weekly worker

When victims become killers - Rwanda and the roots of genocide

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PARTY*notes*

Democracy and centralism

In his renowned pamphlet *What is to be done?*, written in 1902, Vladimir Lenin argued for a highly centralised proletarian party. In the process he savaged the do-what-you-please organisational nostrums of the old type still being peddled today by backsliding opportunists of one stripe or another.

Though a number of his proposals were specific to tsarist Russia, the Communist Party, the Bolshevik *party of a new type*, proved universally applicable. Following the epoch-making October 1917 revolution communist parties were formed across the globe, including in July 1920, in the "most bourgeois of nations", Great Britain. On the basis of the Bolshevik model, the rules of the Communist Party of Great Britain stated that not only are members required to accept its programme, but regularly pay dues and *work actively* in one of its organisations under a *single leadership* (which between congresses represents - not constitutes - the whole).

Our draft rules - by which our organisation of Communist Party members seeks to operate - contains a similar formulation. Of course, the CPGB was finally liquidated by the *Marxism Today* faction in 1991. However, that did not end our responsibilities and duties as Party members. On the contrary it dramatically increased them and we have spared no effort to re-establish the CPGB on a healthy organisational and programmatic basis.

Nowadays many on the left - not least those Socialist Alliance independents who have been burnt by one or another of the more ghastly sects - reject with horror the very idea of a Communist Party and the Leninist principle of unity in action. It has to be said, though, that by so doing they effectively abandon or at the very least blunt the struggle for socialism.

Communist parties and their discipline exist not as an end in themselves, but for a historically specific purpose - namely coordinating, enhancing and successfully carrying through the class struggle. The capitalist state is immensely big, powerful and centralised. Taking it on is no parlour game. It is a matter of life and death, which in the last analysis will be decided on the streets. Workers must meet force with force and the Communist Party is undoubtedly the most powerful, most effective weapon our class can equip itself with.

Members of the Communist Party act as one under a leadership which can change tactical direction at a moment's notice. Achieving that flexibility and solidarity requires developing the theory and culture of the whole Party. That cannot be arrived at by mechanical means, such as packing meetings or issuing leadership dictats. It requires the realisation of democratic centralism.

Democratic centralism is a fundamental political and organisational principle which comprises the dialectical (ie, the moving, developing, changing and interconnected) unity of democracy and centralism. To employ a well known phrase - centralism ensures that the Communist

Party strikes as one, while democracy ensures that the blow is targeted in the right direction. That necessitates ongoing debate on theory, strategy, tactics and organisation.

Few debates result in instant clarity. Lengthy polemics are therefore an inevitable and healthy feature of Party life. And in the CPGB - unlike the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party in England and Wales - minorities are not denied a public voice (eg, when John Rees and Lindsey German announced that women's rights and gay equality should not be treated as "shibboleths" and could be traded away in a rotten deal with Birmingham's central mosque, there was no debate in *Socialist Worker* - not even a single letter of protest). Here one sees what distinguishes democratic centralism from bureaucratic centralism - open ideological struggle.

In this context it is germane to refer to our correspondent, Geoff Smith. He rightly takes me to task for my sloppy formulation in reference to the 1939-40 split in the US Socialist Workers Party (Letters, July 24). The comrade points out that James P Cannon did not in fact "boot out" the minority who disagreed with Trotsky's outmoded formulations on the Soviet Union. Rather Max Shachtman and his comrades "split".

But why? After all, comrade Smith says they were offered what he calls "proper minority rights" - namely, they would be allowed to argue their difference "internally". And here is the rub. The minority had no right to produce an open publication. Not surprisingly, rather than confining themselves to the task of winning the increasingly jaundiced minds of the SWP majority, they chose instead to engage with a much broader and more receptive audience - not least that section of the population upon whom the whole socialist project rests, the working class.

Needless to say, at all times democratic centralism must be intransigently defended against those who would undermine, sabotage or abolish unity in action. Indeed at this very moment there is something of a dispute brewing within the CPGB over democratic centralism. Naturally this is not something we regard as a private matter. It has general significance.

Things kicked off after one of our comrades broke ranks and voted for an Alliance for Workers' Liberty amendment at the Socialist Alliance's national council. It sought to delete a reference to George Galloway. As readers well know, we have consciously distanced ourselves from the AWL, along with its completely unbalanced, not to say pathological, hostility towards Galloway - a leading figure in the anti-war movement and on the receiving end of a vicious witch-hunt by the rightwing press and the New Labour establishment. Our position is critical support.

In and of itself the AWL amendment is neither here nor there. What matters is our unity in action. A fundamental principle, over which there can be no compromise.

Those who disagree with a particu-

lar course can express their criticisms before and after, but not during an action. Then we act as one. Refusal to do that is no light matter. In the words of Comintern's 1921 resolution, it should never be forgotten that to "wreck or break" the unity of the communists is the "worst breach of discipline" and the "worst mistake that can be made in the revolutionary struggle" (A Alder [ed] *Theses, resolution and manifestos of the first four congresses of the Third International* London 1980, p257).

Our comrade, John Pearson, says he was "mandated" by Stockport SA. In e-caucus exchanges others have echoed his position, citing trade unions and how on occasions they too mandate delegates. In order to avoid embarrassment and so as not to upset those who "mandated" them communists are supposedly obliged to follow SA branch or trade union discipline. Not the CPGB's. In our lexicon this deviation is called anarcho-bureaucratism.

In general communists oppose bottom-up mandating. Take the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party. It abolished "binding instructions"; delegates were expected to decide upon matters according to the worth of the opposing arguments and factional alignments and realignments (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p74).

Certainly the Communist Party, even as presently constituted, is regarded by us as a higher body - in terms of programme, expectations and discipline - than SA branches, trade unions, parliamentary constituencies, tenants' associations, etc. Members must put its democracy and corresponding chain of command first. This must be patiently and fearlessly explained. When, for example, standing for parliament communists are perfectly frank. They would, if elected, primarily take their instructions from the Communist Party rather than the atomised electorate. The top-down "mandate" from the central committee would be binding. The same applies to CPGB delegates to trade union conferences. If that means breaking a bad "mandate" from below, so be it. If we cannot convincingly explain ourselves and retain the trust of fellow workers, so be it. Better not to be elected next time than to "wreck" or "break" communist unity.

It has been suggested that we would have comrades voting blindly like automatons. Utter nonsense. Regular seminars, cell meetings, constant reports and report-backs in the *Weekly Worker*, e-caucus exchanges and an annual, seven-day Communist University educate and re-educate. The idea that CPGB members are uninformed is absurd. Our organisation also ensures that the largest possible number participate in decision-making. Aggregates are held monthly. They have the right to call conferences, recall the leadership and decide on all matters of strategy and tactics.

Our democracy is not platonic. It maintains and strengthens our centralism ●

Jack Conrad

LETTERS

AWL and Zionism

Tony Greenstein's article is right about one thing: the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's position on Zionism and Israel is not the result of "confusion", but the result of a long and often heated debate that took place within the AWL's predecessor organisation in the 1980s ('AWL and roots of Zionism', July 24).

It was a debate that took place largely in public (ie, letters were exchanged in our paper at the time), and which we have documented for public consumption since. Comrade Greenstein took part in that debate (as a non-member, in the role of a sort of 'expert witness', and finally lost. He's never got over that.

One other true point that Greenstein makes is that to dismiss Jewish opponents (like himself) of the right of the state of Israel to exist as "self-hating Jews" would be a cheap and unworthy charge. It's one that we in the AWL have never made. But the converse also applies: just because Greenstein happens to be Jewish does not give his view on the subject any particular authority.

Greenstein can rant and rave for all he likes about the reactionary and middle-class origins of 'Zionism'. What he continually fails to address are the following propositions:

● first, since 1948 the only meaningful definition of 'Zionism' is support for the existence of the state of Israel;

● secondly, Jews are the only people on earth and in history whose wish for a state has been opposed *in principle* by leftists like himself (often using Luxemburgist anti-nationalist arguments that are not applied to any other peoples);

● thirdly, the fact that a tiny minority of Zionists saw some advantage to be made for their cause from Nazism is exactly comparable to the attitude of a tiny minority of Irish republicans and Indian nationalists. Greenstein does not denounce those movements on the same grounds;

● fourthly, anti-semitism is still a potent force in British society (witness recent outbursts from Tam Dalyell and Richard Ingrams - the former publicly excused by Paul Foot. These outbursts always take the form of 'anti-Zionism' and refer to the vicious treatment of the Palestinians by Israel. This concern for the Palestinians (which all decent people would share) masks an underlying hostility to the very right of Israel to exist.

Furthermore, when has the AWL *ever* stated that all anti-Zionists are anti-semitic? We simply make the obvious point that all anti-semites now call themselves 'anti-Zionists'. The Arab chauvinist demand for the destruction of the state of Israel has been the worst thing to happen to the Palestinians since 1948. If the Arab states had accepted the Israeli offer of September 1967 to withdraw from the occupied territories in return for the 'normalisation' of relations (ie, recognition of Israel's right to exist), then the colonialist horrors of the past 35 years on the West Bank would not have happened.

Tony Greenstein should address these questions instead of ranting about Adolph Eichmann's alleged sympathy for Zionism.

Jim Denham
Birmingham

Shachtmanism

Tony Greenstein's very good article bears out the points I myself have made in earlier contributions to the *Weekly Worker*.

The AWL's Shachtmanism on the Middle East is merely a slightly disguised way of supporting Zionism and imperialism. I hold no brief for islamic fundamentalism, but it is no accident that people from mainly islamic countries are por-

trayed at best as fearsome and loathsome 'others', 'fanatics', 'asylum-seekers' and 'terrorists'.

Muslims, whether believing or nominal, are the persecuted Jews of our day.

Wendell Payne
email

ICP joins council

The Communist Party of Iraq has been 'elected' to join the new Iraqi 'governing council' that will serve as a civil cover for the Anglo-American occupation forces.

Of course this puppet government wasn't elected by the Iraqis themselves, but by the Americans, who picked each one of the 25 council members. Among them there are well known Pentagon agents such as the banker Ahmad Chalabi, and also the leaders of the nationalist Kurdish parties, Talabani and Barzani.

The Iraqi CP will be represented by its general secretary, Hamid Majid Moussa, who a few days before his appointment met with the American proconsul, Paul Bremer, and his British colleague, John Sawers. The aim of this meeting, which a press communiqué of the Iraqi CP described as a "frank discussion", was "to assure the security and stability of Iraq". For the Americans this means crushing the guerrillas and the popular demonstrations opposed to the occupation. To back this repression and give it a 'national' and 'civil' cover is, precisely, the main function of the council. Given their appointment, it is clear that Moussa and the Iraqi CP have agreed to collaborate with this task.

In another communiqué on the formation of the governing council, the CP called it nothing less than a "patriotic government". It is not a "government" for the simple reason that the council will be subordinated to the dictates of the 'civil governor', Bremer, who will have the right of veto over all its resolutions. It will be even less "patriotic" because it leans upon the weapons of the occupation troops.

Commenting on the formation of the council, the Arab daily *Al-Quds al-Arabi* called it "a shameless attempt to legitimise the American occupation ... It's not surprising that the Iraqis have publicly repudiated it" (reproduced in the *Financial Times* July 18).

The Iraqi CP is a genuine representative of the so-called 'world communist movement'. In February this year it signed a joint declaration with the Communist Parties of France, Switzerland, Germany and Greece, calling for the "effective reinforcement of the process of inspection of weapons of mass destruction by the UN in Iraq, based on resolution 1441 of the security council"!

More recently, it was the "guest of honour" at the "international meeting of communist and workers' parties" that took place in Athens on June 19-20. Sixty-one communist parties from all over the world were represented, among them the Cuban, Chinese, French and Russian CPs, Rifondazione Comunista, the Spanish CP (a member of the United Left front) and the Communist Party of Israel. The CPs of Argentina and Uruguay sent greetings (see www.solidnet.org).

In Athens, Raid Fahmi, representative of the Iraqi CP, made clear his backing of imperialism - and was applauded by his audience. He attacked the movement against the war for "not condemning energetically the regime of Saddam Hussein", which was precisely the argument of imperialism to attack Iraq. But, to put it even more clearly, Fahmi pointed out that "it's a mistake to subordinate the struggle for democracy to the anti-imperialist struggle ... The question of democracy is the central question."

Of course this 'theory' isn't a new one: the "struggle for democracy" is the fall of Saddam; the "anti-imperialist struggle" is the opposition to occupation. The CPs' representatives in Athens got the

message perfectly clear: the CP of Iraq joins the occupation to overthrow Saddam. They 'forget' that with occupation there will never be any democracy. The struggle for democracy is, in the present situation, the struggle to drive away the imperialist troops.

At the Athens meeting, the representative of the Iraqi CP never called for the end of the occupation. That's natural, since it was precisely the occupation forces that put the Communist Party of Iraq on the council.

Adam Giles
San Francisco

Delegate duties

There is a misleading statement in Marcus Ström's report of the recent Socialist Alliance national council meeting (*Weekly Worker* July 24). Referring to the vote on an amendment to the Workers Power motion, from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, he states: "Unfortunately, this included the vote of one CPGB delegate who voted in accordance with the decision of his SA branch rather than with the Communist Party position."

The delegate in question was me, but I was not a delegate from the CPGB, but from my Socialist Alliance branch in Stockport. I voted in accordance with the unanimous decision of the branch from its discussion of the national council agenda. This is the duty of any delegate of a working class organisation when attending parliaments of the class.

Of course, as a member of the CPGB, I fight for its positions in the discussions in my SA branch. Indeed, I did so, to the best of my belief in the matter of the AWL amendment, although comrade Ström clearly disagrees with my assessment. Once the decision of the delegating body is made though, it is my responsibility if I am elected delegate, to carry out that decision.

Where would all the principles of working class democracy, accountability, openness and political honesty be, if we were to act differently?

John Pearson
Stockport

Anarchist approach

I have been reading the *Weekly Worker* with interest over the last three weeks. While admiring your honesty in reporting on what appears to be a fundamental crisis in the revolutionary socialist left in Britain, as an anarchist I can't say I'm surprised by what is going on.

While you are right to highlight the short-sightedness and contradiction in the Socialist Workers Party's 'peace and justice' policy, any approach rooted in electioneerism is doomed to failure. You also fail to put this crisis in a wider context of growing direct action and community-based resistance to capitalism. Revolutionary elements in the anti-capitalist movement, while not all anarchists by a long way, have little interest in joining parties.

Few buy into classical Marxism. Working class people do not vote because they know it does not matter who they vote for. Thinking that elected leftwing general secretaries will change anything is a joke. It is about time the left realised that traditional approaches to change have failed. There is a lot going on: from squats to animal liberation, to prisoner support and industrial sabotage. Why waste time with elections in any shape or form? Maybe, as Bakunin observed, what Marxists really want is power, not change.

Richard Griffin
email

Oust FBU leaders

'A drawn out defeat' was a good article, but missing certain elements: ie, the conduct and the lies spun to members in order for the final, final, final offer to be accepted, and also the way the voting was carried out (*Weekly Worker* July 24).

On such an important issue at least a postal ballot should have been the way: this would have given militants more possibility of swaying the weak and expose the lies being spun by the executive council and officials in certain brigades. For example, the representative of the West Midlands lied on the rostrum, stating the offer was the accumulation of 150 branch meetings.

The members were up for it, not weak, as stated by the EC. The future of the Fire Brigades Union is dependent on the removal of the leadership. That is the only way we will get the membership back who have left.

Robert Gould
email

Reactionary utopia

The origins of ideas and policies within any organisation are very important. Sometimes policies have to change as a result of changes in conditions or simply thinking through more deeply what one has said on a given issue.

However, a section of the far left have also engaged in the dishonest practice of changing lines as a result of the perceived needs of the group by its leaders, while presenting a changing world as the real reason for the shift. I think the "independent socialist Scotland" line of the Scottish Socialist Party is a classic example.

But one should not be ahistorical. What was the background to the adoption of independence? Devolution was a product of a series of labour movement defeats in the 80s and 90s at the hands of the Tories. Huge industrial defeats in the 80s and political defeats at the 1983, 1987 and 1992 general elections created a desire amongst soft-left Labour politicians in Scotland and the old right around Dewar for devolved power. Their motivations were different. With Scottish Labour Action it was about career-hungry politicians' frustration at Scotland always voting Labour and getting the Tories. With the old right it was more about preventing independence by implementing halfway-house constitutional change. The far left, with different degrees of emphasis at that time, saw it rightly as a diversion from class-struggle politics and the necessity for the labour movement to be democratised.

The consequence of a halfway-house-type settlement was a parliament that created an inbuilt conflict between London and Edinburgh over decision-making. It guaranteed that there would be an increasing demand for more power in Scotland. In other words the form the devolutionary settlement took had a nationalist and separatist outcome and trap built into it.

The origins of the independence line within the SSP are tied up with the Militant Tendency's own history as a group. The 1992 'Scottish turn' was really about comrades in what was then Scottish Militant Labour establishing more control and autonomy over decisions than what general secretary Peter Taaffe wanted to allow. Independence became the ideological scaffolding around an organisational split which had little to do with events in the real world. It served the purpose of demarcating the Scottish comrades from what became Taaffe's Socialist Party in England and Wales and allowed Alan McCombes to take the majority of the SML membership with him. In other words it was a functional line, much like the state capitalism position had been for Cliff within the International Socialists/Socialist Workers Party.

The consequences of this functional line have been pretty awful so far and are potentially disastrous for the SSP and the working class. Socialists and trade unionists within the labour movement who have understood the difficulties workers underwent to establish trade unions and extend them throughout the island as a whole, have been deterred from joining the SSP even though it is the SSP they agree with on a whole raft of other issues.

They understand breaking up the labour and trade union movement along national lines is no substitute for the democratisation and transformation of that movement - and comrades from the International Socialist Movement (former SML majority) would have agreed with this not so long ago.

SSP members who would like to be enthusiastic builders of the party find it difficult with such a wrong policy at the core of the programme. And one cannot help feeling that the turning of this policy into a shibboleth (that word again) is part of a deliberate policy by the ISM-dominated leadership of ostracising and marginalising the internationalists (dissidents, as they see it) within the party. Previously it was the Stalinised communist parties that used policies to test loyalty and crush dissent.

It has also, tragically, made nationalists out of internationalists, even though that is genuinely not the self-perception of the individuals concerned. To dismiss Marxist accounts of Scottish history as "Brit left" or "British empire history" is reminiscent of the methodology of Stalinist-type amalgams. Either accept Scottish nationalist histories of Scotland or accept British nationalist histories - you must be in one camp or the other. What rubbish!

Neither is there any difference really between the "independent socialist Scotland" line and the disastrous 'theory' of socialism in one country. Both are predicated on one country being able to survive in a hostile world because of the great natural resources it has within its borders (see *Imagine*, written by Alan McCombes and Tommy Sheridan). Both positions tried to obtain support by keying into a psychology that one particular national group can go it alone. We don't have to wait for conditions to be ripe for revolution in every other country. We Scots have enough fish, coal, oil, etc to survive.

In a world dominated by finance capital and multinational companies this is a reactionary utopian absurdity and the wrong message to send to workers. In the process the centrality of the international working class as the agency for international change is lost. As is the necessity for workers to plan in association with each other across artificially created national borders.

Trotsky talked about a democratic federal republic of Europe. The first four congresses of the Third International talked about workers' governments and workers' self-management of industry. These are the kind of policies and slogans that should be at the heart of our programme. A nationalist-reformist programme will fail in the long run, whatever short-term gains are made.

Pete Burton
Edinburgh

Age of consent

While I'm totally in agreement with your call for the abolition of all age-of-consent laws, I'm quite disturbed by your statement, "Society has an obligation to protect those people whose level of emotional comprehension impedes their ability to understand the meaning and consequences of sexual activity from being exploited by those whose own dysfunctional sexuality drives them to seek gratification without obtaining meaningful consent" ('Effective consent or moralism', December 19 2002).

Please tell me what you mean by "meaning and consequences of sexual activity". This line exactly parrots the bigoted arguments of those who are *opposed* to the abolition of such laws, for it implies that there's something inherently dangerous and disgusting about sexual activity. Does a child need to be briefed on the meaning and consequences of getting a haircut?

"Effective consent" is really nothing more than a mutual awareness of what is transpiring, without either party indicating that he or she wishes to stop.

Michael Little
Seattle

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

Take fight to new level

Now is the time to step up the struggle for principled unity in the Socialist Alliance. Moralistic walkouts by individuals or organisations designed to cohere this or that sect can only damage the fight for a workers' party. What is needed is for those committed to that fight to stay together. Besides, remaining engaged with significant forces with whom we disagree - not least the Socialist Workers Party - must be beneficial. Nothing clarifies more than political struggle at close quarters.

Where the SA is heading remains an open question. There is no telling whether anyone will actually come to the SWP's popular frontist party. The *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain has already sent its rebuttal. Plans for a 'radical' Peace and Justice platform in Birmingham that downplays women's equality and dismisses gay rights as a mere "shibboleth" are unlikely to have developed much further than the imagination of an increasingly pompous John Rees. It could all come to nothing. Yet in pursuit of the elusive big time, the SWP has taken the whole Socialist Alliance project to the brink of disaster.

The SA has been something of a breakthrough for the left. Not only did we attain the unity in action (albeit limited) of previously hostile groupings, but, with the inclusive approach that we fought to make the bedrock of the project, minorities were not only tolerated, but given space to develop their ideas - albeit in separate factional publications rather than in a single Socialist Alliance paper. Our 2001 general election manifesto *People before profit*, while flawed, was a considerable achievement - a common programme for a historically divided Marxist marked a real milestone. Yet the SWP seems prepared to sacrifice precious unity for ephemeral and perhaps phantom short-term gains.

After the heavy-handed approach of the SWP in Birmingham to sideline 'minority voices' and its arrogant dismissal of critics at the last national council, the project is losing any attraction for the very people the SWP had courted - disillusioned and former Labour Party members supposedly looking for a "home". Yet the departure of a handful of non-aligned comrades and Workers Power, while predictable, is damaging - not only to the Socialist Alliance as it is, but to the Socialist Alliance as it could be.

Across England and Wales, regional SA meetings are considering the forthcoming European elections. Underpinning these are discussions about the initiative for left unity. In Wales, independent AM John Marek has said he wants to see the establishment of a Welsh socialist party. In London, regional officers of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union and Fire Brigades Union are in informal discussions. We must press for a principled approach towards implementing the annual conference resolution on a broader alliance. No dilution of our socialist principle, but flexibility in our tactics.

There is also the European dimension to keep in mind. The SWP seems to want to adopt a patchwork approach to the European elections - aligning with nationalists in Wales, the mosque in Birmingham, unions in London. If this happens, there may be little case to argue that these disparate campaigns could be considered part of the national campaign of a European-wide 'party' alongside Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire in France and so on.

These are issues that need to be discussed openly and transparently. The SA will not survive more backroom discussions where non-SWP elements are treated as mere decoration.

Clearly a change of heart from the International Socialist Group would help, if we are to haul the SA back from the precipice. The ISG has alibied the SWP's popular front turn and it is now clearly feeling the strain. Leader Alan Thornett is increasingly under pressure as a result of his spineless kowtowing before the SWP's perspective.

There are certainly tensions within the SWP as well. The pro-party elements in the SA must increase the heat by standing firm on democracy and working class independence. Walking out of the SA does the opposite of what is needed. We need to fight for a return to an inclusive culture and for a principled socialist approach to future electoral alliances. Nevertheless, if this project for left unity fails, another will need to be created.

At the moment, those who favour the Socialist Alliance being at the forefront of a campaign for a workers' party are in a minority. We must fight to turn this around. To do this we need to deepen our principled stand for partyist unity. The statement from Socialist Alliance executive members Lesley Mahmood, Steve Godward, Margaret Manning, Declan O'Neill and myself is a good start (see *Weekly Worker* July 24). Since then Matthew Caygill and Martin Thomas (also EC members) have added their names. Many others, including RMT activist Martin Wicks, have lent their support.

However, we must thread together the various strands emerging from the SA crisis. The May 3 committee (which composited the Merseyside pro-party motion for annual conference); comrades like Dave Osler, who has called for another conference of SA independents; all those who oppose the packing of meetings to exclude 'awkward' minorities - must join forces in a single campaign alongside the executive signatories of the statement for inclusive democracy.

The aim must surely be a united workers' party: through the Socialist Alliance if we can, outside it if we have to. All comrades should give support to the September meeting called by the minority executive members to take the fight to a new level ●

Marcus Ström

Which way is the alliance marching now?

Appeals committee begins work

The newly elected Socialist Alliance appeals committee has begun to look at the thorny problem of Bedfordshire SA and the proposed expulsions of Danny Thompson and Jane Clarke, both supporters of the Revolutionary Democratic Group.

This is a long-running problem with the most recent developments dating back to December 2002, when the officers of Bedfordshire SA requested that comrades Thompson and Clarke be expelled because of unacceptable behaviour. The national executive had been involved prior to that in trying to sort out issues between the Socialist Workers Party, the RDG and a number of independents who tended to line up on one side or the other.

Unfortunately the resolution of the present situation has taken far longer than it should have. This had to do with difficulties within the previous appeals committee - principally the fact that it never actually met.

The present committee was elected at the SA conference in May. It is comprised of Brian Butterworth (SWP), Pete Wearden (SWP), Greg Tucker (International Socialist Group), Jim Gilbert (independent) and myself from the CPGB. We have had one meeting, where it was agreed that a delegation of three of us would meet with both sides to determine the way forward. The attitude of all AC members was that if possible the problems should be resolved without expulsions.

One meeting has so far been held - with Keith Woods (Bedfordshire SA officer and SWP member) and further meetings will be arranged with others involved.

We aim to determine this matter in a democratic and fair way - and as soon as possible. It is particularly problematic that Bedfordshire SA has not met since January.

All involved are concerned at this and quite rightly point to the fact that electoral opportunities have been lost and the whole saga has created demoralisation ●

Anne Mc Shane

Still very much to do

In contrast to the turmoil and negativity of much discussion around the Socialist Alliance for the last month, on July 26 Leeds hosted a meeting of comrades from around the Yorkshire and Humberside region in preparation for the European elections in 2004.

Forty-four comrades from a broad geographical spread of branches attended - very good for a meeting called at short notice in the school holidays and showing that there is still considerable life in the project, despite everything.

Alan Thornett from the executive committee gave a general introduction leading on to a discussion that combined reports from various cities with a general debate about what we need to do.

Overall it was heartening that a significant level of activity has been maintained - in Scarborough comrades meet weekly and membership has gone from nine to 23. Elsewhere, even where it is clear that branches have not sustained themselves, there were positive signs.

More generally it was clear we need to keep up (or start) regular campaigning activities if we are to have any credibility. We also need to ensure that we maintain our profile as the SA in the various anti-war, anti-capitalist and anti-Nazi and other campaigns that we support.

There is still much to be sorted out. We need to get on with working out our relations with other forces on the socialist left.

We need greater clarity on working with other forces. We need a strong, central lead on getting the practical details right ●

Matthew Caygill

WELSH LEFT

The war of Marek's ear

It is now clear that John Marek, the independent Welsh assembly member for Wrexham, is about to launch a bid for the leadership of the scattered forces of the left in Wales. Not only has he begun negotiations about cohering a 'left bloc' to stand in the elections for the European parliament in 2004; he has gone on the record as stating that he intends to launch a Welsh Socialist Party at some point in the future.

Indeed it could be the case that the WSP itself stands in the European elections, as well as in council seats in 2004. In an article in a recent edition of *Red Pepper* (see below), comrade Marek stated: "It is still early days, but we hope to come to a definite conclusion by the autumn and have a party before the new year."

A buzz of excitement can thus be heard within the normally half-asleep ranks of the Welsh left. In his contribution to *Red Pepper*, comrade Marek also noted that it was his ambition to "involve other socialist groups - still small and disorganised - so as to develop a common platform and agree priorities for Wales and for Europe".

Clearly, then, the 'Left alternative' conference in Wrexham on Saturday August 9, where Marek will share a platform with Tommy Sheridan of the Scottish Socialist Party, is being eagerly awaited. However, it would be folly to look upon these developments without critical comment. Indeed, it now seems appropriate to speculate on the likely direction of the Welsh left in the next 12 months or so. It takes place against the backdrop of the success of the SSP - now clearly the most prominent socialist organisation in Britain.

At first glance, comrade Marek remains an unlikely contender for the job of cohering socialists in Wales. He is someone who has not always been identified with the left of the Labour Party even. A traditional social democrat, during the 80s and early 90s he served Neil Kinnock loyally as a junior front bench spokesperson in the Commons.

Yet the Blair project proved too much for him to swallow and he found that his traditional social democratic politics were considered too dangerous for New labour. Hence he was deselected by the Labour Party shortly before this year's national assembly elections, winning his Wrexham seat as an independent.

Largely unknown outside the north-east of the principality, he is unlikely to have the charismatic influence - in south Wales, for example - that Tommy Sheridan enjoys in Scotland. Neither can he be said to have much of an organisation behind him. But nature abhors a vacuum, as they say. A space to the left of New Labour clearly exists. Whilst the SSP has partially filled it in Scotland, the left has been unable to do the same in England and Wales. Consequently, all manner of odd realignments are taking place. A Peace and Justice Party would be just one, albeit the weirdest.

The failure of the Welsh Socialist Alliance and the belief within the left (especially the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party) that it cannot itself attempt to openly lead the campaign for a new party, has left it paralysed. Divided into inconsequential

Strikers in Wrexham: will workers elsewhere back a WSP?

sects, the left has been slow to recognise the need for unity and the necessity for a single party - certainly not the all-Britain formation that is required.

One section - the left nationalist Cymru Goch - clearly wishes to emulate the success of the SSP by creating a Welsh Socialist Party, though it does not have quite the same notion of rapprochement as the founders of the SSP did. It wants to keep out the "Brit left sects" (SWP, SP, CPGB, etc), as it puts it - though interestingly this is rather at odds with comrade Marek's quest for left unity. It hopes to become the 'brains' of such a party, content for it to be left reformist (so long as it is left nationalist).

Cymru Goch does not possess an organic working class leader like Tommy Sheridan. In fact it has sometimes given the impression that it hardly functions as a political organisation. Yet it does have close links with Marek, someone whose support gives the idea a

certain credibility - even if he does not win the Wrexham constituency next time round, he stands a reasonable chance of getting elected on the PR list.

Another section of the left - the SWP - is green with envy at the success of the SSP. It would like to taste a bit of this itself and is willing to embrace wider forces than those that have made up the Welsh Socialist Alliance (and, for that matter, the SSP). Consequently, it too has now entered into discussions with Marek about a common platform for the European elections, though using the umbrella of the WSA to make its pitch. However, the SWP is unlikely to be interested in the lightweight forces that comrade Marek would be able to muster in a WSP.

Comrade Marek is apparently uneasy about using the word 'socialism' in the name of any common platform for the European Union elections - rather odd when he has stated that he wants to create a new socialist party in the principality - and is none too keen on the sort of openly anti-euro line the SWP would want.

Now the SWP in Wales is the largest group on the left, something that it is important not to overlook. Yet it is tiny, even in comparison to what in reality are the meagre forces of the SWP in England, and is something of an embarrassment to its leaders in London - it has almost single-handedly reduced the WSA to a farce. Therefore, peculiarly, Cymru Goch starts at an advantage over the SWP - Marc Jones, a leading member of CG, was essentially comrade Marek's right-hand man in the assembly elections and has helped him establish contact with the SSP.

The SWP's weakness in the principality explains why it desperately needs to cosy up to the likes of Marek and Derek Gregory (Unison's head bureaucrat in Wales, who has recently left the Labour Party). However, it does have one trick up its sleeve. If the leaders of the SWP in London can pull a rabbit

out of the hat - eg, George Galloway - this would rather transform the situation. Marek would quickly become a bit-part player and would be likely to gravitate in this direction. Power would move from Wales to London.

For the moment though, comrade Marek is someone to engage with. Almost overnight, a figure from not even the traditional left in the Labour Party could become of major importance. So Marek faces overtures from two groups that are rather antagonistic to one another. CG intensely dislikes the SWP; the latter thinks CG to be a joke. CG will advise Marek to go nowhere near the SWP, whilst the SWP will play the nice guy, saying it is happy to work with anyone.

Therefore, it is just possible that an SWP-Marek bloc might come off for the European elections - indeed it might even be an SWP-CG-Marek bloc. However, whether this could form the basis of a WSP - something that seems close to Marek's heart at the moment - is another question. Such a bloc would have to win substantially more than five percent if it was to win one of the five Welsh seats in the elections next year. Either it would have to beat the Liberal Democrats into fourth place (most unlikely) or get over half the vote of Labour (even more unlikely). Given that a credible campaign will cost tens of thousands of pounds, it is hard to see the logic of it, especially when the unity programme is likely to be so anodyne that it will be indistinguishable from that of Plaid Cymru or the Green Party. A Welsh Socialist Party campaign would seem more credible from this angle - unless developments in England alter the situation.

What then should be the principled position of communists?

To the extent that any organisation or formation in Wales has a progressive side to it, we will seek to influence it. However, we will campaign for any bloc for the European elections to be based on the politics of genuine working class socialism. We will oppose any attempts by the SWP leadership of the WSA to abandon its programme in an attempt to curry favour with Marek or, much worse, the mosque. Only a manifesto based on radically extending democracy and putting forward a socialist alternative to capitalism would be welcomed by us.

How will we relate to the embryonic Welsh Socialist Party? Our task is to reforge a Communist Party that unites socialists across the British state. No ifs, no buts. This has brought us into conflict many times with those who did not share that view within 'unity' projects - Socialist Labour Party, WSA, Socialist Alliance, etc. Moreover, Marek is no Sheridan and Cymru Goch is no Scottish Militant Labour. Therefore, it is quite possible the project will be stillborn. Without the organised left involved, the project will be a non-starter outside of Marek's local base.

Yet to the extent the new WSP can become an arena for the struggle for a reforged Communist Party we will need to relate to it. Therefore, we would attempt to influence its programme, seeking to ensure that the politics of left nationalism do not poison it. We will fight any attempt to exclude us and others by the likes of Cymru Goch.

Of course, it is also quite possible that the WSP will not be such an arena - it could easily become a formation not much different from a small version of Plaid Cymru - just a little bit more leftwing, perhaps more nationalist, but totally irrelevant. For that reason, one would be wise to remain rather sceptical for the moment ●

Cameron Richards

SSP equivalent in Wales

John Marek's remarks in *Red Pepper* (July)

My experience of winning the Wrexham seat in the Welsh assembly as an independent socialist contains lessons for the debate opened up by Hilary [Wainright] in the last issue of *Red Pepper*.

A sizeable part of my vote came from disillusioned Labour voters and trade unionists who were unhappy with Labour moving to the right or who felt unable to vote for a party that started the Iraq war.

They and many young, first-time voters want to see a credible, left-of-centre party. Wrexham was the only Welsh constituency with an increased turnout in May. I believe this happened because there was a credible radical alternative to the mainstream parties.

Some of us are looking north of the border to the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) for a lead as to how to make progress in Wales. On a recent visit, we were impressed with the unity and tolerance of different views shown by delegates at the SSP's national council. We believe there is a case for forming an equivalent party in Wales - a nascent Welsh socialist party providing a credible alternative to Labour, which has turned its back on working people.

That party would have a mix of principled and practical left policies. It would defend public services, be against the private finance initiative, work for a publicly owned railway, repeal anti-trade-union laws and be anti-racist and anti-militarist. We would also look at what makes us different from Scotland, such as the significance of the Welsh language or the fact that the Welsh assembly doesn't have primary powers - something that we would work to change.

We have been delighted with the support from local trade unionists - especially the firefighters. We have worked closely with anti-incinerator, environmental campaigners and community activists, and I've been actively supporting the anti-war movement. A conference on August 9 will bring many of these people together.

Wales has not seen the same cohesion on the left that there has been in Scotland. Any initiative to form a Welsh socialist party would have to involve other socialist groups - still small and disorganised - so as to develop a common platform and agree priorities for Wales and for Europe. We will also talk to the Greens and Plaid Cymru about campaigns and issues that unite us; there will be mutual respect.

Without unification of left views the possibility for socialists to be represented and have influence will continue to be diminished. It is still early days, but we hope to come to a definite conclusion by the autumn and have a party before the new year. Our aim is that in eight years' time we will have a truly left government ●

Left alternative in Wales
Saturday August 9, 11am to 5pm (registration: 10.30am), Miners' Institute, Grosvenor Road, Wrexham. Speakers: John Marek, Tommy Sheridan. Question and answer session with SSP, workshops.
Followed by social, 8pm to 1am.
To book place email campaign@johnmarek.org

RWANDA

Class lessons of genocide

Mahmood Mamdani **When victims become killers** Princeton University Press, 2001, pp363, £35, hbk

This book, whose secondary title is *Colonialism, nativism and the genocide in Rwanda*, contains a wealth of information and analysis on the subject of what should be one of the most notorious events of the 20th century. The author is of a Marxist background, a long-standing contributor to the American *Monthly Review* journal, and the writer of several books on subjects relating to the politics of Africa. He is an African studies professor at Columbia University in New York, formerly of Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

The death of at least 850,000 people, possibly a million, in 1994 in Rwanda is an event in some ways more shocking in its apparent implications than even the Nazi holocaust. For, though Hitler's genocide of the Jewish people had considerably more victims, the actual number of perpetrators was comparatively small; it was carried out by a bureaucratic-military machine without mass involvement. In Rwanda, conversely, the act of killing one's neighbour or even in some cases members of one's own family was a mass phenomenon. As the publishers note, the author explains why the slaughter in Rwanda "was performed by hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens, including even judges, human rights activists, doctors, nurses, priests, friends and spouses of the victims" (cover).

There have of course been other books written on the horror of the Rwandan genocide. Most widely read is Philip Gourevitch's graphic *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* (Picador, 1998), which contains a great deal of anecdotal material about what actually happened, as well as some historical background about the genesis of hatred between the two main peoples of Rwanda, the Hutu and Tutsi.

Gourevitch's book is useful as a narrative and an introduction, but the comparatively brief historical analysis leaves the reader asking the kinds of questions that flow from the enormity of the situation: above all *why?* Not only why a faction within the post-colonial, Hutu-centred regime should feel inclined to massacre its perceived communal opponents - such massacres are in fact not that uncommon, in diverse situations around the world, from Lebanon to the Middle East, to the Indian subcontinent.

Most mystifying about the Rwandan genocide are two things. One, the absence of a religious or linguistic difference between the two communities: both the Hutu perpetrators and their predominantly Tutsi victims (as well as a smaller number of Hutu who were murdered for being 'pro-Tutsi') are largely catholic in religion, and both speak the same Bantu language, Kinyarwanda. And, two, the conspicuous mass participation in the genocide, which in its ferocity, speed and geographical intensity was simply unprecedented.

Even among those most militantly opposed to racism, the superficial appearance of the Rwandan slaughter undoubtedly evokes echoes of stereotypical concepts about African 'savagery' and alleged inherent inability to organise a society based on 'civilised' norms, the rule of law, etc. Such racist and inegalitarian concepts are deeply rooted in western society. Even though, with the concrete evolution of world politics in the second half of the 20th century, they have ceased to be useful as an ideology for the bourgeoisie, they nevertheless linger around and show their face from time to time.

Ignorance of African history and the politics of African peoples and states is also widespread in the west. In part, this is a reflection of the dominant ideology which in the past regarded 'western civilisation' as something to be exported to 'uncivilised' peoples through the barrel of a gun (today's re-elaborated export is of course 'western democracy', as used to justify the recent invasion of Iraq). This reviewer claims no particular expertise on these questions, but nevertheless found this book particularly useful in dealing with the 'why' of the whole Rwandan enigma through a concrete historical analysis.

What is particularly valuable about Mamdani's work is the attention to historical detail and the rich theorisation he brings to the subject matter to explain the determining role of western, particularly Belgian, colonialism in exporting its ideology of racism and racial superiority, adapted to bring into being a hierarchy of 'racial' differences among Africans. Through a bizarre piece of what can only be called social engineering, this succeeded in creating a perceived 'racial' problem/divide that developed a self-sustaining character. This ostensibly 'racial' division continued to develop through its own logic for decades after Belgian colonialism had left Africa, eventually culminating in the tragedy of a truly *mass*-based genocide in 1994.

Mamdani explains in some historical depth the background of pre-colonial Rwanda. The country was in fact something of a rarity, having one of the most advanced state formations in Africa. It was therefore colonised as a distinct entity, retaining under colonial rule more or less the proportions that existed beforehand, in terms of land, borders and populations. The general practice was to create state boundaries that threw together diverse peoples, irrespective of their linguistic compatibility, history, etc, for the benefit of the colonialists.

Indeed, one fairly generalised index of the ruinous effects of colonialism to this day is the continued existence in Africa of the borders it imposed. With few exceptions (the most notable being the formation of Tanzania by the merger of the former British colonies of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in the early 1960s), the imperialists' artificial administrative boundaries have remained intact, leading to a proliferation of states that do not coincide with any putative nation. Nevertheless these pretend to be nation-states due to the material interests of variegated lumpen-bourgeois and petty bourgeois elites that owe both their prominence and their weakness and insecurity to the effects of colonialism.

Most of these states are, because of their very instability, all the more oppressive in their treatment of all manner of unfortunate minority peoples. In many cases, some kind of democratic, genuinely federal entity - in its logic pointing towards a continental solution - is necessary to begin to resolve these kinds of questions. This in turn demands a resurgence of the *political* workers' movement internationally, led by Marxists, to begin the preparatory work necessary to make such a struggle a realistic possibility.

Class origins

The author describes the evolution of pre-colonial Rwanda in a chapter devoted to the genesis of the identities of Hutu and Tutsi. Its social formation was evidently based on politically enforced forms of exploitation that arguably bear a certain resemblance to early forms of European feudalism - the very complexity of these questions preclude any detailed discussion here.

But what is particularly relevant is that the origins of the division between Tutsi and Hutu appear to lie in class, not ethnicity *per se*. It is clear that the Hutu as such were not a distinct group at all in their origins, as Mamdani explains: "Research on the expansion of the Rwandan state during the reign of Rwabugiri and the early colonial period gives us critical insight into the trans-ethnic nature of the Hutu identity. For Hutu, it appears, were simply those from a variety of ethnic backgrounds who came to be subjugated to the power of the Rwandan state …

"This story of previously autonomous communities being absorbed within the boundaries of an aggressively expanding state focuses on the process of state formation and its contradictory outcome. On the one hand, as local chiefs were dismissed and replaced by incoming collaborators, identified as Tutsi, land and cattle gradually accumulated into Tutsi hands. On the other hand, as those subjugated lost land and were forced to enter into relations of servitude to gain access to land, the 'Hutu identity came to be associated with and entirely defined by inferior status'" (pp69-70).

The Tutsi were effectively the ruling class in this powerful pre-colonial state. That they were not defined predominantly as an 'ethnic' group is showed by the fact that it was possible for a small minority of Hutu to "accumulate cattle and rise through the socioeconomic hierarchy … and achieve the political status of a Tutsi". "Loss of property" could conversely lead to "loss of status"; and "both social processes occurred over generations" (p70).

The various theories as to the coming into being of 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu' are examined by Mamdani; they range from the 'no difference' theory that simply puts the differentiation down to social selection - the Tutsi are taller because of the privileged social position they held over centuries - to theories that appear to suggest a migration of the Tutsi from somewhere around the horn of Africa in a much earlier period, for which no reliable records exist.

Mamdani states that there is considerable genealogical evidence for the latter hypothesis: he quotes Jean Hiernaux to the effect that the Tutsi were originally "ancient east Africans", noting that, "based on studies of blood factors and on archaeological evidence, Hiernaux argued that the Tutsi were one extreme of humanity as it developed under African conditions, just as pygmies were the other extreme" (p47).

The relevance of this understanding becomes obvious when we get to examine a key component of the mass false consciousness that eventually led to genocide in Rwanda: the so-called 'Hamitic hypothesis'. This is a racist theory, in part based on a form of Old Testament pseudo-anthropology on a similar level of absurdity to 'creation science'; it dovetailed in with other, more secular theories of so-called racial difference emanating from the 'social Darwinist' perversion of evolutionary theory, which was the orthodoxy in bourgeois social science in the colonial period. The theory basically stated that the dominant 'racial' type of black Africans, the Bantu peoples, are effectively subhumans, incapable of creating any kind of society beyond the stage of savagery. Where there was evidence of some kind of more advanced, civilised society in Africa, therefore, it must have come from some other people, of a non-Bantu 'racial' type.

The biblical story of Ham, one of the sons of Noah, was enlisted for this purpose. Initially this myth postulated that Ham, having seen his father naked and drunk, was disowned by Noah and was driven away. Because of his dark skin, and his propensity for disloyalty, idleness and stupidity, he supposedly became the founder of the black 'race', who were therefore cursed and doomed to inferiority to the white man. This 'theory' of descent from Noah after the ark and the great flood has served obscurantist and racist theorists well - the entire Semite linguistic/ethnic grouping of peoples, including Arabs and Jews, also supposedly trace their descent from one of Noah's other sons, Shem. Particularly in the 'Hamite' permutation, this piece of biblical nonsense was a justification for the crudest forms of racism, designed to justify the treatment of humanity in a black skin in general like animals. It was one of the key 'intellectual' and religious justifications for slavery in the earlier period of mercantilism that preceded the full development of the European empires.

Modified racism

As the colonial empires expanded in Africa during the later 19th century, this theory of racial inferiority came to be modified. Instead of merely dealing with captive black chattel slaves, mainly in the Americas, the various European colonisers were faced with diverse societies populated with black Africans, with their own widely divergent social structures, languages and cultures. The theory of racial superiority was of course an indispensable ideological justification for colonial rule, but, given the complexities involved in exploiting such diverse peoples, the simplicities of the older theory of uniform black savagery underwent a significant change.

In a number of parts of Africa that came to be European colonies, quite sophisticated forms of the state were to be found, either in actual existence or in terms of archaeological evidence. In some cases, these pointed to relatively advanced forms of civilisation that were not *quite* on a par with early European feudalism, but seemed to show a similar level of development in some respects with regard to military organisation, class differentiation and the politically enforced extraction of a surplus, etc. The emergence of considerable evidence that ancient Egypt, one of the key progenitors of 'western civilisation', was a society in which some of its rulers would have been considered black, also was deeply embarrassing for the theorists of a uniform black 'inferiority', and gave impetus to the concoction of a modified form of the theory.

The modified Hamitic thesis that grew out of this, and which is an element central to Mamdani's explanation of the genesis of the Rwandan genocide, affirmed, as before, the utterly inferior and effectively worthless status of the Bantu. However, it also acknowledged the existence of civilisation in black Africa. Instead of, as previously, being the descendants of the first black man, now the Hamites were said to be a people, still descended from Ham, who had been cursed to live among the already existent and 'inferior' Bantu and had allegedly become partially degraded to their level. However, because of their origins, they were also supposedly the bearers of civilisation in Africa. Such higher forms of social organisation as were to be found there were thereby ascribed to a special sub-group of blacks, the Hamites, who supposedly had a completely different origin and could be considered 'racially superior' to most black Africans.

This peculiar, tortuous piece of racist theorising was very useful for colonialism, both in providing ideological justification for its own rule, and as an additional arrow in the quiver of the policy of 'divide and rule': a standard weapon of colonial imperialism. Mamdani shows with a concreteness that is quite startling how it was made use of by Belgian colonialism in particular in the circumstances of Rwanda; and how this myth and the social and political processes that were initiated by its use under colonial rule as a method of social control of the Rwanda population, both Hutu and Tutsi, continued after independence - indeed they acquired a life of their own, unfolding according to a historical logic that is quite explicable within such an ideological framework. This was one of the worst crimes of imperialism: the creation of a spurious, poisonous ideology of racial difference that started a process eventually leading one group of Africans to slaughter their close kinsmen and women on a massive scale, decades after the end of colonial occupation itself.

As I say, Mamdani does not treat this question abstractly: he examines the history of Rwanda - intertwined with that of the countries surrounding it, such as Burundi, Uganda and western Congo (Zaire) - at each stage of historical development. His analysis encompasses the pre-colonial period; the decades of initially German, then Belgian colonialism; the period in which 'independence' was achieved in the late 1950s/early 1960s; and the subsequent turmoil that finally led to the genocide. He deals in considerable detail with the various changes in the relations between the two main peoples of Rwanda (the pygmy-like Twa, who make up only around one percent of the population, are peripheral in terms of the main issues at stake and therefore are only minimally mentioned in the book).

Class becomes 'race'

The transformation of the Hutu/Tutsi divide from something that in the pre-colonial period was indeterminate, ill-defined and appeared to have more to do with class and social status than ethnic difference, was one of the main 'achievements' of colonialism in Rwanda. The Hamitic hypothesis was seized upon by the Belgians as the key to ruling the country and creating servility among both Hutu and Tutsi, and Mamdani devotes a whole section of his book to this process of racialisation.

The means by which this was carried out varied. One important method was changing the forms of patronage, privilege and exploitation: the reinforcement of some forms of pre-capitalist servility at the expense of others to increase the dependence of the mainly Hutu lower classes on the mainly Tutsi privileged classes, while at the same time undermining any semblance of independence by those same privileged classes, depriving them of real control of the social surplus they had formerly extracted and effectively transforming them into functionaries of the colonial state.

The racialisation of the Hutu/Tutsi divide went hand in hand with the mass conversion of the Rwandan population, both Hutu and Tutsi, from traditional religion to the catholic form of christianity. Mamdani writes: "As a process both ideological and institutional, the racialisation of the Tutsi was the creation of a joint enterprise between the colonial state and the catholic church. Missionaries were 'the first ethnologists' of colonial Rwanda … for father François Menard, writing in 1917, a Tutsi was 'a European under a black skin'. If the church heralded the Tutsi as 'supreme humans' in 1902, the same church would turn into a prime site for the slaughter

of Tutsi in 1994" (p87-88).

As Mamdani explains further, this phenomenon was not just about inculcating an ideology: "… Belgian power turned Hamitic racial supremacy from an ideology into an institutional fact by making it the basis of changes in political, social and cultural relations. The institutions underpinning racial ideology were created in the decade from 1927 to 1936 ... Key institutions - starting with education, then state administration, taxation and finally the church - were organised (or reorganised, as the case may be) around an active acknowledgement of these identities. The reform was capped with a census that classified the entire population as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa, and issued each person with a card proclaiming his or her official identity." The purpose being: "If the theory was that the Tutsi were 'a civilising race' then there would have to be institutions that would discriminate in favour of the Tutsi so as to make the theory a reality" (pp88-89).

Artificial though this grotesque piece of almost Nazi-like social engineering was, it had crippling effects on the Rwandan polity long after Belgian colonialism had ceased to be a force in world.

Indigenism

As another pointer to the root causes of the Rwandan genocide, Mamdani talks about the reactionary role of nativism, or indigenism, in Africa. This manifests itself in a dual conception of citizenship in many African states. There is the formal political, or civic, citizenship of a particular state on the one hand, and there is ethnic citizenship - membership of an ethnic group considered 'indigenous' to a particular territory.

In societies where large sections of the population still live on the land and engage in economic activities centred on subsistence agriculture, this second form of citizenship often equates to the right to own or even to use the land. In countries (and there are many in Africa) where both these types are in existence side by side, the possession of civic citizenship of the state, without at the same time being regarded as belonging to one of the main 'ethnic' groupings that make up the state, leaves large numbers of people doomed to a second-class status and in many cases to persecution, oppression or potentially starvation.

As Mamdani lays out, the latter form of citizenship is itself a creation of the colonialists and their methods of divide-and-rule. For administrative convenience, and for the purposes of keeping control of the population, what were often relatively fluid relations between different linguistic groups in the pre-colonial period were deliberately solidified into systems of 'homelands' for different 'tribes'. One purpose of this, of course, was to make mobility more difficult for those that the colonial state would prefer to tie to a specific piece of land for the extraction of a surplus from mainly agricultural activities.

Another was a more general utilisation and strengthening of the power of traditional authority over those below, while at the same time creating dependence of those traditional elites on the colonial state, putting some apparent distance between the decrees of the colonial authorities and the tribal chiefs, etc, who were often charged with carrying out their will. In this sense, Mamdani argues that, contrary to appearances and the rhetoric of many of its most vociferous agents and supporters, indigenism is both a creation of colonialism and one of the key political factors that holds back the social and political development of Africa. Unfortunately, like the survival of colonial borders, it has proved extremely tenacious and has not only survived the end of colonialism, but played a major and reactionary role in post-colonial political developments.

One of the key contributing factors in the build-up of social and political events that eventually led to the Rwanda horror was a crisis whose essential root was these dual forms of citizenship. This had several different layers and ramifications

at different times, and was a regional, not merely a Rwandan, crisis.

As the decline of colonialism neared its end point in the 1950s and 1960s, the 'racial' polarisation between Hutu, as the 'indigenous' majority people, and allegedly 'alien, civilising race' of Tutsi, which had been artificially solidified and promoted by the colonialists, meant that the movement for independence in Rwanda had an indigenist character. That is, as well as being directed against the Europeans, it was also directed against the Tutsi as a supposedly non-indigenous people. Thus you saw, as concretely expressed in the so-called 'social revolution' of 1959, the emergence of the movement later known as 'Hutu Power'. This expressed ideologically the rise of what Mamdani terms a Hutu "counter-elite", aiming at the exclusion of the 'alien' Tutsi from any share of political influence.

Polarisation

Particularly after the coming to power of communalist political currents (that would decades later give birth to Hutu Power) after a coup in 1961, followed by elections to confirm it, this gave rise to a wave of persecution and communal killings that drove thousands of Tutsi into exile in the surrounding states. The large numbers of Tutsi who ended up in exile in neighbouring Uganda were later to play a pivotal role in the events surrounding the 1990-95 civil war, of which the genocide was the deadliest and most notorious phase. However, before matters could get to that stage, there intervened three decades of struggles, of harsh intercommunal polarisation interspersed with ill-fated attempts at conciliation, from a variety of different regimes.

The rise of the Rwandan 'Second Republic' after another coup in 1973 led to an attempt - doomed in the long run, but significant nevertheless - by the more enlightened Hutu regime of president Juvenal Habyarimana, to deracialise the Hutu/Tutsi divide, redefining the Tutsi from a 'race' to an 'ethnicity' and declaring them 'indigenous' to Rwanda.

At the same time, Hutu grievances over the still in many ways privileged social status of the Tutsi continued to be expressed throughout the Second Republic. A highly complex situation, fraught with potential for communal explosions, continued to develop. Hutus, who were *politically* dominant at the level of the state, were at the same time engaged in struggles to transform Rwanda and raise the *social* status of the Hutu *vis-à-vis* the Tutsi. The social and economic advantages of the Tutsi were considerable, thanks to the social engineering of the colonialists in preferentially educating and promoting them as an alleged 'superior race' into higher positions throughout the country.

The relatively enlightened policies of the Second Republic were doomed. The official pronouncements of a section of the Hutu elite did not eliminate the sense

of grievance of the Hutu population as a whole against the Tutsi, nor the popular hostility to them as an alien 'race'. Nor did it eliminate the social tinder represented by the desire to return of large numbers of Tutsi who had been driven into exile. One particular important historical event in the region had given these exiles a great deal of potential leverage. That event was the triumphant entry into the Ugandan capital, Kampala, of the National Resistance Army led by Yoweri Museveni in January 1986.

The initially progressive, democratic thrust of this guerrilla struggle is illustrated by the participation of the Rwandan fighters of Tutsi Banyarwanda in Museveni's guerrilla army right from the beginning in 1981, thereby breaking with the reactionary ethos of indigeneity. Of the 27 fighters whom Museveni was able to assemble at the beginning of his struggle - after the first post-Amin elections were rigged in favour of Amin's dictatorial predecessor, Obote - two later played a major role in Tutsi armed struggle in the 1990-95 Rwanda civil war. One was in fact the current Rwandan president, Paul Kagame. In the early period the Museveni regime made a significant break with the dual citizenship model by attempting to abolish 'ethnic' citizenship, first in the areas controlled by the NRA guerrillas prior to their conquest of power, and for the initial period after their victory, where citizenship in a unitary sense was granted on the basis of 10 years' residence, not of indigeneity. The granting of Ugandan citizenship on this basis to thousands of Tutsi Banyarwanda exiles in 1986 was a quite remarkable departure from the norm.

Unfortunately, it lasted only a few short years. The programme of the NRA and the National Resistance Movement regime that grew out of it was, for all its democratic aspirations and the 'Marxist' reputation of its leaders, a social democratic - ie, bourgeois - one: for a 'mixed economy', etc. With the enormous ideological and practical pressure on such aberrant third world movements to conform to the imperialist-dictated norm after the collapse of Stalinism, the Museveni regime moved decisively in the direction of neoliberalism by the beginning of the 1990s. Also, in the context of an indigenist outcry against the Banyarwanda sections of the NRA, the Museveni regime reversed its progressive citizenship law and deprived the Banyarwanda exiles of their citizenship rights.

As an aside it is worth noting that, such is the sensitivity of this question and the antagonism between the Museveni regime and its former Banyarwanda comrades as a result of this betrayal, in Museveni's otherwise rather illuminating autobiography *Sowing the mustard seed* (Kampala, 1997) neither Paul Kagame, nor Fred Rwigyema (Museveni's Tutsi former deputy head of the NRA army, who was killed in the Rwandan civil war), nor indeed the presence of Banyarwanda

at all in the NRA, are even mentioned at all.

Genocide

This reversion to indigenism and reaction in Uganda precipitated the crisis in Rwanda. The deprivation of Ugandan citizenship of the exiled Tutsi Banyarwanda, including many hardened veterans of Museveni's bush war, led directly to the formation of the Rwanda Patriotic Front and the armed invasion of Rwanda in 1990 by those fighters, which marked the beginning of the civil war. The regime of Habyarimana responded to the advances of the battle-hardened Tutsi NRA veterans of the RPF with conciliation and further attempts at democratic reform and improving the position of the Tutsi, who were, it is to be recalled, a formerly privileged minority now facing persecution.

In turn, this conciliatory response of Habyarimana to the RPF invaders (perceived by the more extreme communalist tendencies, whose watchword was 'Hutu power', as constituting a potent armed threat to all the 'gains' that had been made by the Hutu at the expense of the Tutsi since independence) produced its own negation. That negation was the *génocidaires*, who were in Mamdani's analysis not the same thing as Hutu Power, but rather an outgrowth of it under specific historical conditions. Finally triggered off by the apparent assassination of Juvenal Habyarimana in a highly suspicious air crash in April 1994, the killing rapidly assumed the mass character that ensured its infamy.

This is in some ways the seminal section of Mamdani's analysis of the Rwanda genocide - its specificity to a particular, special set of circumstances. The genocide was perpetrated by the masses of a population who perceived themselves as 'racially' oppressed by a 'foreign' population, to whom they were seemingly losing a civil war and about to lose the perceived gains that had taken decades to achieve. The fact that this perception was radically at variance with reality, that the 'racial' division between Tutsi and Hutu was a complete myth and an invention of the real oppressors of both Hutu and Tutsi, the imperialists, was beside the point. A radically false perception of reality and history had, through its ability to conquer the minds of large numbers of the ordinary Hutu population of Rwanda, become a material force of devastating destructiveness.

In this context the genocide - both of the Tutsi, who were seen by large sections of the Hutu population as a threat to their fragile supremacy and rights to be free of what was falsely perceived as 'racial' oppression, and of the 'traitor' Hutu who were seen as protecting the Tutsi - becomes explicable. This tangle of historical circumstances constitutes a concrete explanation for the mass participation in the slaughter.

Partial analogies are possible with situations elsewhere in the world, where ele-

ments of mass false consciousness have led to the growth of genocidal sentiments, or atrocities against other peoples, albeit on a less massive and all-encompassing scale - the Middle East and the partition of India, or the growth of extreme nationalist sentiment in Germany, as it was subjugated and reduced to penury after World War I, are appropriately illustrative examples.

Mamdani's elaboration of those elements of the Rwandan situation that were common to other instances - as well as the historical specificities that made for something qualitatively even worse, in terms of the proportion of people slaughtered and the mass participation - is a powerful refutation of the neo-racist myth that there is something uniquely sinister and inexplicable about what happened in Rwanda. In the context of the truly poisonous legacy of colonialism, and in particular of one of its most ruinous and paradoxical creations, indigenism, as well as the malign neglect of Africa by capital that is today most epitomised by the ravages of the Aids crisis, particularly in the south of the continent, what happened is perfectly explicable.

The remainder of Mamdani's book deals with the outcome of the Rwandan civil war and the ramifications of the genocide for the entire region of east-central Africa, as well as his own views on what is to be done in terms of fighting the causes underlying the crises in the region. There is a chapter that deals with the citizenship crisis in eastern Congo caused by the post-genocide migration of hundreds of thousands of Hutu, including large numbers of *génocidaires*, over the eastern border into a region of Congo/Zaire already inhabited by exiled Tutsi and Hutu, who until that point had lived in a kind of equilibrium with various native Congolese peoples.

This destruction of equilibrium and stability of course laid the basis for the welcome and overdue collapse of the corrupt cold war regime of Mobutu. However, it was also the starting point for the Congo wars that have blighted the region since, drawing in armies from as far away as Zimbabwe and Angola and leading to the deaths of over three million people in what is believed to be the most bloody armed conflict anywhere on the globe since World War II.

Mamdani warns of the natural tendency for the surviving Tutsi to establish a Tutsi-dominated state in post-genocide Rwanda; he makes a rather inept analogy with the formation of the state of Israel in terms of explaining what should *not* be done. But his essential point is correct: despite the participation of large numbers of Hutu in the genocide, there has to be a political understanding of the conditions that created it and a democratic political solution to defuse the antagonisms and pseudo-racial hatreds that gave rise to this situation.

Transcendence

In terms of his general conclusions and proposals for democratic reform after these terrible events, Mamdani takes aim above all at indigenism and 'ethnic' citizenship, and calls for a regional reform along lines which strongly imply the need for a transcendence of the existing borders.

For a coherent analysis of the causes of the Rwandan genocide, this book is essential reading, and offers rich food for thought regarding some of the issues involved in other complex national/ethnic conflicts around the world. A concrete understanding of the complexities of interlocking grievances and oppressions, and how the natural desire for emancipation and democracy can be distorted into its opposite, is something that the socialist movement needs in order to maintain an independent class perspective in a world where our rulers constantly put on airs of 'democracy' and 'human rights', while promoting their own predatory agendas.

The insights contained in this book contribute significantly to such a class understanding ●

Ian Donovan

August 1994: a Zairean soldier fires in the air as panic-stricken refugees seek safety

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

Socialist Campaign Group News - www.poptel.org.uk/scgn

Starved of resources

While the websites of *Tribune* and *Labour Left Briefing* (see *Weekly Worker* July 10, July 17) will not be blazing a new path for the internet left, you could at least argue that these publications are run on a shoestring that would rather put scarce resources into their respective publications. The same could not be said of the *Socialist Campaign Group News* website, being the 'official' umbrella of well-paid leftwing Labour MPs and (in theory) having access to a more generous pool of funds. So how does it fare in comparison with its stablemates?

First impressions are pretty basic. The main field is taken up with featured articles from the latest edition, offset against a sickly lime border. This carries a small site navigation box, the hosting company advert, and the *SCGN* legend. Could the shallow appearance belie hidden depths, tucked away in obscure corners of the website?

Unfortunately, it really is a case of 'what you see is what you get'. Diane Abbott's headlining article from the July issue dominates the page, accompanied by a photo. The piece itself is nothing special, dealing with Blair's difficulties arising out of his cabinet reshuffle fiasco. The list of contributors reads like a who's who of the Labour left. MPs such as Alice Mahon and Jeremy Corbyn share space with Billy Hayes, Mick Rix and Labour exile Ken Livingstone. Contents boil down to the war, reclaiming the party, asylum, and the far right.

Of particular interest is the review of national policy forum documents, which exposes the warmongering neoliberal agenda hiding behind Blairite buzzwords. 'Westminster news' is quite a handy page, allowing the viewer to follow the parliamentary activity of SCG MPs throughout June. However, a degree of accountability could be served here with the inclusion of links to the relevant parliamentary transcripts from *Hansard*.

The archive is quite respectable by the standards of the left, carrying an unbroken run of issues back to June 1998. The problem is that these are relatively meagre as well. Blame for this cannot be placed at the webmaster's feet, as *SCGN* articles cannot be conjured out of thin air. Next in the navigation box is 'Subscriptions'; a simple page allowing the viewer to subscribe online or by snail mail. In keeping with the whole website, 'About SCGN' is yet another pinched affair. Dedicated articles, helpful links to themed archive material and what the journal stands for are conspicuous by their absence. Instead we are treated to contact details, the editorial board list and disclaimers.

Rounding the page off, apparently "*SCGN* welcomes letters and articles from readers". It is a pity that none of them are featured. The next link in the box opens a page listing the 27 SCG MPs. It is reasonable to expect profiles and relevant links to be included with this list, but once again another opportunity to make this a decent website is missed.

How can a website with such high-profile backers be so bad? The finger of blame cannot be pointed at the web designer - after all her professional home page has a portfolio of well-designed websites. Could it be that the 27 sponsors are yet to grasp the political possibilities of the internet? A quick survey of their cyberspace presence seems to suggest that this could be the case. Diane Abbott, for example, appears to lack a site of her own - my search threw up only a few short paragraphs on the Hackney Labour Party and Operation Black Vote web pages. Tony Banks is similarly elusive, confined to constituency surgery information on his local party site. Not even Jeremy Corbyn has an internet presence, apart from a short personal statement and information run off the Islington North CLP home page.

Out of a sample of 10 MPs I 'googled' only three turned up dedicated sites. Ann Cryer has a basic website/archive hosted by epolitix.com. Ian Gibson is responsible for a DIY page that looks as if he knocked it up during a lunch break. Finally Neil Gerrard's is the only one with policy, speech and profile links. It is certainly functional, but if set alongside the website of a Blair loyalist such as Peter Mandelson, it is really left in the shade.

The websites of the *SCGN* and the MPs that sponsor it are either practically non-existent or seriously underresourced. It is as if they have reacted against the Blairite obsession with image management by denying the importance of presentation altogether. Hardly a way to attract fresh forces to the fight for the 'soul of Labour', though ●

Phil Hamilton

around THE WEB

Learn to work democratically

Jonathan Neale (left) of the SWP: prepared to compromise

A general meeting of the European Social Forum mobilising committee took place in London on July 25. Attended by about 40 people, it took some positive steps towards organising a British contingent to the second ESF, to be held in Paris from November 12-15.

There were various report-backs on the logistics of the forum and some working groups set up. There was generally unhappiness that there are to be national quotas for plenary speakers (see *Weekly Worker* July 24). Many quite rightly feel that this is against the spirit of the forum and will feed nationalism and division between the various mobilising committees. However, the decision apparently cannot now be overturned and it was agreed to draw up a list of speakers from Britain.

It was also agreed to organise a train from Britain to Paris. Tickets will be on sale for £80.We also hope to get a package together so that those who wish to go can sign up on the website for accommodation as well as transport to the forum.

Jeremy Dewar from Workers Power argued that the mobilising committee needed to encourage the setting up of local social forums. Given WP's recent walkout from the Socialist Alliance, it appears that social forums are now the answer. However, he did have a point when he said that moves to set up forums had been blocked by the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP has always seen Globalise Resistance as the 'British section of the ESF' and has actively tried to discourage an alternative. Nevertheless, now that forums have begun in Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester and London, the SWP has been forced to get involved.

Its representatives, Chris Nineham and Alex Callinicos (speaking for GR, of course), were at pains to stress that they were not against the establishment of local social forums. At the same time they did not want to discuss how they could be encouraged. It is clear that they want to retain as much control as possible over the process in Britain and resent any intrusions on their turf.

This attitude showed itself most forcefully in the last agenda item. This was the question of representation from Britain on the working group to decide the programme of the ESF. The issue had blown up at the previous weekend's international preparation assembly in Genoa, when the French organisers took the SWP to task for what they saw as its dominance of the British mobilising committee (*Weekly Worker* July 24). It had been agreed then that the question would be discussed at the London meeting. The position of the present representatives, Jonathan Neale and Asad Rehman (both from Globalise Resistance), were to be reviewed and possible replacements voted through.

Teresa Hoskyns from the London Social Forum said that we should not have two people from the same organisation. Although she did not want a vote, it was clear that we did need to decide on representatives. However, leading SWP members handled the debate very badly. Claire Williams (Unison militant, Newcastle SWP and a nominee to the working group) said she could not understand what all the discussion was about. It was a waste of time. Instead we needed to talk about "how to sell train tickets to Paris". Other SWP members nodded and the chair, Nick Dearden (War on Want and very close to the SWP), became impatient with those non-SWP members who wished to contribute to the discussion.

Ignoring the legitimate right of the meeting to discuss representatives, we were treated like troublesome children who did not know what was good for them. With comrade Williams repeatedly butting in to try and close the discussion down, it became slightly farcical. Comrade Neale was the only SWP participant to agree that it was important that representatives reflect different political groups. He showed himself able to reach a compromise - much to the apparent annoyance of a very red-faced comrade Callinicos.

Finally it was agreed that he would remain as one of our representatives and that fresh nominations should be taken for a second one - to be voted on at the next general meeting, provisionally agreed for Sunday August 31 in London.

The SWP does not like to be challenged, but it needs to learn how to accept democracy and the culture of inclusion. It is all very well for the comrades to complain about the bureaucracy of the French mobilising committee (something they repeatedly do), but all they offer at the moment is more of the same ●

Anne Mc Shane

> The SWP does not like to be challenged, but it needs to learn how to accept democracy and the culture of inclusion

REVIEW

Anti-consumerist nostalgia

Wolfgang Becker (director) **Goodbye Lenin** Rio Cinema, Dalston (London), and limited release

Goodbye Lenin is a comedy, which takes its inspiration from the death throes of the German Democratic Republic, and the subsequent reunification of Germany. Set in 1989, it follows the story of Christiane (Katrin Sass), a loyal member of the Socialist Unity Party - the (east) German 'official communist' party.

Christiane goes into a coma days before the Berlin Wall falls, and does not awake for another eight months. Her condition is precarious, and doctors warn her son, Alex, played expertly by Daniel Brühl, that the slightest shock could prove fatal.

Alex is convinced that knowledge of the reality of the newly reunified, capitalist Germany will send his mother to her grave, and so the charade begins ... Alex attempts to recreate life in the old GDR in his mother's home, going so far as to fake news bulletins, which are hilarious.

Fortunately Goodbye Lenin steers away from farce, and is compelling for two reasons: the acting is superb, and, surprisingly, the underlying political message strikes a chord with anyone who has communist sympathies.

While it is steeped in nostalgia for the old times under Stalinism, Becker is explicit in his condemnation of the totalitarianism of the GDR - Alex's final news bulletin depicts a reunification of Germany led by the party, which states: "Socialism is not about putting walls around yourself" - and, through him, the consumerism which reunification introduced is questioned and condemned. Indeed it is telling that the film's premise is unashamedly lifted from The bedbug, a play by the Soviet poet, Vladimir Mayakovsky, himself a great lampooner of the society in which he lived.

It is no coincidence that the most cinematographically beautiful scene is Lenin's farewell to Christiane. An enormous statue of Lenin on ropes glides down the street, his outstretched arm extended towards her.

Becker's distaste for the consumerist tide which rapidly engulfed eastern Germany after reunification is, however, highlighted by such nostalgic moments. He pokes fun at the fetishisation of brands such as Coca Cola: banners depicting its logo are unfurled down apartment blocks, where previously red flags celebrating the GDR's anniversary hung.

Becker plays on how the red of communism is displaced by the red of Coca Cola - airships bearing the Coca Cola logo are even in the skies!

Meanwhile Alex is keen to come to the defence of the old regime he is desperately trying to recreate. "What did you do before in the GDR? You went to university," he says to his layabout sister. "Now you say, 'Thank you for choosing Burger King'." The message is clear: at least before we stood for something - warts and all.
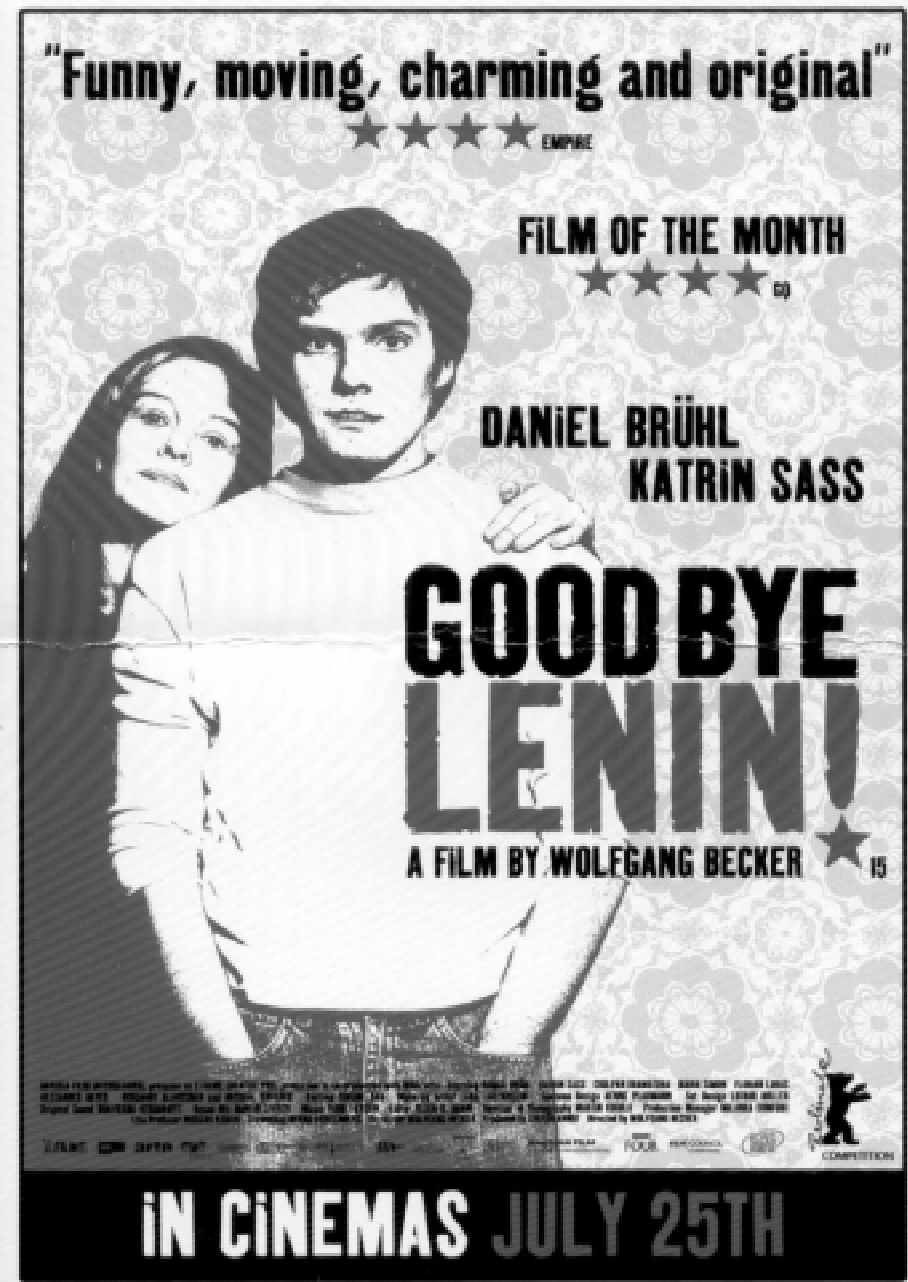
The message is refreshing in these times of continued capitalist triumphalism.

Speaking personally, I cannot really remember the GDR; neither can I remember a time when the logos of Coca Cola, Burger King and the rest did not saturate society. The thought of living in a state which decided not to play host to these brands has for me - junk food junkie that I am - a certain allure. After all, the rights accorded to the workers employed by such companies are even less substantial than their fare.

We need these brands about as much as a fish needs lederhosen.

What we do, however, need more of is intelligent criticism which, in my opinion is exactly what Goodbye Lenin is. Comrades: a must see! ●

Zoë Simon

"Funny, moving, charming and original"
★★★★ EMPIRE

FiLM OF THE MONTH
★★★★ GJ

DANiEL BRÜHL
KATRiN SASS

GOOD BYE LENiN!

A FiLM BY WOLFGANG BECKER 15

iN CiNEMAS JULY 25TH

"Socialism is not about putting walls around yourself"

Communist University 2003

The CPGB's school - the Communist University - is different from the annual education events of the rest of the left. It deliberately features debate and discussion around the key controversial questions that divide us, not dull history lectures by 'red professors'. This helps educate the audience and the speakers - and who can doubt that the left is in need of some serious re-education?

A good number of comrades will be resident at the school throughout, but they will be joined by others during the week to discuss topics as diverse as the problematic future of the Socialist Alliance, the nature of islamic fundamentalism, popular fronts and the punk explosion in popular music during the 1970s. We want comrades to be engaged on many different levels, but Communist University does have a central purpose at its core. If we are not to see another century of horrors like the last, we need to achieve understanding, clarity and principled unity.

If you have any queries about the school, phone Tina on 07941 083011 or Mark on 07950 416922.

Timetable

■ **Saturday August 2**
1.45pm-2pm
Aims and methods of Communist University 2003 Mark Fischer, national organiser of the CPGB
2pm-4.15pm
What future for the Socialist Alliance? Marcus Ström and Steve Godward, (both members of the SA executive)
4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
Revolutionaries and the Labour Party Graham Bash, editorial board of Labour Left Briefing

■ **Sunday August 3**
10am-12.30pm
The 'provisional government' slogan Steve Freeman, Revolutionary Democratic Group
12.30pm-2pm - **Lunch**
2pm-4.15pm
The Scottish bourgeois revolution Neil Davidson, Socialist Worker platform, Scottish Socialist Party
4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
Iraq: The working class and the struggle against US-UK occupation Worker-Communist Party of Iraq

■ **Monday, August 4**
10am-12.30pm
The origins and politics of the Morning Star's Communist Party of Britain Alan Stevens, CPGB
12.30pm-2pm - **Lunch**
2pm-4.15pm

Afghanistan 1979: revolution or Stalinist coup? Jack Conrad (CPGB) and Sean Matgamna (Alliance for Workers' Liberty)
4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
Democratic centralism Mark Fischer

■ **Tuesday August 5**
10am-12.30pm
Islamic fundamentalism: ancient or modern phenomenon Clive Bradley (AWL) and Ian Donovan (CPGB)
12.30pm-2pm - **Lunch**
2pm-4.15pm
Marxism and religion Ray Gaston, vicar at All Hallows church, Leeds
4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
The awkward squad Lee Rock (CPGB) and Greg Tucker, RMT activist and International Socialist Group

■ **Wednesday August 6**
10am-12.30pm
ESF and the new internationalism Tina Becker (CPGB)
12.30pm-2pm - **Lunch**
2pm-4.15pm
Popular fronts and Marxism Bob Pitt, editor of the What next? journal
4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
Human nature Michael Malkin (CPGB)
Thursday August 7
10am-12.30pm
Marxism and law Mike McNair (CPGB)
12.30pm-2pm - **Lunch**
2pm-4.15pm
Oil, rogue states and capitalist crisis Hillel Ticktin, editor of Critique

4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
The origins of islam Jack Conrad (CPGB)

■ **Friday August 8**
10am-12.30pm
Soviet cinema and the first five-year plan Sarah McDonald (CPGB)
12.30pm-2pm - **Lunch**
Daring to dream: sci-fi and social reality Jeremy Butler (CPGB)
4.15pm-4.45pm - **Tea break**
4.45pm-7pm
Complete control: The Clash and the politics of music George Binette (Workers Power)
7.30pm - **Performance of Vladimir Mayakovsky's The bedbug**

■ **Saturday August 9**
10am-12 noon
Polemics - hard and soft Mark Fischer and Manny Neira, both CPGB comrades
12-1pm - **Lunch**
1pm-3pm
Lenin and the 'revolutionary defeatism' slogan Jack Conrad (CPGB)
3pm - **School evaluation** - finish by 4pm

Goldsmiths College, Raymont Hall, 63 Wickham Road, New Cross, London SE14 (15 minutes from New Cross tube)
Full week (self-catering accommodation): £130 waged/£85 unwaged
First weekend (including one night's accommodation): £30/£20; One day: £15/£8; One session: £6/£3
(There is a payments scheme available - phone the numbers above for details)

DIALECTICS

SUMMER OFFENSIVE

Battle of the bulge

Precise figures are hard to give for our Summer Offensive total this week. What I can say is that the last week has certainly seen our total rise by over £2,000 - possibly considerably more - and it is now well over the £20,000 mark.

By the time of our celebration meal to mark the end of this year's campaign on August 2, we will have had time to collate all the information that has been (and still is) coming in from comrades around the country and give an accurate final figure for the conclusion of this year's campaign. Plus, we are pretty confident that there is a 'bulge' of contributions from readers and sympathisers out there making its way towards us through the mail.

Lenin wryly observed that the greatest force in history is inertia and annually we have a battle to ensure that comrades who sincerely intend to contribute to the campaign do so *in time*. Remember, comrades - the SO is a two-month campaign. I can't make any entries for good intentions. If you are making an SO contribution this year and have not yet done so, rush it in *today*! (In fact, it would be a great help to let us know if you have sent a donation in the last few days - it will enable us to give more accurate figures for the end of the campaign).

So, our next paper on August 21 will contain our final total. In the meantime, let me just reiterate that this year's SO has been a good one, with a solid performance from our veterans, new comrades showing real commitment to the campaign and some pleasing donations from comrades on our periphery. We all should be proud of our organisation and its achievements.

Comrades and friends of our organisation are cordially invited to join us at the celebration meal to mark the end of this year's SO on August 2, in the evening of the first day of Communist University. At this, we will mark the collective success of our organisation, plus single out some comrades who have performed outstandingly well this year.

Lastly, let me congratulate every comrade who has taken part in this year's campaign, at whatever level. I think we would all concur that the SO has not stretched us as much as it could - but even so, as it draws to a close for another year, we have a real sense of what is possible with a little more militancy, application and guts.

So, £25,000 in 2003 - twice as much next year, comrades? ●

Tina Becker

Target: £25,000

Hegelian pitfalls

Ian Fraser **Hegel and Marx: the concept of need**
Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp207, £16.50. pbk

"In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly - only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: *From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!*" (K Marx *Critique of the Gotha programme*).

This famous Marx quotation inevitably poses the question, what does Marx mean by "needs"? Ian Fraser's book undertakes to address both this question, and the larger question of the relationship between Karl Marx's ideas and those of the German philosopher, GWF Hegel. Fraser argues for a Marx who is more Hegelian than Marx supposed himself to be. He claims that a fully "Hegelian Marxism" leads to an understanding of 'radical needs', which offers a truly revolutionary alternative to social democracy and Stalinism.

Philosophers on 'need'
The first chapter of the book addresses (some) contemporary academic philosophers' discussion of needs - human needs as distinguished from animal needs, needs as distinguished from wants, and so on. It is a frustrating read, partly because it is so compressed as to be superficial. In addition, however, it never appears directly from Fraser's discussion what a philosophical idea of 'need' is *for*. The unstated answer is that a claim that a person A 'needs' a thing X is a kind of moral or ethical claim, a claim that A *ought* to have X. It is for this reason that if I say, 'I need a cigarette', the statement is either self-satirising or plain wrong: I *want* a cigarette, but I *need* to give up smoking, and I certainly have no moral claim to be provided with cigarettes.

This moral context shows through episodically: Fraser is led to discuss cultural relativism and the philosophers' ideas of 'thick' theories of the good (which include values specific to cultures, ideologies or religions) and 'thin' theories of the good (which purport to be applicable to all humans, irrespective of their cultures, etc). These are elements in more general academic, moral and political theories. Fraser's decision to discuss philosophers' moral arguments about needs in isolation from the general moral theories of which they are part makes the arguments he discusses appear more incoherent than they actually are.

Dialectic in Hegel and Marx
Chapter 2 gives us Fraser's argument on the dialectic and the relation between Hegel and Marx. This is, in fact, the crux of the book, since it gives the argumentative method to what follows. It is generally supposed by Marxists that, as Marx said, his "dialectical method is, in its foundation, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it" (K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, p102 - quoted by Fraser, p23). Fraser disagrees, and undertakes to show that Hegel's dialectic is as materialist as Marx's. To make this case he gives us (1) an account of Hegel's *Logic*; (2) an account of Marx's method in the *Grundrisse* (the working papers at a certain stage of the production of Marx's *Capital*); and (3) a discussion of what Fraser considers to be Marx's misplaced criticisms of Hegel.

In Fraser's account of Hegel's *Logic* we are first treated to the standard description of the defects of the abstract understanding (analysis of the world into formal, fixed categories) and of empiricism (reliance on concrete sense perception). Subjective thought "must not take anything for granted" (p25), and, as a result, we plunge into the world of the abstractly interpenetrated phenomena of Being and Nothing, their antinomies, and through them into 'becoming', "movement out of dialectical opposition into something new", and so on. All this is standard.

The pivotal element in Fraser's argument is the role of the will as meaning "the activity of man in the widest sense" (Hegel *Philosophy of history* p22, cited at Fraser, p29). Hence, Fraser argues, "for Hegel, just as for Marx, theory must be in a unity with practice" (p29), and, quoting Raya Dunayevskaya, "the Idea itself is real, *lives, moves, transforms reality*" (p32; quote from Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and revolution* New York 1989, p43). Fraser concludes that "The portrayal of Hegel as a mystical idealist is only possible, therefore, by ignoring the distinctiveness of his dialectic to previous thought, and by neglecting the role of the Will" (p32).

Since Fraser has thus made Hegel into a 'materialist', his treatment of the supposed Hegelianism of Marx's method can be extremely brief. A few quotations from the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* establish that Marx insists on understanding the concrete as a combination of many determinations, on avoiding general abstractions like the "natural individual" and on grasping the internal relations between and within economic phenomena, and so on.

Finally, Fraser critiques Marx's criticisms of Hegel. The core point is Fraser's response to the *Grundrisse*. Marx argued that Hegel "fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing into its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself" (*Grundrisse* p101, cited by Fraser, p35). Since this is precisely the method of argument of both Hegel's *Logic* and his earlier *Phenomenology of spirit*, it might seem Fraser can have no answer. But we return to the pivotal role of the Will:

"Again, this is a clear misinterpretation of Hegel's argument. We have seen him say that thought is 'powerless' without the Will to actualise it. Thought arises from, and is actualised by, the 'real' in dialectical unity - the unity of theory and practice. Thought does not unfold out of itself but is manifest in the dialectical movement of the Will as the 'activity and labour' of real human beings" (p35).

Fraser's mistake
Fraser's argument in this chapter is clearly open to the point made by Merold Westphal, that "A careful examination of Hegel's usage will turn up more than enough evidence to make him into Marx or Weber, but only so long as the contradictory evidence is ignored" (*History and truth in Hegel's phenomenology* Bloomington, 1998, p42). Westphal is also helpful in understanding where Fraser's error lies - that is, at the point of the claim that "subjective thought must not take anything for granted".

At the very outset of his book, Westphal explains that as a graduate student he was warned by his teacher, Paul Weiss: "As we began the opening chapter on sense certainty, he warned us most solemnly to be careful. If Hegel got us there he had us and there was no escaping" (p ix). Later, in chapter 3, Westphal outlines Hegel's critique of sense certainty (believing what our senses tell us) in the context of the evolution of the theory of knowledge since John Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* (written in the 1670s). Hegel's critique of sense certainty builds on the prior critiques of Locke offered by Berkeley, Hume and Kant. Hegel was in turn criticised by the materialist Feuerbach, who insisted that it makes a difference whether I have before me a concrete, sensuous loaf of bread, or the "concept of bread". And here is Marx, in the first thesis of the *Theses on Feuerbach*:

"The main defect of all hitherto-existing materialism - that of Feuerbach included - is that the Object, actuality, sensuousness, are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as human, sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in opposition to materialism, was developed by idealism - but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, differentiated from thought-objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity" (Cyril Smith's translation, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm).

In the light of this quotation we can see the very elementary difference between Marx and Hegel. Marx, like Feuerbach, rejects Hegel's critique of sense certainty. He departs from Feuerbach not in the direction of Hegel, but in the direction of a theory of knowledge which is *more* reliant on concrete sensuous activity. This is reflected in the character of volume 1 of *Capital,* which Marx saw through the press. Marx does *not* simply move from the concrete to the abstract and return from the abstract to the concrete as a combination of abstract determinations. Rather, at each stage the 'abstractions' or theoretical categories he uses are *themselves supported by concrete empirical evidence and examples*.

Was Marx wrong?
Was Marx wrong to take this, from a Hegelian point of view, 'empiricist' line? There are two reasons to suppose he was right, one of which has important political implications.

The first is rather elementary. All the time we are awake we rely on the immediate reliability of our concrete sense-perceptions. For example, I am writing this on a desktop computer. When I stretch, I automatically avoid putting my hand through the screen. I assume that my eyes (and my fingers if I touch the screen) are truly telling me that the screen is there. To suspend this reliance and belief, as Berkeley and Hume (and hence Kant and Hegel) recommended, is unlikely to produce deeper insight: to do so we would have to be brain-damaged, insane or intoxicated. Concrete sensuous activity is not the end-point of understanding the world in order to change it, but it is the unavoidable starting point.

The second is political. Locke's *Essay* was originally written as part of a polemic round the issue of freedom of religion (see Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics and Locke's two treatises of government* Chapter 2 and 3). Put very simply, advocates of state control of religion had argued that true knowledge rests on authority and is unavailable to the unwashed masses, who ought not to claim free choice of beliefs. Locke's argument that knowledge rests ultimately on sense-perception undermines the claims of authority to determine truth. Now it is transparent that bishop Berkeley criticised Locke's claims for sense-perception in order to restore the claims of authority to determine truth. It is less obvious in the case of the 'radical sceptic' Hume, but still true. Hume's argument leads to the conclusion that we can know nothing ... and should thus leave it to constituted authority to get on with the management of political affairs: we should "always keep a hold of nurse, for fear of finding something worse" (Belloc). This political line is reflected in his *History of England*.

Hegel's argument similarly does not lead *immediately* to the claims of authority. But since the true knowledge which is, for Hegel, available to us, is only knowledge *of* the totality in all its contradictions and mediations, the only possible *subject of knowledge* is the human totality - ie, the society as a whole ... which, as becomes clear in the *Philosophy of*
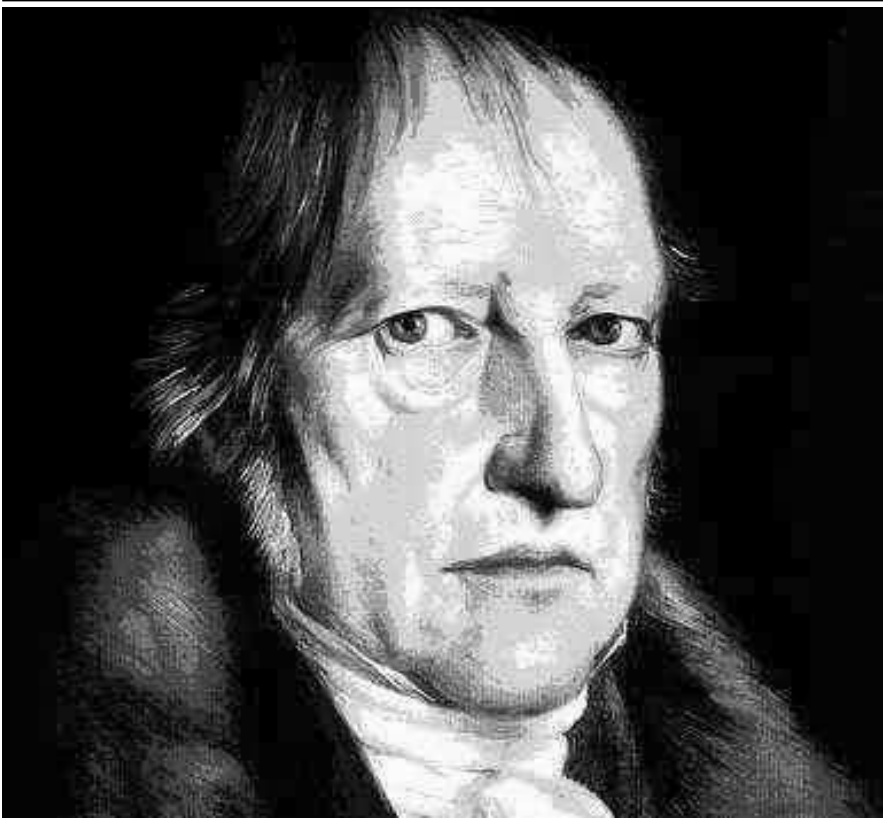
Georg Hegel: materialist?

right, is expressed in the state. Hegel's statism is thus implicit in the nature of the knowledge he thinks humans can attain and in his original starting point of refusing to 'take for granted' our unavoidable reliance on sense-perception in our concrete sensuous activity.

Hegelian versions of Marxism in their classical forms - for example, Georg Lukács' *History and class consciousness* - share Hegel's starting point. As a result, as for Hegel, knowledge becomes knowledge of the totality, and the knowing Subject necessarily a collective Subject. But something has to be substituted for Hegel's state as collective knowing Subject. At first level it is the proletariat as the universal class, and then at second level the party as the representative of the general interests of the proletariat. In this species of thought, political dissent becomes a reflection of failure to attain knowledge due to inadequate totalisation, which reflects inadequate integration into the party. Only the party can understand the world. The authority to determine truth, which Locke denied the church possessed, has been re-vested in the politburo.

Marx, in contrast, says to the workers: this theory is grounded in your concrete, sensuous experience. Here's the evidence for it. You can understand it, use it, test it and correct it. This understanding, if you use it, can set you free. To be sure, the theory implies that you need a party: but this party is to be your creation, your instrument, not a Hegelian knowing Subject in which you submerge yourselves.

Dialectic in Marx-Engels

Marx, then, was not a Hegelian. And yet, we know, Marx and Engels *did* make use of dialectical reason and of substantial elements of Hegel's *Logic*. There is, however, a profound difference. For Hegel, dialectical reason is logically, transcendentally or immanently necessary. Hegel's proof of the dialectic starts with the abstract, allegedly necessary features of thought and, to tell the truth, remains abstract. In contrast, Marx and Engels clearly think that basic dialectical ideas like the interpenetration of opposites, the transition from quantity to quality, and the negation of the negation are claims about the material world, of which evidence can be given (by the same token, their validity could be refuted by evidence). That is the point of Marx's references to these concepts in *Capital*, which Dühring criticised and which Marx and Engels supported in the *Anti-Dühring*. It is the point of Engels's *Dialectics of nature*. This material dialectic is in the last analysis about *time* and *change*.

The 'analytical Marxists' rejected these uses wholesale as being incompatible with the doctrines of the physical sciences. But, even as they were doing so, computer scientists were reinventing the interpenetration of opposites as "fuzzy logic", and complexity theorists reinventing the transition from quantity to quality in a variety of forms. The 'analytical Marxists', moreover, made fools of themselves by insisting on a static or gradualist view of the world which was immediately successively refuted by the fall of the Stalinist regimes, the non-emergence of a law-based 'new world order', the actual regression of

many third world economies and the continued, albeit slower, tendency for welfare states to be undermined and politics to be destabilised in western Europe. The result is that their work already looks more time-bound and dated than ... *Capital*.

The materialist, evidence-grounded dialectics of the Marx-Engels 'firm' thus looks as timely and useful as ever. But what about the Hegelian Marxism offered by (among others) Fraser? His original claim was that Hegelian Marxism offered a superior account of "need". Does it?

Hegel and Marx on needs

Chapters 3-7 - the larger part of Fraser's book - consist of exegeses of Hegel and Marx in Fraserian terms. We discover what Hegel said about needs in his early *System of ethical life*, in his later *Philosophy of right* and in his *Aesthetics*, and what Marx said (in passing!) about needs in various sources, and about "higher needs". Along the way Fraser offers a fair amount of critique of rival accounts of Hegel's, and of Marx's arguments. He also makes these arguments engage with the modern academic need theorists discussed in chapter 1.

This last activity is not very helpful. As in chapter 1, isolated points are taken in abstraction from general theories. The result is that Fraser's 'Hegel' and Fraser's 'Marx' are talking at cross-purposes with the modern moral philosophers. Reading chapters 3-5 for the second time, I was struck by the fact that passages on "need" are torn from the context of Hegel's general theory of history, which then obtrudes itself back in the form of mini-descriptions to contextualise them. These phenomena cast into doubt the reliability of Fraser's underlying exegeses. If he does this much visible violence to the arguments of Hegel and of the modern needs theorists, how much other violence am I missing?

A similar issue arises in the exegesis of Marx in chapter 6, which takes the form primarily of a critique of the earlier work of Agnes Heller, *The theory of need in Marx* (London 1976). Both Heller and Fraser struggle to find single determinate analytical 'meanings' for Marx's rather varied uses of the German *Bedürfnis* in a variety of contexts in the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts*, the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. But to give real meanings to these uses it is unsatisfactory to lump them all together as statements about "need": we need to ask what work the individual statement is doing in its context (usually but not always some aspect of economic analysis). In several of the cases cited it is clear that *Bedürfnis* could find a translation other than "need" without obscuring Marx's meaning.

Fraser's conclusions

The work of chapters 3-7 is "cashed" in chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 summarises Fraser's analysis of - as he sees it - the common position of Hegel and Marx. It has to be said that the result is considerably more obscure than Marx's *published* work. Just to give one example: "Both thinkers understand the determinate abstraction and the particularisation to be forms: that is, the mode of existence of the

general abstraction or universal concept in society" (p165).

Broadly, Fraser's argument is that for Hegel and Marx alike, humans start with "natural needs" (food, etc). Satisfaction of these needs moves antagonistically through "mediations" - labour, tools, money and so on. This activity leads to surplus, which posits "higher needs" or "social needs", and in turn "spiritual needs" or "human needs", and at last to "radical needs", needs which challenge the existing order of society. All these levels are dialectically interpenetrated forms. When Fraser then returns to modern academic need theory, he argues that both the distinction between 'needs' and 'wants' made by the academics, and that between 'thick' and 'thin' theories of need, turn out to be undialectical, failing to recognise their unity-in-opposition.

In chapter 9 Fraser draws out some political implications. He considers first "Soviet communism", which he considers broadly from the perspective of Hillel Ticktin's *Origin of the crisis in the USSR* (1992), though eclectically drawing on a variety of other writers. The struggles of workers, and of the nationalities, intellectuals, youth movements and feminists, were for Fraser "moments of 'radical needs'" (p181) and "offered the possibility of rupture and transcendence in and against the Soviet system" (p180). What is striking about this analysis is the complete disappearance from it of problems of *political strategy*.

He continues with a brief critique of the disputes between liberals and communitarians as failing to grasp "the importance of mediation between the general and the particular". The final section attacks the social democratic arguments of Len Doyal's and Ian Gough's *A theory of human need* (1991), which offers a reworking of the liberal Rawls's *Theory of justice* to give priority to a right to satisfaction of 'basic needs'. Fraser's response is to assert, so briefly as to be merely dogmatic, the Marxist claims that the state is a capitalist state, and that within the global capitalist economy even Sweden (the model of Doyal and Gough) has been forced to attack the working class.

A better account of need?

Some of Fraser's conclusions are stunningly banal. For example, as society develops, needs develop: an electricity supply was a luxury in 1903, but is a necessity now. So too resistance to the capitalists, or to the Stalinist bureaucracy, from below offers the *idea* that this was not the only way to live - but absolutely no idea of *how to get rid of these bastards*. Others commit the classical Hegelian error of 'resolving' real contradictions in thought. Thus, the disputes between liberalism and communitarianism, or over 'thick' and 'thin' theories of the good, in the academy are in reality not merely thought-disputes which are "resolved into a higher unity" by a dialectical understanding. They represent (in a form mediated by rarefied academic air) opposed political trends in the real world, which kill each other (fundamentalists and secularists), rig elections (US Republicans and Democrats) and so on. Yet others - as in the critique of Doyal and Gough - simply fail to follow from Fraser's limited discussion.

More fundamentally, Fraser's series of forms - from natural needs as a "fundamental general abstraction", through "social needs", to "human needs" and "radical needs" - rather misses the point, that for most of the world's population "natural needs" are not merely a "fundamental general abstraction", but the object of an immediate struggle for survival. This is reflected in his failure to note that the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and eastern Europe - which resulted from the spontaneous struggles without a strategy he applauds - resulted in real impoverishment of the working class in these countries. Fraser thus remains within the world of ideology described by István Mészáros in his *The power of ideology* (1990): he cannot see beyond the life-world of the metropolitan countries.

Thus, far from offering a superior concept of need, Fraser's 'Hegelian Marxist' 'dialectical method' degrades all concepts and produces useless conclusions ●

Mike Macnair

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.**

Become a
Communist Party
supporter

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Town/city _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Age _____

Email _____ Date _____

Return to: Membership, CPGB, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

Between Iraq and a hard place

On the afternoon of Sunday July 27, under the scorching Iraqi sun, a group of young westerners in civilian clothes but with trademark military crops sit sweating in a car parked in downtown Baghdad. They are noticed, but puzzled locals do not disturb them. They loiter for two hours, and pull away. Soon, a loud explosion is heard: it seems to come from a couple of blocks away.

These 'incognito' foreigners are, of course, soldiers: part of the rather video-gamishly named 'Task Force 20', the US military unit formed to find and capture Saddam Hussein. Their small group joins others outside the home of prince Rabiah Muhamed al-Habib, whom they suspect of harbouring the ex-dictator or one of his remaining sons. Presumably to prevent their quarry's escape, they have established roadblocks on some, but not all, of the roads around his property.

Now armed and terrifying in body armour and gas masks, some of their number raid the house, while others enforce the road blocks. A civilian car is approaching, and for some reason fails to slow. The soldiers fire on the windshield, killing both driver and passenger. They drag their bodies away. A second car noses out of a side street. At the wheel is a disabled local man, driving his wife and son away from their home. He turns into the main road towards the road block, and is fired upon. He is killed, and his injured family are hauled off by the soldiers.

By now, the 'elite' Task Force 20 is trigger-happy. Bullets hit the doorway of a local shop, the generator providing power to a restaurant over the road, and the fuel tank of a parked Mercedes, causing it and a nearby vehicle to burst into flames. A third car, this time not approaching the road block but merely slowing on another road to peer into the commotion, is also fired upon, and this driver too is killed.

In all, the local Iraqis who provided this account witnessed at least four civilians killed and two injured during the operation. Saddam, needless to say, was not home. Prince Rabiah was bemused, admitting the fugitive dictator had been acquainted with him, but claiming no knowledge of his whereabouts: "If they want to find anybody in this house they just have to knock on the door." Aside from confirming that Task Force 20 was responsible for the operation, the coalition press minders refused to comment.

Iraqis are facing more than merely the humiliation and danger imposed by an occupying force clearly contemptuous of their lives. Power supplies are intermittent. Sewage has flowed through the streets of their cities. Public transport has not been restored: a few private cars and ubiquitous military vehicles form most of the traffic. The economy and infrastructure of Iraq have been damaged so severely that daily life has become, for many, a bitter struggle.

During and after the war, the mass defections from the army and liberators' welcome from the people, predicted and even counted on by the US and UK governments, never materialised. The occupation began with, at best, a sullen acceptance of conquest.

Desperate to engage Iraqi popular opinion, the occupying forces not only turned a blind eye to, but positively encouraged, the looting of Ba'ath Party offices, contributing to a pattern of crime which they belatedly found they could not break. They promised reconstruction, and even brought with them Iraqis from abroad who they formed into an Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council.

One member of this body, academic Isam al-Khafaji, resigned on July 9. In his resignation letter he wrote: "People cannot understand why a superpower that can amass all that military might can't get the electricity back on." The body it set up was a sham, he continued: "… although the reconstruction council has an office within the presidential palace, there seems to be little done there apart from members reading their email."

No doubt Iraqi peoples are angry at the chaos. But what really infuriates a substantial and growing part of the population - in all likelihood the majority - is the fact that their country is under the heel of an occupying force.

Since president Bush declared the war over on May Day, Iraqi resistance fighters have killed over 50 American soldiers. The heaviest casualties have fallen in the last week or so: three were killed in a grenade attack in Baquba, another in a raid on a convoy in the outskirts of Baghdad, and another by a bomb floated under a bridge they were repairing. On one day - Monday July 28, the day after Task Force 20's raid in Baghdad - five US soldiers were killed in three separate incidents.

Only now is the US administration and military belatedly coming to terms with the fact that the war is neither over nor likely to be so soon. A US central command official has now estimated that there may be between 4,000 and 5,000

Iraqis vent their anger on a damaged coalition armoured vehicle

resistance fighters, though how this figure was arrived at is unclear. He said: "Iraq is more than a guerrilla war. It is a low-intensity conflict where you have to fight terrorists, you have to fight guerrillas, you have to fight criminals and you have to achieve stability. It's a multi-faceted effort, and most of the country is stable."

This claimed 'stability' notwithstanding, young US soldiers are scared. Each new US death is a shock and, as the enemy they face wears no uniform, they begin to regard every Iraqi as a potential threat to their lives. This psychology has led to a gradual, brutal, hardening in the treatment they mete out to the people they are policing. An inclination not to take risks and the absence of any constraining authority are forcing an ever harsher occupation.

Naturally, this is quickly using up the limited tolerance many Iraqis initially allowed them. As the occupiers fail to repair the damage they have done, and more and more Iraqis hear of, or witness themselves, the casual killing of civilians, the people of Iraq become more bitter in their suspicion and their opposition.

L Paul Bremer, 'top US administrator' and effectively US military governor in Iraq, claims that the resistance is simply a remnant Ba'athist force: "A small minority of bitter-enders - members of the former regime's instruments of repression - oppose … freedom. They are joined by foreign terrorists, extreme islamists influenced by Iran and bands of criminals."

This might be considered mere propaganda. After all, if Iraqis welcomed the US invasion to free them of Saddam, as the US and UK governments claimed they would during the build-up to the war, they would be unlikely to be fighting a guerrilla war now. For political reasons, this is best presented as merely stubborn Ba'athist opposition.

In a curious Orwellian *doublethink*, though, the Americans particularly seemed to have convinced themselves of the truth of their own propaganda. Their strategy has been to crush the remaining Ba'athist leadership in the belief that this will destroy the will and effectiveness of any forces still loyal to it. The grisly obsession they showed to prove to Iraqis that they had killed Saddam's sons, by showing pictures of their mutilated corpses on television and in the press, is evidence of this.

Ironically, implementing their strategy may have the opposite effect. Most Iraqis would indeed have feared a return of Saddam's regime, and would be reluctant to consider themselves acting in its interests. As the Ba'athist threat is removed, the scope for independent Iraqi resistance may be increased.

The US now hopes to divert Iraqi opposition by engaging its leadership in a new 'governing council'. Though they appointed this body, and can veto its decisions, the Americans have succeeded in attracting at least some members with real social constituencies. Clever diplomacy, the bribery of power-broking and above all the playing off of one group against another have won them a significant political and propaganda victory. Some who might have seen this council as a mere collaborators' club have been persuaded to join. It is indicative that supporters of the Organisation of Islamic Action, not represented on the council, protested not against the imposition of this US-sponsored body, but actually against their exclusion from it.

The occupiers may have paid a high price for their council, however, as the inherent contradictions in its status begin to tell. In order to have it taken seriously, they could not simply stuff it with members of the Iraqi National Congress, a group so clearly favoured by the Americans as to be viewed with great suspicion. Some of the council's members are credible precisely because they have the capacity to act independently and with wide support.

Significantly, amongst the members of the council is Hamid Majid Moussa, secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party. While politically hampered by a tradition of Stalinism, the ICP has a real base in the Iraqi working class. Its decision to support the council is surprising, and the party's own formal statement on the subject, expanded on in an interview with the Greek left weekly *Epohi* and reproduced in the *Morning Star*, seems somewhat awkward.

The ICP claims a victory in securing a 'governing council' rather than the originally planned advisory 'political council', but seems conscious that its decision will be controversial - perhaps not least amongst its own membership. With good reason. Already the party has condemned "acts of sabotage targeting public services and installations", which it claims are "carried out by remnants of the ousted regime" (*Morning Star* July 22).

Frankly this is an example of 'communist' collaboration with imperialism and can only heighten the risk that resistance to the occupation will find its expression in islamism, not secular, independent, working class politics ●

Manny Neira