

Paper of the Communist Party of Great Britain

weekly **worker**



**Steve Godward: stay in
the Socialist Alliance
and fight for democracy**

- Tribune website
- SA council
- SWP-LCR talks
- Detention camps

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Towards a new workers' party

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Did SWP's Chris Bambery organise Marxism thuggery?

**For a culture of debate,
not violence on the left -
see pp2,4,5,10,11**



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PARTYnotes

Socialism and the logic of sectarianism

Georg Wilhelm Fredrick Hegel - the celebrated 19th century German philosopher - remarked somewhere that "things develop from themselves". Thoughtfully he added that they do so "according to their own logic". A telling observation. Think about the Socialist Workers Party in this light.

Doubtless most comrades in the SWP's leadership are utterly sincere in their desire to see socialism actualised on a global scale. An aim to which they devote an inordinate amount of time, energy and income. Those whom I have encountered at various times are educated, talented and often tireless. Many have shunned the comfortable but egotistical and essentially arid life of middle class careerism. Praiseworthy indeed, and only turncoats or the bitter and burnt out would seek to denigrate or demean anyone for dedicating themselves to the great cause of revolutionary socialism.

There exists, of course, another, less attractive, side to the SWP. Open debate is an alien concept and internal democracy a sorry sham. Serious opposition is outlawed. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Workers Power and the Revolutionary Democratic Group have their origins as expelled SWP factions. Delegate conferences routinely occur each year. They are, however, akin to company rallies for the sales staff. Members acclaim the leadership rather than hold them to account. Till a few years ago tiny pre-conference 'factions' did occasionally appear - around purely technical or third-rate matters. Even then they were permitted no permanent or public existence. Outside the charmed circle of the central committee just to query the latest line is considered suspect. Individuals deemed hardened dissidents are arbitrarily and wastefully driven out - sometimes after a kangaroo trial. 'Sexual harassment' is a favourite trumped-up charge.

The bureaucratic centralist regime of the SWP in England and Wales is *logically* extended to the International Socialist Tendency. Alongside the Anti-Nazi League, Spark and Globalise Resistance, the IST is jealously guarded as the private turf of the central committee in London. An unofficial but permanent and dominating faction. Shamefully Alex Callinicos has overseen the callous expulsion of whole sections in South Africa, the United States, New Zealand, etc.

The Socialist Alliance too is increasingly viewed by the SWP leadership as just another one of its fronts. And evidently that is how the SA is being treated. Its constitutional principles of inclusiveness, political balance and toleration apparently count for nothing. Four prime examples:

- Finding themselves lumbered with an 'awkward squad' running things in Bedfordshire, the SWP launched a vindictive campaign, which not only entailed packing an AGM with newly signed up members and a clean-sweep coup, but disciplinary charges against two former officers. Their real 'crime' - being supporters of the RDG.

- May's national conference saw an SWP attempt to remove the AWL's Martin Thomas from the executive committee. His real 'crime' - having the temerity to criticise the SWP's defence

and courtship of George Galloway.

- Birmingham SA, its officers and chair, Steve Godward, have also been on the receiving end of an SWP packed AGM. Their real 'crime' - questioning the advisability of a Peace and Justice electoral bloc with the mosque.

- Last week SWP national organiser Chris Bambery orchestrated an attack on CPGB members outside this year's Marxism - or, less probably, turned a blind eye - because they were handing out a "shite" anti-islamic leaflet. Their real 'crime' - defending the SA's 2001 general election manifesto commitment of "no compromise" with sexism and homophobia, a so-called "shibboleth" to be sacrificed for the sake of the SWP's Peace and Justice turn.

Where does the SWP's lack of democracy, bureaucratic manipulation and thuggery stem from? Many explanations, mostly unsatisfactory, have been offered.

I would flatly reject the anarchist nonsense that the SWP represents the direct continuation of the method of Marx, Engels and Lenin. That is a calumny disproved by any serious study of the facts. Take the Bolsheviks - at their best they provide a model of working class democracy and open polemics.

With more solid foundation, others have blamed Gregory Zinoviev, Lenin's lieutenant and first president of the Communist International. Zinoviev stressed the necessity of putting the newly formed, and often shambolic, communist parties, onto a war footing. He believed that direct, earth-shattering, revolutionary struggles were imminent. Then there is Leon Trotsky himself and his so-called Fourth International. In the US his leading comrade, James P Cannon, booted out Max Shachtman, Hal Draper and co simply because they disagreed with the woefully mistaken designation of Stalin's USSR as a "degenerate workers' state".

Actually the SWP's rotten practice is spontaneously self-generating. It has not been transmitted across history, generation by generation, like some awful, inescapable genetic code. The SWP's doctrine that the end justifies the means and avoidance of programmatic commitments runs counter to classic Marxism but does empirically serve to buttress and sustain a confessional sect.

Not that every sect behaves in the exact manner of the SWP. Nevertheless from the past to the present revolutionary sects tend time and again to display a manic self-obsession in tandem with contempt for democracy. Eg, in the early 19th century the Jacobin-communist sects were typically headed by an all-powerful leader or tight-knit ruling clique which neither practised nor envisaged democracy. Mikhail Bakunin's fantastic revolutionary conspiracies were no different. Alone the select few possessed the intellectual keys to unlock the future utopia. The masses were either ignorant, inert or easily fooled and so could not be trusted. Hence the sects put themselves first, not the real working class movement. On that basis they recruited, acted and justified themselves.

Organisations like the SWP might perhaps once have had a certain worth. The real working class movement was

in the 1930s crushed under the suffocating ice sheet of 'official communism' and social democracy. Whatever their faults, Tony Cliff and others before him had the virtue of keeping alive some vital shoots of Marxism in the darkest hours of the century.

Yet the objective situation nowadays cries out for a revolutionary class party - its scientific name, according to Lenin, being 'Communist Party'. Though let us underline once again that we would be perfectly happy with 'Socialist Alliance Party', if that is what the majority wanted. Any such party would contain within its ranks a wide variety of opinions - not a weakness, but a source of strength. Through ongoing debate a party collectively learns from the work of its militant thinkers and the invaluable experience of its class activists. Hence the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.

In all probability a Communist Party in Britain will initially have to be made on the basis of the existing revolutionary left coming together. First the rapprochement of the hard factions - along with much of their baggage. But then, if circumstances prove favourable, these factions would voluntarily become mere shades of opinion. Working together for the common cause builds trust, digs roots amongst the broad masses and hopefully dissolves antiquated lines of demarcation. However a class party is conceived - and this is the main point - only equipped with such a combat organisation, which embodies freedom of criticism and unity in action, can we seriously talk about the working class realising socialism and communism.

And there is the rub. Remember Hegel's remark that things develop from themselves and according to their own logic. While the SWP remains a sect and shuns genuine partyism, it cannot possibly help realise the social transformation its cadre ardently wish to achieve.

Socialism is the victory of democracy, the antithesis of bureaucracy and censorship. Socialism is the self-liberation movement of the working class, as it breaks through the political and economic limits of capital.

If by some freak circumstance the SWP was in the position of pushing aside capitalism or inheriting a post-capitalist Britain, the only socialism it could preside over would be an 'elitist socialism'. Despite the 'socialism from below' mantra, the SWP epitomises in *practice* socialism from above - albeit subjectively with benign intentions.

Under its 'socialism' is the SWP suddenly going to undergo a Damascene conversion and display toleration towards leftwing critics and encourage the free expression of differences? Hardly. Instead capriciousness, manipulation and thought-control are inevitable. Especially if problems arise and become acute. Means determine ends and ends determine means. An absence of democracy cannot usher in democracy. Democracy can only be won through struggle. It cannot be given. Those who unleash a squad of hysterical bullies today are in the future more than likely to unleash the secret police ●

Jack Conrad

LETTERS



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

Marxism joy

I have sometimes bought your paper and have found it sometimes has informative articles. But recently the red-baiting of the Socialist Workers Party has simply got too much.

I am not a member of the SWP, but attended this years Marxism 2003 event in London. The coverage in your paper has no connection to what I attended. Put simply, it was a fantastic, informative and open debate. I went to meetings on ancient Rome, fascism, the Middle East, labour history, women's oppression, amongst many others (Picasso!). The speakers were excellent and many were not from the SWP and had many different ideas. I found, contrary to myth, that they were treated with respect and constructive debate.

The Monbiot meeting was a good example of this. His ideas are important, as many people coming to socialist ideas may well have bought his book and read his column. Whilst I did not think his proposals were completely thought out, it was good to see the SWP trying to engage with him in a comradesly manner. There was a brilliant discussion around the book *Empire* by Negri and once again the SWP speaker (Mr Callinicos) was very thought-provoking in his contribution and the Italian speaker received a very warm welcome.

Whatever differences exist, I do not see the point in endlessly attacking the main force on the left. Let's all be honest - if the SWP did not exist then the anti-war movement would not have been half as successful as it has become.

I may have differences with some of the SWP policies, but I discussed these with members of the SWP and was really listened to. It was a refreshing week and I will be going next year, as I understand it is an annual event. I was one of many thousands of young people who went to Marxism 2003 and I am sure, as all of those who went thought, it was credit to the SWP and a joy to be amongst thousands of socialists from all around the world.

When the CPGB - who frankly looked bizarre alongside the lunatic fringe - can operate in an open and fraternal way it may be worth attending your events, but whilst you continue to just make sectarian attacks on the SWP I for one will think twice about coming to your meetings and to Communist University.

Ian Janus
London

Racist nutters

Jack Conrad wrote: "SWP leaders maintain that the most radicalised people in Britain are muslims. By which they generally mean someone who obeys the imam's call to prayers" ('No compromise on sexism and homophobia', July 10).

What complete rubbish! Hundreds of thousands of muslims marched on the streets of London against US and British imperialism. Conrad's blatant racism has no place in the socialist movement. It is a welcome sign that the SWP has taken a hardened stance against the racist nutters of the lunatic fringe. You represent nothing.

Kevin Murphy
email

Rotten bloc

The sheer size of the anti-war movement shook the ruling class, but is now tending to melt into the political background. The SWP has a blinkered obsession with this movement, which it falsely claims to have built virtually single-handedly. Ironically, such a claim actually downplays the numbers of understandably worried muslims that

the mosques were able to mobilise on the streets around the country, as an anti-islamic backlash accompanied the murderous onslaught on Iraq. Now, somewhat bizarrely, the SWP counterposes the anti-war movement to the wider trade union and labour movement, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the latter actually *forms* a not insignificant part of that very same movement!

Furthermore, while the SWP is certainly a very active component inside the Stop the War Coalition, overblown claims about how many 'the party' mobilised on anti-war demonstrations surely tend to crumble away somewhat when it is remembered that the SWP-controlled Unity Committee/Anti-Nazi League could only get about 150 people on the streets of Dudley in one of the recent nationally coordinated demonstrations against racism and the rise in the number of fascist councillors.

Perhaps now the SWP will see the rump which Birmingham SA has effectively become as their 'united front' offering for the Peace and Justice European election campaign of 2004. This may well result in the disgraceful attempt to field a candidate on a ticket which downplays women's rights and ignores gay rights altogether. Such a betrayal of even the most basic of socialist principles will put such a rotten bloc to the right of New Labour on the question of human equality!

Such is the nature of Pyrrhic victories and gross opportunist appetites.

Geoff Smith
Birmingham

Get a life

So it's all right to have christian or atheist homophobes and sexists in the movement then? As socialists we argue against such beliefs, at the same time building the socialist resistance to war and global capital. You lot are sad - you represent no one, snipe at what you cannot achieve. You are welcome to work with other socialists - or confine yourselves to the dustbin of history!

There was no attack on your members on the Saturday - I was at Marxism all morning. Get a life!

Andy Coles
email

Just flawed

Cheap abuse towards the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is your stock in trade at present, so I wasn't surprised to read Kit Robinson's trite remarks about my review of Alex Callinicos's new book in *Solidarity* ('Valuable but flawed' *Weekly Worker* July 10).

I've argued that the book is riven with utopianism, making it pretty worthless. I might be wrong about this, but it would be helpful if Robinson could at least engage with the argument.

First, for Callinicos, socialism is not the product of advanced capitalism. He is so keen to avoid association with neoliberal ideas that he cannot bring himself to analyse the side of globalisation that has further prepared the prerequisites for socialism - such as the growth of large working classes and militant labour movements in places like Brazil and Korea. Instead, socialism is presented as just a 'good idea'.

Secondly, he does little to educate young activists in the anti-capitalist movement. There is no attempt to convince them to turn to the labour movement, as campaigns like No Sweat try to do. Unionising workers in Starbucks is far harder than putting a brick through their windows, but you won't find the Socialist Workers Party or Globalise Resistance organising a union drive.

Thirdly, Callinicos's "transitional programme" is not aimed at the working class, but rather at the global justice movement. There is a substitution going on in the SWP's politics, in which the working class is being displaced. The

case for socialism as the self-emancipation of the working class is alluded to, perhaps asserted, but not coherently argued for. At the very least Callinicos appears to think the movement can play the role of a workers’ international.

Finally his “transitional programme” is nothing of the sort. The whole point of the transitional method is to mobilise the working class to fight for socialism. Transitional demands start from the reality of working class life and working class consciousness. Callinicos’s programme is a shopping list of good causes - rather like the Socialist Alliance programme at the last general election.

Trotsky’s *Transitional programme* in 1938 spoke of facing reality squarely, not seeking the line of least resistance, calling things by their right names, and basing one’s programme on the logic of the class struggle. For Trotsky that’s what separated Marxism from utopian socialism. Callinicos does none of these things and that’s why his book is simply flawed.

Paul Hampton
 AWL

SP picking up

Political contributions in your paper by various correspondents would be taken a little bit more seriously if they were honest. Baldly characterising the Socialist Party as having declined from a great height to the depths of irrelevance is inaccurate.

I spoke to several members of the SP in Ireland who travelled over, who independently agreed that 400 attended Socialism 2003, while your paper reported 250. Your correspondents then go on to characterise the perspectives of the SP/Committee for a Workers’ International as being lost and muddled.

Of course, even when I lived in the UK most on the left didn’t seem to understand anything other than the occupation of the north of Ireland was wrong - boo hoo. If you want tub-thumping ‘thousands are joining us’, when they are not, and the only interesting comments on Ireland about the so-called armed struggle (ended 10 years ago), go to a Socialist Workers Party rally.

It is correct to say that the SP has had a difficult time of it recently, but that 400 attended Socialism 2003 is an indication that numerically things have picked up. Our party in Ireland, the UK and elsewhere is the only one that has achieved electoral strength in more than one country, which, while modest, shows the true weakness of others. Also our base within the unions is not rivalled by any other force on the left.

So excuse us if we aren’t in a canteen bunfight with all on the left, but any major movement in society will bypass the Socialist Alliance and its myriad of fictitious affiliates. Our perspective is to build with a new influx of members not embittered by experience of the sterile politics of the CPGB, SWP, etc.

Garrett Mullan
 Dublin

SP excesses

In reply to Steve Williams, my review of the CWI website was perhaps guilty of slightly over-egging the pudding (Letters, July 10). Yet, if it is taken in conjunction with my piece on the SP (*Weekly Worker* January 9), the “virtual vanity” does become apparent.

You have to practically excavate the foundations of the SP website to find a link to non-SP/CWI sites. Just an example: when I clicked on what I assumed to be a link to the European Social Forum, I was instead treated to an article on it! When you combine this with the CWI’s “best socialist analysis” boasting, you have got to ask what sort of purpose this narcissism serves. Is it borne out of sectarian arrogance, an inferiority complex or both? I don’t know.

It just seems weird to me, as I remain an admirer of the SP, despite my criticisms of its daft excesses.

Phil Hamilton
 Stoke-on-Trent

Child abuse

Judging by his ‘response’ to my letters, I can feel sympathy with those who are irritated by Ian Donovan’s views.

Ian states that the CPGB as a whole supports his views. If so, why has no other CPGB comrade written in his defence? I suspect that within the CPGB there are those who would shrink from leaping to the defence of one whose arguments share many disturbing similarities with those that paedophiles use, (constantly arguing for the age of consent to be lowered and infamously seeing paedophiles as victims: a stance which Ian has become notorious for making).

It’s more than hypocrisy that the CPGB is (rightly!) up in arms about the dumping of anti-sexist and anti-homophobic principles by the SWP within the Socialist Alliance, and yet apparently has no principles, revolutionary socialist or otherwise, when it comes to the protection of children.

I wonder whether, if Donovan had praised racists in the same way as he praised the paedophile Jonathan King, the CPGB central committee would be so blasé?

Steve Davies
 email

Workers’ state?

Jack Conrad’s generally excellent ‘Party notes’ column contained in passing the comment, “Nor should it be forgotten that the regime ushered in by the October 1917 revolution was the worker-peasant alliance in power. The country became a workers’, peasants’ and soldiers’ republic” (*Weekly Worker* July 3). This formula needs to be handled with a certain degree of caution. I recently came across the following quotes.

First, the constitution of the RSFSR, adopted by the fifth all-Russia congress of soviets in July 1918, stated: “The main objective of the constitution of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, designed for the present transitional period, is to establish the dictatorship of the urban and rural proletariat and the poorest peasantry in the form of a powerful All-Russia soviet government, with a view to completely suppressing the bourgeoisie ...” (article 9).

Secondly, in January 1921, Lenin commented as follows: “I must correct another mistake of mine. I said: ‘Ours is not actually a workers’, state but a workers’ and peasants’ state’ ... What I should have said is: ‘A workers’ state is an abstraction. What we actually have is a workers’ state, with this peculiarity: firstly, that it is not the working class but the peasant population that predominates in the country, and, secondly, that it is a workers’ state with bureaucratic distortions’” (VI Lenin *Collected works* Vol 32, Moscow 1977, p48).

Of course, whether either formula was right is open to question.
Mike Macnair
 Oxford

Middle England

The strange world of comrade Mick Cresswell continues to turn. He seems stuck in an ideological position about the nature of the working class in the UK (Letters, July 10).

Having earlier stated my understanding of class in these pages, I’ll not repeat myself, but rather address the comrade’s assertion that the left is more influenced by middle England radicalism than working class militancy. Middle England is bourgeois bullshit designed to make a certain section of the working class feel it’s doing better than another section and is no longer considered on the bottom rung by their lords and masters.

It’s hard to see the wood from the trees with the thought-control job the bourgeoisie has done on the proletariat; a starting place for a clearer view is from the straitjacket of olde Marxism, but increasingly parts of Marxism must be left behind. This is where for me the current

situation underlines the need for a reforged Communist Party.

Such a party - ie, *part* of the class, armed with a programme and theory born in the straitjacket, but working towards a contemporary theory and politics of the working class - will stand the test of reality, organising the vanguard for the war to come.

Roger Clarke
 email

Shibboleth

Brethren ... just in case, like me, you never knew the meaning of the new in-word used by the vicar (John Rees) and Ms German, then here it is:

“*Shibboleth*: noun - a custom, phrase or use of language that acts as a test of belonging to, or as a stumbling block to becoming a member of, a particular social class, profession, etc (from Hebrew; literally: ear of grain; the word is used in the Old Testament by the Gileadites as a test word for the Ephraimites, who could not pronounce the sound ‘sh’)

” - *Collins Dictionary* 1992.

And here it is, taken from the vicar’s favourite new book, the *Holy Bible*, which seems to have replaced *Das Kapital* for the foreseeable future:

“Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now ‘Shibboleth’: and he said ‘Sibboleth’: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand” (Judges, 12:4-6, KJV).

I suppose we can all expect a copious amount of quotes from the Holy *Qur’an* next. Perhaps in the future, just to claim that we are non-sectarian socialists, we should all pepper our emails and articles with words from holy writings of islam, hebrew, hindu or how-do origins.

One thing is for sure: if the vicar and Ms German aren’t stopped, we will be reading of the *shidduch* between the Socialist Alliance and a plethora of anti-gay, anti-communist, anti-feminist, anti-progressive religious sects over the coming months. As Jim Royle would say, ‘Socialist, my arse’.

Myself, a member of the working class and of ‘low awareness’, I have to settle for ‘What a load of bollocks’.

Shidduch: Yiddish; noun; 1a: an arranged marriage. b: the arrangement of a marriage. 2: any negotiated agreement.

Bollocks: pl, noun, ... an explanation of annoyance, disbelief, etc.

Merv Davies
 Colchester

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday July 20, 5pm - ‘Which way for Socialist Alliance?’: report from SA national council.
 Phone 07950 416922 for details.

Tattoo protest

Rally and demonstrations against military air show, Royal International Air Tattoo, Fairford, Saturday July 19. Rally: 12 noon to 2pm, Fairford Community Centre, High Street, next to St Mary’s Church, just above market place and Bull Hotel. Speaker: Damacio Lopez, depleted uranium expert. Followed by demonstrations.

New Interventions

Annual general meeting, Saturday July 19, 2pm to 5pm, Calthorpe Arms, Kings Cross, London (corner of Grays Inn Road and Calthorpe Street; nearest tube: Kings Cross). Speaker: George Binette, Committee to Defend Asylum-Seekers, on ‘Asylum-seekers and racism in Britain today’.
 Motions, comments, suggestions: drdavidspencer@aol.com

People’s Assembly for Peace

Second conference, Saturday August 30, 10am to 5.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London WC1 (opposite Euston station).
 Organised by Stop the War Coalition.

Remember Larkin

Sixth annual James Larkin commemoration, Saturday September 6. Assemble 12 noon, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. March to city centre rally.
 webmaster@jlrfb.com

End the occupation

National demonstration against occupation of Iraq and Palestine, Saturday September 27, from 12 noon, central London.
 Organised by Stop the War Coalition.

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.

Socialist Alliance

National council

Saturday July 19, 12 noon to 5pm, United Services Club, Gough Street, Birmingham.

Yorkshire and Humberside

Regional membership meeting for Euro elections, Saturday July 26, 12 noon to 5pm, All Hallows church hall, Regent Terrace, Leeds LS6 1NP.

Brent Convention of the Left

Thursday July 31, 7pm, Willesden Library Centre. To discuss a left candidate in the forthcoming Brent East parliamentary by-election.
 Organised by Brent SA: 07940 510906.

Eastern Region

Meeting to discuss European elections, Sunday August 3, 2pm to 4pm, Latton Bush Centre, Harlow.
 Agenda: Practical tasks; feasibility of standing; preliminary short list; non-SA candidates; tasks and responsibilities for ERSA members.
 More information - Jim Jepps: 07956 605634; jimjepps@hotmail.com

New address

The Socialist Alliance has moved to a new national office. The address is: Creative House, 82-90 Queensland Road, London N7 7AS. Temporary telephone: 07952 841979.

www.cpgb.org.uk/action

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SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

Tribune -
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Labour left portal

The Labour left is on the move once again after years of long slumber. The election of leftwing activists to the leadership of key trade unions and the mass opposition to Blair's warmongering has provided it with some much needed backbone. Over the coming weeks, this column will be looking at websites of a number of opposition groups and journals.

We begin our cyberspace journey around the Labour left with *Tribune*, a veritable stalwart of "democratic socialism" since being set up by Victor Gollancz (of Left Book Club fame) and a few close comrades in the late 30s. Today the journal remains one of the main clearing-houses of left Labour activists, and its pages are regularly graced by prominent personalities.

Logging on to the *Tribune* homepage, initial impressions of the site aesthetic are mixed. A parade of past magazine covers runs along the top and underneath that the screen splits into two vertical columns. The first has a bright red background and is jam-packed with all manner of links. In contrast, the second is sparsely decorated and rests on a dull grey backdrop. Thankfully this lukewarm impression remains restricted to the surface, as this is a website of many depths.

The grey panel is more *Tribune*-focused than its companion. Mark Seddon's editorial comment for the latest issue heads up the column. Clicking on the link takes us to a photo of the comrade and his short commentary on the opposition facing the Blairites. We are also invited to submit our own opinions to *Tribune* and comrade Seddon directly, and there is a link to an article that covers similar matters by Diane Abbott on the Socialist Campaign Group website. The next five features are similarly adorned.

Continuing down the page, the 'Tribune online vote' leads with the ongoing row around homosexuality and the church. It carries an archive of the polls taken so far this year, and these also remain open. So if you feel particularly moved to vote on six-month-old polls, the option remains to do so. Following on is probably the definitive page of British anti-war links, supplemented by the relevant *Tribune* editorials from the last year. Next up are contact, search engine and comment page details. The latter, however, is not a forum for a general exchange of ideas between participants and is more

akin to an edited announcement list, which in the context of this site is not necessarily a bad thing.

An archive of *Tribune* from 1998 to the present is patchy in places, as a good number of issues have been only partially uploaded, this being especially true of older editions. However, the comrades have to be congratulated for beginning work on an ambitious library of articles running from 1937-75. I hope the time (and the web space) is found to get all issues online. Moving on, the next item is a three-year archive of book reviews, followed by a collection of contributions to *Tribune*-sponsored conferences over the period 1999-2001. A link to live parliamentary webcasts is a nice touch, and a shameless plug for a *Tribune*-branded bag completes this column.

A special mention must be made of the 'British' and 'International' links pages. The former links to hundreds of websites, covering Constituency Labour Parties, elected members, campaigning sites, Labour affiliates, unions, etc. The international links are not as broad in scope, bringing together several dozen social democratic, green and campaigning websites.

Turning now to the first panel, it is broken up into 3 separate sub-sections. The first, 'Subscribe to *Tribune*' carries a subscription form in pdf, an 'ezine' page (under construction and open only to subscribers) and the option to sign up to the journal's email list. 'Latest links' is self-explanatory, but worth exploring in its own right. For instance the Orwell centenary is marked here with half a dozen dedicated links. Lastly the column is finished off with business information, such as advertising rates, stockists and the like.

As a portal to the cyberspaces of the Labour left, this website is excellent. As a vehicle for *Tribune*, however, there is room for improvement. Understandably the archives are still under construction and will no doubt remain so for many years, but what is most visibly lacking is a dedicated introduction and history of the magazine. Perhaps a search through the *Tribune* archives would yield up the relevant information, but this is no substitute. The Labour Party remains a key area of struggle despite the Blairites, and unfortunately the case to back up this assertion is not clearly made here ●

Phil Hamilton

Democracy, not bureaucratic control

Victimised firefighter and Socialist Alliance national executive member **Steve Godward** (pictured) looks at the SWP's role and gives his view on the way ahead

In order to understand where we are at the moment, it is worthwhile looking briefly at the recent history of the left in Birmingham in relation to the Socialist Workers Party.

Shortly after September 11 2001 I was elected vice-chair of the Birmingham Stop the War Coalition. But last year there was a bureaucratic coup, which ousted everybody, including myself, who was prepared to put forward politics different from that of the SWP. After the takeover there were no further democratic membership meetings.

Around that time comrade Arash, an Iranian comrade who is a member of Erdington SA, was raising concerns about the involvement in the STWC of muslim fundamentalists. Instead of having the debate, the comrade was attacked at a meeting. John Rees described the comrade - somebody who fought as a socialist in the Iranian revolution and saw his comrades slaughtered - as having "émigré politics". Wasn't Marx an émigré?

Then earlier this year I went to Palestine as part of a delegation from Birmingham Trades Council. We had agreed there would be a teach-in afterwards. As vice-president of the trades council I was asked to report back on my trip. Obviously I wanted to raise the consciousness of as many people as possible concerning the situation in Palestine.

Astonishingly, a leading SWP comrade told me that if I spoke on this platform I would be "politically finished" in this city. The SWP did not want the teach-in to go ahead because it was being organised by comrades in the Anti-War Network - set up by former members of the STWC who had been

appalled at the SWP's bureaucratic behaviour. If it cannot control it, the SWP tries to destroy it - and democracy is the loser.

Then I was down to speak on behalf of the Socialist Alliance on the day war broke out in Birmingham. But the SWP, along with Socialist Action and STWC chair Salma Yaqoob, decided to remove me from the speakers list.

As on other occasions, Birmingham SA was sidelined. For example, on the SWP's 'Peace and Justice' initiative with Birmingham central mosque, there has never been an approach to any Birmingham SA committee member - not even the comrade who is an SWP member. All we wanted was to be informed. We only found out that comrade Rees had had a meeting with Salma Yaqoob and the mosque when he announced it at the SA annual conference.

We all want to work with the 'muslim community'. I have comrades from the muslim tradition - whether practising or secular - just as I have worked alongside practising christians, in the Fire Brigades Union and elsewhere. But what concerns me is political islam - that is where the problem is. It is a disgrace that the SWP uses the term 'islamophobe' at the drop of a hat against people expressing such genuine concerns.

At Marxism I was the butt of such outrageous attacks, which I intend to refer to the SA appeals committee.

There was also the appalling attack on CPGB comrades who were exercising their legitimate political right of criticism. At a time when the fascists are gaining in influence, the SWP organises physical assaults against fellow socialists.

The SWP has worked hard to build the anti-war movement. But it does not want to expose its comrades or those it hopes to recruit to the ideas of other socialists - the ideas of democracy, for example - and so it carves everybody else out. But it seems to have been seduced by the limelight. It believes that certain sections have the ability to mobilise the mass, including the mosque.

When it came to the first meeting of the new SA executive, I was punished for exercising my democratic right, enshrined in the constitution,

to write for any publication - ie, the *Weekly Worker* - and removed as vice-chair. I have made my view clear that I do not believe an electoral bloc with the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain and the mosque is a good idea. Why not have a debate to see if I am right?

Unlike some, I am not a 'professional revolutionary'. But I have been on the front line, fighting against capitalism in the workplace. As a result I have lost my job, been suspended by my union and now I am treated with contempt by comrades in the SA. To me it all feels like victimisation.

What makes me particularly angry is that in Birmingham a working SA committee has been destroyed. We survived the SWP coup in the STWC, but we have now been replaced by hacks with no experience of the job for which they have been elected. Press officer Rummy Husan, a former long-standing SWP member who had built up many contacts with journalists, with editors, was replaced by somebody who arrived in the city two weeks before.

I fear that the new committee will do what was done in Birmingham STWC - cut down on open meetings and membership democracy, simply mobilising SWP comrades when they need to win political battles. The SWP does not want to expose its members to political debate. I have been on good terms with many SWP comrades, but not one of them has picked up the phone to express a political difference with me over recent events.

The SWP does not appear to have anything approaching a democratic culture. Members are told to believe what has been spoon-fed to them. Does being a militant mean the same thing as being cannon fodder? Is this how the SWP expects to become leaders of the class? Not in my view. The working class needs a democratic leadership in order to build an alternative structure - not just an alternative to the Labour Party, but to capitalism.

We must start putting forward what we are *for*, not just what we are against. But how do groups that advocate revolution think they can achieve that without mass democracy? They appeal to the masses, but it seems they want to control them. Yet socialists must be for democracy just as much as we are against privilege. But those who raise their head above the ground by asking a simple question get shot down and are called 'racist'.

All these issues could be discussed openly, if only we had a paper for the Socialist Alliance. Thank god we have papers like the *Weekly Worker* and the others, where we can have some debate. But we should be having them internally, within SA structures. Political ideas must be dynamic, needing constant development. Parrotting the 'line' can never be sufficient. In my view the SWP is tending towards political dictatorship - which can be left as well as right, from my reading of history.

I am on the side of those who will stay, build and fight within the Socialist Alliance. This is possibly more urgent for those like myself who have no other political home than the SA. If we do that and, despite everything, the SA proves to be dead duck - if it is found to be unnecessary by the SWP - at least there will be a group of comrades able to continue the fight ●



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National council Future at stake

The Socialist Workers Party's entry made the Socialist Alliance a force that could begin to seriously function at the level of national politics. However, the zenith of our efforts - the 2001 general election - is now but a dim memory of cooperation, solidarity, comradeship and even a degree of trust. All that has changed.

The national council of the Socialist Alliance meets on Saturday July 19. Most of its agenda is fairly anodyne. However, its future direction is at stake and this is reflected in emergency motions on the SWP's latest turn to an unprincipled alliance with sections of the mosque. A short-term, will-o'-the-wisp is being pursued at the expense of the long-term, patient work of building a working class alternative to New Labour.

Across the board, the SWP is more and more blatantly beginning to treat the alliance as its own property. Doubters, dissenters and waverers in relation to the SWP's emerging popular front direction are to be sidelined and, if possible, silenced. Steve Godward is beyond the pale for expressing doubts about a lash-up with the mosque and the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain - others who actually think independently of the SWP, be warned. That is the unmistakable message.

As scales continue to fall from people's eyes concerning the SWP's method, a mood of anger in some quarters, despondency in others, is growing. Yet the SWP antics have had the result of uniting large parts of the membership - both on the executive and from below - against the trajectory it seems intent on following.

Even such loyal partners as the International Socialist Group are beginning to find something resembling a backbone and are raising their voice. For our part we never had illusions. While the SWP's involvement with the alliance gave the project a much needed boost, this alone was not going to be enough to transform the alliance into what was really needed - the core of a united, all-Britain workers' party.

That was always going to require a revolution in the thinking of the SWP leadership, a rebellion in its rank and file or - perhaps the most likely scenario - a mass influx into the alliance of working class recruits who would have nothing to do with the SWP's fake old Labour programme. Unfortunately, none of these scenarios has happened so far.

Pumped up from its experience of heading the Stop the War Coalition, the SWP has had a taste of the big time. During the huge anti-war demonstrations, the SWP dumped all pretence of operating through its many 'united fronts' and attempted to recruit directly to 'the party'. Imagining that the days of the Vietnam war era had returned, SWP leaders expected to be able to add a zero to the end of their membership figures. Yet where are the recruits - for the SA or the SWP? In the very hour of the SWP's triumph, a self-deluding sect cul-

ture is leading it to territories and temptations always considered off limits for Marxists - though not for labour traitors and opportunists of the more revolting stripe.

The SWP would not be the first group to have come a cropper in such circumstances. Militant Labour, forerunner of today's withered Socialist Party, began to unwind almost from the moment of its poll tax triumph. Nationalist breakaway in Scotland and increasingly frenetic pursuit of the next big thing has seen it dwindle to a rump in England and Wales. Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party shattered within months of a triumphant rally of thousands in London's Alexander Palace in the aftermath of the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85.

The SWP's heavy-handedness has never been far from the surface throughout its involvement in the SA. Almost its first act in the London Socialist Alliance back in 1999 was to back an unsuccessful attempt to stop open reporting of differences. Rob Hoveman voted to kick out the CPGB. Then there was ex-SWP member Anna Chen. She was pushed aside unceremoniously after doing sterling effort as press officer during the general election. Later comrades Liz Davies and Mike Marqusee reached a point where they could no longer stand the SWP's behind-the-scenes manipulation - in which they had previously been implicated. The SWP went for dissenters in Bedfordshire SA. Now it wants to show partners in a potential popular front a pliant, safe and homogeneous SA face.

It is unclear whether this 'Peace and Justice' approach is only meant for Birmingham or is to be rolled out elsewhere. And therein lies a further problem. John Rees has been less than forthcoming as to the content or conclusion of any of his negotiations. The minutes of the SA task force (which are 'not for publication'), dealing with implementing the 'new left initiative', say nothing of any interest.

We must glean the direction from other sources. In her interview with *Socialist Worker*, Lindsey German says: "People understand that the [Stop the War] coalition can't be a new political party because it's made up of a whole host of different parties... But they would like to see the various forces involved in a new political challenge to Labour" (July 12).

In order to achieve this, she is quite prepared to dump 'shibboleths' such as women's and gay rights. This unprincipled and non-socialist turn is further confirmed by a letter from ISG member Stuart Richardson to the Birmingham SA annual general meeting (see *Weekly Worker* July 3). Comrade Richardson reports a conversation with comrade Rees, who told him he had been involved in discussions whose conclusion was that Salma Yaqoob, chair of the Birmingham STWC, should, with the backing of the SA, "stand in the Euro elections on a limited programme - limited in its commitment to wom-



SWP high point

en's rights and there would be no mention of gay rights". A quite disgusting proposition for any socialist.

Attempts by the SWP to insist that such a betrayal is sanctioned by the resolution passed at the May annual conference are disingenuous. Written by Alan Thornett, the resolution states that any new formation coming out of the 'initiative' would "of course be socialist". Junking mention of gay rights and limiting reference to the rights of women is in no way socialist. Why is comrade Thornett silent?

Even if the SWP is able to successfully implement its opportunist turn at the expense of socialist principle, this is hardly a *winning* strategy. There are only two million Muslims in Britain. Furthermore such a stance on women and gays would put 'Peace and Justice' candidates to the right of the government on matters such as section 28. Madness.

What is missing is a long-term strategy aimed at superseding Labourism in the workers' movement. As the Labour left shows signs of renewed life, as the 'awkward squad' in the union bureaucracy consolidates, the revolutionary left must develop a strategy to leave behind Labourism, not reinvent it in a 'left reformist' SA. Certainly few, if any, Labour lefts would touch 'Peace and Justice' with a barge pole.

Through this crisis of the Socialist Alliance we must fight for the coherence, clarity and unity of the pro-party forces. The motion moved by Lesley Mahmood (below) shows there is a fighting spirit. Within the SWP itself there is the large "wait and see" body of opinion: those waiting to see the fine print on the Peace and Justice platform. Frankly, comrades, that is a feeble excuse. You know what your leadership is prepared to ditch - women's and gay rights and socialism. Now is the time to rebel.

Socialist Alliance activists and others on the left must get together to seriously debate the way forward. We are for a campaign for a workers' party. This should include all those in the SA who oppose the SWP leadership's popular frontism. But we must reach out to other socialist forces and, crucially, into the Labour left and the trade unions.

Unfortunately, some seem intent on walking out of the Socialist Alliance. We urge them to stay and fight. The SWP is no monolith. Other forces are looking and waiting for a lead. Let us aim to win a majority and reconstitute the left in a revolutionary workers' party ●

Marcus Ström

■ Lobby national council

For equality, transparency, accountability, democracy and socialism. Saturday July 19, 11am, United Services Club, Gough Street, Birmingham.

Going Dutch or double Dutch?

The national office of the Socialist Alliance has instructed branches that they should carry out the decision of annual conference - which agreed, among other things, that "the national council has two delegates from each local Socialist Alliance: one woman, one man".

The whole implementation of this ill-thought through resolution is totally wrong-headed and possibly unconstitutional. If this aspect of the resolution is to be carried out, why not other parts? Crucially, the resolution calls on a 50-50 make-up on the executive committee. Many of the same comrades - most notably, the SWP - who had just voted for this immediately went on to elect an EC with 23 men and 13 women.

Local SAs are meant to "ensure" half the local officers are women. Is this being done? What if local branches have not? How many votes will be represented at council? If one man turns up from a local alliance, do they get two votes?

It harms our movement if we cynically vote things through on the nod, without actually meaning to implement them. The resolution is wrong. Life is showing that. You cannot win equality for women through bureaucratic quotas. Even the resolution notes that trade unions "aim for/ensure" equal representation. Well, which? Our policy should be to *aim for* equal representation through the whole SA seriously fighting around issues which particularly effect women. Campaign and recruit should be our motto. Not tokenism which is open to bureaucratic manipulation. All women SWP members will do what John Rees orders - depend on that.

Tokenism actually weakens the fight for substantive equality. And if the executive does not take even take tokenism seriously enough to implement it for itself, why should the rest of the organisation? ●

Women's representation

Women constitute one third of the membership of the SA and are severely under-represented in the Socialist Alliance at all levels. We would want equal involvement and representation to reflect women being half the population and because they are still oppressed in so many ways. It is now part of trade union practice to aim for/ensure women's equal representation. We should ensure this is at the core of the Socialist Alliance.

We therefore agree that:

- The executive is composed of 50-50 women and men.
- That the national council has two delegates from each local Socialist Alliance: one woman, one man
- That local SAs should ensure half the officers/committee are women.
- That where PR elections make this possible half the candidates should be women.

Where elections are not PR every effort should be made to have half the candidates women" ●

■ Next steps

Immediately after the national council, comrades who support the Lesley Mahmood/Steve Godward motion are welcome to stay in the meeting room, which has been booked from 5pm to 6pm. There we can discuss the next stage in the fight for principled socialist unity.

Emergency motion

This national council of the Socialist Alliance:

1. Regrets the moves of the Socialist Workers Party to politically dominate the committee of Birmingham Socialist Alliance and exclude so-called minority viewpoints from that committee. This stands in stark contrast to the Socialist Alliance constitution which states: "We also recognise the desirability of balance and inclusiveness for political trends within the Socialist Alliance at all levels of the organisation. All local Socialist Alliances as well as individual members attending national conferences are encouraged to take this into account in electing officers, steering committees and selecting candidates."

2. Further, we note the SA 'Charter of

members' rights' in the constitution

which, in part, says that all members have "the right to information about all SA activities and decisions". We further note the 'Charter of members' rights' guarantees "the right to freedom of opinion and expression". If the SA is to develop, the principle of inclusiveness needs to be put into practice. Members should have the right to question or disagree with tactics and strategy without being removed from positions.

3. Finally, this national council reaffirms the commitment of the Socialist Alliance to support election candidates who are unequivocal in their support for women's rights, gay/lesbian rights and socialism ●

Moved: Lesley Mahmood

Seconded: Steve Godward

THE LEFT

SWP's fantasy world

Exchanges between the Socialist Workers Party and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire cast light on the weaknesses of both organisations. **Mike Macnair** looks at the SWP's latest contribution

In the usual way in which these things happen, a recent letter from Alex Callinicos, for the Socialist Workers Party central committee, to a group of leaders of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire in France has found its way into general electronic circulation. The letter offers some sound points of criticism of the policy of the Fourth International (FI), to which the LCR is affiliated, and of the LCR itself. It also offers important insights into the fantasy world of the SWP leadership.

The letter begins with mutual congratulation and self-congratulation. The SWP and the LCR are "facing the same way" in the global anti-capitalist and anti-war movement; convergence between the FI (which Callinicos seems mistakenly to assume is merely a network dependent on the LCR) and the SWP's International Socialist Tendency (which is a network dependent on the SWP) could "have an impact well beyond our ranks".

"But - alas that there is a but -" the FI's English affiliate, the International Socialist Group, turned down an invitation to join the SWP, and the LCR has delayed, until September coming, a decision on whether to integrate the SWP's French co-thinkers, Socialisme Par En Bas (SPEB). Why? According to Callinicos, the LCR leaders have raised three basic political issues separating the two tendencies: (1) The SWP's political practice "fails to respect the autonomy of mass movements"; (2) its concept of the party "does not integrate the possibility of an organised pluralism" - ie, does not permit genuine factions and faction-fights; and (3) the "strongly verticalist" - ie, hierarchical - character of the SWP's party and its relationship with the "unitary movements" contradicts the SWP's proclaimed adherence to 'socialism from below'.

These criticisms are, of course, the LCR leaders' diplomatic version of a perception of the SWP operations which is very widespread among the British left and particularly intense among ex-SWP members. Removing the diplomatic language, this perception is (1) that the SWP operates through fronts (Anti-Nazi League, Globalise Resistance, 'rank and file' groups in the unions, and so on), which, once the SWP has obtained administrative control, are turned on and off like taps from the SWP centre, so that they never achieve any permanent organisation of militants at the base; (2) that the SWP's internal regime is worse than that of the old Stalinised Communist Party - a view particularly strongly held by ex-CP militants who passed through the SWP at some stage in their political lives. The LCR's (3) is merely the assertion that these practices of the SWP are flatly in contradiction with the SWP's proclaimed political ideology.

Callinicos responds to the LCR criticisms for the SWP CC with a combination of injured innocence, an assertion of 'Leninist fundamentals' in the SWP's usual rather dogmatic form, and a counter-critique of the practice of the LCR. To disentangle the arguments it is best to start with the asserted fundamentals and the counter-critique before coming back to the injured innocence.

Reform and revolution

The last part of Callinicos's letter consists of a re-assertion of the basis for supposing that the divide between reform and revolution remains fundamental to orienting the left. On this point Callinicos has some strong points to make against the FI's, and hence LCR's, diplomatic



Callinicos: no factions, please, we're SWP

concessions to projects like those of the Parti Communiste Français/Gauche Plurielle and of the *autonomi* followers of Hardt and Negri's *Empire*. These projects evade the question of state power and hence wind up as loyal left critics of the "social-liberal" governments imprisoned in the logic of neoliberalism. Any serious movement for reform, Callinicos argues, "will face the most intense resistance from the bourgeoisie - resistance that can only be overcome by organised mass mobilisations that, among other things, seek to break the state's monopoly of the means of coercion."

This is entirely true. So, too, are the concrete critiques drawn from it. The first is that the FI's diplomatic equivocations lead to accommodation in practice to trends like that led by Bernard Gassen in the French Attac - Gassen argues for building up the European capitalist states' military as a 'counterweight' to the USA. There is a slight 'people who live in glass houses' problem here: Callinicos himself includes Attac's major proposal, the Tobin tax, in his own 'action programme' for the anti-capitalist movement (see Kit Robinson's review of his *An anti-capitalist manifesto* in *Weekly Worker* July 10), but this is precisely a proposal for a return from globalisation to national capitalism - which leads perfectly naturally to Gassen's conclusions. The second and more striking critique is the decision of the FI's Brazilian affiliate, Democracia Socialista, to accept a ministerial portfolio in the Lula government and its consequent implication in this government's continued neoliberal attacks on the working class (see *Weekly Worker* July 3).

The problem is that the question of 'reform or revolution' remains for the SWP a highly abstract reference point. Callinicos's critique of the LCR on the general issues is here almost as obscure as the LCR's (habitual) use of Left-Bank Parisian theoretical language to preserve diplomatic obscurity; in the SWP's public life 'revolution' takes the form of the empty slogan, 'One solution - revolution', applied to mugs and t-shirts, and a sentimental attachment to the forms and figures of 1917 Russia. *Concrete* issues of a politics which radically opposes the real existing state - like republicanism in Britain - are evaded or marginalised.

The underlying cause of the FI's and LCR's equivocations on this issue is that in the late 1960s and 1970s the FI majority attempted to concretise a strategy for workers' power: the "strategy of dual

power". This strategy strikingly failed to have any purchase on the course of events in Portugal in 1974-76 and in several crises in Latin America in the 1970s. Since the mid-1980s the FI has been attempting to come to terms with this failure, but the conclusions it has drawn are those of Kautsky's 'Two-and-a-Half International' in the 1920s and the 'London Bureau of Socialist Parties' in the 1930s (both projects notoriously failed).

Callinicos admits to the LCR: "Of course, there is plenty of scope for discussion about the forms in which such a confrontation with the capitalist state could unfold - the working class of today is very different from the one that drove the last upturn of struggle in the late 1960s and early 1970s, let alone the proletariat at the heart of the great revolutionary experiences of the early 20th century - though, as you imply, more than anything else we need new experiences to give our speculations concrete shape." This is as much as to say that the SWP also has no clear idea of a strategy for power.

The truth is that the old International Socialists, the SWP's forerunner, like the FI, had a strategic conception - this time drawn (as Callinicos says, their ideas still are) from Rosa Luxemburg's 1906 pamphlet *The mass strike*, coupled in the 1960s and 70s with a liberal use of the spontaneists' critique of Leninism. The core of the strategy was to abstain from the left-right struggle in the official trade unions and instead focus on building 'rank and file movements', which would independently express the spontaneous dynamic of the strike struggle. This strategy also failed in the 1970s, with the collapse of the large Italian semi-spontaneist left organisations like *Lotta Continua*, with which the IS was at the time collaborating, and in Britain with the derailment by the 1974 Labour government of the offensive led by the shop stewards' movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s (in reality it had already been disproved by the course of events in Germany and Italy in 1918-1920).

IS guru Tony Cliff's balance sheet of this failure was not a thorough critique of *The mass strike* and rank-and-file strategy, but to superimpose on it the idea of the need for "the revolutionary party" - understood through the frame of Zinoviev's 1922 *History of the Bolshevik Party* and the cult of the personality of Lenin. The resulting 'Bolshevisation' splintered the IS and led to the creation of Workers Fight (today's Alliance for

Workers' Liberty), Workers Power, the Revolutionary Communist Group (later *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism* and the Revolutionary Communist Party) and some more ephemeral groups like the Workers League and the International Socialist Association. The remaining IS core converted itself into the Socialist Workers Party and embarked on a 'party-building' offensive aimed at bypassing its 'sectarian' opponents by recruiting newly radicalising youth. In reality this turn meant that revolutionary *strategy* was reduced to the need for the revolutionary *party*.

The party

Callinicos explains the need for the party thus: "The classical case for the revolutionary party is that it generalises the experiences of particular struggles, on the basis of this generalisation formulates a programme and strategy for taking the movement forward, and intervenes in an organised manner to translate these broad conceptions into reality. When things go well - and they have gone better for us in the anti-war movement than anything has for many years - a mutually enriching process takes place in which revolutionaries learn from the movement but also help to strengthen it and give it direction."

This is a radically incomplete conception of the nature of a party programme. The elementary ideas of the socialist programme that socialism is possible and necessary, and that the only road to socialism is through the rule of the working class (dictatorship of the proletariat) depend not *only* on the generalised "experiences of particular struggles", but *also* on scientific analysis of anthropology, history *before* the development of the particular class struggles between workers and capitalists, political economy, the dynamics of the capitalist states, etc. The basic understanding of the Marx-Engels polemics against Lassalle and apolitical trade unionism, and of Plekhanov and Lenin's polemics against the economists, is that the working class has to begin to take the lead in society as a whole, which means taking up issues which do not immediately generate "particular struggles" - like, for example, the question of agriculture in Britain.

This anti-scientific concept of the programme as "generalis[ing] the experiences of particular struggles" is the continuing reflection of the SWP's original Luxemburgist spontaneism. It naturally has the result that the programme has no definite content which is ever capable of being tested, criticised and improved, but that whatever ideas are thrown up by "struggles" - like the Tobin tax - can be adopted, while ideas which are not immediately popular with the SWP's preferred audience - like women's and gay rights in relation to the mosques - can be dumped as "shibboleths".

Conversely, in Callinicos's account the task of the party is not to *persuade* the broad workers' vanguard (the activists of the trade unions, workers' parties, etc) and the working masses to fight for the elements of the party's programme, but to "intervene[s] in an organised manner to translate these broad conceptions into reality". A little later Callinicos states: "Daniel Bensaid puts [it] very well when he writes that, for Lenin, the party 'becomes a strategic operator, a sort of gearbox and points-man of the class struggle'." These slippery expressions can all too easily mean that the task of the party is to manipulate the mass movement through trickery of one sort or an-

other and bureaucratic manipulations into unconsciously doing the party's will. In this context it is unsurprising that Callinicos says that "a revolutionary party does not aim to represent the working class in its entirety".

The following sentence appears to qualify this statement: "Rather, it seeks to organise those who are more or less fully committed to a revolutionary socialist programme in order to intervene in the struggles and movements of the day and draw wider layers of the working class and other oppressed sections of society towards that programme." But there is a permanent separation built into the account between party and class. The project is deeply unambitious: it does not seek (to give a British example) to *replace* Labourism with Marxist class politics as the dominant politics of the working class, but to organise a permanent minority.

Even the discussions of this permanent minority are poisoned by the idea of 'generalising the experiences'. There are two results of this concept. The first is that issues which are not about "experiences" are not open to party discussion, but are taught from the top down by the leaders. The second is that dissent can all too easily be explained as reflecting the *partial* experiences of the ranks: only the leaders have sufficient access to information really to generalise ... What is involved is a watered-down Hegelianism in which the party takes the place given by Hegel to the state.

Party and movement

Callinicos remarks: "... we were struck by the fact that the LCR central committee, when it resolved to defer a decision on SPEB's integration, reaffirmed, as a 'position of principle': 'the choice of the LCR to refuse to impose "party discipline" on its militants within mass organisations (trade unions, associations) must be clearly understood as a will to respect the autonomy of the social movements, according to their own frameworks and their own rhythms of elaboration and decision'."

"This seems to us a bizarre position. Of course, if by 'party discipline' you mean subjecting members to the will of the organisation by instructions and the threat of expulsion, then resort to such mechanical procedures is, at best, an admission of failure - though not something that can therefore be ruled out *a priori*: trade-union activity, for example, is full of temptations that occasionally can only be dealt with by disciplinary measures. But for us much more important is political discussion involving the leadership and the comrades directly concerned to hammer out what the party should be pushing for in the union or movement in question. The alternative is a dispersion of forces, and at worst, a situation in which members of the same party are openly pressing for divergent positions."

The bulk of this criticism is plainly correct. The error of the LCR here flows from a general error of the FI, adopted in its response to Stalinism in the 1985 'Resolution on socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Though less transparently so than the SWP's, the FI's conception of democratic centralism is in fact bureaucratic centralist, attempting to keep the party's internal differences hidden in a secret internal bulletin. Since a mass workers' party which worked in this way would manipulate and substitute for, rather than lead, the political discussion in trade unions in which it

worked, the FI asserts that democratic centralism has no place in the trade unions; the LCR extends this doctrine to the “movements”; the result is a mere dispersion of forces.

The sting is in the tail of Callinicos’s argument - “*at worst*, a situation in which members of the same party are openly pressing for divergent positions”. Far from being the worst outcome, this was actually the *practice* of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and the Bolsheviks. It is through the *open* struggle of views that the class and its broad vanguard learn and are able to choose effectively between divergent views. Party unity is required in relation to *concrete actions* - strikes, elections, and such like - not in relation to ‘positions’ more broadly. The common error of the LCR and SWP on the nature of democratic centralism here leads the LCR to reject it; the SWP to embrace a policy of secrets and lies.

Party and faction

After a good deal of discussion of how the LCR and SWP agree on the principle that democratic discussion is essential, and some discussion of the concrete history of the Bolshevik Party between September-October 1917 and 1921, Callinicos concludes that “... revolutionary organisations necessarily involve plurality; moreover, democratic debate is the indispensable mechanism through which perspectives and circumstances are calibrated and crises are overcome. In our view, however, the kind of principled distinction that you draw between party and faction and the right of members to form permanent tendencies that you infer from this distinction are an obstacle to internal discussion playing this role.

“If comrades identify themselves as members of factions that have a continuous identity, they are likely to approach concrete issues and debates through the prism of the faction’s general perspective. Issues are unlikely to be discussed on their merits, but approached rather from the point of view of their impact on the internal balance of factional forces. Daniel [Bensaïd]’s ‘organised plurality’ then risks degenerating into something like the pluralism that American political scientists claim for their society - pragmatic competition and bargaining between interest groups.” He goes on to identify the prolonged faction-fight in the FI between 1968 and 1979 as an example of this problem.

There is a curious paradox here. Callinicos’s critique of Bensaïd’s “organised plurality” as effectively a variant on the liberal conception of pluralism is broadly correct. The LCR’s ‘pluralism’ - and the same is true of the tradition of the British supporters of the FI over the last 30 years - contains the parliamentarist hidden secret that ‘whoever you vote for, the government (ie, the party apparatus) will get in’. Moreover, the LCR’s ‘government’ is strikingly more tender of pluralism to its right, than of pluralism to its left.

A good illustration is what happened in 1991-3, when opposition in the LCR’s youth group, the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire, broke the bounds of the diplomatic dance between the tendencies in the LCR. The JCR leaders were abruptly expelled from the LCR on factitious charges of indiscipline and a new competing youth organisation set up by the LCR majority. Like liberalism, the LCR’s ‘pluralism’ thus contains the ‘state of emergency’.

On the other hand, Callinicos’s example proves the opposite of his claim. The period of the great - public - faction fight in the FI between 1968 and 1979 was the period when this organisation grew most strongly, attained the most political influence and was most effective in educating cadre. *The open faction fight was itself a dynamic element which strengthened the organisation.*

Before the theme of ‘party and faction’ emerged in the later 1970s, the FI majority had a better understanding of the question. This was that *the party apparatus is a permanent faction within the party, which has interests distinct from*

the interests of the members (this view is merely the application to the apparatus of workers’ organisations of Marx’s critique of Hegel’s theory of the state). As a result, the adoption of party rules banning factions - like the Bolsheviks in 1921 - does not abolish factions: it merely gives the apparatus faction a formal monopoly, an instrument to consolidate its dictatorship over the members, and forces factions into the form of cliques and court intrigues like those of the renaissance monarchies.

The same is true of rules banning ‘permanent’ factions. This was transparent in the old US SWP, which invented this form of apparatus control, and has been apparent in the British SWP since the 1970s. Banning ‘permanent’ factions allows the leadership to decide how long a political discussion will go on and to begin and end it at times convenient to the apparatus. It is the equivalent of the British prime minister’s power to fix the dates of elections for his own advantage.

Injured innocence

The theme of injured innocence, or simple denial that the real SWP is in any way similar to the image of the SWP criticised by the LCR leaders, is a thread which runs through the whole letter, though it is most strongly present in the discussions of ‘Party and movement’ and ‘The revolutionary party today’ - ie, party and faction. Of course the SWP doesn’t manipulate fronts, insists Callinicos: the Stop the War Coalition and the ANL are “mass united fronts”, Globalise Resistance “a united front that brings together members of the SWP with activists with other political perspectives - for example, progressive muslims and comrades influenced by the *disobbedient*”. The SWP’s approach to party and faction does not lead to splits: “The last, and much the most serious, split in the history of the SWP took place in 1975.” And “Though you accuse us of having a ‘verticalist’ method of organising, the number of times that individuals have been expelled from the SWP over the past 25 years because of political disagreements as opposed to personal misconduct has been extremely small.”

These last two points can be rapidly disposed of. In relation to splits, the very same point Callinicos makes (the organisation has lasted a long time without major splits) could have been made by the American SWP before the early 1980s, by Gerry Healy’s Workers Revolutionary Party before that organisation’s implosion in the mid-1980s, and by the Militant Tendency before their 1991-92 split. The explanation is that once ‘permanent factions’ are prohibited, before any serious faction-fight can develop individual dissidents will wind up being expelled for ‘personal misconduct’ - either for the crime of “factionalism” or for other factitious charges of indiscipline. Thus no major splits can develop. But the effect is ... dispersal of forces - once members begin to think seriously for themselves, they come into conflict with the apparatus and wind up as hostile ‘independents’.

Frontism

When it comes to the relations of party and movement, the contradiction between the SWP’s proclaimed ideals and its actual practice is a little more complex.

The first question is the dynamics of “movements”. Single-issue campaigning groups have been an institutional feature of British bourgeois politics since the 18th century (early examples focussed on prison reform and slavery). Such groups are a useful means of conducting an agitation. Marx and Engels had no difficulty with the participation of the embryo workers’ movement in such groups, but insisted on maintaining an independent class line. The errors which the SWP share with the FI on this front are two-fold. First, they confuse single-issue campaigns with the policy of the workers’ united front advocated by the Third Congress of the Comintern. This policy is about *class* unity in the aftermath of the split in the Second International, not

about single-issue initiatives in agitation.

Second, on the basis of this bastard version of the ‘theory of the united front’, the participation of some element of the official lefts is indispensable to make the campaign a ‘united front’. The SWP and FI are therefore strongly inclined within the single-issue campaign to tone down their own differences with their collaborators to their right, and thereby act as foot-soldiers and gatekeepers for the Labour bureaucracy and the Stalinists. This was evident as early as the early Anti-Nazi League: in the name of unity this organisation excluded any consideration of the state racism that provides the fertiliser feeding the far right.

The temptation in this direction is simple. The official lefts in both the trade unions and the Labour Party are happy to lend their names to campaigns and to speak on platforms, provided they do not have to provide the foot-soldiers (organising at the base would be against their principles) and can be assured that they are not lending their names to promote Marxist politics. Conciliating them therefore produces larger numbers on demonstrations, etc. Marxists who fall into this trap fall prey to the idea that they have ‘entered the big time’: in reality they have merely become part of the dynamics of the official lefts. To preserve the alliance with the official lefts they must, as far as possible, marginalise left critics. They enter the dialectic of secrets and lies demanded by this policy, and do the official lefts’ work of bureaucratic exclusion and manipulation.

Dynamics of SWP

The second element is the dynamics of the SWP. Since the ‘party turn’ of the mid-1970s, the SWP has conceived a party as “an organisation which initiates action” (Tony Cliff *Why we need a socialist workers party* January 1977, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1977/01/swp.htm>). This is a clearer version of Callinicos’s party which “intervene[s] in an organised manner to

translate these broad conceptions into reality”. Cliff’s examples? “That is the meaning of the Right to Work Campaign, the Campaign against Racism and so on” (*ibid*). The party is *conceived as such* in relation to its single-issue campaigns, not its work in the trade unions or the mass movement in the localities. The fundamental task of this party is to recruit: “If, when the revolutionary crisis comes to Britain, we have 40,000 members, there is no question that we can grow to 400,000 or perhaps half a million. If, on the other hand, the revolutionary organisation has only a few thousand members, it is even possible that the party appears as irrelevant and does not grow at all. A certain size is necessary for take-off. Recruitment is the first task we have to carry through” (*ibid*).

This project has had two results. The first is that since the SWP seeks to “initiate action” in the form of single-issue campaigns, SWP commitment of forces to these campaigns will be intense while they are successful, but will only be maintained as long as they have some agitational purchase. The SWP can therefore have no stable long-term perspective *as a party* either in the localities or the trade unions.

The second is that ‘open recruitment’ means that the SWP has roughly four categories of member. The first category is the central leadership, the apparatus and sections of experienced members not directly employed by the party who are fully committed to the ‘party project’ and/or integrated into an apparatus clientage chain. This is the core of the SWP. At the opposite extreme stands the second group - pure paper members, in substance merely sympathisers of the party (if that), who have been persuaded to take party cards but never brought effectively into party activity.

The third group is a largish class of militants who hold SWP membership and sell the press, but are deeply rooted in trade union, local or other sectoral work and cannot routinely be mobilised for the

latest ‘initiative in action’. Apart from their formal party affiliation these militants are hardly distinguishable from the LCR and ISG “coalitions of activists involved in specific movements” criticised by Callinicos in his 2002 text *Regroupment, realignment and the revolutionary left* (p12 - <http://www.istendency.net/pdf/Regroupment.pdf>). (It should be said that the Bolshevik membership in the low periods of the class struggle between 1905 and 1917 had a very similar character...)

The fourth group is the key to the SWP’s size and ability to mobilise. It consists of recent SWP recruits from among newly radicalising students and youth. These militants have rarely met any of the other tendencies of the far left. They are attracted by the SWP’s dynamism as a party which “initiates action”, but have as yet acquired only a superficial grasp of the SWP’s ideas. Their inexperience makes it hard for them to think critically, but they are enthusiastic and readily mobilisable. They will retain this character for a year or two between joining and then either dropping out, becoming part of the apparatus group or gradually passing into the ‘rooted activist’ group. In the meantime, they are the SWP’s real foot-soldiers, the element on which the apparatus group relies to enable it to “initiate actions”.

But the organisation therefore moves more or less constantly from one campaign to another, and does so by moving substantial numbers of rootless and inexperienced young members who can be trusted to vote the party line. The result is, first, that the SWP acquires *organisational control* of the ‘movements’ it is involved with *as opposed to political leadership*; and, second, that this organisational control will inevitably be used to shut the movement down temporarily when the SWP’s perspectives shift, and revive it as a vehicle for “initiating action” when the issue comes back into prominence. Whatever the motivations, the result is that the ‘movements’ are converted into SWP fronts. It quacks like a duck ...

Fantasy land

A comrade recently argued on the Socialist Alliance e-discussion list that what we see in the SWP is merely the cynical exploitation of the new members for the benefit of the jet-set life style of the leadership. This is not serious. Callinicos, for example, is a senior academic, professor of politics at York University, and could have a jet-setting lifestyle of conferences, visiting professorships and so on without being a leader of the SWP (no doubt if he had abandoned Marxism he would be even more eminent in his profession). Other long-standing SWP leaders, too, could have found more comfortable niches in life by breaking with their political commitments.

The problem is not cynicism, but self-deception. The SWP embarked in the mid-1970s on the path of the declaration of an organisation of a couple of thousand as a party which “initiates actions” and the adoption of a Zinovievist internal regime. This is a path which leads nowhere. It has remained about the same size ever since, never making the hoped-for ‘breakthrough’. Even if its major competitors have collapsed, it remains in the same league as the small groups relative to the trade unions and the Labour lefts - as is visible in the comparable electoral results of the SWP-controlled Socialist Alliance and the (much smaller) Socialist Party. The SWP’s ‘united front’ policy and its concept of the party actually act as *obstacles* to initiatives which could undermine Labourism or develop an alternative pole. But its leaders continue to con themselves that all is well.

The alternative would be a deep-going self-criticism of their policy over the last 30 years. We may guess that those among their leadership who have a glimmering of appreciation that such a turn is necessary are frightened that it would blow the party up. The reality is that the risk of a destructive crisis is much greater if they continue on their present course ●

Come with us to the mosque

A comrade in New Zealand admits to having been “perplexed” by the ‘peace and justice’ turn of the Socialist Workers Organization, fraternal organisation of the SWP. However, all was revealed when he read of the latest moves in Britain, discussed in the Weekly Worker.

The comrade writes: “Your reportage is valuable because it means that we usually know what the SW here are going to do before they even know themselves (there is usually a small time lag between the British SWP doing something and their more boneheaded blind followers here catching up).”

It is the same with all the affiliated organisations of the SWP’s International Socialist Tendency - a good recent example being Socialisme Par En Bas (Socialism from below), the IST franchise-holder in France, which has seemingly embraced the SWP’s alliance with the mosque just a little too enthusiastically. Socialisme Par En Bas has gone so far as to adopt the slogan, ‘We are all muslims’ - a move which has brought this sharp reprimand from Chris Harman:

“... I must say that you have the tendency to take up slogans without having evaluated all the implications and that do not come across as serious. This can feed

the criticisms of the worst elements of the LCR and those around them. Personally I find the slogan, ‘We are all muslims’, totally mistaken. For two reasons.

“Firstly, clearly you are not muslims. Muslims form a community where members share beliefs which they take more or less seriously. If you tell them, ‘We are all muslims’, they are within their rights to retort: ‘Come with us to the mosque then’, ‘Come with us to Mecca’, ‘Don’t forget to pray five times a day’, etc.

“I say that because at least twice at anti-war meetings practising muslims have tried to convert me. I also know that many SWP members from the muslim tradition insist on the fact that they are not muslims, but atheists.

“Secondly, because the slogan does not take into account the oppression suffered by muslims. It is as if we are ignoring the response of the black population in general, and black nationalists in particular, which would be to say, ‘You are minimising our oppression, for you do not suffer it every day.’

“The slogan is not sufficiently thought through and can only play into the hands of the ‘Cassenites’ and the right wing of the League” ●

Peter Manson

CAMPS

Razor-wire imperialism

The resurgent idea of the concentration camp should worry everyone. No doubt we all have picked up along the way some idea of their horrors. Whether the German camps in World War II, or the gulags of Siberia, or even the strategic hamlets of the US 'police action' in Vietnam, camp detention degrades us all.

Such horrors can be seen on TV or at the movies, and increasingly contemporary versions can be read of in the press - from the offshore 'Pacific solution' and remote desert prisons for immigrants in Australia, to the US razor-wire Camp X-Ray for the Taliban at Guantanamo in Cuba. We are seeing more and more examples, not less.

This article is inspired by the recent success of the Anti-Internal Security Act Campaign in Malaysia (AIM - see www.suaram.org/isa), where Reformasi activists held at Kumingting Camp were released after more than two years in detention. As will be shown, however, this success, while welcome, is only a minor victory in a struggle that must be taken up everywhere - the camps are not unique to Malaysia. They have been, and are, a key component of capitalist imperialism - as the British, Australian and US cases show.

Razor-wire enclosures come in several different, but closely linked, forms, and in all cases their use is wholly political. Whether designed to manage the flow of workers into the advanced capitalist enclaves of Europe, America or Australia (asylum and immigration centres) or more explicitly to house political detainees and vanquished enemies or combat alleged threats of the new 'war on terror' (Guantanamo, Terrorism Act, 'homeland security'), the logic is the same. The razor wire is ostensibly designed to control minds and suppress the people.

In Britain, the 'asylum and immigration system' is the formal name given to a regime that legislates for the detention of potential settlers and workers, and, along with forced dispersal, deportation and general intimidation - the demonisation of whole communities - this system is intended to work to control population and as such is a political infringement upon the whole working class. Over 1,500 people, mostly asylum-seekers, are presently locked up in detention camps and prisons within Britain and abroad, and have been detained without trial, without time limit and without automatic recourse to bail or public appeal. The detention centres, prisons and asylums are where the New Labour government locks up those who slip through the net of Fortress Europe - where borders and boundaries are set up by the state to limit movement, while capital and goods can move at will (commodity fetishism again). At the present time there are plans to build new detention centres in the UK with a target capacity of 4,000 and the European Union has approved the development of pilot 'safe haven' camps overseas, where refugees will be held within the countries they are trying to escape, or nearby (*The Guardian* June 21).

The constant escalation of talk about such schemes continues to encourage a public fear of 'foreigners', and by targeting refugees as a 'problem' and asylum-seekers as likely to 'abuse the system', people in need become the handy scapegoats with which to brand all immigrants and settlers as unwelcome.

Against this, it is an article of principle that freedom of movement should be accepted, even encouraged and condoned, and as part of our international context should apply to everyone, not just those subject to persecution in their 'home' states. Everybody should have the option of travel so that they might chose to move to, settle and work anywhere they like in the world. If capital is free to move across borders, it stands to reason that people, who, as workers, create the value of capital, should also be free to move. The detention centre system is a blockage to workers' movement, and as such it is as political as the gulags - the fight against them must be taken up as a political fight of the entire class, internationally.

This applies to the more explicitly 'political' forms of detention too. If not targeting and

From Guantanamo to Kumingting to Campsfield, detention without trial is used to divide and rule. **John Hutnyk** calls for an international working class response



Political detainees: a warning to others

demonising asylum-seekers, then the camp mentality targets 'terrorists' - on Guantanamo's Camp X-Ray and since the opening of the global 'war against terrorism' there has been a remodelling of the technology of detention camps and it is in our interests to ensure they cannot be used against anyone - not muslims, not even (alleged) criminals, and certainly not against those fleeing political persecution. We should also beware that one day George Bush and Tony Blair may want to put us in such camps - it has been tried before.

Reinventing the McCarthyism of the cold war for new times, the Patriot Act and 'homeland security' in the USA gives the state sweeping powers of arbitrary arrest and detention of non-nationals suspected of being involved in terrorism. In Britain, under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001, police powers of arrest and detention are triggered by mere suspicion that someone may be involved in 'terrorism' - including conduct that in itself does not constitute a criminal offence, such as, perhaps, support for a 'proscribed' international organisation. The detention of any "foreign national" for an indefinite period without charge or trial because they may be "reasonably" believed to have "links" with terrorism, or are thought to be "a risk" to national security, is the thin edge of an anti-democratic and racist wedge that threatens us all. These attacks upon democracy makes it a potentially detainable offence to advance a "political, religious or ideological" cause, which would include a good many more people than you or I would like to see sent to the salt mines.

In a typical double play, the 'war on terror' opens up the possibility of locking away those who threaten the 'homeland' with the prospect of political alternatives and those who protest against the devastation imperialism brings to the other side of the international division of labour. Freedom requires the incarceration of others. Security equals war. Nation equals jail. Humanity equals inhumanity. New Labour has lost no time in reintroducing a full raft of imperialist, even totalitarian, legislative measures that impact primarily upon minority and working class communities. Initially the targets are so called "foreign nationals" who



Tian Chua (left)

can be detained without trial on minister Blunkett's "reasonable suspicion", but as the hypocrisy of this demonisation escalates, the consequence is that everyone in Britain - loyal royal subject or not - is placed in jeopardy. The concentration camps must be defeated.

Malaysian camps

The image of detention has become a media standard. Few, however, experience the comforts of such a camp and come out to tell the story - Tian Chua of Malaysia is one of the few. On release from Kumingting detention camp in June this year, Chua said he had merely "exchanged one small jail for a larger one". Political expression is at a premium in Malaysia. Interned for two years and three months without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA), Chua was spuriously accused of plotting an armed uprising; he was beaten, denied food, visitors and communications.

Chapter and verse could be cited about the camps at Buchenwald, Dachau and Auschwitz, but in each case the general point that detention is an ideological weapon as well as a political tool is already explicit. The image of the camps is cultivated in a dubious historical remembrance - selective and sensational, demoralising.

(To those who object to the conflation of the detention centres with concentration camps, the example of the Australian 'Pacific solution' should be borne in mind as a 'final solution' that abandons people fleeing political and economic austerity to death at sea,

rather than by gas chamber. For an Atlantic example: "On June 20, a boat packed with hundreds of African would-be immigrants sank off the city of Sfax on Tunisia's eastern coast, with only 41 of about 250 on board believed to have survived" (*Herald-Sun* June 30). Additionally, the modern substitution of the SS with employees of the Wackenhut Corporation does not seem to significantly alter the character of the camps.)

Conveniently the threat of detention silences dissent, engenders despair, occupies activists' time, dissuades new recruits - its publicity acts in the old Spanish inquisition model of 'showing the instruments' - as Giorgio Agamben says, the "display of weapons" characterises the police in all eras: the display of the police power, beyond the law, is made public in the most visible way (G Agamben *Means without ends: notes on politics*, Minneapolis 2000, p105).

Outside the Penang Museum in Malaysia today you can still see an old bullet-ridden Rolls Royce that once was used to ferry vice-roys about the Malayan peninsula. The explanation offered for this exhibit, however, is somewhat vague. The bullet holes were earned at the assassination of the high commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, in October 1951. What is not noted is that this was the highest-level kill achieved by communist insurgents during the so-called Malayan

Europe: meeting the challenge of continental unity

In his new book of essays Jack Conrad argues against those who view the European Union and the single currency with trepidation. The unity of capitalist Europe is our opportunity to unite the European working class into a single combat party - a Communist Party of the EU. An important step in that direction would be a European Socialist Alliance. pp129, £5 or €8



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‘emergency’. What happened in the villages during this ‘emergency’ should be of concern - wholesale detentions that set the model for strategic hamlets in Vietnam.

Malaya was the most profitable part of the empire in the years between World War I and World War II. But with grave shortages of rice and cloth, a malaria epidemic, collapsed plantation and mining infrastructure, this once most lucrative colony became the most difficult to rule. The local Chinese-led communists joined with the Malay community in a mass non-cooperation movement.

Of course international solidarity on the part of mainland Chinese was cast as ‘infiltration’ for propaganda purposes, and when support for the Malay communists came from Britain, this was concealed.

Out of the mass non-cooperation movement there developed popular support for the Communist Party of Malaysia. In reaction to the British declaration of a state of emergency in June 1948, an insurrection began, led by Chin Peng. This insurrection was self-consciously known, on the part of the Chinese and Malays and their international supporters, as a revolutionary war. On the British side it was characterised merely as ‘the emergency’, which was a calculated reference to alibi the declaration of special police powers above and beyond conventional law (non-war, non-Geneva Convention, as now occurs with Guantanamo Bay and the US failure to extend any rights to captured combatants).

Under Colonel WN Gray, appointed direct from Palestine as commissioner of the Malay police, the force expanded to 73,000, plus 17,000 “auxiliaries and Kampong guards” by 1952 (A Stockwell in Anderson, David and Killingray *Policing and decolonisation: nationalism, politics and the police 1917-65* Manchester 1992, p110). Gray oversaw the introduction of resettlement and gave the Malay police the major role in defence of ‘new villages’ in order to separate the people from the communists - and food and information.

Stockwell writes: “The emergency regulations gave the police extraordinary powers of search and arrest, control of the movement of persons and traffic, and the authority to impose curfews ... in late 1951 it was estimated that some 6,000 persons were being held in detention without trial” (*ibid* p113, citing O Lyttelton *The memoirs of Lord Chandos* London 1962, p372).

Detention without trial was the mainstay of the ‘security’ and ‘anti-terrorism’ programme of British rule, even as the insurgency became a war of attrition that effectively drained the colony’s profitability. The combination of communist insurgency and the international climate of anti-colonial pro-independence negotiations meant the British played their old divide-and-rule routine even in the run-up to an inevitable independence.

In July 1955 the Malay leader, Tunku Abdul Rahman, headed a coalition of the UMNO (United Malay National Organisation), MCA (Malay Chinese Association) and MIC (Malay Indian Congress) to victory in the first ‘federal’ election of the Malay colony. As the British debated handing over internal security and policing to the new chief minister, Tunku Rahman suggested an amnesty for the communists and with Chin Peng opened talks (A Stockwell in Anderson, David and Killingray *Policing and decolonisation: nationalism, politics and the police 1917-65*, Manchester 1992, p120). Chin Peng wisely offered peace as soon as independence, and control over security, was achieved. The British moved to forestall such alliance-making by granting Tunku immediate control of internal security through a ‘guided’ police service commission.

After independence in 1957 a gradual Malaysiansation of the upper echelons of the still predominantly Malay police force was implemented and Stockwell reports that the Malaysia police retained “a paramilitary role, [it] is centrally organised and has extensive powers of arrest of persons and seizure of property ... like its predecessor it has been accused of acting as the instrument of repressive government, infringing civil liberties and

neglecting ‘normal policing’” (*ibid* p122). The continuity of colonialist methods is shown in the fact that there have been 4,000 ISA arrests since independence: cases in 1987 numbered 106; in 2001-2002 over 60. These numbers are not as extensive as during the emergency, but the same strategy prevails in the absence of any form of insurgency - the ISA used as a tool of ideological repression. More rule than divide today.

When Tian Chua says he has swapped one prison for another, he refers to this heritage of so-called post-colonial Malaysia, where the ruling clique has adopted the policing strategies of British colonialism. Chua was originally detained with six others as part of a crackdown on Reformasi opposition leaders by Mahathir. Subsequent to September 11 2001, Mahathir has tried to present himself as a moderate muslim, yet curries favour with the US administration, detaining at least 170 alleged muslim ‘terrorists’ under the ISA laws - so similar to those adopted in Britain today. As I write, there are still 99 detainees being held at the Kamunting detention camp without trial.

Mahathir has been working closely with the British and US administration to set up a regional ‘counter-terrorism’ centre in Kuala Lumpur (L Fekete ‘Cynical manoeuvres in the war against terror’ *CARF* 2000: 69, p12). Although the government alleged the present detainees have been involved in terrorist activities, no evidence has been produced to substantiate this allegation. Some of these detainees have been held without trial for almost three years. They languish in Kumingting while Chua tries to mobilise a campaign to demand their release. It cannot be stressed enough that they have not been charged, and they have not been tried. The ISA law under which they are held is a political law of suppression, incompatible with even the most rudimentary forms of democracy - and such laws are being adopted worldwide.

As with those who cross the borders of Fortress Europe or are interned in similar camps or prisons in Burma, Indonesia, Australia, the USA, these laws ensure people who protest are subject to political repression. In this respect detention degrades us all - the struggle must be international against the camps.

Detention without trial

Having lost interest in the age-old sport of taunting ‘communists’ (with the House Un-American Activities Committee, witch-hunts and persecutions of the McCarthy period), the technology of detention camps awaited a new crop of recruits - mostly they turn out to be muslims, whether refugees from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, or alleged ‘terrorists’. To release those who have been detained without trial must be a first priority. If the detainees in any of the camps at Guantanamo, Kumingting or Campsfield have committed any kind of ‘crime’, there has been more than enough time to charge and try them - if they have not been charged and tried by now, they must be set free. They should not have been detained in the first place. To continue to ignore the atrocities of these criminal incarcerations makes us guilty of far worse crimes against ourselves than any enemy, real or imagined, could commit.

The new concentration camp detentions are an ideological weapon as well as a political tool. The opportunist uses of detention vary: in the one case we might find it used to deter others from the dissenting views that the detainees are held for, as I think we see in Malaysia. In another case we can see detention given a high profile in order to placate an already placid public, as in Britain where the detention of asylum-seekers and ‘terrorists’ is given much publicity (this spurious link is explicitly made, even though it has no empirical basis in law beyond a few traces of castor oil bean extract at an asylum-seeker’s flat - tanks deployed at Heathrow in response). The numerical incidence of detention here is insignificant in terms of government calculation of some sort of deterrent effect on asylum claims or immigration in general. It is a shameless appeal to the mass voting public, via the tabloid press, that alibis detention.

A third use of detention silences opposition leaders. The British used this tactic in India against the non-cooperation movement, even locking up Gandhi, and this is a part of the rationale behind the so-called anti-terrorist detentions in the US and the UK. As we have seen, detention can also take the form of the strategic hamlet: the village protected from itself. We often see this as capitalism responds to its critics.

A double campaign

Against the detention camps in our minds that excuse the demonisation of people as queue-jumpers, terrorists, communists, asylum-seekers, migrants, the slippage to all of us must be made clear. Against the detention camps in the concrete - at Campsfield; surrounding Fortress Europe; being built by New Labour; and internationally from Kumingting to Guantanamo Bay. The double prisons demand a break-out from the razor-wire security fences everywhere.

The campaign against the camps must be political. The liberal assurance that due process will sort out the true terrorists and illegal immigrants from those who ‘have no reason to worry’ is as naive as it is stupid - the bourgeois legislative process is patently faulty, as numerous examples show, and the definition of ‘illegal’, and indeed ‘terrorist’, is dubious in the extreme (who, and how, can a person be considered ‘illegal’ just through fact of travel?). Of course the government, keen to ensure its everlasting rule, will use all and every means it can to prevent challenges to that rule. The new security legislation in Britain empowers it to act to suppress any ‘political’ or ‘economic’ threat to its dominance.

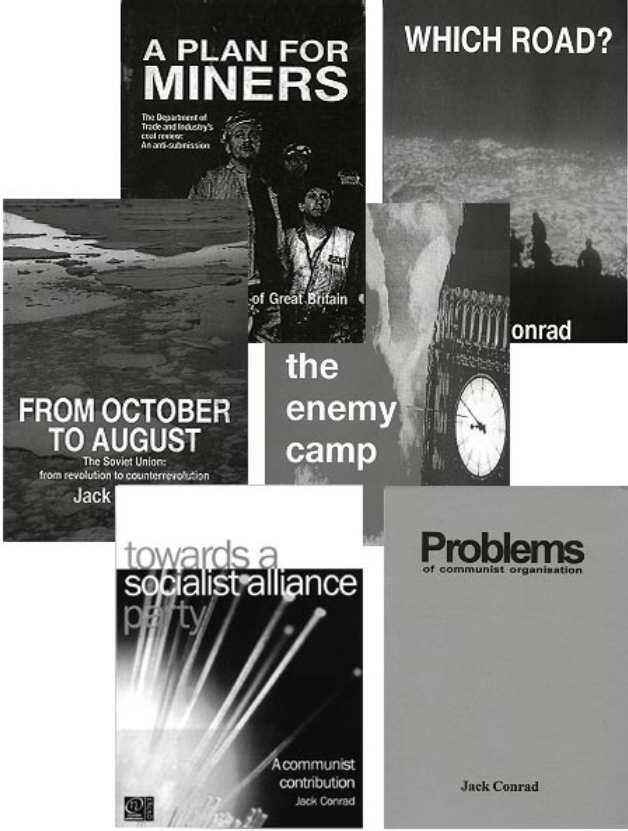
Capital is necessarily an anti-democratic force, and its use of a farcical version of vote-every-four-years, forget-me-not ‘democracy’ is maintained through spin, degraded education, tamed media and lack of vision, backed up with armed force - in the interests of short-term profit and long-term rule. Of course the government will say, ‘If you have nothing to hide, no need to worry’, but history is replete with examples of whole communities, whole nationalities, being demonised on the basis of ‘terrorism’, without justification.

Sending people to detention centres without trial constitutes a political attack upon us all; that the detention centres contain the political and the economic detainee at the same time should indicate why this is important to communists - the political and the economic are combined, someone once said. The old tactic of the bourgeoisie is one that aims to exploit divisions in the class, encouraging racism against workers who come from ‘elsewhere’ - as if that difference were more significant than shared exploitation by the bosses. Against this, and the new anti-terrorism legislations, here and abroad, a defence of the democratic rights of those sections of the working class who are to be the immediate target of these measures - asylum-seekers, settlers, minority communities - must be seen as part of the struggle for the democratic rights of the entire working class. Without this struggle, the political expression so necessary for any serious mobilisation of the people is under threat.

As a matter of principle, communists should be against all restrictions on migration and political expression, whether that of political refugees or of so-called economic migrants (as if these categories were really borne of different means). Border controls are fundamental to the refusal of capitalism to countenance an integrated labour market. Were workers on either side of the international division of labour not so separated, the polarisation between reserve armies of labour and active workers would tend to be eroded, and with progressive consequences for the class struggle - as Marx noted, when he wrote: “Workers of the world, unite”.

The potential of that slogan becomes clear when we are confronted with immigration law, detention and the camps - a key dimension of our struggle. The abolition of immigration controls, and opposition to any initiatives that support such controls, must be an immediate aim. Detention centres are fundamentally an attack upon all workers as a class - they restrict the freedom of movement and freedom of expression of labour in a world where capital moves and speaks unhindered. This cannot go on ●

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Border controls are fundamental to the refusal of capitalism to countenance an integrated labour market

MARXISM 2003

SUMMER
OFFENSIVEShow
support

As I write this column, comrade SM from Dundee is completing this year's most unusual and certainly most painful task for the Summer Offensive: She is walking the 22 miles from Dundee to Perth. On the hottest day of the year.

The comrade has approached 50 or so people to sponsor her walk and, while most agreed to help her, the level of their support varied considerably: "I expect a total of about £150 to £200. In general I got a lot more money from non-political people, friends and other students than my comrades in the Scottish Socialist Party", she says. A sign of the poor political culture on today's left.

Other comrades, too, have answered my calls for some serious last-minute pushes for this year's fundraising drive. Comrade TR, a veteran communist from the North East, has donated £70 for the Summer Offensive this week, comrade EK has taken out a £10 monthly standing order, while comrade SO from Wales, who is taking part for the first time as a full party member, has sold "various old knick knacks" on the internet auction site, www.ebay.co.uk. "It is incredible, but there are people out there who buy any old rubbish," she says about her precious possessions: "half-used nail varnish, old porcelain figures, books - in a couple of days I sold stuff for over £200."

At our halfway social on July 12, we raised another £75 for the Summer Offensive - special thanks to comrades JB, BL and JB.

These examples show what the Summer Offensive is all about: a special period in the CPGB's political calendar, where comrades make an extra effort to raise money for the organisation. We do not want comrades to slave away in a McDonalds kitchen or stop eating for two months - but with a bit of courage and initiative it is actually rather easy to raise money for the organisation.

This week we have received cheques and cash for £4,553 - thanks especially to comrade SM, a longstanding supporter of ours, who donated £20 via our newly installed card payment service on the CPGB website. Our total now stands at £12,588 with two weeks to go.

The circulation figures for the *Weekly Worker* demonstrate that the readership of our paper goes far beyond our immediate circle. Our paper has become an indispensable voice for openness, democracy and partyism. Now is the time to show your appreciation for the *Weekly Worker* and the people who produce it, even if you do not always agree with all the politics ●

Tina Becker

Physical attack on

A personal statement from **Mark Fischer** and **James Bull** of the Communist

Comrades and friends
We were physically attacked outside the morning plenary session of 'Marxism' on Friday July 11 by up to seven members of the Socialist Workers Party. The attack was preceded by orchestrated haranguing of us because of the content of a leaflet we have distributed at this year's conference, 'The SWP's Clause 4 moment? No compromise on sexism and homophobia'.

The actual attack was pretty limp and un-serious. As far as either one of us are aware, the SWPers did not actually manage to get a blow in on us, even if that had been their intention. Instead, we were attacked from various angles by SWP comrades intent on tearing leaflets out of our hands, ripping up our papers, etc. While this led to some pretty comical-looking wrestling, only people's dignity really took any sort of knock.

We believe the incident is serious for other reasons, however:

1. We suspect it was an attack effectively sanctioned by leading members of the SWP. As we were getting papers and leaflets out of bags, comrade Chris Bambery approached and told us that he would "take no responsibility for what my members do to you today", because of their supposed outrage at "the shite" in our leaflet. This is unacceptable, of course. We think it is a requirement of the leadership of this organisation to condemn physical attacks on political opponents in the movement - including ones undertaken by their own membership. Unless this is forthcoming, the movement is justified in the presumption that the SWP actually *support* the resolution of political differences with fists and boots. This group did have a reputation for this sort of thuggery in the 1980s and 1990s, but its culture seemed to have moved on since its involvement in the Socialist Alliance.

2. It seems to us that the attack had all the hallmarks of an *organised* provocation, not

the spontaneous explosion of outrage comrade Bambery darkly warned us of. The initial attack was led by women members, with a tight ring of their male comrades around them. Both of us heard warnings from the men - as *we* were being attacked! - along the lines of "Don't you touch her!" So the plan was - women attack the two men; in the course of the struggle to defend themselves the men do something against a woman that then 'justifies' the blokes wading in.

3. Some SWPers actually took our leaflets, some bought papers. The snarlers (not all of whom took part in the attack) were essentially middle-cadre SWPers, people who were not interested in what we *had* said in our leaflet, what our arguments actually were. Instead, we had their faces - purple with hyped-up rage in some cases - pushed into ours, their fingers jabbing our chests and variations on two key accusation repeated at ear-splitting volume:

● "You call the SWP sexists and homo-

Letter to Socialist Workers Party central committee
from Communist Party of Great Britain

Dear comrades
We are writing to express our concern about an incident outside one of the plenary sessions at this year's Marxism. An outline of what happened is given in the personal statement from Mark Fischer

and James Bull. We note that the basic veracity of this account has not been challenged by SWPers on any of the numerous discussion forums where it has appeared.

We regard this as an extremely regrettable incident. Arising from our work together as allies in the Socialist Alliance, we hoped that a more civilised, genuinely revolutionary culture would evolve on the left. Indeed, we have commented favourably on what we saw as the stirrings of such a sea change several times in the *Weekly Worker*.

Chris Bambery:
"not responsible"

The revolutionary left should be able to collaborate despite our differences, with the democratic right to openly express dissent, with respect and comradeship.

We have grave concerns about the current political turn of the SWP leadership towards what we characterise as an unprincipled bloc with elements of the mosque. As you are aware, these concerns are hardly unique to the CPGB. They are shared by the majority of your bloc partners in the SA and - as illustrated in some of our more calm exchanges with your own comrades attending Marxism - by a not insubstantial number of SWPers themselves.

We are sure that you agree with us that these misgivings and criticisms must not be silenced with violence, or the threat of it. Although he conceded it would "not be easy to achieve", your comrade John Rees spoke at Marxism of "knitting together the left and the trade unions ... many people in the muslim community and the existing forces in the SA" (Marxism tape, no186, cited in *Weekly Worker* July 10 - our emphasis).

No one, let alone the left organisations in the SA, will be convinced of the correctness of this new turn if the only 'arguments' deployed are threats and physical intimidation. If you have the arguments comrades, you don't need the violence.

Worryingly, comrade Chris Bambery told our comrades before the attack that he took "no responsibility" for what was about to happen to them. This implies two things to us:

1. That comrade Bambery was aware that a physical assault was in the offing.
2. That he (at least) tacitly approved. If he did not, why not use his authority in the organisation to make sure that it did not happen?

In contrast to comrade Bambery's 'Pontius Pilate' stand, we believe that the SWP central committee must look into this incident and make its view public. There are important principles involved. We believe it is incumbent on the leadership of what is currently the largest group on the revolutionary left to make its position on violence in the workers' movement crystal clear to people both in the wider movement and to all members of the SWP, at every level of the organisation ●

With communist greetings

Mark Fischer
for Provisional Central Committee, CPGB
July 15 2003



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Target: £25,000

opponents

Party of Great Britain, July 11 2003

phobes.” The leaflet actually warns that the SWP leadership is in danger of a “*compromise* on sexism and homophobia” due to its pursuit of an opportunist electoral alliance with a section of the mosque, not that the SWP is a sexist or homophobic organisation. The leaflet states clearly that “SWP comrades have a passionate commitment to the rights of women, gays and lesbians - are these simply ‘shibboleths’ to be downplayed for electoral expediency?”
 ● “You are *racists*. You don’t want muslims in the movement.” The leaflet actually underlines that “to march alongside those mobilised by the mosque against the US-UK warmongering is good politics. What we object to is not unity in action with non-working class forces, but the watering down or abandoning of our *principles* for temporary advantage.”
 Of course, what we had actually *said* or believed was irrelevant. A layer of SWP hacks had been mobilised (by elements in the

leadership?) to try to prevent critics of their organisation’s dangerous new turn having *any* sort of hearing.
 4. This has dangerous implications for the Socialist Alliance project. Already, we have seen the SWP ‘clean sweep’ in Birmingham and a partially successful attempt to remove dissenters from positions of authority on the SA executive. Are we to now to expect that anyone who raises criticisms of the SWP’s new orientation to be physically assaulted and removed from positions of authority or perhaps from the alliance altogether? After all, apart from indies such as Steve Godward, groups like Workers Power and the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty also have their criticisms of the SWP’s new orientation - are they next for the rough stuff?
 5. The last thing we would like to emphasise is that the SWP’s violent hysteria flows from a profound political weakness. If the organisation was actually confident about its politics and the alliance with the mosques, why

react in such a brittle way to criticisms? The SWP leadership is aware that in terms of Marxist principle and the history of our movement, it is skating on very thin ice. *That* is why it is trying to paint any criticism, any dissent as an act of “racism”, something that must be met with physical attacks and censorship.
 As far as we are concerned, that can never work of course. We have the *Weekly Worker*, we have our website, etc. The leaders of the SWP can never shut us up. The people who ought to be really worried are SWPers themselves. Is this the sort of reaction *you* comrades can expect when you develop different ideas; when - horror! - you actually have temerity to *voice* those criticisms? Be warned. Once you allow censorship against others, it is only a matter of time before you feel the gag yourself ●
 ● For open debate!
 ● Against violence and intimidation in the workers’ movement!

PARTY AGGREGATE

Stay in, fight on

An aggregate of CPGB members held on July 12 discussed the way forward for the Socialist Alliance in the context of the Socialist Workers Party’s opportunist abandoning of socialist principles.
 Comrade Marcus Ström opened the debate, outlining how the present crisis in the Socialist Alliance is linked to developments in the SWP. When the SWP joined the Socialist Alliance in 2000, it hoped to attract a layer of left reformists disillusioned with New Labour. Dissatisfaction with the obvious failure of this strategy was exacerbated when the SWP leadership saw the millions on the anti-war demonstrations melt away. In a desperate effort to recreate in electoral form the Stop the War Coalition, it is willing to drop “shibboleths” such as women’s equality, gay rights and secularism to secure an alliance with the undifferentiated ‘muslim community’.
 As comrade Ström pointed out, this as a problematic formulation, involving no class delineation. Our job is to win over working class muslims to a socialist programme. Not pretend that the anti-war sentiment amongst muslims can be the basis for a common electoral platform drawn up with radicalised petty bourgeois elements in the mosque. While communists and revolutionary socialists ought to be firm on principle but flexible on tactics, the SWP turns this on its head.
 Some independents have left the Socialist Alliance in disgust at the behaviour of the SWP - we believe this is a mistake. There are many principled socialists in the SWP who

must be encouraged to openly express their disagreement with the latest opportunist turn of their leadership. They can be won to accept the need for a single democratic and centralised working class party. The period we are in calls for patience: we must continue to strive for ideological clarity. There is no short cut to building a mass party.
 All speakers agreed that it would be a mistake for us to walk out of the Socialist Alliance and that we should criticise groups who seem on the verge of doing so - namely the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty and Workers Power. Comrade Tina Becker said part of our job is to make it as difficult as possible for these groups to return to their old sectarian ways. *Weekly Worker* editor Peter Manson made the point that to walk out of the SA at the very moment when the SWP leadership’s opportunism is exposed for all to see would be to abandon the healthy forces inside the organisation.
 Many SWP members read the *Weekly Worker*, and comrades who attended Marxism 2003 reported having more productive conversations with SWPers than at any previous such events. The thuggish behaviour of the SWP cadre, who attempted to prevent their members reading CPGB leaflets, proves there must be internal dissent. Comrade Lee Rock, however, warned against overestimating the likelihood of a split in the SWP. Opportunism has long been its method.
 Comrade Anne Mc Shane called for the CPGB to organise a challenge to the SWP for the leadership of the Socialist Alliance. It is not theirs to bargain away, she said. We must

stay in and fight for it. Others pointed out that we do not have the numerical strength to win the leadership of the alliance, but, as comrade Cameron Richards put it, if we do not strive to become the main opposition, who else will? Comrade John Bridge argued that we must develop and offer an alternative programme. Our leadership at this stage is ideological. Our project remains the transformation of the Socialist Alliance into a revolutionary Communist Party.
 There was some difference of opinion on what our attitude should be to the May 3 Committee (made up of comrades from the CPGB, AWL, Revolutionary Democratic Group and others, who came together to draw up a composite motion in favour of an SA party prior to the annual conference). Comrade Manny Neira described it as the best chance for an alternative leadership of the Socialist Alliance, bringing together people who share our criticisms of the SWP. Comrade Rock said it could become a revolutionary pole of attraction within the alliance. These comrades and others proposed working actively within it and even helping to produce some paper or bulletin in its name.
 Others were more sceptical. Comrade Manson said we should work with the committee, but not make it the centre of our intervention in the SA. Comrade Bridge described it as diffuse. Who knows what could emerge after the July 19 national council meeting? Comrade Ian Donovan urged caution because of the undemocratic set-up of the May 3 Committee: the pro-party wing of the Socialist Alliance cannot allow its actions to be subject to the veto of elements such as the AWL, which participates while having set up its own alternative ‘network’, he argued. Comrades Mike Macnair and Steve Cooke put forward a motion on the May 3 Committee which called for complete openness in its operations. This was defeated by a margin of around two to one - the majority did not wish to turn the technical proceedings of a barely functioning committee into a point of principle.
 National organiser Mark Fischer concluded the aggregate with a short report on the Summer Offensive, which as always highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of our organisation. However, he was optimistic that we would raise the full £25,000 - a total that would enable us to continue playing our full part in the fight for a working class party ●

Mary Godwin

What we fight for

■ Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists, anti-capitalists 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 oppose the neo-conservative war plans of the Project for the New American Century and all imperialist wars 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 working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national 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 readied 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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Mass anti-war movement forced Blair into corner

Lies, damned lies, and WMDs

It is now some years since the *Daily Sport*, a paper not frequently quoted in the *Weekly Worker*, ran the headline "World War II bomber found on moon!" This startling intelligence was supported with a photograph, quite clearly showing a Lancaster bomber silhouetted against the lunar surface.

At the time, the story seemed to catch the popular imagination - though it is perhaps fair to say that, in general, the population remained sceptical. The *Sport* was not to be beaten, though, and had the last laugh when it breathlessly published the follow-up piece some weeks later: "World War II bomber missing from moon!" The story was supported by a second photograph: this time simply of the moon.

The British and American governments seemed to have learned a lesson from this: gradually lower the evidence threshold, and sooner or later you will be able to prove anything. First these defenders of truth told the world that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction which presented an imminent threat to us all. Though the world remained unconvinced, the invasion went ahead. But if he had WMDs Saddam Hussein was uncharacteristically coy about using them. No matter: with hundreds of thousands of soldiers on the ground, Blair expressed "no doubt" that the weapons would be found. They were not.

A slight note of hysteria edging into his voice, Blair hoped nobody would notice as a subtle change crept into the claims - that evidence would turn up of WMD programmes. What would a WMD "programme" look like? A research establishment? A chemical laboratory? Hussein's personal copy of *Dr Strangelove*? Despite being so vague as to be almost meaningless, even this claim could not be substantiated.

But there was still hope. At least it could be established that Hussein had tried to start a WMD programme by buying nuclear material from the state of Niger. Such at least was the claim in president Bush's state of the union address in January. With the kind of generosity which takes a pork pie to a *bar mitzvah*, Bush credited his closest ally as the source: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein has recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

Bush is relatively unconcerned. The American working class, traumatised by the attacks on the World Trade Center, protested against the war, but not on the scale that the British did. Whatever Powell said to the UN, at home the Republican case for war was based nakedly on the determination to oust Saddam Hussein.

In Britain, Blair faced a bigger problem. Mean estimates put the number who demonstrated in London on February 15 at 1.5 million. This statistic has been repeated so often that it begins to dull on

the mind, but it means that one in every 40 men, women and children throughout the country marched to Hyde Park that day. Blair needed every scrap of support he could get: he particularly needed the sanction of the UN. To make the case to the UN and the British people, he needed to prove that Iraq was in breach of UN resolutions imposed after the invasion of Kuwait which forbade it to hold WMDs. He therefore lied like a man caught in bed with Mike Tyson's girlfriend.

The war won, there is no sense of triumph in the British people - no 'Baghdad bounce' - and, as his lies are exposed, Blair is descending into crisis.

The claim that Iraq thought it could buy uranium from Niger was never likely to be true. The country's mines are tightly controlled by the French, and the material they produce is entirely exported to France, Spain and Japan. Experts doubt it could have been smuggled out unnoticed, and, though the French may be dubbed 'cheese-eating surrender monkeys', it is difficult to believe the US administration really thought they would allow such exports. Even secretary of state Colin Powell was not persuaded that this story was true. He refused to include it in his presentation to the UN on February 5 because it was not "sufficiently reliable".

This is doubly so because in 2002, well before the state of the union address, the CIA sent Joseph Wilson, former US ambassador in Gabon, to Africa to investigate any possible link between Iraq and Niger. Wilson recently told the *New York Times* and NBC that he had concluded in a report that it was very doubtful that any such link existed, adding that he had sent his report to both Congress and the White House.

He said: "Either the administration has some information that it has not shared with the public or, yes, they were using the selective use of facts and intelligence to bolster a decision that had already been made."

Bush first blamed his intelligence services, and Central Intelligence Agency director George Tenet duly took the fall: "First, CIA approved the president's state of the union address before it was delivered," he said in a statement. "Second, I am responsible for the approval process in my agency. And, third, the president had every reason to believe that the text presented to him was sound."

His own justification for the error? The CIA approved the line because, though their own intelligence did not support the claim, it was attributed to the British. "This should not have been the test for clearing a presidential address," he said. "This did not rise to the level of certainty which should be required for presidential speeches and CIA should have ensured that it was removed."

More embarrassingly still, in February the US passed to the International

Atomic Energy Agency documents purportedly supporting the argument that Iraq had been shopping for uranium in Niger. Days before the war, IAEA director-general Mohamed El Baradei announced they were forgeries. Again showing the kind of loyalty to its ally that a dog shows a lamp post, US officials simply replied that the documents had been provided them by the British.

Indeed, Blair must be wondering rather about his new friends. Defending her president's assertion that "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein has recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa", US national security advisor Condoleezza Rice said, "The statement Mr Bush made was indeed accurate. The British government did say that." I would have given a week's wages to have seen Tony's face when he heard that one.

Given the treatment he has received at the hands of his allies, it is little wonder Blair felt he could portray the report of the foreign affairs select committee as, by comparison, supportive. The report concerned the dossiers of evidence produced by the British government claiming that Iraq possessed WMDs. Alistair Campbell stood accused by a BBC anonymous source of 'sexing up' the information provided by the security services, in that he had allegedly added a claim that Hussein could mobilise his WMDs within 45 minutes. The committee, on a split vote, did not accept Campbell's guilt.

The way Campbell was cleared is strangely typical of the whole grubby affair. Apparently Nicholas Soames, the former Conservative armed forces minister, intervened on Campbell's behalf at the 11th hour. He spoke to Richard Dearlove, director of MI6, and simply

You would almost think that this question of Saddam and weapons of mass destruction was some invention of the CIA and British intelligence - **Tony Blair**



Justification for war still slipping through his fingers

passed back to the committee the top spook's assurance that Campbell had not been cooking the books. Either Dearlove is content to admit that this ludicrous intelligence was provided by his own organisation, or he knows perfectly well no one will believe a word of it.

The report was not, however, a complete whitewash. It euphemistically said that Blair "misrepresented" information in another dossier largely copied from a graduate student's thesis, and that the 45-minute claim was given "undue prominence". Neither does this end the row about this latter claim. Hans Blix, interviewed in *The Sunday Telegraph* shortly after the report's publication, went further: it was a "fundamental mistake" for Blair to support it.

Meanwhile, the row about Hussein's alleged window-shopping expedition in Niger continued: but Blair has been sticking to his story, and it seems that with the help of foreign secretary Jack Straw he may have found the perfect political alibi.

The latest spin is that the government was not relying on the forged documents provided to the US to substantiate this story: they had documents from another country, which they were not free to pass on to the Americans without the supplier's permission.

So who was causing this confusion? Who else? It is all the fault of the French. Here is a nation the British and American administrations can unite in disparaging.

Much to the frustration of the British government, however, this WMD story shows no signs of going away. Blair joined with the US in the invasion of Iraq in contempt of the clear, democratic will of the British people, and he lied to justify this.

As the story continues, it is perhaps more interesting for the glimpses it gives into the murderous and cynical workings of imperialism.

It is possible that, should the political pressure become great enough, the occupiers of Iraq will yet produce evidence of WMDs. If they do, they should submit it for publication in the *Daily Sport*, which is used to dealing with such stories •

Manny Neira

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