - killed while trying to protect a Palestinian doctor's home from demolition, was run over twice by an Israeli bulldozer. Brian Avery, 23 - shot in the face by a tank-mounted Israeli machine gun while standing still with both hands raised. Tom Humdall, 22 - in a coma after being shot once in the head from an Israeli watchtower. He was escorting three small children to safety. All three peacemakers were easily identifiable and wearing fluorescent vests at the time of their death/wounding.

ISM uses non-violent, direct action to confront and challenge the illegal occupation (www.palsolidarity.org).

Tom Trottier
Ottawa

Manipulation

I write to raise concerns about the Socialist Workers Party's manipulation of the anti-war movement in Cambridge.

Cambridge has two established anti-war organisations, for the city and for the students. Members of the SWP have also

set up their own organisation, which they run under the banner of the Stop the War Coalition.

However, although it benefits from association with a national brand-name, it makes no pretence at coalition, or indeed at any activity that is not directly related to increasing SWP membership. Meetings are not publicly advertised, and those not considered contacts are refused details.

At their one public meeting, an active member of the local anti-war movement, who had been a delegate to the Stop the War Coalition People's Assembly in London, was literally barred entry. Although they have been prominent on the day of local demonstrations, they have done nothing to help promote them. In fact they have tried to argue against them taking place, attempted to undermine them by misrepresenting the organisers, and even resorted to personal character smears.

Our biggest demonstration here was on March 8, with an attendance of around 1,500. Three days before, a leading SWP activist and local Stop the War Coalition organiser, who had previously disparaged the idea of a demonstration at all, attempted to prevent one of the convenors of the demonstration from speaking to a rally of striking school students.

The SWP is not "building a mass movement" (Bobby Blazer, Letters, April 17) - Blair and Bush have done that - but they are attempting to exploit it in a very damaging way. Bobby Blazer may also be interested to learn that it is only recently that the SWP has accepted the arguments of others on the left and woken up to the fact that we are indeed fighting imperialism.

The type of politics we have witnessed is not unique to the SWP in Cambridge. Those who indulge in it rely on the readiness of the majority to dismiss all left politics as typically 'Life of Brian' and any criticism, however legitimate, as a danger to 'unity', but if these antics are allowed to go unchallenged, the potential of the whole anti-war movement will be badly damaged. As we take stock and prepare ourselves for the next stage of the fight against the new imperialism, we need to look critically at our own anti-war movement.

Sarah Glynn
Cambridge

Fighting fund

Last week

We are now entering the last week of April. Thankfully there has been something akin to a small flood of donations. Our £500 fund - which stood at £162 - has now soared to a much more healthy £348. So the target is in sight.

Thanks this week go to comrades MM (£20), TT (£20), JP (£15), DL (£10) and the shrapnel collected from *Weekly Worker* street sales. Our comrades are routinely asking for a £1 'solidarity' price.

In particular though I must single out comrade VB for her splendid £100 cheque. The comrade writes that she has been reading the paper for exactly a year now. She is "deeply impressed" by its "honesty" and commitment to the "principled unity of the left". The comrade has also ordered an extra four copies to sell and distribute to contacts and friends.

Frankly we need more a lot more readers of this type. Selling the *Weekly Worker* has never been easier. Nor has it ever been more necessary. The war against Iraq is over. The next US invasion is only a matter of time.

Our movement needs solid organisation. It also needs a source of hon-

Aaronovitch

I agree with Eddie Holland (Letters April 17). You should seriously rethink. Yes, David Aaronovitch - once a Communist Party member and spawn of the *Marxism Today* journal - is recommending the *Weekly Worker* to his *Guardian* readers (including no doubt MI5). But as they say - by their friends ye shall know them.

You act as an unpaid (?) spy for the enemies of socialism. No wonder Aaronovitch is so appreciative. If you are capable of thinking - and I doubt it - you should urgently re-think. When some like Aaronovitch sings your praises it is time to ask some serious questions.

You expend most of your energies attacking others on the left such as the Socialist Workers Party and Tommy Sheriden's Scottish Socialist Party, etc. Instead you should try attacking the real enemy - New Labour, US imperialism and capitalism.

Robert Gould
e-mail

Labour left

With reference to "Debating the next move" (April 10), the discussion list for Labour Left Briefing (www.groups.yahoo.com/group/LLB_readers), makes interesting reading for understanding the war's impact on the Labour left. It is also good as a general source for developments in Labour, and how the left should relate to them.

Phil Hamilton
Stoke-on-Trent

Absurd

It is absurd to think that, having been beaten inside the Labour Party, the answer for the left is to form yet another splinter party. If it is possible to win general elections in the big world outside the Party it is obviously easier to win within the Labour Party first.

If you cannot turn Labour into a Labour party, how on earth could you turn the country into a socialist republic?

Comet Joyce
email

Choices

In recent articles and letters we have witnessed many an argument about

whether we support UK-US imperialism or Saddam in Gulf War II.

In my opinion it should be the policy of this party, and indeed of the left, to declare no support for the UK-US or 'rogue states' and focus upon the fact that it is a weakness to feel obliged to 'choose sides'. In fact all these nations are capitalist states and therefore the natural enemy of communism and the party. So here I am declaring no support for capitalist nations and their wars.

The question is, do I stand alone?
James Campy
Wakefield

UN to vote

The UN will vote, for the first time in its history, on the issue of homosexual human rights. The landmark vote takes place on Wednesday, April 23, at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its 59th session in Geneva. The resolution 'Human rights and sexual orientation' has been introduced by Brazil with support from various countries, including members of the European Union, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

As I said when I first lobbied the UN for a commitment to gay equality over 30 years ago: "All previous attempts to debate gay human rights in the UN have been vetoed by homophobic governments". So this is the first-ever UN resolution on lesbian and gay human rights. It is a historic milestone in the global struggle for queer freedom.

More than 70 countries have a total ban on homosexuality, with punishments including imprisonment, flogging, hanging and beheading. Same-sex relations are punishable by execution in seven countries: Chechnya, Iran, Iraq, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen. Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia and Pakistan penalise gay people with maximum sentences ranging from three to 20 years jail. In Mexico, El Salvador, Columbia and Brazil right-wing death squads target gay people for assassination in what they call 'social cleansing' campaigns.

Police harassment and brutality against lesbians and gay men is particularly harsh in Russia, Turkey, India, Uganda and Jamaica. No international human rights convention explicitly recognises gay human rights. Many outlaw discrimination based on race, sex, religion, language and political opinion, but none guarantee equal treatment for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Up to now, the UN has ignored the persecution of gay people. According to international human rights laws, we don't exist and we have no rights.

This vote will, hopefully, begin to challenge the discrimination and violence that blights the lives of hundreds of millions of lesbians, gays and bisexuals world wide.

Peter Tatchell
London

ACTION

CPGB London seminar

Sunday April 27: 'Failure of the New Left' using Istvan Meszaros' *Power of ideology* as a study guide
Phone 07950 416 922 for details.

CPGB Manchester seminar

Monday April 28, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (behind Central Library). 'Plekhanov and other Russians', using Hal Draper's *The dictatorship of the proletariat from Marx to Lenin* as a study guide.

Sutton: Iraq, the war and after

Public rally, Friday April 25, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 10 Cedar Road, Sutton. Speakers: Paul Burstow MP; Jane Shallice STWC; Hani Lazim and others. Organised by Sutton for Peace and Justice.

Greenwich: End the US occupation

Public rally: US-UK out of the Middle East - No to the occupation. Tuesday April 29, 7.30pm, The Forum, corner of Trafalgar Road/Christchurch Way. Organised by Greenwich STWC. Speakers: Tony Benn, Lindsey German, Dr Siddiqui (Muslim Parliament of Britain), Kate Hudson (CND). Tickets: £3/£1 concessions, from Ben on 07971 593 947.

Artists Against the War

'Shock and awe' cabaret at The Cockpit Theatre, London. April 28, May 8, 12 and 26.
www.shockandawe.org.uk

May Day actions

London: Demonstration supported by TUC and Stop the War Coalition on Thursday May 1: Assemble 12noon at Clerkenwell Green, march to Trafalgar Square.

Weapons of Mass Construction, Thursday May 1, from 2pm onwards, High Holborn and Endell St, WC1. Assemble at Lockheed Martin, corner of High Holborn and Endell Street. Critical Mass bike ride. Meet up at Home Office, Birdcage Walk. All converge at Shell UK, Strand, WC2. See <http://mclondon.enrager.net> for more details.

Manchester: March and rally on Saturday May 3: Assemble 12.30, Chamberlain Square, march through city centre.

Anti-racist march

Manchester anti-racist day, Saturday April 26, 10.30am, Castlefield Basin, Liverpool Road. Called by Unison. Rally and music, 12noon onwards, Albert Square. Concert in Apollo, 7pm onwards, with Chumbawamba, Alabama 3 and others. More details from www.anl.org.uk or www.northemandus.org.

Love Music Hate Racism gig

Sunday April 27, Burnley Mechanics, 3pm-11pm, with Basement Jaxx, Tim Westwood, Heartless Crew and others.

Socialist Alliance annual conference

Saturday May 10, 10am to 5pm, Islington Green School, London. For details phone 020 7791 3138 or go to www.socialistalliance.net.

Free Palestine national rally

Saturday May 17, 1.30pm, Trafalgar Square, London. Called by Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

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 rdgroup@yahoo.com.

www.cpgb.org.uk/action

Communist University

August 2 - 9 2003, London

Places are limited. Reserve your place now by sending a cheque for £20 to the CPGB address.

full week (self-catering accomodation): £130/£85 unwaged
first weekend (incl. one night's accomodation): £30/£20
one day (sessions only): £15/£8,

This annual school will be debating a whole range of issues to do with the Iraq war including:

- new American century and the myth of post-imperialism
- the aftermath of the US-UK conquest
- rogue states and why they were invented
- fighting for defeat: Leninism and war
- Socialist Alliance and Iraq: did it meet the test?



FASCISM

Anti-Nazi League -
www.anl.org.uk

Fundamentally dishonest

With the generalised hostility toward asylum seekers and the absence of a credible left electoral alternative in England and Wales, the British National Party seems likely to do well in the upcoming local elections in May. It comes as no surprise to learn that the Anti-Nazi League (one of the Socialist Workers Party's many fronts) has upped the campaigning tempo to keep the 'Nazis' of the BNP and National Front out of office.

Visiting the website, it does look as if the SWP's webmaster has had a hand in its garish design (*Weekly Worker* December 19). Someone should tell the comrade that grey and yellow just does not go at the best of times. Under the heading 'Don't vote Nazi 2003', there's a link to a list of fascist candidates. This is certainly useful in providing details of where the BNP, NF, and Freedom Party are standing, and a link to the previous year's results. Certain areas have an action link, taking us to a section of the main page where 'don't vote Nazi' campaigning materials can be downloaded in pdf format.

Next in this section is 'news', providing information about recent ANL activities (the site was last updated on April 17) and setbacks. At the time of writing, the two chief features are reports about the BNP failure to hold a pre-election meeting at a Liverpool school, and a story about a BNP supporter having to withdraw his candidature at his mum's insistence. There is also an archive of related material going back to March 1999.

The rest of the opening section allows one to jump to other sections of the main page, which is a good job really, considering it is 17 screens in length. First up is 'It's time to fight the Nazis'. This piece holds no surprises for comrades familiar with the ANL's liberal anti-fascism, and dwells on the need to expose the BNP as nasty Nazis. At one point it makes the ludicrous claim, "we smashed Mosley's blackshirts in the 1930s", and somewhat contentiously takes the laurels for the NF's and BNP's decline in the late '70s and early '90s respectively.

Scrolling down past an announcement for a recent ANL action and upcoming gigs, there's 'Organise to stop the BNP'. This gives seven bullet points on how

to deal with a fascist presence, ranging from letter writing to the press to gathering intelligence.

The top bar carries more material. First is an introduction that sums up everything that is wrong with the ANL's approach to anti-fascism. Their aim is "to stop the Nazis reaching a wider audience and growing. This is done by pinning the label of Nazi clearly on the likes of the BNP and NF." This is backed up by the ANL's online education pack, an unfortunate exercise in half truth and shoddy scholarship. For example, 'What is fascism?' merely talks about the actions of Mussolini and Hitler and makes no attempt at explaining their rise to power.

The piece on scapegoating is of a similar ilk. There is no attempt at understanding its material causes, instead preferring to heap it at the door of Britain's band of fascists (what about the role of the press and New Labour?). 'Who are Britain's Nazis?' is hopelessly out of date (it was last updated three years ago). Also, pastor Niemoeller's famous "first they came for the communists" has been dishonestly changed, no doubt to make it more acceptable to the likes of cabinet minister Peter Hain, who still sits on the ANL steering committee.

One redeeming feature of the site is a good selection of links. There are domestic and international holocaust and anti-fascist links. I was surprised to see the ANL's most voracious critics - Anti-Fascist Action - listed, as well as the BNP themselves.

As a website it is functional and there are far worse sites out there, but as a resource for anti-fascists it is hopeless. The organisation of the poor quality material is informed by a fundamentally dishonest approach. For example, browsing through the news archives I noted how the 2002 news ended at February. I had to use the site's search engine to turn up any material on the BNP's five local election victories, and that was in a throwaway line exhorting us to fight 'the Nazis'. If the ANL is committed to telling the truth about the BNP, it should begin by honestly acknowledging the latter's success. Only then can it begin to plot an effective strategy, instead of running around after the fascists ●

Phil Hamilton

around
THEWEB

Lesser evilism

The British National Party is standing a record number of candidates in the forthcoming local elections in England. According to the Anti-Nazi League, the BNP are contesting 217 electoral wards; they themselves claim variously 219 and 221.

Whatever the exact number, both the BNP and their opponents clearly view this as a significant bid by the party. The BNP's web-site proudly proclaims the "biggest push for council seats in the history of the party". It confidently asserts that 2003 is the year when they will "break through." Predictably this has led to the customary indignant outbursts, emanating from both the political mainstream and, of course, from some of our comrades on the revolutionary left. The SWP has moved with customary speed, swiftly swapping their Stop the War placards for those of the Anti-Nazi League.

Local elections - which determine control over the almost powerless borough councils - are heavily influenced

by how the electorate regard parties in terms of big national and international issues. Recent political events - most notably the invasion of Iraq and the continuing presence of British troops as an army of occupation - will doubtless affect the fortunes of parties in the local elections.

The war has polarised opinion and politicised many; and these elections are the first chance the public has to pass judgement in the ballot box. The Labour Party, Tories and Liberal Democrats demonstrated how out of touch they are with the people of Britain. The way opposition to the war was brazenly ignored highlighted the lack of democracy inherent in the British constitutional monarchy system. It is likely then that discontentment with established politics will manifest itself in a low turnout and increased support for extreme parties.

Set against this backdrop, and combined with their opposition to the war on Iraq, the BNP have the potential to do well and gain seats.

How should the left respond to this prospect? As communists we are opposed to just about everything that the BNP stands for; they are irredeemably obnoxious and reactionary. Their creed is hatred and intolerance. A knee-jerk desire to confront and oppose them with the boot and the fist is understandable. However, we are not creatures of mere instinct. Communists have a coherent vision of our ultimate aim, and we must make swift tactical changes in order to further the struggle.

To make correct tactical decisions we must understand the nature of what we oppose. Nick Griffin, BNP leader, has unambiguously declared his intention: "We're here to win votes and power". With this in mind, the BNP have attempted to camouflage their true character in a shameless attempt to gain votes. Griffin admits to overt populism. He writes that he wants people to feel "either pleasure or amazement" that they agree with "pretty much everything" the BNP says. That the BNP is "just another party". That everything

Racism, Nazism and fighting fascism

There is a loss of clarity every time the terms 'fascist', 'Nazi', and 'racist' are used interchangeably. Furthermore, these terms risk dissolving into the vague, purely pejorative, term applied to any form of dictatorship, or even to anything that is disliked by the left. In the introduction to the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx derided the use of the word 'communist' as a general term of abuse. These three words seem to be heading the same way. For the sake of understanding history and accurately locating present dangers 'fascist', 'Nazi' and 'racist' need to be rescued and if possible returned to more exact meanings.

Fascism takes its name from the *fascies*: a bundle of twelve rods, bound around an axe, which was used as a symbol of authority in the Roman empire. The term and the symbol were adopted by Benito Mussolini, and became the banner of the Fascist party, formed in 1921, which was to become all powerful in Italy.

The underlying political doctrine is difficult to explain, because it was a mixture of so many different elements and contained much which was irrational or even anti-rational. It relied on the absolute centralisation of power. No one man can administer an entire nation, but Mussolini came as close as he could, taking control of individual government department after department in addition to his official role as prime minister. He was *il duce*, the leader, and around him was the Fascist Grand Council. Stretching beyond that, all under his direct authority, was a sprawling party mechanism which reached into every aspect of Italian life. It was corrupt, inefficient ... but murderous.

Interestingly, though, it was initially regarded with tolerance by the other European imperial powers and their bourgeois intellectuals. Their view has condensed over time into the now notorious claim that Mussolini "made the trains run on time": a task he accomplished through a programme of physical terror and shoot-

ings. Nevertheless, he was regarded as preferable to the chaos and paralysis of the existing liberal democracy in Italy.

Central to fascism was the destruction of the independent labour movement. Unions were crushed, and reformed into professional organisations within the state controlled 'corporative system'. In the process, they became the opposite of what they had been: a means of maintaining state power over workers, rather than asserting the power of workers against existing society.

National chauvinism

The nationalism and anti-working class ideology of the fascists stood in stark contrast to Mussolini's background. The young Benito was an outspoken revolutionary socialist, and referred to himself as an 'anti-patriot'. He was the editor of several socialist journals, and a leading figure in the Italian Socialist Party. World War I marked his transition into a full blown national chauvinist and soon a determined counterrevolutionary.

Nazism is a particular German form of fascism. The word 'Nazi' is an Orwellian contraction of 'national socialist'. The National Socialist German Worker's Party was one of many similar, tiny groups which sprang up in Germany during the troubled, liberal Weimar republic established after German imperialism's defeat in World War I. Adolf Hitler was a young corporal and highly decorated for an NCO. His early political thinking seems to have been ardently nationalist, and vaguely anti-communist, but extremely confused. In *Mein Kampf* (my struggle) he claims that initially he despised the anti-semitism of much of the German nationalist press, being opposed to the division of Germans by religion. Later, he was to embrace a hatred of the jews with a passion to which history bears tragic testament.

National socialism is yet harder to describe than Mussolini's fascism. At its heart was an apparent fixation with the

'volk', a word rendered in English as 'people' but without the curious intensity of the original. Hitler wrote that while the liberal was concerned with the individual, and the communist with humanity, the national socialist fought for the rights of the volk.

A bizarre Nazi pseudo-science categorised the world into a hierarchy of races: the 'aryans' at the pinnacle, the slavs, blacks, gypsies and jews at the bottom: but little of this or any other Nazi doctrine was supported by any hard evidence. The Nazis aimed to build an ideology and identity to which they could enslave minds, which had sufficient dark, psychological appeal. To this end, they created a syncretism which included everything from the music of Wagner to revived Odinism.

As the name of the movement suggests, the economic programme of the Nazis was initially superficially leftist. The hatred of the jews was intensified by their association with German capital: a propaganda ploy which was lent a veneer of plausibility by the prosperity of some jewish families in the German middle and ruling classes when so many suffered grinding poverty. Gregor Strasser, at one time Hitler's rival for the leadership of the Nazi party, considered himself a revolutionary socialist. He bitterly opposed Hitler's attempts to win the backing of German capital for the party, and was finally killed by the Gestapo in 1934.

Suppression

As the Italian fascists had done, the Nazis ruthlessly suppressed the communist and independent labour movements. Capital under the Hitler Reich operated in a weirdly controlled way, but continued to exercise essentially the same form of economic exploitation of the working class as it had done under the republic. While the bourgeoisie had to cope with Hitler's randomly draconian decrees, which for instance at one point simply banned the laying off of workers, any in-

and beating the BNP

about the BNP is “normal”. Having eased the potential new recruit in gently, they may then be introduced to “the principles of modern ethnic nationalism and the long-term aims of the BNP” (*The BNP: anti-asylum protest, racist sect or power-winning movement?*).

Consequently, the BNP’s election manifesto contains deliberately ambiguous policies such as ‘asylum clampdown’ and ‘equal treatment’ in amongst all-purpose populist slogans against taxation, corruption and bureaucracy. With an eye on potential green voters they are also standing on the policy of “no waste disposal charges.” As an aside, the BNP is very complimentary about the Green Party, praising the emphasis that it puts on the environment - an issue that is “sadly lower down the popular, political agenda than [it] deserves”!

Fascism and Nazism have always had more than their fair share of rightwing nature lovers who like to view the majority of human beings as something

akin to vermin. The BNP, in common with many other reactionary movements, is regressive and parochial. Their vision is based upon a mythical golden age; they want a land of rolling pastures, of ruddy-faced farmers and friendly local greengrocers. They hearken to a time when Britain was ‘great’ and every face was that of a stolid Anglo-Saxon. Those who point out that Britain has always been a mixing-pot of cultures are denounced as “neo-Marxist academic and media prostitutes” (which sounds quite appealing!), or thralls to the “dogmatic liberal elite”.

BNP ideology is confused, irrational and based on fabrications. But the BNP’s racism and extreme chauvinism has to be taken seriously because it gives them a populist edge. The *Daily Mail* and the Tory front bench have made great play in exploiting resentment against migrants and especially asylum seekers. The BNP, for its part, wants an “all-white Britain.” It wants to close Britain’s borders to incomers.

The idea that Britain is overpopulated is widespread almost to the point of being common sense.

However the BNP also wants to remove anyone who is a “non-white European,” regardless of their country of birth. Those who refuse to leave will be regarded as “permanent guests,” rather than full British citizens, a chilling euphemism. The BNP reserve their worst bile for those who choose to live with or to have children with a person whose skin colour is different from their own. Nick Griffin claims that ‘miscegenation’ is an act of genocide. He even claims there are “moral and sentimental grounds” for refusing to eat Chinese and Indian takeaways and not supporting sports teams with non-white players.

The left’s traditional response to the BNP is best illustrated by the approach taken by the SWP and its Anti-Nazi League front. Symptomatic of a ‘broader the better’ approach, the ANL campaigns against the BNP in purely negative terms. They exhort electors

with the timeless slogan: ‘Don’t vote Nazi’. As if the majority had ever done such a thing. Or that those tempted to vote for the BNP had not been driven to desperation by the failures and betrayals of the mainstream parties. Seen in that light, the ANL is a campaign designed to bring back electors to their traditional fold. Without a positive programme the ANL therefore becomes part of the problem. Not the answer.

The SWP-ANL rallying cry of ‘Don’t vote Nazi’ is sheer ‘lesser-evilism.’ Seeing their priority as denying support to the BNP they are willing to serve not only the Labour Party, a bourgeois workers’ party, but the Liberal Democrats and Tories. The underlying message is, ‘vote for any other party, just don’t vote BNP.’ Presented with the choice between Labour and Conservative policies on immigration or the BNP, the ANL advocates support for the lesser evil. It has even played with calling upon the state to ban the BNP - a hostage to fortune if ever there was.

As communists we do not advocate the politics of the lesser evil. We champion independent working class politics.

The Socialist Alliance quite clearly represents a step forward for the SWP and the left as a whole. But it will get nowhere simply as an electoral front. Unless the Socialist Alliance develops a fully rounded programme - a revolutionary not a reformist programme - and becomes an effective and rooted political party of the working class, it will find itself outvoted and outmanoeuvred by the BNP time and time again.

The BNP is a disease triggered by the decay of the post-World War II social democratic project. Tackling the disease can only be done effectively by going to the cause. If the state banned the BNP, that would not eliminate racism, chauvinism and sectionalist prejudice. Nor can social democracy be revived. What is required is the fight for communism ●

Jeremy Butler



Without a positive programme the ANL becomes part of the problem

dependent working class organisation to oppose capital was crushed.

There can be no question that Nazi ideology was racist in the purest sense, but Mussolini’s fascists in Italy only slowly adopted their anti-semitism, and then under the greatest pressure from Hitler himself. Neither is every form of racism equivalent to Nazism. British colonialism excused slavery and conquest on the basis of a vague racism. The US slavocracy systematised a pseudo-science of race. Till recently Australia regulated inward migration according to racist categories and criteria.

The close association of Italian fascism and German Nazism lies mainly in World War II. Mussolini committed Italy to support Germany, forming the ‘axis’. Moreover, there can be no question that Hitler admired Mussolini during his early career, even visiting him before finally achieving power. It is also clear that the men recognised some common purpose in their regimes. However, it is worth noting that other fascists in Europe, notably Franco in Spain who both Italy and Germany had helped into power, never joined the axis. All these regimes had separate, and sometimes conflicting,

nationalist programmes.

The real connection lies in the similarities surrounding both the Italian fascist and the German Nazi ascent to power. The Russian 1917 revolution inspired the workers’ movement throughout Europe. In Spain, Germany, and Italy, unstable parliamentary democracies were facing huge pressure from both sides: both reactionary and communist. There was also hyper inflation and mass unemployment. A revolutionary situation presented itself, and the attempt to establish stable capitalist states on the British model floundered.

Fearing for its survival, the ruling class turned to ultra-reactionary movements. Using unofficial fighting formations - recruited from the petty bourgeoisie, lumpen proletariat and the socially dislocated - such a movement could violently crush its opponents on the streets. So fascism is counterrevolution of a particular sort. Counterrevolution which comes to power through a combination of mobilising mass discontent and physical force. Once in power fascism rids itself of its plebeian fighting formations, integrates them into the state machine and operates as a bureaucratic dictatorship

along the lines of bonapartism.

Fascism, whatever its particular national name or path of evolution, is therefore the antithesis of the revolutionary movement: a very direct opposite, almost a reflection, and ultimately an alternative future to communism if the working class is defeated. It is not accidental that Mussolini was previously a socialist, or that the Nazis initially invoked the name of socialism. Their movements thrive on conditions which pose the socialist revolution point blank.

Modern

In modern Europe, these conditions do not yet exist. The ruling classes will not risk the arbitrariness, volatility and gross inefficiency of such regimes unless their only other option is extinction. Hence the BNP - formerly a motley sect of Hitler worshipers and racist thugs - is busily reinventing itself under Nick Griffin. Like its counterparts on the European mainland stiff arm salutes, random violence and skinheads have given way to suits, cultural politics and the search for electoral popularity.

Some of their leadership doubtless see themselves as dictatorial leaders in waiting, but their activists are still chiefly badly educated and economically insecure individuals looking for a sense of belonging in the myths of British commonality.

No wonder then that the BNP is opportunist even in its racism. At one time, it offered guarded support to Arab nationalists on the grounds that they were enemies of Israel and thus were seen as allies in the anti-semitic cause. Now they run an overtly ‘anti-islam’ campaign to capitalise on the current tensions. They also appointed a half-Turkish ‘ethnic liaison’ officer to win support from some other groups, such as the hindus, for their opposition to islamic Arabs.

Both Mussolini’s fascism and Hitler’s national socialism arose from the failure of revolution. Their primary aim, dressed in whatever sado-masochistic inspired uniforms and salutes, was the crushing of the working class. The racism of the Nazis, though inexpressibly vile, was neither their *raison d’etre* nor the cause of their seizure of power. No anti-racist movement will defeat them should they rise into a national force: only the revolutionary working class.

In the meantime, we must protect our fellow workers of all races from lies, intimidation and attack, but not waste our time feeding BNP delusions of importance ●

Manny Neierra

REGROUPMENT

Greg Tucker is the national train crew grades secretary for the Rail, Maritime and Transport union. He recently won West Trains after being victimised for his political activity and demoted by SWT management. Greg is also a member Socialist Group. Marcus Ström spoke to him about the struggles on the rails, the anti-war movement and the shape of

On the tracks

First of all, congratulations on your reinstatement. What implications does this have for broader industrial disputes, particularly on the railways?

I've been driving again for about a month. Effectively the legal process came to a conclusion. Faced with a final tribunal hearing the company came up with a position that was acceptable. They clearly didn't want to go back into the tribunal, so we were legally able to conclude the dispute.

The legal side of it was just the culmination of the broader campaign that developed. It wasn't just that we were 'proved right in the law'. I would not have been reinstated if it wasn't for the more general campaign by the union - which included support from CGT and SUD rail workers in France.

It is unusual to have a full reinstatement of a union activist in this period. Why do you think it happened?

It was slightly easier because SWT never sacked me outright. They probably would have preferred to pay me the money and seen shot of me, but they didn't feel strong enough to sack me because of the campaigning work we did around the dismissal of Sarah Friday a while back. If they had sacked me they would have faced a serious industrial problem they couldn't have coped with.

The current round of national strikes by RMT guards over safety concerns has been particularly prominent because they have taken place while the United Kingdom was at war with Iraq. What other significance does this dispute have?

This has been a long dispute. It has been going on since 1996. As soon as British Rail was privatised, one of the first things the new train operating companies (TOCs) did was go to what was then Railtrack Safety - responsible for the railway rule book - and convince them that in order for them to be profitable there needed to be changes in the rules to give them the freedom to get rid of guards. We have been fighting as a union against those changes ever since.

This is not a campaign that has been turned on because of the war. Neither is it a campaign that can be turned off because of the war. There have been previous industrial actions. Train crews have been balloted for action in 1997, 1999, 2000 and 2001 when we have seen rail companies back down.

I understand the TOCs are divided on the issue.

What has made this dispute possible is that GNER and seven or eight other TOCs have essentially agreed with the RMT position and accepted our demands in terms of the safety role of guards on trains. This has divided the TOCs, which has been very positive from our point of view.

Each company has a different approach depending on the sorts of trains it operates: long-distance or suburban for example. It is easier for some companies to agree

terms with the RMT, depending on how they view their business models.

However, those companies continuing to stick out against the RMT safety demands are clearly doing it for political-industrial reasons rather than for technical-safety reasons. They want to take the union on and consider this is the way of doing it.

Given the near denouement of the FBU dispute and the success of the government in isolating the fire-fighters, what tactics do the guards need to ensure an acceptable settlement with the TOCs?

Our biggest problem is the fact that the TOCs are bankrolled by the government. There is a huge subsidy given to them in terms of losses on strike days. We need to up the stakes in terms of political campaigning.

The government makes no pretence of neutrality in this dispute. It does not limit its support for the operating companies to words alone. Blair's government is whacking in millions of pounds for any losses the companies suffer. This is outrageous.

It is not as if the RMT is being particularly intransigent. We have settled with almost half the companies. However, some companies want a dispute with us and being bankrolled by the government makes this a lot easier to do.

What happens next in this dispute?

In practical terms, four more days of industrial action have been set: May 6 and 7, then May 27 and 28. It is a matter of organising to make those strikes effective. That means dealing with the companies' scabbing tactics - bringing in management to act as guards.

My employer, South West Trains, is not involved in the dispute, but our managers are going off to work for Virgin Trains on strike days. This is one of the reasons we have decided to increase our actions to 48-hour strikes. For me the key point is the political question of how companies are allowed to get away with these scabbing tactics.

It seems that in this period strikes are taking on more of a political character. Media attention has certainly been due in part to the attack against Iraq and the positive role of Bob Crow and the RMT.

Railway disputes have always been quite political. It doesn't take long before we are dealing directly with issues of governmental concern. Our disputes have always had a political edge to them.

The union has been unequivocal in its opposition to the war. This dispute was not designed to cause problems during the war, but the RMT is not going to hold back because of the government's military adventures.

Yet having embarked on industrial action in this period, the 'forces of evil' will focus on us, so it automatically develops a political dimension whatever our intentions.

The anti-war movement has thrown up a degree of fluidity throughout



Greg Tucker: disputes with a political edge

the workers' movement as well as broader society. How well has the left responded to the challenge?

I have had no huge problems with the anti-war movement itself. There has been a problem in that we haven't had the resources in the Socialist Alliance to properly put our position forward. A great shame.

Instead, most political organisations have focused on their own efforts in relation to building the anti-war movement rather than seeing a way of using the overall political situation to make capital for the Socialist Alliance.

The RMT is at the centre of debates concerning the future of the trade union political fund and backing a political alternative to New Labour. Pat Sikorski - RMT assistant general secretary and former general secretary of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party - has though recently expressed caution over the Socialist Alliance.

There is a difficulty in separating out Pat's personal views and his views as a representative of the RMT. From the RMT's viewpoint, there is no question of just plumping for a new political organisation. There has to be a process.

In terms of the RMT, one must look to how we can open up the way in

which our political fund is operated, so that in the future we can support candidates from non-Labour Party organisations that support our policies.

The driving force in terms of the RMT comes down to what is going on in Scotland. There the Scottish Socialist Party has been more successful. Key RMT activists are standing as SSP candidates. There has not been this same level of exposure in England with the Socialist Alliance.

That means the RMT cannot put all its eggs in one basket. But the debate is moving along. RMT members consider that they are getting a pretty rotten deal out of the contract they have at present with the Labour Party.

This is not to say the union is ready to break its links with Labour. What it has done is rearrange its links with Labour - and this has been very positive. We now organise our parliamentary activity around a core of Labour MPs who actually support union policies. This has proved much more effective. But it is clearly not enough. It's one thing to support individuals, however at the end of the day you've got to support a political organisation. A process that must develop over time.

You were a Socialist Alliance candidate in the 2001 elections

RMT members consider that they are getting a pretty rotten deal out of the contract they have at present with the Labour Party

reinstatement to his job as a driver on South of the Socialist Alliance and the International the left



which directly led to your victimisation by SWT. Given the general fluidity on the left and in the workers' movement what future role do you think the Socialist Alliance has to play?

There is clearly a lot of turmoil. From the RMT's perspective, it can support the SSP but is unable to support the Socialist Alliance because it has failed to cut the same profile in England and Wales. It would be wrong to have that fight for SA support now in the RMT.

We have to build the alliance. Make it a more credible organisation. It must take on more of a party form. The political work of the different organisations on the left should go through the framework of the alliance. On the other hand, the SA is capable of playing a serious role in a debate with other forces that are not necessarily willing to join it directly but may well be able to have a discussion with us about how we shape the nature of politics on the left over the next few years.

Maybe it won't be the Socialist Alliance in two or three years' time. Maybe it will be a new political formation. But there is no contradiction between having that debate successfully and building the alliance at the same time.

I would hope that the Socialist Alli-

ance's May 10 annual conference will seriously debate the future. Even people who were burnt by the negative experience of the SLP are now becoming more amenable to discussions.

How do you see us extending that debate about regroupment into the Labour left?

Even if the SA is an electoral opponent of the Labour Party, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't be engaging with the Labour Party and attempting to work with it and engage in joint struggles. The SA shouldn't just be an electoral organisation. We should be a campaigning organisation that can work with the best elements inside the Labour Party.

I don't see many signs of the Labour left reviving. There were elements that had a strong anti-war position and that is commendable. However, Labour's structures don't allow them to express themselves in any meaningful way. There may have been a huge parliamentary rebellion, but that was more connected with direct external pressure rather from turmoil within the Labour Party. I'm not sure exactly what there is to engage with in a serious way in the sense that you could have 10 or 15 years ago.

The key is to ensure that we don't make electoral opposition a barrier to political collaboration ●

Aussie six

The statement below from non-aligned members of the Socialist Alliance in Australia will be of interest to readers in Britain. It points to a common malaise in the alliance in England and Wales as well as in the antipodes. Here the project is stalled. The partyism implicit in the unity of the left - however partial and incomplete - has been consciously halted by the unwillingness of the main supporting organisation to leave behind its sect existence. Hence the postponement of the Socialist Alliance annual conference till safely after Gulf War II was over.

The Australian statement, with six initial signatories and now attracting dozens more (www.socialist-alliance.org), calls for things to quickly move forward to a party. It cites the best opportunity in a generation to unite the left. The main

group, the Democratic Socialist Party, favours moving forward. It is the International Socialist Group, offshoot of the Socialist Workers Party in England and Wales, which is the main obstacle to deeper unity. What goes in London also follows in Sydney.

What the statement of the six misses out is a detailed path forward. This underlies once more that the struggle for partyism cannot *rely* on the 'indies'. The six accept this much. Nevertheless we are in new circumstances. There is fluidity in the workers' movement. The unity of all serious communist and revolutionary forces is a burning necessity.

Those who cannot move beyond narrow sectism will eventually be swept away. The statement of the six in Australia points in the right direction ●

Marcus Ström

Developing the common socialist voice

An open letter to Australian Socialist Alliance members and affiliates

We write as non-aligned members within the Socialist Alliance. We consider it urgent to respond to the six month debate over progressing the move from an electoral alliance toward a multi-tendency socialist party.

There is no particular set of proposals that frames our intervention. We have not sought to formulate a common view on what may resolve the historical, theoretical and programmatic differences among affiliates currently barring this development. However we do feel it is important to bring a non-affiliate membership perspective to bear.

We are 'non-aligned' and thus have come to the alliance project from a diversity of individual views, perspectives and experiences. The single thread that unites us in our diversity is that we have joined the alliance because of the promise it holds for developing the common socialist voice so urgently required. An electoral alliance has been a good first step and the dividends of that unified demonstration have been realised in terms of our successful exposure in the wider political landscape. While there have been obvious gains in ongoing alliance political work since establishment, more needs to be done to consolidate and expand this success. This cannot be achieved if our collective resources and commitment, particularly from the affiliates, remain centred on a parliamentary election cycle.

It is evident from the debate thus far that there is resistance among most affiliates to pursuing the opportunity of socialist regroupment the alliance offers. This is disappointing because the conditions for developing a strong, unified socialist voice in this country have not been better for many decades. Australia is in the midst of the first clear cut imperialist war since Vietnam. The Labor Party has never been so alienated from its working class base and there is a substantial break to the left, as evidenced by the dramatic growth in green support. It is difficult to fathom what more political encouragement affiliates require. The alliance needs to rise to this historic opportunity and the challenge it presents right now - not wait for some mythic future moment when the conditions spontaneously become 'just right'.

In some respects socialist regroupment through the alliance is already un-

derway. Over half the membership is not aligned to any particular tendency. Nevertheless, for a socialist regroupment to be effectively realised and prosper it has to be undertaken with the integral involvement of the revolutionary affiliates. We recognise differences cannot be papered over. Program debates have to be had, theoretical perspectives clarified and the integrity of principled differences preserved. This is to be welcomed as part of the strength and vitality of a growing socialist organisation, rather than seen as a basis for political and organisational paralysis.

Non-aligned members are not persuaded by affiliate concerns of the alliance being dominated by any one particular tendency. For affiliates to abandon the terrain of debate for socialist regroupment on the basis of caution, or worse, on the basis of historical circumstances long past, will be to realise precisely a *de facto* single tendency domination. As long as the alliance retains its current character as a democratic organisation, where a consensus building activist culture and the force of the better argument prevails, the case for retaining separate party organisational structures by affiliates rings hollow. Who are affiliates expecting to reach within the politically advanced sections of the working class that does not include current non-aligned members of the alliance?

We urge affiliates to present their case and negotiate their terms for retaining the organisational and programmatic integrity of their tendency. This must occur within the context of an alliance functioning as a single and united socialist voice, whatever the current limitations, given the differences we all bring to the alliance. Moreover, it must occur with the full ongoing participation and resources of the affiliates in order to advance the growth of the alliance. This is the only available guarantee for realising a socialist regroupment with a revolutionary dynamic.

With a democratic and organisationally united socialist voice non-aligned members will stay the course, and more will come.

United in struggle,

**Lesley Hayes, Alastair Greig,
Paul Kringas, Ian Shepherd,
John van der Velden,
Michael Morphet**

NUT Rightwing thrown on defensive in Harrogate

The annual conference of the National Union of Teachers took place in Harrogate over the Easter weekend. Generally, the conference was a good one for leftwing forces in the union, although the left failed to make the union take an unequivocal anti-war stand.

On a whole range of issues, the moderate majority on the National Executive Committee found themselves on the defensive. On the issue of classroom assistants the left was able to inflict an important defeat on the executive. A motion was passed calling for industrial action in the event that assistants, rather than qualified teachers, take lessons.

The mood of delegates was such that even the leadership, which normally does its utmost to avoid leading any meaningful industrial action, was forced to back a boycott of SAT tests for 7, 11 and 14 year olds. It remains to be seen, however, whether the executive's decision was simply a way of pacifying conference or whether they really mean to take action. Previously conference resolutions have been subsequently ignored by the leadership.

In the debate on Iraq and Palestine, many delegates expressed contempt for the way the executive has continually refused to take a clear anti-war stand and back the Stop The War Coalition. However, due to tactical errors on the part of the left, no unambiguous anti-war motion was voted on, so the NUT remains 'neutral' on the war. A disgraceful position to hold.

Nevertheless, up to 200 people attended a Stop the War Coalition rally on Easter Sunday. Among the speakers were Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn and the SWP's Lindsey German. Whilst the anti-imperialist rhetoric was on full display, it was disappointing that none of the platform speakers raised the question of the Kurds or which forces in Iraq the left needs to support.

When questioned about the danger of Islamic fundamentalism, comrade German claimed she did not really understand what was meant by such a term. Clearly if the left denies this political category, the anti-war movement will find it difficult to distance itself from such reactionary forces.

About 35 people attended a fringe meeting of the Socialist Alliance, a much smaller turnout than at the previous two conferences. No doubt this reflects the fact that the SA has rather disappeared from view since the start of the war crisis.

Criticisms of the SA's failings were made from the floor, and contrasted with the fortunes of the Scottish Socialist Party. Even the members of the Socialist Workers Party, by far and away the majority present, recognised that the SA has problems at the moment. Unfortunately, they had no answers to overcoming its failures and were reduced to attacking the anti-war work of the SSP, which they characterised as sectarian ●

Cameron Richards

IRELAND

British state terrorism

Who killed Pat Finucane? The answer to this question has been common knowledge for years. In Belfast, the writing is literally on the wall. Drive down the Lower Ormeau Road and you will see this mural: "Q. Who supplied the gun used to kill Pat Finucane? A. RUC special agent William Stobie. Q. Who shot Pat Finucane? A. RUC special branch agent Ken Barrett. Q. Who was the head of the UDA which killed Pat Finucane? A. RUC special branch agent Tommy Lyttle. Q. Who supplied the intelligence? A. RUC agent Brian Nelson".

It was in February 1989 that Pat, a catholic solicitor, whose only crime was to defend Irish republican prisoners, was gunned down by loyalist assassins in front of his wife and kids at the family table. After 14 years, three inquiries, 10,000 interviews and four tons of documents, comprising the biggest criminal inquiry in British history, an interim report on the latest inquiry by metropolitan police chief sir John Stevens has now been published.

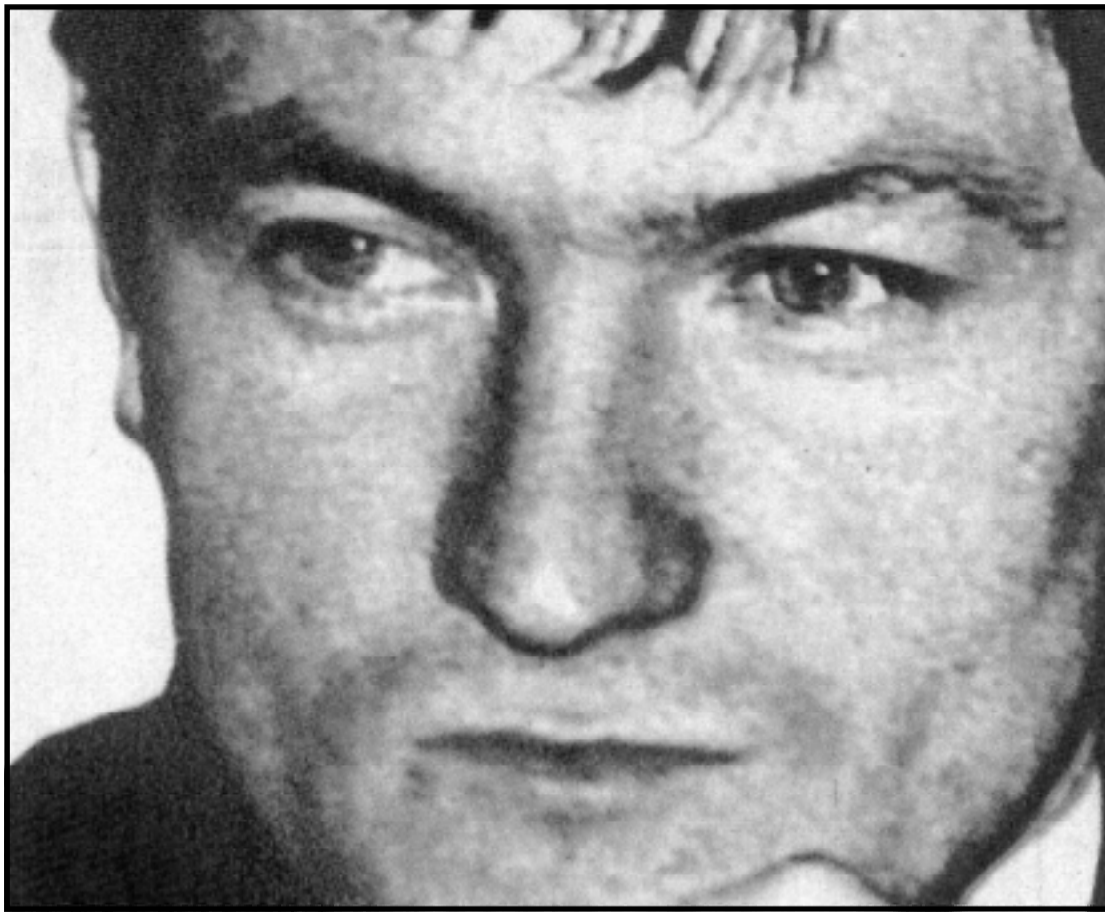
At a mere 20 pages and summarising more than 3,000 pages of evidence, the document may be a slim volume, but it is explosive. Stevens tells us of "disastrous collusion" between British special forces and protestant paramilitaries; of "unlawful involvement of agents in murder"; and of killings "sanctioned" by the security forces. The gist of his findings is found in this paragraph: "My inquiries have highlighted collusion, ranging from the wilful failure to keep records, the absence of accountability, the withholding of intelligence and evidence, through to the extreme of agents being involved in murder". The reality, as we shall see, amounts to state terrorism by the British security forces.

Stevens makes it clear that over long years of investigation he got no help whatsoever from his supposed 'colleagues' in the army and RUC. "From day one my inquiries have been obstructed in its work by the FRU and Special Branch in particular". To them he was evidently nothing short of a 'traitor'. Why? Because his work, left unimpeded, would inevitably produce evidence not just of collusion but of active collaboration between British special services and protestant paramilitaries. Perhaps that explains why, in an act of farcical desperation aimed at destroying incriminating evidence, somebody set fire to his office.

Who or what, you might ask, is the FRU? The anodyne name "Force Research Unit" seems to have been used by a covert formation of army intelligence personnel based at headquarters Northern Ireland in Lisburn. Their function was apparently to recruit and run agents (informants) from among the nationalist and protestant paramilitaries. They were evidently a bunch of free-lance, gung-ho, union jack-waving cowboys, notionally under the command and control of superior officers at HQNI. Doubtless, their brass hat bosses, like their counterparts in Whitehall and the government, were content to give a wink and a nod when it came to operational detail. Better not to know too much.

As to the Special Branch, we are talking about the intelligence/security section of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the latter now renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Given the fact that this overwhelmingly protestant, loyalist and orange lodge unit was up to its neck in the torture and abuse of republican detainees (remember the Castlereagh barracks, Armagh and other hell holes?), and routinely cooperated in the sectarian murder of catholics by loyalist paramilitaries, small wonder that they wanted to do everything possible to conceal their longstanding links with 'terrorists' who were little short of friends and neighbours.

From the point of view of British intelligence, the RUC was fundamentally untrustworthy: they could provide good intelligence when it suited them, but when the chips were down, they would inevitably side with the loyalist paramilitaries, including in a virtual civil war. Hence the necessity of creating units like the FRU to provide a notionally objective and



Pat Finucane:
victim

impartial source of intelligence about what was really going on in the protestant community.

A closer look at the Finucane case and the personalities involved is the best way to grasp the complex reality of relations between army/RUC officers and loyalist paramilitaries. Let us begin with the case of Nelson himself, who did everyone (especially British military intelligence and the Special Branch) a really good favour by dying of a brain haemorrhage on April 11, aged 55.

Nelson was a fanatical, sectarian protestant from the Shankill Road. He joined the Ulster Defence Association in 1975 and was recruited a decade later by the British army as a source within the UDA. As a former soldier with the Black Watch regiment, Nelson knew how to take orders. No doubt the prospect of a free house and car plus £200 a week expenses helped soften any qualms he might have felt about grassing on his mates.

Given the fact that the UDA was not exactly overendowed with brains, it did not take long for a piece of scum like Nelson to rise to the top of the organisational pot as "head of intelligence", an ideal conduit through which British agents could pass targeting details of catholics they did not like.

It was Nelson, with the help of an intelligence dossier thoughtfully supplied by his FRU handler, who named Pat Finucane as a leading republican target. The gun that killed Pat was supplied by William Stobie, another UDA source working for the RUC. The finger

that pressed the trigger was that of Kenny Barrett, another RUC agent who later confessed his crime to his police bosses, but strangely enough, the tape of his confession was 'lost' and there was no prosecution. As to Sammy Lyttle, the West Belfast 'brigadier' of the UDA at the time and on the ruling council of the organisation, it transpires that he too was a paid agent of the RUC special branch. At this point you begin to wonder whether there was any important member of the UDA, or for that matter the Ulster Volunteer Force, who was not actually in the pay of the British state or the RUC.

Among the Brits themselves, there were those who could not stomach the sort of 'collusion' which inevitably led to conspiracy and to the violent deaths of innocent catholics like Finucane and dozens of others. We remember Colin Wallace, an army information officer at Lisburn, whose job it was to disseminate lies about these and other murders; and captain Fred Holroyd, a military intelligence officer, who was closely involved in FRU and other covert operations. Both men were thrown out of the army when they tried to tell the truth. Wallace was fitted up for the murder of his best friend and served 10 years of a life sentence before being released on an appeal that found his conviction 'unsafe'. What became of Holroyd, who was written off as a mad man, I do not know.

Were it not for the activities of commissioner Stevens, we would have no definitive information whatsoever about the activities of the

FRU/RUC agent runners who effectively were the brains behind a significant number of sectarian murders in the province. It was only at Stevens's insistence that Nelson himself was brought to trial, after having been housed comfortably in a 'supergrass' house allotted to him by his friends in the special branch.

Thanks to a bit of clever horse trading in the usual open spirit of British 'justice', Nelson pleaded guilty on five charges of conspiracy to murder, in return for having a number of concrete murder charges against him dropped. Believe it or not, the trial took less than a day, and after an emotional tribute paid to Nelson's work by a veiled and anonymous colonel of British intelligence, he got off with just ten years, of which he served less than half, on account of his sterling service to the crown. Thereafter he lived quietly and incognito at taxpayers' expense. Stobie and Lyttle are conveniently dead.

Where does the buck stop? Days before Pat Finucane was murdered, home office minister Douglas Hogg told the commons about "a number of solicitors who are unduly sympathetic to the cause of the IRA". Charity leads us to believe that Hogg, like most other ministers, was merely mouthing what his bureaucrats had set before him. But was not this a form of 'parliamentary' green light, when seen from the HQ of the FRU?

Whatever the truth, at least on this occasion neither Alistair Campbell nor whole regiments of witch doctors could put a positive spin on this still relentlessly unfolding fiasco. Damage limitation is all that can be done by the PR forces of the FRU and their friends. What can we expect? That the murders orchestrated by Nelson and his friends were somehow merely the work of "rogue elements" in the army/RUC; that superior army/police officers were blissfully unaware of what was being done by their subordinates.

Can we really expect brigadier Gordon Kerr (onetime Nelson's handler in chief among the FRU cowboys) and now her majesty's military attaché to China to answer Stevens's call to court?

And what about the dozens, perhaps scores of senior diplomats, officers and civil servants who were complicit in the assassination of innocent catholics? Will they come forward and confess their guilt? No. They will adopt a hedgehog formation and wait, for as long as it takes, until we have lost interest. In the meantime, there is the retired Canadian judge Peter Cory, who will allegedly look at various murders and the whole thing. If he recommends it, there will be the full public inquiry that Pat's wife and family have been calling for over the last 14 years.

Stevens is good, but full truth and openness are better. Why the silence hitherto? Because the so-called 'collusion', referred to by Stevens - acquiescence and conscious collaboration in the murder of innocent catholic men, women and children - has extended right to the top of the British establishment. The time for a full and public inquiry is now ●

Michael Malkin

It was Nelson who named Pat Finucane as a leading republican target

Northern Ireland: war and peace

Easter 1916: Nationalist uprising against British rule in Dublin. Many leaders executed including James Connolly, leader of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Death sentence on Eamon De Valera, future president of Irish Republic, is commuted to life imprisonment. **1919-21:** Three-year armed struggle against British rule ends in December 1921 with the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty and creation of Irish Free State. **1922-23:** Civil war between Free State forces and Irish Republican Army over the

treaty and division of Ireland through a six county statelet in the north-east. Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the United Kingdom. Its borders are based on a redrawn Ulster and includes a substantial, one-third, Irish-catholic minority.

1967-69: Inspired by the United States' civil rights movement, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association is founded. A series of marches are staged across the Northern Ireland statelet against the oppression of the catholic-Irish minority. In August 1969 British troops are sent to prop up Northern Ireland government.

1971: First British soldier killed by IRA in Belfast. The Northern Ireland government introduces internment without trial for suspected republicans.

1972: On January 30 (Bloody Sunday) British paratroopers shoot 13 civilians during civil-rights march in Derry. The Stormont gov-

ernment is suspended and the statelet is brought under Westminster administration.

1973: The Sunningdale Agreement sees the creation of power-sharing Council of Ireland, giving the Irish Republic a say in the governance of Northern Ireland.

1974: Opposition to involvement of the Irish Republic in Northern Ireland's affairs results in the Ulster Workers' Strike. The Consultative Assembly is brought down and direct Westminster rule reimposed.

1981-82: Ten republican prisoners die on hunger strike in Maze Prison. Hunger striker Bobby Sands is elected to the UK parliament

1997: IRA declares a ceasefire. Talks begin in Belfast between government of Irish Republic, Britain's Labour government and representatives of all Northern Ireland's political parties, including Sinn Fein.

1998: Initial peace-plan accepted by all parties.

NATIONALISM

Separatist road to Scottish socialism

In the penultimate week of the Scottish election campaign the national question has emerged centre stage. Last week the Labour Party was panicked by the palpable apathy sweeping the electorate. As a result, in desperation, they raised the national question. The Scottish National Party's drive for independence would have disastrous effects on Scotland's 'prosperous' economy. Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Scottish secretary Helen Liddell all jetted up north to warn us of the dire consequences of 'divorce'.

The SNP have recently been rather coy on their plans for independence. However, Labour has raised the stakes. Not only would independence wreak economic havoc, but would be illegal under the powers devolved to the Scottish parliament. This claim has enraged the SNP, which quite rightly insists that it should be the Scottish people who take the decision on independence, not Westminster. Self-determination should, yes, be an elementary democratic right.

Yet the fact of the matter is that there is little or no evidence of any majority wanting independence ... and thus the break-up of Britain and working class disunity. In an article in the *Sunday Herald* on April 20, John Curtice (professor of politics, Strathclyde University) published a report showing that less than 30% of the Scottish electorate expressed any strong desire for independence.

Of course, this does not deter either of the nationalist parties. Both the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Socialist Party are committed to independence on principle. It would appear then that both the SNP and SSP intend to achieve an independent class state in Scotland by hook or by crook. This is the politics of separatism and, as such, alien to the basic programme of socialism, which always and everywhere puts the unity of the working class first.

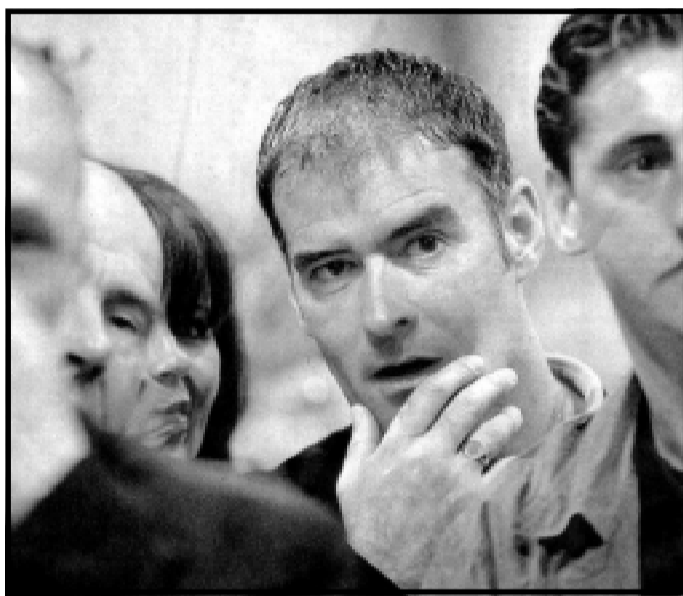
While we would support the *right* of the Scottish people to opt for independence, as communists we do not advocate - under present-day concrete circumstances - that they choose this particular road. That is what self-determination means. Those who do not or cannot grasp this surrender to petty nationalism and betray socialism. Nevertheless, as Curtice's findings indicate, there does exist mass discontent with the quasi-democratic constitutional monarchy system in the United Kingdom. The CPGB, for its part, has consistently advocated the abolition of the UK state and a fully democratic federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales.

In a *BBC Scotland Newsnight* debate on April 17, SSP international co-ordinator Francis Curran put a left gloss on nationalism. She argued that her socialist brand of independence was "better" than the SNP variety. She also criticised the SNP's intention to delay a referendum on independence if they and the SSP together won a Holyrood majority on May 1.

Comrade Curran said: "If the pro-independence parties win a majority in parliament" then the SSP would urge "a referendum within the first 12 months of the parliament". Comrade Curran went on to attack the SNP's position on Europe. The slogan "an independent Scotland in Europe" was merely swapping Westminster rule to Brussels. Curran is determined to build socialism in splendid isolation.

There can be nods in the direction of solidarity with workers in the rest of Britain or in Europe. But the idea of international socialism is now an anathema for comrade Curran and co. Hence whenever the Stop the War Coalition called a demonstration in the UK's capital city, London, the comrades were determined stay put. They organised much smaller protests in Glasgow.

The SSP have reinvented socialism in one small kingdom. Self-deludedly our leadership of Tommy Sheridan and Alan McCombes



Tommy Sheridan:
noble aims,
wrong
method

argue that an independent socialist Scotland could control its own economy and deliver wealth and prosperity to the people in Scotland. Globalisation seems to have escaped them. In all likelihood a reformist socialist Scotland would suffer a flight of capital and economic sabotage. A revolutionary socialist Scotland would almost certainly be subject to military threats and maybe the bloody reality of counterrevolutionary regime change.

So the SSP sees no advantage in forging ever closer unity with the (especially after enlargement) massive working class movement in the European Union. Comrade Curran's role as SSP international co-ordinator therefore amounts to ensuring that the working class in Scotland is kept at a safe distance from their brothers and sisters in the rest of the UK and the EU. Once again nationalism passes itself off as internationalism. Meanwhile the Socialist Worker platform keeps a diplomatic silence

national strangulation. History tells us that we are correct and those who advocate other roads to liberation are sadly mistaken.

How mistaken can be seen from a BBC Scotland TV broadcast, *Your election: the leaders*, on April 21. Tommy Sheridan indicated that his road to socialism is the tried and failed route of parliament and piecemeal reform. The state machine is not to be smashed, rather used to introduce socialism from above.

Asked how the SSP could afford to fund its programme, comrade Sheridan argued for the abolition of the council tax, fairer local taxation based on ability to pay, nationalising major industries and utilities and taxing big-business and the rich. However, confronted by the suggestion that capital might flee from the prospect of a socialist republic, he reacted almost like a Keynesian convert. Comrade Sheridan insisted that because of lower taxation and higher minimum wages there would

The Scottish Socialist Party leadership have reinvented socialism

on nationalism and chooses to fight on issues of a comparatively secondary or even minor nature.

On the BBC, the SNP's shadow health and community care minister Nicola Sturgeon would not be drawn on exactly when her party would seek a referendum on independence. Wary of Labour's scare tactics, she proposed a 'consultative' mid-term referendum.

The differences that separate the SSP and SNP appear to be substantial. The SNP promises to improve public services. But it is business as usual with capital and capitalists. On the other hand the SSP says it is committed to far reaching social changes.

At a press conference on April 17, Tommy Sheridan, SSP national convenor, repeated his commitment to socialism, albeit in one country. Purple passages mixed with tartan hues. "We want Scotland to be independent from poverty, independent from low pay, independent from racism and independent from nuclear weapons. Our new Scotland will be democratic and therefore a republic, independent from monarchy and inherited privilege." He concluded: "Scotland is rich enough, mature enough and smart enough to stand on its own as a beacon of social justice throughout the world. We are not frightened of independence, we promote it with confidence."

The aspiration of ridding society of poverty, injustice and inequality are shared by communists. However, what we question is whether independence would take us one step nearer realising those noble aims. Socialism begins with the existing state but immediately reaches to the global level. That, or it faces death - through internal decay or inter-

be more money generated in the Scottish economy. This would persuade companies to invest in the Scottish workforce!

Even more disturbing was his citing of Denmark and Norway as examples of countries where business and high taxation on the rich had resulted in prosperity. The comrade did though have the grace to admit that neither could be described as remotely socialist. They are examples of a 'mixed' economy and that is what the SSP's programme is designed to achieve in practice. A Scottish road to reformism.

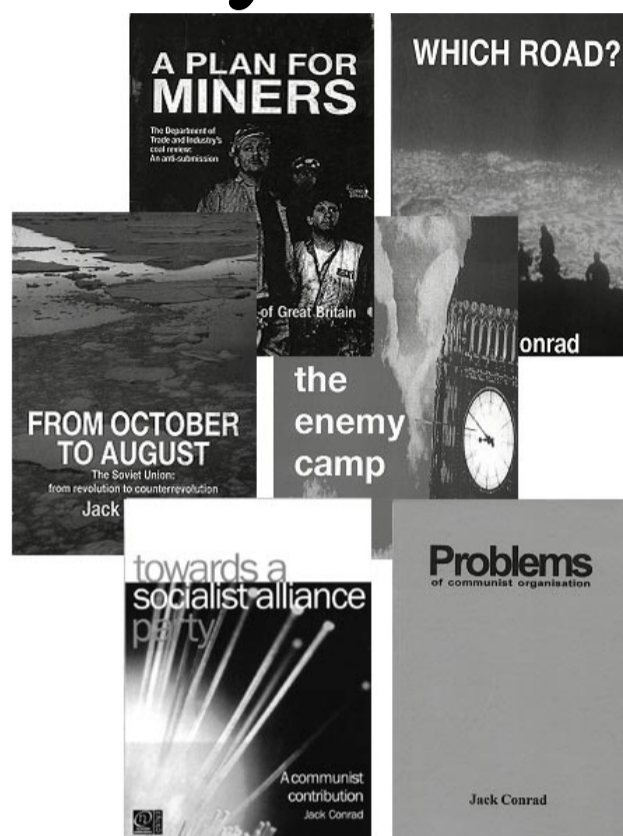
No one doubts the tremendous gains made by the SSP. Support for the firefighters in Scotland, building anti-war demonstrations in Glasgow, campaigns against low wages and poverty conditions are only a few reasons why the SSP has climbed in popular support.

Certainly the unity of the left achieved in the SSP contrasts brilliantly with the becalmed and ineffective Socialist Alliance in England and Wales. But the lesson to be drawn should not be that separation brings rewards. It is unity.

That the International Socialist Movement, the Committee for a Workers' International, Socialist Worker platform, Republican Communist Network and CPGB members in Scotland work together in one organisation breeds confidence and brings in a whole, much wider, layer of new members. Unity with the Socialist Alliance, an EU Socialist Alliance, unity on a global scale would inspire too. And that road has the undoubted virtue of being the only viable one. Anything else is to invite another ghastly defeat ●

Ronnie Mejka

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AFTER SADDAM

Islamic threat to US project

“Freedom is beautiful”, mused Bush in a message to the Iraqi people over the Easter weekend. “And when people are free, they express their opinions as they could not do before”. It is unlikely that the US finds the opinions starting to be voiced in Iraq as particularly “beautiful”

On April 18, millions of Iraqis attended the first Friday prayers since the fall of Baghdad to US occupation forces. Addressing tens of thousands in the main mosque of Abu Hanifa in Baghdad - and many more via a live broadcast by several Arabic satellite channels - the imam, Dr Ahmed Al-Kubaisa, delivered a stark message to the United States and Britain.

“Either these forces leave immediately”, he warned, “or they will be forced out by the people of Iraq”.

It is hard to comment in detail on the social forces that are beginning to emerge after the fall of the Ba’ath regime. In general, what we can say is that Iraqi society is opening up. Conditions are being created for the rapid politicisation of masses of people and the overcoming of the profound atomisation of society that was characteristic of life under the Saddam Hussein dictatorship. In these chaotic circumstances - with Iraqi society just beginning to breathe again - it is not surprising that an established and well funded institution such as the mosque comes to the fore. These have maintained alternative networks of social solidarity throughout the Ba’athist years which - unlike secular oppositions - were not totally crushed.

This is a danger, of course. But the conditions for left forces to ‘catch up’ and gain a mass hearing also seem to be developing. Exiles are returning. Those who survived underground emerge into the light. The Iraqi Communist Party has opened offices in Baghdad and is beginning to freely publish.

Either way, the omens for the type of pliable, neo-colonial ‘democracy’ desired by the US do not look good so far. This will probably produce a marked reluctance on the part of the occupying powers, ie, the US, to permit elections in the short term. At the beginning of the war, British troops distributed thousands of leaflets to Iraqi civilians quoting Tony Blair to the effect that “our troops will leave as soon as they can. They will not stay a day longer than necessary” (*The Guardian* April 5).

This open-ended formulation has now been made rather more concrete by senior Republican politicians in the US.

Senator Richard

Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, commented on April 21 that the mass demonstrations against the US presence should not lead to the view that “somehow or other, the Iraqis have spoken and we should move out”. Indeed, the man believes that the Iraqi people should not have the right to speak for quite some time yet - he warns against “going to elections prematurely”. Pressed for details, the good senator suggests that “at least we ought to be thinking of a period of five years” (www.theage.com.au).

The one part of Iraq where US plenipotentiaries can be guaranteed a warm welcome is the Kurdish area in the north. The perception that the Kurdish parties having acted as cat’s paws for the imperialists has clearly fuelled anger amongst the hardline islamists. Hence their reactionary demand for the ‘integrity’ of the country. Put another way - they are against a federal solution and any notion of Kurdish self-determination. Yet, the Kurdish parties themselves are unreliable allies of the US - their ‘alliance of convenience’ could easily fall apart if Washington opts for the ‘integrity’ of Iraq.

In fact, the problems currently faced by US imperialism underline that the whole concept of ‘liberation’ from above - even if one accepts the dubious proposition that ‘liberation’ of the Iraqi people was any kind of motive of the war - is a concept fraught with problems. In fact, thoroughgoing democratisation is almost invariably the product of emancipatory struggles from below, by the mass of working people. Given that the Iraqi masses played no part in their own ‘liberation’, how can democracy result from this war?

The first problem the occupying forces face is a vacuum of power - how do the Americans establish a viable neo-colonial administration, having decapitated the previous power hierarchy? Ba’ath party leaders have fled, but it is not pliable home grown ‘democrats’ that are stepping into their shoes. In many places, power is devolving to forces that wield a degree of local authority and have an organisational infrastructure that can mobilise support - the imams.

So the occupying power is viewing the mass demonstrations in holy cities such as Karbala with some unease.

For them the disturbing prospect looms that the ‘pre-emptive’ overthrow of Ba’athism will bring forth a regime that resembles Iran’s rather than the docile neo-colonial model wished for by Bush. William Saami, Middle East expert

for Radio Free Europe, points out that America does not “have a lot of traction in the shi’ite community in Iraq. It is going to get worse before it gets better” (www.theage.com.au).

In some areas, the chaos in the aftermath of the collapse of the Saddam regime is being filled ‘informally’. In Baqubah, 35 miles from the Iranian border, a heavily armed, ostensibly pro-Tehran militia - the Badr Brigade - has seized control from under the noses of the Americans, much to the consternation of the local people. In Mosul in the north, two rival opposition groups - the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Iraqi National Conference - compete for control. Even where the occupying powers have attempted to establish a ‘formal’ civil power, as in Baghdad, there are huge problems in terms of legitimacy.

The capital’s reconstituted police force - which began joint patrols with US marines last week - is hated by the people. Marine captain Alan Yankowsky, a military liaison officer, laconically notes - “we’re having trouble convincing the neighbours that they should trust the police. The problem is that the police weren’t the nice guys. They basically robbed and raped and plundered. And now, look around. The police are back, they’re driving the same cars as before, they’re wearing the same uniforms and they have all the same faces. I can understand the concern”.

Similarly, the plan to parachute in political exiles - many who have lived pampered lives in the west for decades - is viewed with deep suspicion by the masses. The CIA notes that “every time you mention” the name of Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, “to an Iraqi, they want to puke” (*United Press International*, April 8).

Of course, the prime motivation for this war had nothing to do with a noble urge to ‘democratise’ Iraqi society. Many Baghdadians bitterly note that while much of their city, including hospitals and other vital institutions, were left to the looters and arsonists, the occupying forces moved immediately to protect the ministries of oil and interior. But given the absence of the Iraqi people themselves as active agents in the struggle to remove the old regime, even plans to bring a degree of policed stability to society could start to unravel.

The non-participation of the Iraqi people accounts for the power

vacuum we now see expressed in the breakdown of civil order. In every genuine popular struggle for liberation, the energy of the risen people actually throws up new forms of democratic control - initially as organs of struggle, later as organs of rule. The fact that the Iraqi masses were absent as active agents in their own ‘liberation’ effectively means post-war society lacks cohesive democratic ‘glue’. It has been decapitated - so now, how is it going to work?

The last time the Iraqi people themselves started to take an active role in the fight for their own freedom - in the uprisings after the 1991 Gulf war - the US betrayed them, leaving Saddam’s Republican Guard to exact a terrible revenge on the Kurds in the north and shia and leftist forces in the south. After calling for the Iraqi people to rise against the dictatorship, Bush snr recoiled from the actuality. As Avi Shlaim - a professor of international relations at Oxford university - notes, papa Bush “evidently had in mind a military coup, a reshuffling of ... gangsters in Baghdad, rather than establishing a freer and more democratic political order” (*The Observer* March 30).

Establishing a stable government is a daunting task for the imperialists. The country does have the potential to fragment into Kurdish, shi’ite and sunni zones, perhaps with disintegrative knock-on effects in neighbouring countries. The US could bend towards accommodation with the shi’ite reactionaries and turn against its Kurdish allies in the north to maintain the country’s unity. On the other hand, if Iraq starts to seriously fragment, the US could bolster Kurdish claims to wide-ranging autonomy - even independence - in order to maintain control over the oil-fields of Kirkuk and Mosul.

Whatever strategy America eventually opts for, its motivation will have nothing to do with the democratic rights of the people of the region. Genuine liberation can only come as a result of mass action from below - an anathema to the imperialists. Communists and revolutionary democrats in Iraq have to utilise the political space now opening up to advance a programme of *consistent* democracy - to avoid tailing reactionary anti-imperialism on the one side and sowing any illusions in the ‘democratic’ credentials of the imperialists on the other.

● US-UK - out of Iraq!

● Self-determination for the Kurdish north - for a federal solution!

● No to the mosque, no to imperialist stooges like Chalabi! ●

Ian Mahoney



Shi'a pilgrims in Kerbala self-mutilate

Smoking guns

It was always a risky gamble to make weapons of mass destruction the main official reason for attacking Iraq. The fact that there is still no sign of anything resembling a WMD could easily blow up in the faces of Tony Blair and George Bush. Robin Cook seems to have started to sharpen the knife.

Although thousands of US personnel are now solely concentrated on finding them, the only reliable signs of illicit weapons in Iraq are the cluster bombs that have been dropped from US jets. In his address to the UN security council, the UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix attacked Washington and London for going to war on “very, very shaky evidence. It is conspicuous that so far the US inspectors have not stumbled upon anything evident” (*The Independent* April 23). There is a real possibility that the whole military operation will universally be looked upon as a political failure if those illusive WMD are not uncovered soon. Most probably, though, they did not exist in the first place.

At the beginning of the war, US forces claimed to have discovered a “huge” chemical weapons factory near Najaf. It turned out to be a disused cement factory. Next, chemical protection suits were discovered in Nasiriya. At the time defence secretary Geoff Hoon was certain that these items “show categorically that Iraqi troops are prepared” to use “weapons of mass destruction” (*BBC News Online* March 23). Later, it turned out that the suits were of the same type that Iraq used in the 1980s during the war with Iran; and now the find is rated as “obviously not conclusive”. Indeed, the suits may well have been 20 year-old leftovers, as the Cambridge academic Glen Rangwala pointed out. US officials confirmed that there was no indication they were freshly worn or issued. A number of other loudly announced “discoveries” were later disproved and quietly dropped.

Even earlier this week, British foreign office minister Mike O’Brien still insisted it was “absolute fact” that there were weapons hidden in Iraq: “The suspected presence of WMD is at the heart of our reasons for taking military action against the Iraqi regime” (*BBC News Online* April 21).

However, reality stands in the way of this “absolute fact”. If we presume Saddam Hussein possessed any such weapons, surely a good time to use them would have been around March 20. Weapons of mass destruction come in quite handy if you are trying to defend yourself against an invasion by the most powerful armed forces in the world, which want to eradicate you and your whole regime. Instead, we are supposed to believe that Saddam Hussein used the last days of his regime in order to hide or destroy his weapons system. Why? In order to keep his good reputation once the US had won?

Another, new explanation from the US administration is that the looting that ensued after the fall of the Iraqi regime made it “extremely hard to secure potential weapons or intelligence sites” (*The Independent* April 23). Of course, American troops did not even attempt to stop any of the civil unrest. Just another excuse.

The most likely scenario is that the Iraqi regime simply did not possess WMD. Also likely is that the US administration and its secret service were very well aware of this fact even before their invasion force moved into Iraq. But if they hoped that a quick and overwhelming victory would be enough to silence critical and anti-war voices, they were palpably wrong. While the US administration can look back on a lightning victory over Saddam Hussein’s wrecked regime, a serious absence of legitimacy remains.

During the war, polls suggested that a majority of people in Britain and the US subordinated their anti-war sentiment to patriotism. A clear anti-war majority of up to 65% was reduced to a minority of around 25%. Many felt that, once the war had started, they had to ‘support our troops’. With the war won, opinions start shifting again. A poll amongst 1,200 invited *BBC News Online* readers over the easter holiday weekend showed that only



Blix: demands for his return grow

36% agreed with the motion that “going to war was a price worth paying for the liberation of the Iraqi people.” 64% disagreed.

Similarly, the governments of France and Russia are turning the heat back up. They are demanding that UN weapons inspectors should immediately return to Iraq. Officially, Russia and France want the UN inspectors to administer the search for and possible destruction of any WMD. Unofficially, the inspectors are also to make sure that WMD are not just planted there. The Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov hinted on the danger of falsified evidence: “Even if the American-British forces report that they have found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the final assessment of their origin can be given only by international inspectors” (*Pravda* March 26).

Unsurprisingly, the US have made their opposition to such proposals clear. John Negroponte, the US ambassador to the UN, said that “for the time being, and for the foreseeable future, we visualise inspections as being a coalition activity. The coalition has

assumed responsibility for the disarming of Iraq” (*The Guardian* April 23).

Robin Cook, former leader of the House of Commons, has thrown his hat back into the ring. He also demanded that chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix should return to Iraq “on the next plane”. And - in what could well turn out to be a serious declaration of war against Tony Blair - he also added that “if the threat from Saddam does turn out to have been overstated, the responsibility must rest with those who made the public statements” (*Evening Standard* April 22).

Tony Blair’s position is far from secure. Sure, he and his mate George have won the war. But he certainly does not come out of it squeaky clean. Two million people on the streets of London made it quite clear that they did not believe his war rhetoric. Backbench Labour MPs staged the two biggest parliamentary revolts in British history. And as the examples of Winston Churchill and George Bush snr show, winning a war does not guarantee that you and your party will win the next election ●

Tina Becker

Pentagon overlord

Jay Garner, the man imposed on the Iraqi people as their ruler in the post-Saddam chaos, arrived in Baghdad on April 21 - to mass protests and growing demands that the US-UK led coalition get out of the country. His record underlines what the US has in mind when it talks about ‘democracy’.

● This retired general is part of the ‘hawkish’ trend in American politics, an ideological co-thinker of the bellicose neo-conservatives such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz. For example, his criticism of US involvement in Vietnam was that it “took too long. We should have taken the war north instead of waiting. Just like here.”

● Garner was a passionate champion of the Star Wars missile system, a defence ‘umbrella’ designed to enable the US to fight and win a world war against the USSR.

● Garner retired from the military in 1997 to become president of SY Technology, a defence contractor specialising in - surprise, surprise - missile defence systems. SYT was soon winning lucrative non-competitive contracts as part of the

Star Wars system. Allegations began to fly that these were procured through Garner’s direct influence.

● In 2000, he added his name to a statement by the right wing Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (Jinsa), which praised the Israeli Defence Forces for its “remarkable restraint in the face of lethal violence orchestrated by the leadership of a Palestinian Authority”.

● After one Jinsa event, he stated that “a strong Israel is an asset that American military planners and political leaders can rely on”.

● A man with this strong pro-Israel bias is bound to inflame local resentment, especially as a militantly confident shi’ite mass movement emerges in Iraq. Garner’s former company also has contracts to help install Patriot missile systems for Israel and Kuwait.

● Garner was appointed to his role by the Pentagon on January 20, even as the US was still trying to get a second UN resolution to sanction the invasion. The Pentagon made the decision, without reference to its coalition partners, the US state department, still less any Iraqis ●

What we fight for

■ Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists, anti-capitalists, anti-war activists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communists Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called ‘parties’ on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members 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 ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists are fully committed to building the anti-war movement but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of anti-war, working class and democratic parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, ‘One state, one party’. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions 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 war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by 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.

■ Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ 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 or, as with Stalin’s Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

■ All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.

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Galloway must be given benefit of doubt

Trial by Telegraph

Dave Osler - member of the Socialist Alliance and author of the recent bestseller *Labour Party PLC* - discusses the press campaign against George Galloway and draws some important political conclusions

Are you now or have you ever been in receipt of Moscow/Tripoli/Baghdad gold? Delete foreign capital as appropriate. In the latest version of a script all too frequently rewritten over the years, the *Daily Telegraph* is accusing George Galloway of feeding his serious Armani habit with £375,000 a year in Iraqi kick-backs, in return for public relations services to the regime. The Labour MP has hit back with libel action against the paper.

The trouble is, this man's past record of Saddam-schmoozing makes it impossible even for his strongest supporters simply to dismiss the charges as preposterous or inconceivable. He is now paying the political price of openly saluting the tyrant's "courage, power and indefatigability". Accordingly, the glee of Galloway's political opponents is uncontained. Finally got that bastard bang to rights, they enthuse.

Let us not rush to judgement. Natural justice - at this stage anyway - must allow him the benefit of the doubt. While the documentary evidence appears pretty damning, and the *Daily Telegraph* is way too smart for crude falsification, the case remains unproven.

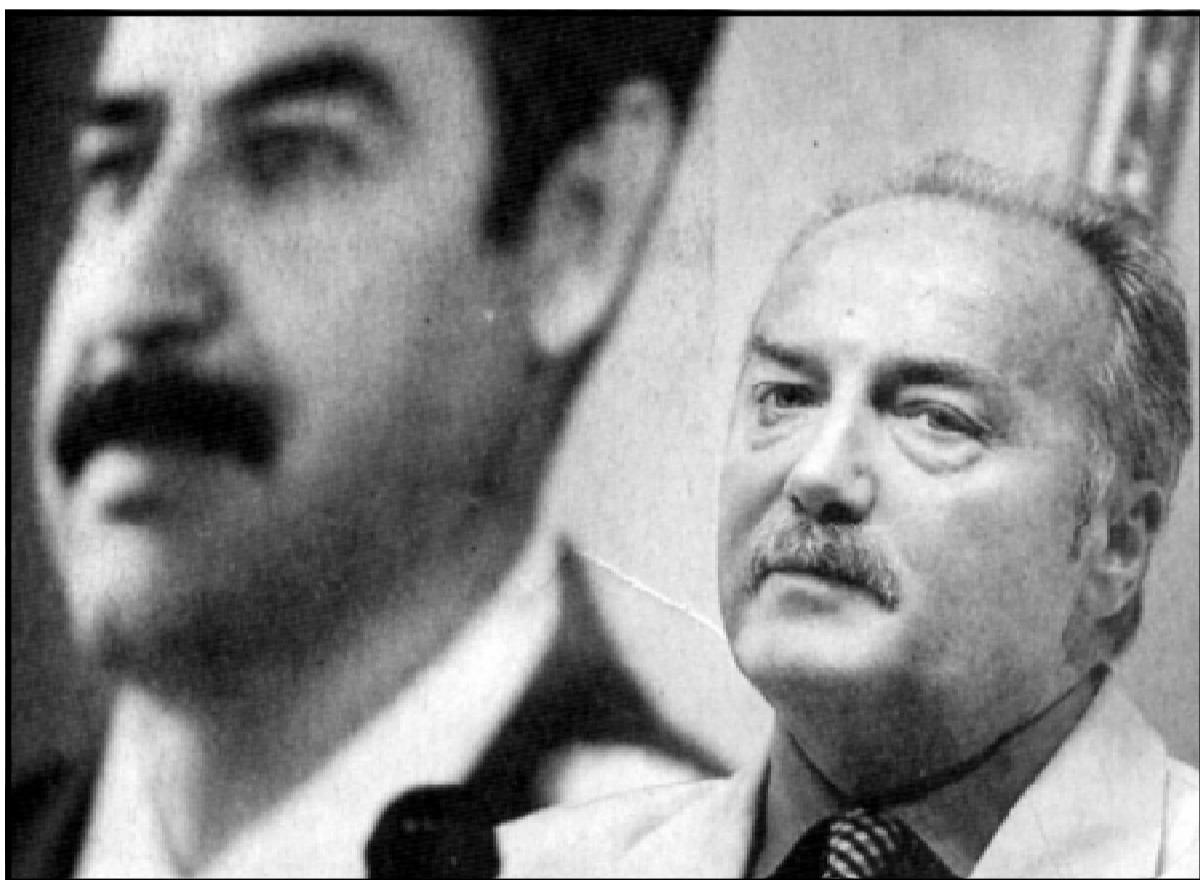
In the eight decades since the Zinoviev letter, many socialists have been turned over by Fleet Street for being in the pay of various nasty Johnny Foreigners. Remember the *Daily Mirror*'s 'Col. Gaddafi paid Scargill's mortgage' campaign? Remember the *Sunday Times*' ridiculous attempt to smear Michael Foot as the KGB's very own 'Agent Boot'?

Britain's best-selling broadsheet is not nicknamed the *Daily Torygraph* for nothing. Just reading the editorial the *Telegraph* published on the day it splashed material supposedly gleaned from the burnt-out bunkers of the Iraqi intelligence service underlines the political agenda at work.

Both the Labour Party and the Stop the War Coalition are explicitly branded guilty by association, while the entire anti-war movement is effectively dismissed as the provisional wing of the Ba'athist party. Hundreds of thousands of well-meaning peaceniks were personally duped by Gorgeous George, the leader writer maintained, and must now surely realise the error of their ways.

That is a simple non-sequitur, of course. Political arguments stack up - or not - on their own account. The revolutionary socialist case against what is happening in Iraq does not stand or fall by the belief systems of those that led the campaign against it. It is true that the Stop the War Coalition was led by an Uncle Joe nostalgia merchant in league with British exponents of Islamic semi-fascism and Mick Jagger's ex-wife, all united in a common endeavour to put the leader of the Liberal Democrats on a podium in Hyde Park.

It is even true that the British National Party was against the war. In Telegraph-land, that logically makes the anti-war movement incipient fascists. Conversely,



George Galloway: once saluted Saddam

liberal and soft left commentators who supported the conflict must crudely be written off as *de facto* ultra rightists, because the intellectual inspiration for the atrocity has come from a clique of Washington neo-conservatives.

Unless it can be shown that Galloway divvied up the illicit cash between a million or so marchers - and that would have given them about the price of a packet of crisps apiece - then nobody who protested on February 15 is in any way complicit in whatever he may or may not have done.

When it comes to political funding, remember also that the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher - a close friend of *Telegraph* owner Conrad Black - was not adverse to accepting gifts from Greek fascists, businessmen on the run from the serious fraud office or Hong Kong billionaires in hock to less-than-democratic Beijing.

But such is the gravity of the accusations against Galloway that no publication still in possession of its marbles would go to press with such a sensational story unless it was pretty convinced it had got the basic facts straight. Let the truth be established. If he did take the money, the left should lead the condemnation.

For a start, it is primarily our comrades - and not the Iraqi capitalist class or the wealthy exiles - that so often lost their lives at the hands of Saddam. Disgracefully, parts of the British left have sometimes sped their path to the firing squad.

In the late seventies, Workers Revolutionary Party photographers took pic-

tures of demonstrators outside the Iraqi embassy in London and then passed the photographs on to its paymasters sitting inside the building. The consequences could have been tantamount to a death sentence.

This must rank as one of the worst atrocities ever committed by an ostensibly socialist organisation in Britain. That incident won't have done a whole lot of good for the prospects of any future Iraqi section.

When it comes to taking money from dictatorships, whole sections of the British left are hopelessly mired in a moral grey zone. The Communist Party of Great Britain - and the publishers of this news-

paper present themselves as the current incarnation of that outfit, at least when it suits them - was extensively subsidised by suitcases full of cash from Moscow. It was hardly the only CP worldwide in that situation, either. Right or wrong? Wrong, because of the nature of what Stalinism represented.

There would be no problem with a healthy revolutionary international making those kinds of payments. Ultimately it was not the money that corrupted the 'official' CPGB; it was the politics. Of course, that assessment comes easier with hindsight.

Although Scargill did not personally benefit, the fact is that Libya did provide

financial support to the National Union of Mineworkers during the great strike of 1984-85. Right or wrong? Given the human rights record of the Libyan state, it might have been preferable not to take the cash. In the concrete circumstances, the money was badly needed and the cause was just. At least half right, then.

Sundry tankie splinter groups reputedly relied on lucrative printing contracts from the odd people's democracy or two, while Hoxha's Albania was always good for a Marxist-Leninist hand-out in order to keep a few small fan clubs around the world afloat.

None of these outfits could quite be described as bought and paid for. They would have been quite happy to trumpet the latest triumphs of Czechoslovak collective farm tractor stations, even without the dosh. Yet the used fivers helped them sustain an artificial existence they did not properly deserve on the basis of their domestic support.

So where should the line be drawn? For a start, using any proceeds for personal rather than political purposes amounts to pure and simple bribery. That goes to the heart of the accusations against Galloway. If there were any ill-gotten gains, they do not appear to have been used for political purposes.

Then there are the political considerations. What if there is a political price tag attached, even if only a minor one? That is where the difficulties really kick in.

Probably the donor would not even need to specify that he did not expect to read any criticism of his government in the recipient's press. Gooses, golden eggs, and all that stuff. Victory to the Arab revolution! Read Gaddafi's *Green book*!

Deals like that are far too costly. The principle at stake at all times is independent working class politics. By that yardstick, taking money from repressive regimes is nearly always wrong. And putting a progressive political gloss on them is absolutely always wrong. Baksheesh Bolshevism has a nasty tendency to backfire ●

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