

# weekly **worker**



**Hillel Ticktin: Iraq  
and the myth of oil  
determinism**

- Human nature
- Ukrainian scam
- People's Assembly
- Hutton inquiry

No 493

Thursday August 28 2003

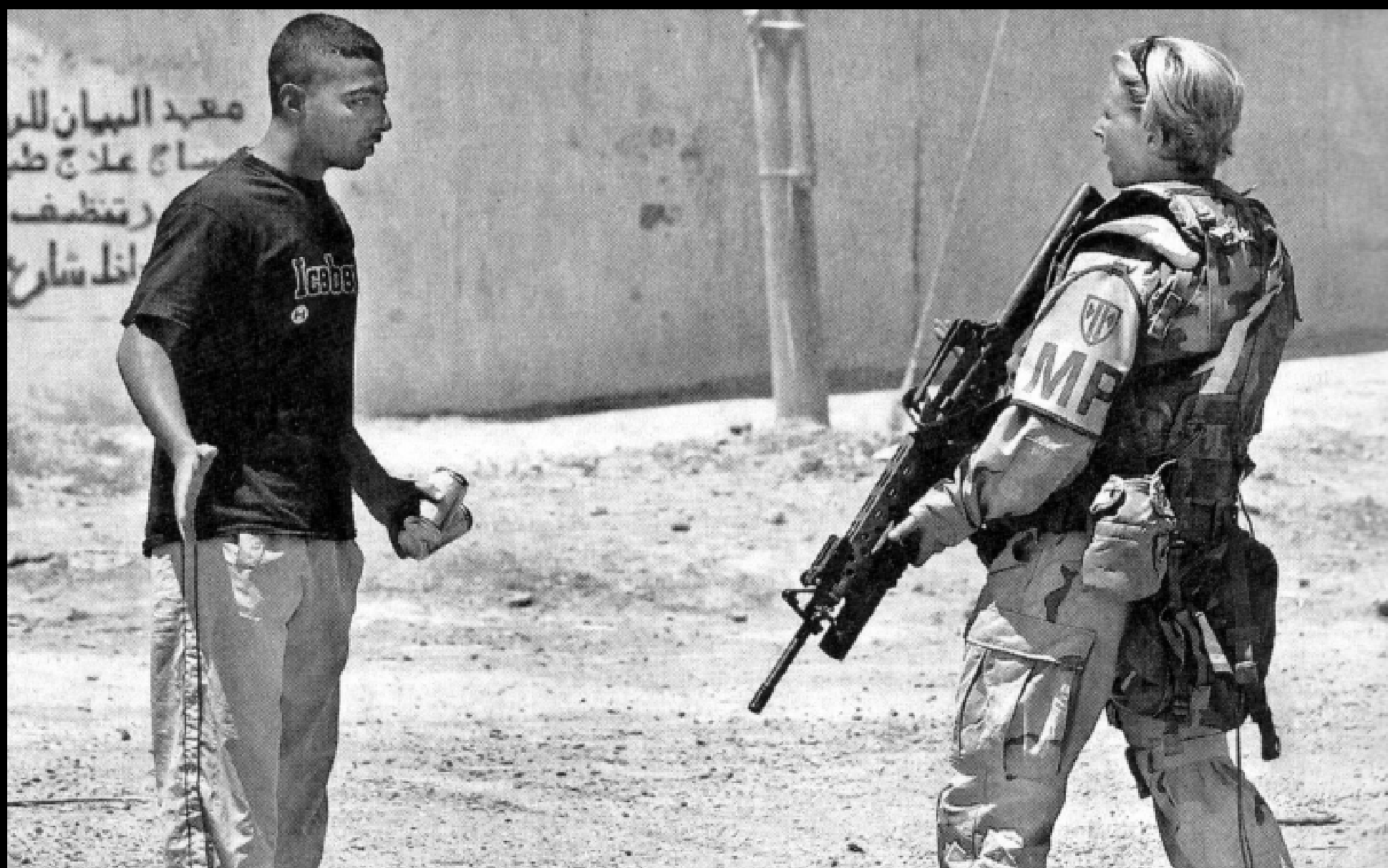
Towards a new workers' party

[www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk)

50p/€0.85

# Solidarity with the workers of Iraq

**In conflict with US-UK occupation,  
islamic reaction and Ba'athist  
nationalism - see pp10,11**



# LETTERS



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

## Human nature

I read Michael Malkin's article with great interest and sympathy ('What makes us human?', August 21).

In my (first version) CPGB life, there were two reasons why I found the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* difficult to make sense of. Firstly, Stalinist publishers had deliberately distorted Marx's text, failing to reproduce the first manuscript in the three-column manner in which Marx wrote it. Just look at the *EPM* at <http://home.freeuk.com/lemmaesthetics/> and you will find you are reading a different document. And Marx's ideas are so well developed, even in 1844.

Secondly, early English language writers on the *EPM* (eg, David McLellan) made a dreadful hash of dealing with the text - *Marx before Marxism* and all that. It took me some time to realise that Marx himself said, in the much cited preface of 1859, that his intellectual breakthrough was made during his study of Hegel's theory of the state. Marx told us that he had sorted out his key ideas before he had written the *EPM*! Sadly, I did not pay attention to what Marx wrote, as I accepted party doctrine (ie, Stalin and Althusser) on the periodisation of Marx's ideas.

I accepted it rather than reading Marx and thinking for myself. How do we get socialism if we don't do that, comrades? Ah, if only I had not been such a small-minded CP member in those days and had read Marcuse on the *EPM*.

**Richard Harris**  
Canterbury

## Not reductionist

While Michael Malkin is right to remind us of the central importance of Marx's 'humanism', his contribution is seriously flawed.

His major opponent is identified as Daniel Dennett, whom he introduces as "a prominent advocate of solutions proposed by mechanistic materialists such as La Mettrie and Cabanis", adding: "Dennett tells us that human consciousness can be reduced to physiological, biochemical processes in the brain and central nervous system."

In his major work *L'Homme machine* (1749), the non-reductive La Mettrie declared his theory as an extension to Cartesian philosophy; he defined the individual as "a purposively self-moving and self-sufficient system, consisting of dynamically interrelated parts"; and he rejected any notion that mental processes are *reductively identical* to their physiological causes. Working in the days of the Napoleonic empire, Cabanis made the famous comparison between brain and stomach: "As the latter is the machine for digesting food, so the former is a machine for digesting impressions." He argued that a study of mind necessitated understanding the "mechanism of language" as the gateway to the "mechanism of the intellect"; like Descartes and Marx he believed (quite falsely) that language is a prerequisite for consciousness.

But the real villain of the piece for Malkin is Dennett, for his "reductionist" approach. Malkin offers the reader half a dozen paragraphs attacking this "ultra-determinism that robs humanity of most, if not all, of its meaning". In fact, Dennett argues for *exactly the opposite*! Let the accused speak for himself: "The problem of mind is not to be divorced from the problem of a person. Looking at the 'phenomena of mind' can only be looking at what a *person* does, feels, thinks, experiences; minds cannot be examined as separable entities without leading inevitably to Cartesian spirits, and an examination of *bodies* and their

workings will never bring us to the subject matter of mind at all. Thoughts, for example, are not only not to be identified with physical processes in the brain, but also not to be identified with logical or functional states or events in an intentional system (physically realised in the nervous system of a body)" (*Content and consciousness* 1969, p189).

In his later, *Consciousness explained* (1991), Dennett develops this argument further, stating that to "make the mistake of trying to define all salient mental differences in terms of biological *functions*" would be "to misread Darwin badly" (p460)!

Malkin relates his 'thought experiment' of Barbarossa in order to contrast his *mythological* Dennett with "the Marxist view": "It seems to me uncontroversial for a Marxist to say that there *is* a distinct, objective and irreducible reality to the mind - something qualitatively different from the mere operations of the brain, and that the essence of this reality is to be found in the social intercourse mediated through language and other forms of communication," he says.

Had Malkin read a little more of Dennett, he may have stumbled upon *Brainstorms* (1978), where, in a satirical essay, 'Where am I?' (pp310-323), Dennett carries out his own 'Barbarossa-type' exercise, ironically reaching *identical* conclusions to Malkin (albeit at a rather more refined level of analysis!).

I sincerely hope Michael Malkin is unsuccessful in attempting to discourage readers of *Weekly Worker* from reading the exciting and informative books of Dan Dennett and his colleagues!

**Bob Potter**  
Hove

## New ways

I think Jack Conrad's article misses a number of vital points ('Democracy and centralism', July 31). Britain in 2003 is not Russia in 1903. The British working class has a long tradition of running organisations, official and unofficial, for itself. It is often rightly suspicious of attempts by professional revolutionaries to take over its struggles and run them not in the interests of the class, but of the self-appointed vanguard.

Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist manifesto* that the communists have no interests apart from those of the class. Comrade Conrad's article, however, reflects the arrogant view of the intelligentsia that the working class are a bunch of thickos who, left to their own devices, can only achieve an economic trade union consciousness and therefore have to be led by the nose like so many sheep.

A reading of what Trotsky and Luxemburg were writing around 1904 in reply to Lenin's *What is to be done?* will prove instructive. Their predictions that the party would substitute itself for the class, the central committee would substitute itself for the party and the leader would substitute himself for the central committee have proven to be all too accurate. The process begun with the ban on factions passed at the 10th Bolshevik Congress (passed in the wake of the resort of the workers and sailors of Kronstadt to the criticism of arms) ended in the dictatorship of Stalin and the GPU.

In the same issue John Pearson wrote: "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?"

We have to look no further than the myriad of the sects run as petty dictatorships by their central committees with their endless rounds of expulsions, resignations, splits and cynical survivors for an answer. Is it any wonder many workers recoil in horror from this nightmare?

Maybe it is time to look at new ways of organising. I remain open to being convinced that democratic centralism can be made to work in practice. However, I am afraid it will take a lot more than comrade Conrad's article to do so.

**Terry Liddle**  
London

## Too centralist

Jack Conrad's initial response to our Stockport Socialist Alliance secretary John Pearson's vote for the branch mandate at a recent SA national council was bending the bow, or bending the stick, firmly towards centralism.

The problem with this approach is that the bow gets bent out of shape, as the history of the Socialist Workers Party demonstrates. Jack repeated myths about Lenin's organisational proposals in *What is to be done?* as a party of a new type. But the proposals were essentially about the need to establish a party centre in the absence of democracy and a coherent party in tsarist Russia.

The democratic aspect of democratic centralism - particularly democracy from below in the party - was not emphasised. The pamphlet was also written when Lenin was far too influenced by Kautsky and concepts about socialism as a product of the intelligentsia and workers spontaneously only being able to develop trade union consciousness. It was Lenin's first word on organisation rather than any fully developed model to uncritically recommend for today.

As Lenin was to write some years later, "We all know the economists have gone to one extreme. To straighten matters out somebody had to pull in the opposite direction." Many of the centralist exaggerations are not tenable. Lenin developed some of his centralist organisational proposals in *One step forward, two steps back* (1904). Rosa Luxemburg wrote the best criticism of Lenin's one-sided centralism in her *Organisational problems of Russian social democracy*. Her main point was that the proposals contained far too much of the sterile spirit of the overseer, which is not positive or creative. Revolutionary politics were not about the infallibility of the cleverest central committee.

Which brings us to Jack's other myth, that the democratic centralist organisation is like a military machine or, to use his own words, "Members of the Communist Party act as one under a leadership which can change tactical direction at a moment's notice."

Where is the room for open debate and discussion here? It's not essential. Trust the leader. The communist troops are instructed to turn at the double and they carry out the instruction or, as Harry Pollitt used to say, the members' job is to follow the party line. Now Jack and the CPGB do not operate like that, but this old military image of the party is used as a stick to beat John Pearson. When abrupt strategic or tactical turns are required, this is usually when minority rights and heated open debate are called for to determine the way forward. Otherwise the only thinking element would be the trusted leaders.

Take the example of the *April theses*. Before the turn could be put into activity - and this was about the life and death of a revolution in 1917 - the party majority had to be convinced of the politics which justified it. It was the old Bolsheviks with their centralised experience and knowledge that got it wrong. Lenin was compelled to fight the trusted leaders from below - first as an individual and second as a minority.

Now Jack has thought twice about his first response and is saying that "democratic centralism should never be treated as a set of fixed rules and timeless regulations". Democratic centralism changes with different circumstances. Broadly, very broadly, democratic centralism is about unity around the programme. But this leaves the trusted leader to define

what democratic centralism is in certain historical circumstances.

Those who are uncritical of the Bolshevik tradition can dismiss the norms or rules of the democratic aspect only by falling back on the trusted, infallible leader. Tony Cliff could dismiss the democratic rules because the true followers believed he instinctively knew where the class struggle was going. If we are ever to offload this rubbish we cannot dismiss the democratic content of democratic centralism or trust the pragmatism of the leader to determine how much party democracy we can have.

**Barry Biddulph**  
Chair, Stockport SA

## Dictatorship

I am amazed at how Jack Conrad and his associates seem to paint Vladimir Lenin as an icon of freedom and democracy. His 'democratic centralism' may have started out simply as a guide to a disciplined regime for a revolutionary organisation, but I agree with Janet Brett (Letters, August 21) that the party under his stewardship became a tool to oppress the workers and add to their difficulties. Far from liberating them from the shackles of capitalism, he helped set the scene for the horrors and atrocities of the working class under Stalin.

At the close of the civil war in 1921, the workers in Petrograd and other major cities (who were the main supporters of the Bolsheviks) expected that the (communist) government would lighten their burdens, abolish wartime restrictions and introduce some fundamental liberties. The Russian people had gone through the horrors and hardships of the Great War, the revolution and then the civil war, they simply craved the commencement of a more normal life, and some no doubt the materialisation of a utopian dream.

The truth is that Lenin and Trotsky's government were not willing to give up power. This new 'workers' state' had no intention of loosening the yoke, but continued with the militarisation of labour, further centralisation and the suppression of protest meetings. Strikes were called, and many of the workers (in whose name the revolution had originally been won) were now called traitors and counterrevolutionaries!

The communist secret police were soon making numerous arrests and suppressing labour unions and organisations - Trotsky's most trusted units were called from the provinces into the city, much to the growing anger and anti-Bolshevik feelings of the population. The Kronstadt sailors were staunch supporters of the revolution and the soviet system, but they were not supporters of a dictatorship of a Communist Party, and this is what was happening. It was not 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'; it was without doubt the dictatorship of the party over the proletariat!

The rest is history, the Kronstadt rebellion and its subsequent bloody crushing. The Kronstadt sailors movement for free soviets was stifled in blood, while at the same time Lenin's government was making compromises and deals with European capitalists, signing the Riga peace treaty which allowed a population of 12 millions to be turned over to the mercies of Poland, and helping Turkish imperialism to suppress the republics of the Caucasus!

And all this well before Stalin became dictator of the USSR; Lenin and his associates were by 1921 undoubtedly committed to communist power, not communist ideals. They knew best - another example of communism from above!

**Brev Kanatov**  
email

## Cynics

Anyone who cannot distinguish between *bureaucratic* centralism and

*democratic* centralism is hopeless muddle-head in my view. Why do people who should know better persist in confusing the two? It is not, after all, a difficult distinction to understand. There is nothing complicated or sinister about deciding upon action by majority vote and then implementing it in a united way.

If there is no possibility of uniting in a disciplined fashion, on the basis of democratically agreed decisions, then there is no possibility of defeating an utterly ruthless class enemy. There is no hope for humanity. This is simple fact of life. If the working class and the oppressed are not better organised, better informed and more ruthless than the class enemy, they will be butchered.

People who say it is impossible to create a *democratic* centralist party are cynically writing off the ability of the working class to organise itself in an orderly, comradely, yet effective way. Perhaps they think that it is against 'human nature', as the bourgeois demagogues say?

According to Trotsky (in his *In defence of Marxism*), the secret of Lenin's success in building the Bolshevik Party was his comradely loyalty towards minorities who had been defeated in votes at party conferences. It was always his policy to be generous towards them, when offering positions on leading bodies and in full-time positions. In this way, he avoided damaging splits.

**Bill Jones**  
email

## SWP and BNP

The SWP needn't have bothered organising all those coach trips for their Anti-Nazi League/Globalise Resistance/Socialist Alliance followers to the various locations of sitting British National Party councillors. As several of us SA indies said a couple of months back on the e-lists, Nick Griffin's carefully designed mask will slip before long and the BNP will start to reveal its true face.

We have witnessed the start of this at last by the alleged 'drink-related behaviour' of councillor Luke Smith (Burnley BNP) at a gathering of the party faithful. It has been reported in the press as a fracas, in which three other people and a security guard were also believed to have been involved - police were informed but no action was taken. Smith was recently banned from the local football club grounds for yobbish behaviour and has now been suspended from the BNP while the embarrassed Mr Griffin holds an internal investigation.

Luke Smith's behaviour is unacceptable as a serving councillor. In fact it is every bit as annoying and tiresome as that of the SWP cadre who tried to prevent *Weekly Worker* comrades distributing their paper at a national event not so long ago - this behaviour is not really a vote-winner, is it? Mind you, neither the SWP nor the BNP are likely to be a threat to the status quo in the future, so no worries of either Stalinism or fascism being established in Britain in the near future then!

I'm surprised that the SWP leadership haven't started a new front against the outrageously racist muslim organisation, Hizb ut-Tahrir. According to an in-depth report on BBC's *Newsnight* on August 22 by Imran Khan, they are a radical muslim political group operating here in the United Kingdom with a racist website and a racist ideology which is working hard to recruit new members from a British university.

Silly me, I forgot - to speak out against a muslim or any minority group, no matter what they preach, is in itself *racist*, as per the central committee of the SWP! So, best we ignore the more serious threat of backward and reactionary forces who *openly* preach 'Death to all Jews' - and continue to support the SWP fixation with Griffin's football bovver boys.

**Nathaniel Oppenheim**  
email

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

Brent polling day announced

With Robert Evans MEP pushing New Labour’s ‘tough on crime’ propaganda through our letterboxes, we hear not a squeak from him about the Iraq war and occupation - the main issue being raised by Socialist Alliance candidate Brian Butterworth in the Brent East by-election.

Evans is playing to the right, displaying an obscene loyalty to the Blairite spin machine. There seems to be no trace of left credentials on show that might excuse a tactical vote for Labour on the part of socialists.

Leaving aside Labour-loyal leftists, there appears every chance that the left vote will be divided. At the time of writing the prospective anti-war candidate, Fawzi Ibrahim, has dropped out of view, hopefully having second thoughts about standing. However, Labour Party member, Harold Immanuel, has announced his intention to stand as an independent “in protest at the war in Iraq”.

The announcement of polling day for September 18 has dramatically shortened the time available for the SA campaign to gain momentum and means that the mass leafleting on Sunday August

31 becomes of crucial importance. The first leaflet has now been delivered to almost every dwelling in the constituency, and tube stations are being covered every evening. School and college students will be handed targeted leaflets as they return from their summer break. Local SAs in London are being urged to come to Brent and lend a hand. We have just three weekends between now and the vote.

**Friday August 29, 1pm-2.30pm:** Leafleting outside the three mosques.

**Saturday August 30, 12noon-3pm:** SA stalls in shopping centres - Neasden, Willesden High Road (Somerset), Kilburn Square, Cricklewood (opposite Iceland).

**Sunday August 31 - National Day of Action in Brent East:** Campaign rooms will be open from 11am to 4pm at the Ceilidh on the Green pub, Walm Lane - opposite and to the right as you come out of Willesden Green tube station (Jubilee line). Do at least two hours leaflet-

ing. Bring cars and loudhailers. We will be gathering for food and drink at the Ceilidh at the end of the afternoon’s campaigning.

**Monday September 15, 7.30pm - Election rally:** Under the theme, ‘End the occupation of Iraq, freedom for Palestine’. Pakistan Community Centre, Station Parade (turn left out of Willesden Green tube station).

Speakers include: Eamonn McCann, Paul Foot, Louise Christian, Ken Loach, Linda Smith (FBU London region), Asad Rehman (Stop the War Coalition).

**Thursday September 18:** Take the day off work, and be there.

The need for hard cash is also more pressing and comrades are being asked to send their donations to the Socialist Alliance at Creative House, 82-90 Queensland Road, London N7 7AS. Make the cheques payable to ‘Socialist Alliance’ and write ‘Brent’ on the back. A target of £5,000 has been set ●

**Stan Keable**

To help with the campaign, contact Brian Butterworth: 07940 510906; brentharrowwsa@hotmail.com; www.brentsocialistalliance.org.uk

Waltham Forest by-election  
Combating chauvinism

The Socialist Alliance’s campaign for the September 4 council by-election in William Morris ward, in the London borough of Waltham Forest, is building momentum. The entire ward has been leafleted and canvassing is well under-way.

All sections of the SA have contributed to the effort, but, considering its size in the area, the Socialist Workers Party has not pulled anything like its weight. SWP comrades actually opposed an SA contest in William Morris on the grounds that all our forces should be directed to the parliamentary by-election in Brent East.

Canvassing is necessarily impressionistic, because only those positively interested in talking politics give you time

of day. Strangely in an area where the local Labour Party is in political chaos and the borough has just been dubbed a ‘failing council’ by Whitehall, in my experience the only local issue to come up repeatedly on the doorstep has been the question of road humps - from residents tired of having their streets used as rat runs. This did, however, allow for a more general discussion on London’s public transport system.

The nearest thing to a pro-Labour comment I encountered was: “I don’t really want to vote Labour.” Other comrades report that Labour voters were on the defensive and could not give any particular reasons for their voting intention. In this historically solid Labour ward

antipathy was not directed at local politicians, but at Tony Blair personally. He was described as being more Thatcherite than Thatcher and as having done nothing for ordinary people. Nor has victory in the war on Iraq brought him any kudos.

The other comment that comrades came across from time to time was the famous ‘I’m not a racist, but ...’ We need to take the issue of asylum-seekers very seriously and provide a positive solution, based on working class solidarity, or we could lose the ideological war to the right on this single issue. Most people who say this are indeed not racist, but have fallen for the media-induced anti-migrant hysteria in the absence of any kind of socially rooted, counterbalancing working class ideology. The result is atomisation.

The moral panic directed against migrants comes from the top but gains purchase because of the feelings of powerlessness amongst wide masses of the working class. All decisions are made outside their control and without concern for their interests.

Without a fully rounded programme to extend democratic rights in every area of life the left cannot hope to gain ideological hegemony - over the working class, let alone society as a whole ●

**Phil Kent**

Fighting fund

Rise and fall

After the CPGB’s magnificent Summer Offensive success, when a grand total of £26,585 was raised, the *Weekly Worker* is still receiving donations from readers wishing to contribute to our annual fundraising drive.

Comrade OG, for instance, sends us belated “best wishes” for the SO, expressing the hope that our “target thermometer rises with the August temperatures!” She sends us a useful £15 to add to our (very much curtailed) August fighting fund. Thanks also go to comrades PL, NM, CF, CG and NC, who have taken our total for the holiday month of August to £185.

Well, the temperatures have fallen

and so has our fundraising target - down from the lofty heights of £25,000 to the regular £500 per month, which we need just to meet our paper’s running costs. September’s fund begins today, giving us an extra couple of days to make it following the sleepy month of August.

For those comrades who got into fundraising mode during the SO, how about making it a regular thing? Why not take out a standing order to the *Weekly Worker*? ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

ANIMAL

A new play by Kay Adshead from The Red Room. September 4-27, Soho Theatre, 21 Dean Street, London W1

Bookings: 020 7478 0100; www.sohotheatre.com

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday August 31 - ‘1945: climax of Labourism, part three’, using Ralph Miliband’s *Parliamentary socialism* as a study guide. Phone 07950 416922 for details.

People’s Assembly for Peace

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

Respect festival

Saturday August 30, 2pm-10pm, Platt Fields, Fallowfield, Manchester. Admission free. Four music stages, market, community groups stalls, food, drink, arts and crafts field, sports activity, kung fu workshops, singing competitions, children’s play area. Music acts include Gregory Isaacs with the Mafia and Fluxy Band, DJ Mr Scruff, Asian crew RDB, Zimbabwean band Hohodza and Latin jazz collective Homelife. Walk the Plank touring theatre company with poetry, music, video and special effects. Sponsored by TUC and Unison. www.respectmanchester.org

East Midlands SA

Regional meeting to prepare for the European parliamentary elections, Monday September 1, 7.30pm, International Community Centre, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. All East Midlands Socialist Alliance members welcome. 07778 480484/01246 203552; mail@n-dsa.org.uk

Coventry and Warwickshire SA

*Monday September 1:* Debate - ‘What happened in Birmingham SA?’ Speaker: Steve Godward. 7.30 pm, Koco Buildings, The Arches, Spon End, Coventry. *Thursday September 11:* Local election planning meeting, 7.30 pm, Methodist Central Hall, Coventry.

Remember Larkin

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

Close Dungavel

Demonstration, 12 noon, Saturday September 6, Dungavel immigration removal/detention centre, Strathaven, South Lanarkshire. Called by Scottish Trade Union Council. 0141-337 8100; rfoyer@stuc.org.uk; www.stuc.org.uk Transport from Glasgow and Edinburgh: 0141-337 8100; from London: info@defend-asylum.org; from Manchester: manchester@defend-asylum.org; from Birmingham: ncadc@ncadc.org.uk; from north-east England: ncadc-north-east@ncadc.org.uk

Love music, hate racism

Carnival, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunday September 7, 12 noon to 8pm, Stoke Sixth Form College, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

Two stages with live bands and DJs, including Spooks, The Stands, Metz and Trix, Skitz and Rodney P, The Mountaineers, Miss Black America, Nicky Blackmarket, Emma Feline, Surinder Rattan, Antihero, The Unpeople.

Open forum

‘Democracy and the Socialist Alliance’, Saturday September 13, 11am to 3.30pm, United Services Club, Gough Street, Birmingham. Informal discussion, open to all, including: reports from Birmingham and SA national council; left unity inside and outside the alliance; what do we mean by a democratic Socialist Alliance?

Called by SA EC members Steve Godward, Lesley Mahmood, Margaret Manning, Declan O’Neill, Marcus Ström.

End the occupation

National demonstration against occupation of Iraq and Palestine, Saturday September 27. Assemble Hyde Park, 12 noon. March to Trafalgar Square. Organised by Stop the War Coalition.

NCDAC

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns national meeting, Saturday October 11, 12 noon to 5.00pm, ARC, 60 Dovecot Street, Stockton on Tees. Transport costs for anti-deportation campaigns reimbursed by NCDAC; lunch provided for all participants; crèche available.

To attend contact nearest coordinator: London and South East England - 020 7701 5197; north-east England and Scotland - 01642 679298; Greater Manchester and North West England - 0161-740 8206; Midlands, Wales and south-west England - 0121-554 6947. ncadc@ncadc.org.uk; http://www.ncadc.org.uk

Renewing dialogues III

Marxism and education day seminar, Wednesday October 22, 9.30am to 5pm, Clarke Hall, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. Sessions on identity, Marxism and action; activity theory; Gramsci, religion and the curriculum. To reserve a place (free, but limited), contact Glenn Rikowski: rikowski@tiscali.co.uk

Mumia Must Live

New video showing in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, US militant framed for murder of policeman, at Anarchist Bookfair, Saturday October 25, 3pm, room 3B, University of London Union, Malet Street (nearest tube: Goodge Street). Organised by Mumia Must Live, BCM Box 4771, London WC1N 3XX; mumiauk@yahoo.co.uk

Party wills

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

RDG

To contact the Revolutionary Democratic Group, email rdgroup@yahoo.com.



## THE LEFT

Sinn Féin -  
www.sinnfein.ie

# Exhaustive message

**J**uly 23 saw Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams unveil his party's new website at a cyber cafe in Belfast. Quoted in SF's press release, he points out that the Irish republican movement has, "throughout the years of repression and censorship, found innovative ways to get our message across". The new website sits firmly in this tradition, being "the latest and most high-tech way of bringing the republican message to an audience at home and across the world".

Indeed, the SF homepage is certainly slick and professionally produced, reflecting the resources and political will the organisation can muster. Available in English and Gaelic, the website itself is small, but the design allows for a great deal of material to be packed in without looking crowded. An avuncular-looking Gerry Adams and introductory statement occupies the top part of the screen. Immediately below is a brief promotion for the SF-run Irish Republican Media resource.

Three navigation bars frame the central features. The first is primarily concerned with profiling SF. 'Introduction' covers the political character of the party (keenly playing up its 'socialist' and 'internationalist' credentials) and lists a series of issues on which the party has "progressive positions". It then moves on to a potted history of Irish republicanism, and provides a thumbnail sketch of SF's structure. 'History of the conflict' is by no means exhaustive, but it fills some of the gaps by providing a nationalist-oriented account of over 800 years of occupation. 'Sinn Féin offices' and 'Sinn Féin leadership' give out contact details and list the names and positions of leading members respectively. 'Elected representatives' is an exhaustive compilation of every SF member currently holding office, from county councillors to Westminster MPs. This could have been further enhanced if these names linked to individual contact details. Finally a links section featuring civil rights and social justice organisations completes this bar.

Turning now to the top of the page, the 'Policies' link leads to a detailed menu hosting past and present policy documents, manifestos and position papers. Most of these are social democratic in character, but the role of religion in Ireland is not addressed, and the section on women studiously avoids mentioning contraception and abortion. Similarly the 'Peace

process' section is packed to the gills with documents and speeches, and is an important resource for all students of the events of the last decade. Again there is a varied mixture of material, ranging from an archive of IRA statements to defences of the Good Friday agreement. There is, however, no shying away from thorny issues such as policing and demilitarisation. 'Elections' continues the encyclopaedic character of this navigation bar with more local, six-county, 26-county and European manifestos. Alongside referendum documents is a breakdown of recent SF election results by constituency, which carries photos and profiles of elected members (but sadly, individual contact details are still absent).

'Join/donate' gives "six reasons to join SF" and allows one to download a membership form or join over the phone. No doubt with security in mind, the option to join or donate via the internet has, understandably, not been included. Lastly the SF newsroom sets a standard left organisations should aspire to. News feeds and press releases combining with soundbites and audio/video interviews convey the impression that Sinn Féin is a living and dynamic organisation - whereas the incomplete and seldom updated sites of the left groups frequently tend to confirm perceptions of inactivity and bureaucratism.

The final bar carries four items. The first is a rather unnecessary link to the newsroom. This is followed by a portal to the *An Phoblacht* (Republican News) website. Compared with the SF parent site, the latter appears crude, but happily the comprehensive content makes up for it. Next along is the online bookstore, which also sells a bewildering array of branded merchandise (priced in dollars and euros). Finally there is the site for the friends of SF. This carries a picture of Gerry Adams meeting Nelson Mandela and has dedicated sites in the US, Canada and Australia. Strangely there is nothing for Britain, beyond a request for supporters to send £25 to an address in Belfast.

The omissions in the policies section aside, 'exhaustive' is the most appropriate adjective that springs to mind. As a result most leftwing websites compare very unfavourably, but then it is not the first time I have noted that bureaucratic centralist sects are left in the shade by less 'doctrinally pure' organisations ●

Phil Hamilton

# Attack of the clones

The revolutionary left plays at 'internationalism'. Events in the Ukraine prove that beyond doubt

**A** bizarre collection of organisations on the revolutionary left have been on the receiving end of a petty, but nonetheless politically quite sophisticated, fraud dating back to at least the late 1900s. Five young Ukrainian conspirators - seemingly with a background in the 'official communist' Komsomol and well able to pick up the vital factional nuances of left politics in the Anglo-Saxon world - managed to pass themselves off as 'sections' of anything up to 12 different organisations. A feat which might be explained by the claim that they first met each other in an "amateur acting troupe".

Those stung include Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Sheila Torrance's Workers Revolutionary Party and its 'Fourth International', the US-based League for a Revolutionary Party, the Committees of Correspondence (publishers of *News and Letters*), the International Bolshevik Tendency, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and Workers Power, along with its burlesque League for the Fifth International. Plans were also being hatched to establish links with colonel Gaddafi and his regime in Libya - that at least might have proved to be a real money-spinner.

Using a whole string of aliases - Alexander, Ivor, Ivan, Jukuv, Kyril, Marsha, Alyosha, Ihor, Pugachov, Mikhail, Oleksity, Sergey Kozubenkov, Vadym Yevtoshok, Vassily, Viktor, Vitality, Yakov - Boris Pastukh, Oleg Vernik (assistant lecturer at a Kiev law school and mastermind of the fraud), Oleksander Zvorsky (born 1972), Yuri Baronov (born 1984) and Zakhar Popovich (born 1976) recreated in fictional microcosm the factional struggles and rivalries that plague the left in Britain and the US. Negotiations, polemics, splits and all. This doubtlessly pleased their 'masters' in London and New York no end.

In a spirit of internationalism, but presumably with an eye to outdoing their rivals on the left, various groups channelled money and material resources to aid those whom they believed to be their co-thinkers. For example, it seems that at least three organisations were supplying cash for the upkeep of an 'office' in Kiev. Besides that there were trips to Germany, Britain and elsewhere.

Now the whole scam has been exposed. Apparently the executive committee of the SPGB got the feeling that all was not well with their World Socialist Party Ukraine in July. Their minutes put the worries on record. The penny dropped for the IBT and Workers Power on August 14. A leading WP comrade was boastfully displaying a photograph of the organisation's recent world congress to an IBT member. Standing on either side of the said WPer were two Ukrainian comrades - they were instantly recognisable. They were the IBT's key comrades in their own Ukrainian section. Photos and information were quickly exchanged between factional centres - everyone had been conned.

With exposure the various Ukrainian 'sections' have simply winked out of existence and the CWI - said to be the original host organism - has suspended its whole Ukrainian membership pending a full investigation.

The fiasco is not without its funny side, of course. *The Sting* meets *Life of Brian*. For instance, we also received an approach from these people (see below). A little later, we got a furious email from a leading AWLer, demanding to know what 'our group' in the Ukraine was doing putting out leaflets attacking their group, the Ukrainian Workers Tendency.



Boris Zakhar

They were - of course - the same people. Even better, I have often been teased by a leading member of the minuscule IBT in Britain that at least his group in the Ukraine was bigger than ours. As it turns out, they were exactly the same size, comrade. Whatever else can be said about this mob, you cannot criticise them for not working for the money ...

Perhaps tempted by what they saw as our relatively successful fundraising efforts, these con-artists contacted us in June of last year. Complimenting us on our role in the Socialist Alliance, the self-styled "Communist Struggle Group (Ukraine)" told us that the main thrust of its work was "the call to establish of a wide socialist anti-Stalinist alliance like the SA in the UK", with the perspective of this bloc developing in the direction of a "real mass socialist party".

Some discussions were mentioned with the Ukrainian Workers Tendency - the "organisation of supporters of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty". While the CSG(U) agreed with "some of their programme documents", the UWT still needed to "overcome a lot of dogmatic, authoritarian and sectarian Trotskyist" baggage (*Weekly Worker* June 13 2002). A carefully crafted 'teaser' of a letter, in other words, designed to get us reaching for our cheque book. However, I don't think the 'comrades' were that encouraged by our reply ...

We publicly answered the letter in the following issue of our paper (this open exchange caused some consternation back in Kiev at the time - now we understand why). We agreed that the SA represented a potential route out of the sectarian impasse in which the UK left found itself. At the same time, we noted that "abroad, the sects still seem to behave in the old way ... the various splinters of the British revolutionary left have attempted to build Ukrainian replicas of themselves. This is sad to watch, frankly."

"Groups that can barely reproduce themselves in this country expend gargantuan amounts of time, resources and energy attempting to construct 'Potemkin village' versions of themselves in other parts of the globe. Entertainingly, members of these sects will castigate our organisation for not being interested in this sterile and pointless work - 'You're not internationalists,' they taunt us. In fact, their understanding of 'internationalism' is thoroughly degenerate."

"Our comrade Marcus Ström has cuttingly dubbed their efforts as constructing 'oil-slick internationals'. Given time and tide (and the internet), it is pos-

sible to spread yourself over a wide geographical area and pick up small knots of (supposed) co-thinkers across the world. There is no depth to the phenomenon, however. It is all on the surface and, given the non-permeable nature of the material, it can *never* go any deeper. A sect internationalising itself is *not* 'internationalism'" (*Weekly Worker* June 20 2002).

Concretely, we offered our 'comrades' in the Ukraine access to the *Weekly Worker* to develop their ideas and openly engage with other trends, including our own; *technical* help with the construction of websites or publishing projects; joint work at the Florence European Social Forum that year; an invite to Communist University and assistance and advice on launching their *own* Summer Offensive-style fund drive.

Now, we are not claiming to be staggeringly more clever than any of the groups who were stung. It is quite feasible that this Ukrainian mob might have been able to con some cash out of us eventually - if they had not so busy with trends who were an easier touch, perhaps. We do believe the incident has highlighted two very different approaches to the key question of 'internationalism', however.

First, our organisation is not interested in creating identikit clones of itself across the globe. We emphasised *independent* fundraising tasks to the Ukrainian 'comrades', because we have learned from our own experience in the 'official' world communist movement an important truth. One prerequisite of independent politics is independent *finances*, the ability to have the wherewithal to say *what* you want, about *whom* you want, *when* you want.

A genuine communist international will - like the Third International - represent the coming together of different revolutionary trends and traditions, fusing on the basis of historic victories of our class. The criterion for joining this world party of revolution will *not* be bland 'agreement' with this or that shibboleth, to employ a currently loaded term. It will be a *living* political entity. Sects which seek to 'internationalise' their own arid impotence via a forlorn, massively time-consuming global quest for *co-thinkers* are unlikely to have much positive to contribute to any world party of the future.

Second, we agree with Lenin: "There is one, and only one, kind of internationalism," he pointedly states. "And that is working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in *one's own* country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) *this* struggle and *only this* line in every country without exception" (VI Lenin CW Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p24).

The "development of the revolutionary movement" in this country would be greatly enhanced by the principled unity of the revolutionary left, a step forward tantalisingly glimpsed in the best moments of the SA. The fight for this is the concrete, genuinely Leninist application of internationalism in today's UK ●

Mark Fischer

around  
**THEWEB**

**Mobilisation for the European Social Forum**  
Another World - A Better World - Is Possible  
**2nd European Social Forum**  
**November 12-16, Paris**  
Check out [www.mobilise.org.uk](http://www.mobilise.org.uk) or email [esf@cpgb.org.uk](mailto:esf@cpgb.org.uk) for details of transport and accommodation.

## PROGRAMME

# Republican People's Assembly needed

Saturday February 15 2003 is a day comrades will remember because of the massive demonstration in London against war in Iraq. It was one of the largest ever to take place in Britain. It involved between one and two million people. It was more than simply an anti-war event. It was the height of the most important mass democratic protest movement since the anti-poll tax campaign. We need to draw some lessons from that earlier example.

Like the anti-poll tax campaigners, the anti-war movement represented a majority of the British people. It was a protest at the failure of British parliamentary democracy to represent the will of the majority. Parliament failed to call Blair and his government to account. It failed to expose the secret pact between Bush and Blair to invade Iraq, made months, if not years, before any formal decision was announced. It failed to investigate or expose the economic and commercial interests of British and US imperialism in supporting the war. It failed to expose the bogus story of 'weapons of mass destruction' promoted by Blair as his excuse to go to war. In short parliament failed to stop a war, as demanded by a majority of the people.

The sheer size of this demonstration swamped every socialist organisation. But it is widely accepted by most, if not all, Socialist Alliance members that, rather than raise its political profile, the SA was virtually liquidated during the pre-war period. The war was a major test for the alliance and one which it failed. This is not to deny the important role in the anti-war movement played by the Socialist Workers Party, one of the SA supporting organisations, nor indeed the involvement of other SA groups and individuals. Given the failure of the SA to build either its credibility or membership on the most important test facing the Blair government, the question is now whether the SA can do any better in the aftermath. The question is, where now for the Socialist Alliance?

Any new perspective for the SA that did not focus on such a movement would condemn the alliance to continued irrelevance. This year's SA conference in May made absolutely clear that the SWP - now providing the majority of the membership, finances, and organisational cadre - is in charge of the SA. Whilst the SWP has always had a majority on the ground, it was not until the 2003 conference that the SWP and its allies (International Socialist Group and pro-SWP independents) took a majority of executive seats. So the real question is, where is the SWP taking the SA?

Certainly there is no dispute over who the target audience should be. Both John Rees and Rob Hoveman, leading SWP members on the SA executive, correctly identify the left, the trade unions and the muslim community as the 'constituencies' the SA should seek to win over. On the latter comrade Rees says: "There is a palpable desire among those [muslims] who supported the Stop the War Coalition to find a viable alternative to New Labour. This community is, in its majority, working class. It is, in its majority, a community which has been the bedrock of Labour support in many inner cities. Some have been radicalised by the war. This has made them open to working with the left. The left should welcome this development" (*Socialist Worker* August 2).

The real question is not whether we

Where now for the Socialist Alliance and anti-war movement?  
asks **Dave Craig** of the Revolutionary Democratic Group

should try to win these forces, but how, and on the basis of what politics and programme. Should it be 'old Labour' politics, or some new-fangled 'Peace and Justice' platform, or the democratic and republican socialism outlined in our SA programme *People before profit*? It is here that the real problem can be found. In SWP psychology, a programme is not the cutting edge of our politics, but a barrier that could put people off! If the SWP wants to broaden the appeal of the SA, the natural tendency in its own political method is to reduce the programme to zero. The SA would appear like a chameleon, appealing to Labourites and trade unionists as old Labour and to muslims as 'Peace and Justice'.

### Marxist method

The Marxist method points in the opposite direction. We must deepen our analysis, politics and programme if we are to broaden our appeal. Perhaps we could begin where Rees and Hoveman do, by considering the current position of the Blair government. It is instructive to see what they have to say on this score.

Comrade Rees argues: "The Blair government is now in a deep crisis. The war has left a bloody and costly occupation behind in Iraq. The trail of lies and deception is now reaching back into the heart of the government. The movement built by the Stop the War Coalition struck the whole governing system with such force that its aftershocks are still reverberating through the corridors of power" (*Socialist Worker* August 2).

If we compare this with what Rob Hoveman says in an internal SWP document, we can see a subtle, even if unintended, difference. He speaks only of "Blair's crisis" and "anti-Labour feelings" (*Weekly Worker* August 21). By contrast Rees implies a deeper crisis, not limited to New Labour. The "whole governing system" has been shaken. It is not therefore just the credibility of New Labour that is on the line, but parliament, civil service and government itself.

If comrade Hoveman is correct, then all we need to do is campaign for a new workers' party as an alternative to New Labour. Certainly his document talks about millions of people who will not vote Labour again, some of whom would want "a viable left alternative" and a "socialist alternative". Only a party, not an on-off electoral alliance, would be seen by workers as a "viable left alternative". It is only the sectarian interests of the SWP that have them voting down the perspective of campaigning for a workers' party, whilst calling for a "viable left alternative".

But, if Rees is correct, we need to campaign for a new "governing system", or perhaps a new parliament. So we need to look more closely at where Britain is going. We need to understand not only Labourism and its relationship to the state, but the specific features of Blair's New Labour. Our starting point is to go back to the high point of Labourism - the 1945-50 Labour government.

The programme of the Revolutionary Democratic Group calls this period the formation of the "social monarchy". Marx used this term to describe the situation in Germany in the 1880s under the

kaiser, in which a welfare state went hand in hand with a weak parliament. We use it not simply to describe Labour's 1945-50 combination of welfare state and mixed economy with the constitutional or parliamentary monarchy. It better captures the totality of the system's political, social and economic features than simply 'welfare state'.

If this system goes into crisis, it will show itself at all levels. Certainly it was stable in the 1950s and 60s. Both the Tories and Labour accepted the social parameters of the post-war settlement. This gave rise to the term 'Butskillism' after the Tory, Rab Butler, and the Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskill, who both pursued social monarchist policies. This remained in place until the crisis of world capitalism in the 1970s and the advent of Thatcherism.

The defeat of the miners in 1984-85 marked the beginning of the end of the social monarchy. It allowed Thatcher to extend privatisation and free markets. As the welfare state and mixed economy were being dismantled, so the political features and even the monarchy itself would come into sharper focus. Of course Thatcher's radicalism did not extend into constitutional affairs. The one exception to this rule was in local government, where Thatcher imposed the poll tax.

Parliament proved itself unwilling or unable to represent or defend the people. But a mass anti-poll tax movement emerged - the first mass democratic movement - in response to the dismantling of the social monarchy. It had the greatest impact in Scotland. It produced a new working class leader in Tommy Sheridan. It produced the Scottish Socialist Alliance. It gave real impetus to the demands for a Scottish parliament. This was translated into one of the major policies in Blair's 1997 election manifesto. The advent of the Scottish parliament itself was one of the factors in the evolution of the SSA into the Scottish Socialist Party. Significantly there was no parallel constitutional change in England.

What therefore is the historical significance of Blairism and New Labour? First New Labour is the product of Thatcher's defeat of the miners and the trade union movement. It is a continuation and extension of Thatcherite anti-union laws, markets and privatisation into, for example, student fees, foundation hospitals, public-private partnerships and private finance initiatives. But New Labour is also a product of the anti-poll tax movement, extending Thatcher-style radicalism into the realm of constitutional reform.

In the Scottish parliament, New Labour accidentally stumbled across its own 'big idea'. Blair would 'modernise' the constitutional monarchist system of government. In the Scottish parliament, Welsh and Northern Ireland assemblies, the reform of the House of Lords, regional assemblies, proportional repre-

sentation, the European Convention of Human Rights, New Labour distinguishes its reformist agenda from that of Thatcher.

The problem for New Labour radicals is that the system of government is historically bankrupt. Attempting to reform it only brings more problems. Remember how Gorbachev 'reformed' the USSR, only to see it crumble to dust? The mess Blair has got himself into over the House of Lords is indicative of more trouble ahead.

The constitution is like a rotting piece of meat. It cannot be made edible, no matter how much New Labour packaging and spin is deployed. It is past its sell-by date. The stench of the decaying carcass gets stronger by the day. Those best placed to feed off this are the maggots of fascism. Each crisis makes the corruption and bankruptcy of the parliamentary monarchy ever more transparent. The latest issues over weapons of mass destruction, the death of David Kelly and the Hutton inquiry are bringing further exposures.

What makes this significant is the involvement of a mass movement in the whole political drama. Rees is therefore right to say that "the movement built by the Stop the War Coalition struck the whole governing system with such force that its aftershocks are still reverberating through the corridors of power". Unfortunately the politics of the SWP and their sectarian hostility to republicanism blinds them from drawing the correct conclusions.

### Mass democracy

The emergence of a mass democratic movement against the war is the next step on from the anti-poll tax movement, to which the SWP failed to relate correctly over a decade before. Of course this movement was not officially about democracy. It was 'merely' a protest against the war in Iraq. But it was in reality a protest against the failure of parliamentary democracy to represent the will of the people. The political potential for this movement is massive. It can do for England what the anti-poll tax movement did for Scotland. It can bring political-constitutional change and new forms of class politics.

Can John Rees become England's Tommy Sheridan? Not unless socialists, communists and the working class movement develop a new democratic perspective and a democratic programme. In this respect the RDG, CPGB and Alliance for Workers' Liberty have democratic demands which fit the bill. The call for a federal republic may be theoretically correct. But it will remain abstract unless it is translated into a fighting perspective.

A federal republic implies parliaments for Scotland, Wales and England, and an all-Britain parliament for the common affairs of the republic. With the advent of New Labour's assemblies in Scotland and Wales, there is a massive political

vacuum in England. This is why we call for a republican parliament for England - not as part of some separatist agenda, but as part of an all-round struggle for a federal republic.

A federal republic must come from below, propelled by the self-activity of the masses. It is not a matter of waiting for the ruling class to promise a republican parliament. We must build it for ourselves. In the 1990s the Scottish Constitutional Convention brought together political organisations, trade unions and religious and community organisations to discuss a democratic future for Scotland and to promote it. We should take that example, but improve on it.

We should campaign for a republican People's Assembly in England. This would be a representative, not elected body, comprising democratic organisations that recognise the sovereignty of the people. It should include trade unions, tenants associations and representatives of mosques, synagogues and churches, along with republican political organisations such as the SA, the Green Party and the Communist Party of Britain.

Campaigning for a republican People's Assembly is not a utopian perspective. On the contrary the mass anti-war movement moved into the political vacuum in England by organising its own People's Assembly for Peace in March. On Saturday August 30 the second People's Assembly will be held in London. Perhaps not surprisingly the assembly, called by the Stop the War Coalition, will be focused on the war. It will be discussing a draft declaration opposing the war and demanding an end to the illegal Anglo-American occupation of Iraq.

The declaration makes the link between the war and democracy. It states: "The government of Tony Blair systematically lied to the people and to parliament about the threat from Iraq in order to manipulate opinion." It goes on to say that "This conduct represents a negation of democracy" and that "The government should be held to account by the public and parliament for these lies and assault on democracy."

Of course we must remember that it is Rees's "whole governing system" that is the negation of democracy, not just Blair's government. Neither should we forget that parliament is politically, constitutionally and morally incapable of holding this government or any government to account. That honour belongs to the people and especially the working class. The people need their own republican assembly independent of parliament, just as workers need their own democratic rank and file organisations, if they are hold the capitalists to account.

The People's Assembly could be the start of a new democracy movement, if we learn from the Scottish experience. It would need its own people's charter of democratic demands. It would need to become an organisation in its own right and not simply an appendage of the Stop the War Coalition. It would become a democratic assembly for all issues of democracy, peace and social justice.

The next step should be to take a leaf out of the Scottish book and convene a republican 'constitutional convention' comprising those parties and organisations that recognise only the sovereignty of the people. If we go in this direction, the anti-war movement will have a more lasting impact on class politics in the United Kingdom ●

**Can John Rees become England's Tommy Sheridan? Not unless socialists, communists and the working class movement develop a new democratic perspective and programme**

## DEBATE

# Denying human nature

**Michael Malkin** concludes his two-part article by taking on the Marxist critics of Marx

Anyone who argues, as I have done, that there is an authentic, Marxian concept of human nature, and that, furthermore, this category is pretty much at the core of Marx's doctrine of historical materialism and of his materialist dialectics, must expect to face considerable criticism from other Marxists.

The objections to the notion of human nature from within Marxism have been well documented in Norman Geras's very readable and useful book, *Marx and human nature: refutation of a legend* (Verso 1983, pp89-116). Sean Sayers's monograph, *Marxism and human nature*, is also useful in this respect (Routledge 1998).

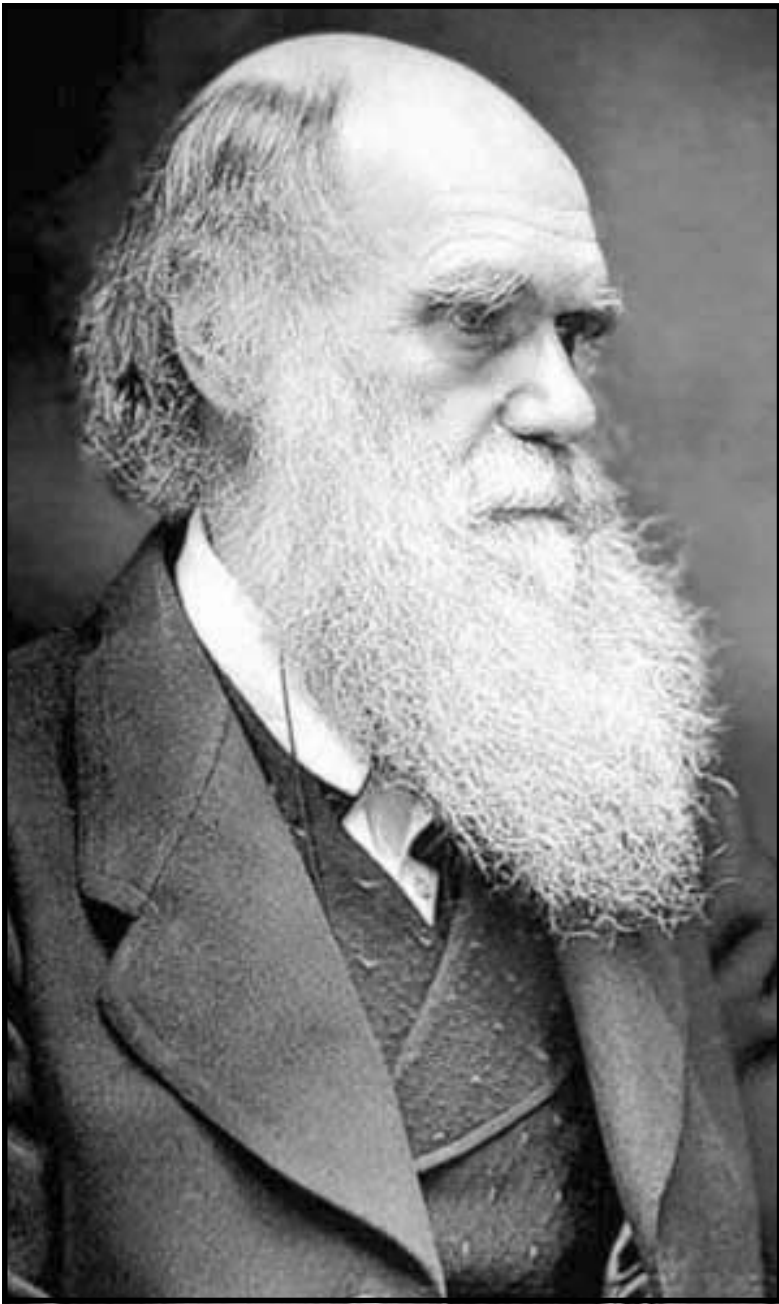
Broadly speaking, the argument takes one of two forms: objections in principle to the category itself, and particularly in the context of the undoubtedly negative role it has played and continues to play in bourgeois ideology; and objections derived from an interpretation of Marx's own writings. It has to be said that the latter do not really bare close scrutiny, though we must deal with them. The former are rather more substantial and also more generally familiar.

First, critics - especially those who imbibed the orthodox Marxism-Leninism of 'official communism' with their mother's milk - say that human nature is an irretrievably reactionary concept, consistently employed by bourgeois ideologists to defend existing social institutions based on capitalist relations of property and power and to claim that communism, however theoretically desirable it might be (though *they* certainly do not deem it desirable), is simply impossible.

## Ruling ideas

Of course, this line of thought has a long history. Remember Hobbes, who in his *Leviathan* (1651) buttressed his argument for the state by depicting a world in which, without the state, there would be "no arts; no letters; no society; and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". Life was a jungle dominated by fratricidal strife, a war of all against all. This was "the natural state of things". We find the same line constantly reiterated by the ideologues of the ruling class. They seize on facets of existing (alienated) social relations under capitalism (greed, selfishness, inequality, bigotry and so forth) and erect them into eternal, immutable laws of nature. "This," they tell us, 'is how people are, and you'll never change it.'

As if to demonstrate that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas - ie, the class which is the *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force", we find the same arguments deployed when, in the canteen or the pub, we talk to ordinary folk about the vision of a socialist or communist society (K Marx, F Engels *The German ideology* Moscow 1976, p67 - hereafter *GI*). We have all heard them say, 'It's all very well *but* ...' - the '*but*' in this case being the 'fact' that human nature, in its supposed egoism and selfishness, somehow precludes the possibility that people might struggle side by side, sacrificing, if necessary, even their own lives for the liberation of humanity from capitalism. Yet when you take the conversation further, I have yet to find anybody who cannot, from their own personal experience, think of people who, in their own quiet way, by what Wordsworth calls "those little unremembered acts of kindness and of love", constantly make a nonsense of this consciously debased and



**Charles Darwin: politically motivated interpretations**

debasing view of humankind.

The problem with arguments denying the existence of human nature *per se* on purportedly Marxist grounds is that they so often rest on palpably false premises. We encounter Aunt Sallies by the dozen, the classic case being that to argue for the existence of human nature means *ipso facto* positing the existence of some universal, immutable, abstract and ahistorical entity, which in some way embodies the 'essence' of humanity. Quotations from the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts*, with their Feuerbachian language of "species-being" and "species-consciousness" are used anachronistically (and cynically) to 'prove' the opponents' case against human nature, which in the end tends to rest on what Althusser contended was the 'theoretical anti-humanism' of the 'later' Marx.

But they do nothing of the kind. Nowhere in his writings will you find a concept of human nature that corresponds even remotely to this travesty. The "premises" of his historical materialism are human beings "not in any fantastic isolation and fixity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions" (*GI* p43). It is puzzling why some people who regard themselves as Marxists seem to find a difficulty in absorbing the basic tenets of historical materialism. The answer, it would seem to me, is to go back to Marx himself, rather than seeing him through the lens of manuals and textbooks: "It is not consciousness that determines being but social being that determines consciousness".

is the sense that society is on the move; that the post-communist hubris, all the fatuous liberal crap about the end of history and so forth, is dissolving. *Pax Americana* as always means the use of military force to secure global US hegemony.

## Common needs

Surely, at this stage, the point is not to shy away from the notion of human nature, but to expose the *falsity* of the way in which the class enemy abuses the category as one of the weapons in his ideological armoury against socialism? Any socialist or communist worthy of the name must surely accept that there are certain *needs* common to all humanity right across the globe and right now; but also that these needs have not changed and are unlikely to change in the historically foreseeable future. When, in the case of millions of people, these needs are either not satisfied at all, or only partially satisfied - because of the existence of capitalism and class society, because of the demands of a global capitalism that is entering a period of crisis - then real human suffering is the consequence. The task of socialists and revolutionaries is self-evidently to change society in such a way as to ensure that these human needs *are* fulfilled, to the greatest possible extent. The universal *needs* of human beings, the things which constitute our human nature in relation to the natural world and one another, form the basis of our concrete political *demands*, of our *programme*.

A second, related, objection to human nature as a category is that it is intrinsically 'idealist'. I have problems with labelling concepts in this way, but ... yes and no. Yes, in relation to how it is used in *bourgeois* ideology, detaching human beings from their real material existence and endowing them, in the christian tradition at least, with a god-given (regrettably 'fallen') nature from which they can only be 'redeemed' by divine intervention - of course; but no, in relation to how it should be correctly understood in Marxist terms. We make no separation between history and society on the one hand and human nature on the other. Naturalistic materialism, naturalistic humanism, means accepting that human beings are a species of animal, subject to a concrete range of biological and physical determinations. What we *are* is not something predetermined or implanted in us by 'god'; what we *are* is about how we *live* as *social* animals, how we *work* together to *produce* the things we need.

A third objection on grounds of principle is that human nature is an inherently '*unscientific*' category, in that it cannot be subjected to the sort of materialist, empirical investigation which we were all once taught must be a hallmark of 'official communist' Marxist-Leninist science. Of course, all concepts, 'scientific' or otherwise, can be abused - emptied of their content or even turned into their opposites.

If we want to talk about 'official communist' Marxism-Leninism and science, then allow me to mention the name of Trofim Denisovich Lysenko - not, god help us, to get a cheap laugh or to score some easy points. There was nothing laughable about the way in which Lysenkoism, if we can call it by such a grand title, held back and diverted the development of science in the Soviet Union.

His virulent rejection of Mendelian genetics as 'bourgeois' science and therefore 'bourgeois' ideology, endorsed by Stalin and the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet

Union in 1948, meant that biology in general and genetics in particular became a battlefield of ideological struggle in the cold war. Those scientists who opposed Lysenko were pilloried and dismissed. Laboratories were closed on the grounds that they were nests of bourgeois deviation. Lysenkoism persisted long after the death of Stalin. Who can forget Nikita Khrushchev prating on about the possibilities of growing maize anywhere, even in the permafrost? It is all too sad to talk about, even now.

The point is that human nature as a category was denounced, actually years earlier, as 'bourgeois' and 'unscientific' in just the same way. If you look at the hallowed pages of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* (1938) - the bible of 'official communism' for decades, every dot and comma of it minutely censored and key chapters written by JV Stalin himself - you will find no mention of human nature. Similarly, if you plough through all 891 pages of such standard textbooks as O Kuusinen's *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* (1961) you will search in vain among sections denouncing "objective and subjective idealism", the "pseudo-philosophy of science" and so forth for any engagement with the category of human nature.

What we find in these sad, mildewed tomes is another kind of lie. Where the bourgeois ideologists use human nature as a weapon to deceive us into believing that socialism is simply unrealisable, the ideologists of 'official communism' either suppressed the category altogether or told us that it was a mere decadent manifestation of a dying bourgeois ideology. By this stage though they could not suppress Marx himself - the works had, after all, been published in their millions - but they could and did ignore the 'embarrassing' bits in their dogmatic, catechetical, wooden account of what Marxism was about. As the ideology of a powerful state, 'official communist' Marxism-Leninism meant exactly what the CPSU wanted it to mean. No more, no less. The 'meaning' changed with time and its demands, but Marx himself was in many key respects just a dead letter.

Is it bending the stick too far to suggest that another, fourth, reason why 'official communist' Marxism-Leninism rejected the notion of human nature on grounds of principle was not just because of the *explanatory* but also because of the inescapable *moral* and *normative* significance of Marx's thought? We enter the contentious world of facts and values - realms which must, according to conventional philosophy and ethics, somehow be kept strictly separate from one another.

'Facts' are (we are told) empirically verifiable; other statements are not and are therefore cognitively useless. Of course, I oversimplify, but how can this be? I am no philosopher or intellectual, but it strikes me that even the most supposedly obvious, objectively true and 'factual' statements can be disputed. 'Facts' are not always what they seem to be. What matters in the present case is, first, whether we can establish an empirical basis for the existence of certain facets of our life which we can label 'human nature'; and, secondly, if we *can*, then what consequences does this have in terms of our conduct, our *social* relations?

The existence of certain intrinsic (essentially timeless in the *historical* framework) human needs - actually far surpassing the mere biological determinants of reproduction and continued physical existence - appear to me to be



self-evident. Tell me that the caveman and the cavewoman did not experience *aesthetic*, intensely personal, as well as 'practical' satisfaction from their creation of tools, garments and all manner of useful artefacts, let alone such things as paintings, whose ultimate significance we can only guess at, and I will not believe you. Even then, what Marx calls the "working over" of nature meant far more than the mere struggle for survival. Surely the need to explore, to concretise and ceaselessly to extend our potentialities is what makes us human?

### Universality

There is a level of biological determination in the species which remains unaffected by social, economic and political changes; and even beneath the surface of such changes, we discover - in literature, for example - the reflection of an essential continuity and homogeneity in human experience. To have been in love in the third century BC is the same as being in love today. Most people would argue that such universality is actually a precondition for great art. Eternal 'truths' are few and far between, but there are certainly eternal 'facts', if by those we mean the recognisably shared experiences and feelings of people separated by centuries or even millennia, experiences the description of which in paintings, sculpture or books enrich our own lives today.

When we stand in awe in front of a great work of art, we think not just what a great achievement it is, in terms of its historical and artistic origins, of its creator's place in the class society of the time, the material and cultural resources available, such facts as patronage and so forth. We also surely think, what could this great painter or sculptor have done in a society free from alienation, in the "true realm of freedom"?

On the theoretical level, when it comes to the general problem of the task of 'reconciling' facts and values in Marxism, for once I would turn to Leszek Kolakowski, whom nobody could accuse of being on our side of the barricades. He writes that, with Lukács, "Marxism does away with the dichotomy between facts and values, for it is identical with the self-knowledge of the working class; that class comprehends the social process in the very act of revolutionising the world, so that in this one privileged case the understanding and the making of history appear as one single act" (L. Kolakowski *Main currents of Marxism* Vol 2, Oxford 1978, p374).

As he goes on to say, "The characteristic feature of Marxism is that it is neither purely descriptive nor purely normative, nor a combination of descriptive and normative judgements, but claims at once to be a movement and an act of understanding - the self-awareness of the proletariat in the act of struggle. Knowledge of the world, in other words, is an aspect of changing it: theory and its practical application are one" (*ibid*). A touch of irony, perhaps. With Kolakowski, one never quite knows. But even the devil speaks the truth sometimes.

Turning albeit briefly to a couple of the objections to human nature based on an interpretation of Marx's own works, the case is pretty weak. For example, some opponents argue that, since Marx tells us that history is "nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature", it is therefore incoherent to talk about general and enduring facets of human nature itself ('The poverty of philosophy' *CW* Vol 6, p192). Even the most stubborn of Marxist dialecticians ought to be able to get their heads around the fact that something can both change and remain the same. Transformation is not logically incompatible with the existence of permanent and general facets or attributes. However great the impact of humanity's transformative labour on the natural world, for example, there will always remain important aspects of our environment that we cannot change. When it comes to the language of 'mastery', heed

Engels's warning in *The dialectics of nature* and remember also that the temporal framework of historical materialism is historical, not geological.

Likewise, as we shall see presently, when Marx criticises bourgeois ideologues for making socially and historically conditioned features of a specific mode of production into "eternal laws of nature and reason", what he is arguing against are *false* generalisations employed for ideological, political purposes (D McLellan *Karl Marx: selected writings* Oxford 1977, p234 - hereafter *KMSW*). To suggest that he is thereby condemning all generalisations *per se* is just daft. In *Capital*, for example, in the course of an attack on Bentham, we find the following: "To know what is useful for a dog, one must study dog nature. This nature itself is not to be deduced from the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he that would criticise all human acts, movements, relations, etc by the principle of utility, must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch" (K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, Moscow 1962, p571, note 2 - hereafter *Capital*).

To "deal with human nature in general" is to do exactly what I have sought to show Marx doing. The concept of human nature, both explicitly and implicitly present in his naturalistic materialism, provides the explanatory framework on which he later built his theory of history, a theory which shows how "human nature in general" is "modified in each historical epoch".

### Darwinism

If we look back for a moment to the arguments on principle advanced by Marxists against the existence of a category of human nature, we ought perhaps to say something about the relationship between Marx and Darwin - for the various politically motivated simplifications and perversions of Darwinism have done the most to discredit human nature as a concept which Marxists and revolutionaries can usefully work with, let alone propose as a cornerstone of Marx's historical materialism.

That Marx and Darwin should have been linked is hardly surprising. In his graveside tribute to Marx in 1883 Engels makes the parallel explicit: "Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history; he discovered the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat and drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, religion, science, art, etc" (K Marx, F Engels *Selected works* Vol 2 Moscow 1951, p153).

It is well known that facets of Darwin's theory have been and still are being perverted into a reactionary and dangerous social doctrine, which claims to provide a naturalistic and scientific account of human society. As we shall see, Marx was one of the first people to identify and criticise this tendency to abuse Darwinism for social and political ends.

There were, of course, aspects of Darwin which Marx found in some ways supportive of his own work. In a letter to Lassalle in 1861, Marx wrote that "Darwin's book [*The origin of species*] is very important ... Despite all deficiencies, it not only deals the death-blow to 'teleology' in the natural sciences for the first time, but also sets forth the rational meaning in an empirical way ..." (K Marx, F Engels *Selected correspondence*, Moscow 1982, p115 - hereafter *MESC*).

In *Capital*, Marx suggests an affinity between his investigation of production and Darwin's enquiries into the natural world: "Darwin has interested us in the history of nature's technology - ie, in the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which organs serve as instruments of production for sustaining life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs that are the material basis of all social organisation, deserve equal attention?" (*Capital* Vol 1, p352, note 3).

The materialist and anti-teleological dimension in Darwin's work understandably attracted Marx, as did the notion of cooperation as well as struggle in the biological world. In general he accepted the burden of Darwin's thesis and supported its judicious use, but there was a flaw in Darwin's approach which opened up the possibility for a great deal of mischief. Darwin himself had acknowledged in his *Life* that the parson Thomas Malthus's work, *An essay on the principle of population*, had inspired him in formulating his theory of evolution. In fact Darwin described his own concept of the 'struggle for life' as being the doctrine of Malthus applied to the whole of the animal kingdom. The notion that the 'struggle for life' was the key to Darwinism was propounded by men like the German neo-Kantian philosopher, FA Lange, with whom Marx was in correspondence in the 1860s.

Although himself content - in *Capital*, for example - to use the 'struggle for life' as a *metaphor*, Marx resisted any attempt to build a social theory on Darwin's supposed Malthusianism. Marx regarded Malthus with the deepest suspicion because his theories about human population lacked a basis in historical fact and showed no insight into the impact of humanity's social, productive activity on the natural world.

As early as 1862, this time in a letter to Engels, Marx had pointed out the weakness inherent in Darwin's application of Malthus to the natural world: "Darwin ... amuses me when he says he is applying the 'Malthusian' theory also to plants and animals, as if with Mr Malthus the whole point were not that he does not apply the theory to plants and animals but only to human beings ... It is remarkable how Darwin recognises among beasts and plants his English society with its division of labour, competition, opening up of new markets, 'inventions', and the Malthusian 'struggle for existence'. It is Hobbes's *bellum omnium contra omnes* and one is reminded of Hegel's *Phaenomenologie*, where civil society is described as a 'spiritual animal kingdom', while in Darwin the animal kingdom figures as civil society ..." (*MESC* p120).

In other words, by "applying" Malthus's doctrine to animals and

plants, Darwin had imported into his theory of evolution Malthus's very questionable propositions about the way human society works. A vicious circularity arises when people come along and claim to have 'discovered' in Darwin a 'proof' that their own way of looking at society has the force of a natural law. Engels sums up this legerdemain in a letter to Lavrov: "The whole Darwinist teaching of the struggle for existence is simply a transference from society to living nature of Hobbes's doctrine of *bellum omnium contra omnes* and of the bourgeois-economic doctrine of competition, together with Malthus's theory of population. When this conjurer's trick has been performed, the same theories are transferred back again from organic nature into history and it is now claimed that their validity as eternal laws of human society has been proved" (*MESC* p368).

This "conjurer's trick" of projecting aspects of human society onto nature and then miraculously rediscovering them as eternal laws was something I mentioned a little earlier and remains a favourite trick of all manner of bourgeois thinkers and writers to justify the *status quo*, allowing the apologists of capitalism to maintain that the unpleasant outcome of the 'struggle for life' which most people are condemned to endure is just an unavoidable natural necessity.

One such apologist was FA Lange himself, whose error is made clear in an important letter written by Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann in 1870: "Mr Lange has made a great discovery. The whole of history can be brought under a single great natural law. This natural law is the phrase (in this application Darwin's expression becomes nothing but a phrase) 'struggle for life', and the content of this phrase is the Malthusian law of population or, rather, overpopulation. Thus, instead of analysing the 'struggle for life' as represented historically in various definite forms of society, all that has to be done is to translate every concrete struggle into the phrase 'struggle for life', and this phrase itself into the Malthusian 'population fantasy'. One must admit that this is a very impressive method - for swaggering, sham-scientific, bombastic ignorance and intellectual laziness" (*MESC* p225).



The young Karl Marx: no idealist

To grasp the truth of Marx's criticism we need to take a brief look at some of the ways in which Darwinism was subsequently abused. The British philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) - a complex and contradictory character if ever there was one - inflated what Marx called "sham-scientific, bombastic ignorance" into a full-blown theory of social Darwinism and in the process unwittingly opened up the way to horrors far more serious than "intellectual laziness". Like many liberal or libertarian intellectuals, Spencer talked a lot about individual freedom in the abstract, but in his copious ethical writings this amounts to nothing more than the freedom of the jungle, where the "survival of the fittest" (Spencer's phrase, *not* Darwin's) is the only law.

Spencer's odious musings must have been music to the ears of the Manchester manufacturers. All attempts at social reform are dismissed as futile, since they only "try to make up for the defects in the constitution of things ... and to supersede the great laws of existence". Public education particularly was anathema to him and was purely a matter of "parental responsibility". Those parents who cannot educate their children "must be left to the discipline of nature, and allowed to bear the pains attendant on their defect of character".

Leaving things to the discipline of nature, to the law of the jungle and the survival of the fittest just about sums up Spencer's contemptible ethics. Of course, it is quite 'natural' that those who enjoy wealth and power will be more 'fitted' to survive than those who lack these advantages. It is not, however, the "discipline of nature" that orders things in this way, but the "discipline" of a specific social system. In Spencer's hands, 'the survival of the fittest' means nothing more than *saue qui peut*. It is a callous and complacent tautology, based on no scientific authority, Darwinian or otherwise. What Spencer's ethics do accomplish, however, is to endow the notion of 'fitness' with a spurious moral dimension, in so far as those who are 'fitted' to survive evidently deserve to do so on the grounds that they are in some way better than those who are not.

So far as I know, Spencer did not get around to suggesting that those least fitted by nature for survival, such as the physically and mentally handicapped, should be exterminated. He would have been content to let them die a 'natural' death, though at the least possible cost to the taxpayer. It was left to another social Darwinist, Adolf Hitler, to give nature a helping hand in this respect and to propagate a crazy racist ideology similarly based on the pseudo-Darwinian 'science' he had picked up in the doss houses and cafes of Vienna. Of course, blaming Darwin for Hitler is ridiculous - just as ridiculous, in fact, as blaming Marx for Stalin.

### Humanity

What makes this brief excursion into pseudo-scientific lunacy relevant to our discussion? Simply the fact that we need to be reminded of the grave moral dangers of drawing facile parallels between animals and human beings. For Marx, human beings have a number of things in common with animals, but, as we have seen, there is no room for doubt that human beings are qualitatively different from the other animals with whom we share the planet. As a species, we are *sui generis*.

The "one single science" capable of comprehending the implications of this fact must, therefore, result from a fusion of natural science and that study of humanity as social, productive beings which Marx calls the "science of man". Its starting point must be the study of humanity's productive activity, because it is industry which is "the real historical relationship of nature, and therefore of natural science, to man" (*KMSW* p93f).

Here we will find the definition of what it means to be a human being, to share in what we can rightly call our common human nature ●

## DEBATE

# Iraq and the myths of oil

**Hillel Ticktin**, editor of *Critique*, argues that the invasion and occupation of Iraq is rooted in capitalism's historic decline. Those on the left who explain every modern war and conflict with reference to oil are wrong

**M**any of those campaigning against the war emphasised the question of oil as being of central importance. I think that is entirely wrong, and based on the theory of imperialism as applied before 1914 - as if great powers were trying to annex a state in order to acquire its resources. That entirely fails to understand the present stage of capitalism. It fails to understand the politics of the situation.

If one was to argue that imperialism went in for oil, one has to argue that the United States does not already control world oil - that somehow it is divided up among great powers or alternatively it is owned by individual states. In reality we know that a few giant oil companies control world distribution. Yes, Saudi Arabia has nationalised its oil, but nobody believes that Saudi Arabia is a great power or is really independent. The Saudi bourgeoisie, if you can call it that, is more American than it is Saudi. Clearly, they nationalised the oil as a manoeuvre.

Oil is basically managed and distributed by American companies - Exxon and Mobil are by far the biggest. Of the two British companies, BP and Shell, most of the shareholders are American. Even the one French company has at least 30% of US shareholders. To all intents and purposes, the United States effectively controls world oil as far as it actually needs to. If it had needed to 'gain control' over Iraqi oil, all it had to do was bribe Saddam Hussein. Since he was their client until 1991, it is difficult to see why he would not have agreed.

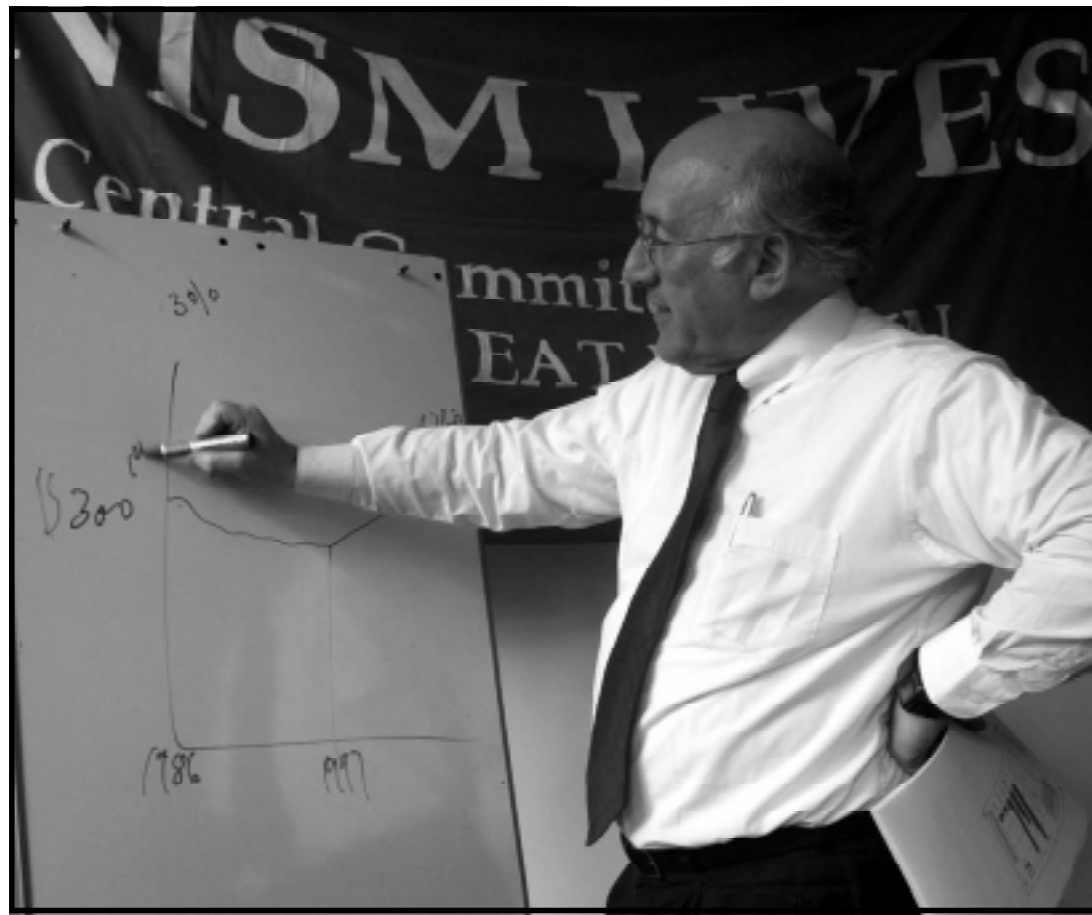
Nor is there a shortage of oil in the world - it is very unlikely there will be any such shortage in the next 20 years or so. Nor is it a question of the price of oil. If oil companies raise the price, then other companies lose money. So you cannot say the US bourgeoisie as a whole wants either high oil prices or low oil prices. That cannot be the issue.

With this in mind, one has to criticise much of the left for their method, in reducing Marxism to economism. For them there has to be an immediate, technical-economic reason (as opposed to a *political-economic* reason) for the invasion of Iraq - or, for that matter, for whatever else is happening in the world. It does reflect to a degree, I think, the further degeneration of the left. At the same time, while some of the left's slogans certainly made me cringe, one has to agree that imperialism would not have invaded, had oil not been important in the region. Clearly American and British troops are not going to be sent to Zimbabwe or to North Korea, even though they are both 'rogue states'.

The second argument I would like to get out of the way is that somehow the United States has to re-establish itself as a great world power. It is a world power - throughout the entire period from 1945 until now, it has been the single world power. There is a huge degree of financial integration, as well as a fair degree of industrial integration, between the imperialists. It is not clear what competition between these powers means any longer. The kind of inter-imperialist rivalry that there was in 1914 or later is now much more muted.

The Soviet Union was never the equal of the United States. I once met someone who had been in the CIA, and had been involved in analysing the results of the 1960 spy flights over the USSR. He concluded the USSR did not have the capacity to damage the USA militarily, so he went to his superiors and reported there was nothing to worry about. They told him to shut up. In 1976 the CIA came out with figures to show that the power of the Soviet economy was a fraction of what had been thought, and consequently their military ability was much less. The Pentagon insisted that the figures should be upped.

The point is that the powers that counted, within the US administration, understood the



relative weakness of the USSR. They knew the USA was the sole great power. Therefore I disagree with the whole idea that, once the cold war came to an end, there was only one great power and that this represented an enormous change. The Soviet Union was never really a competitor. It is true that the existence of the Soviet Union, with its supply of arms and equipment, allowed various states to at least nominally and sometimes in reality stand up to the United States - a situation that does not exist today. But that is another question. The essential point is that it cannot have been the case that the United States wanted to reassert its power over other imperialist states. It is true that the world has changed because the Soviet Union no longer exists, but it cannot be argued that the USA is therefore transformed. To me the argument that the United States needs somehow to reassert itself does not add up. It is already in control.

In fact it is the capitalist crisis that is crucial in trying to understand why imperialism went into Iraq. It has much more to do with the present stage of capitalism, and the position of the United States within that. Capitalism's decline requires a method of stabilisation and, to put it in the starkest form, the existence of Stalinism stabilised capitalism. Empirically, the cold war was absolutely essential to capitalism from the 1940s onwards. Keynesianism is only possible under conditions where there is a war or cold war - both for its military and economic effect, and for purposes of political and economic control.

Modern capitalism requires war as a form of mediation, in order to stabilise itself. But for the past 50 years or so, the form of capitalism has been one in which there has been no great war - but a cold war, or a war which was not a war. So the point of going into Iraq, and of any subsequent invasion, would be to buttress that form. You cannot go on talking about war without eventually engaging in one.

Saddam Hussein had the misfortune of heading a country that was weak in military terms, whose regime was detested throughout the world, a regime whose defeat might stabilise the region for US control. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. It so happens that Iraq was an easy country to deal with, and that is why the US went in. One can add that there happened to be a

particular kind of administration in the United States that was receptive to this action, and of course there was 9/11. But 9/11 represented an acceleration of already existing features, not an independent feature in itself.

It was president Clinton who began the warlike posturing, not George W Bush. It was under Clinton that increased expenditure on arms began. Bush merely continued this trend. Similarly it was Clinton who did not want the Kyoto protocol, although it was repudiated by Bush. There is a clear continuity and the idea that Bush represents a sudden change is simply untrue. The invasion itself provided a relatively low cost for a relatively large return. The return is mainly internal, of course.

In the light of world history, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie as a whole, what has happened is actually irrational. War is irrational in itself, if looked at in terms of the immediate extraction of surplus value, or for that matter of political support. The risks were enormous, but we are in an irrational period which goes back to the 1930s. Reflecting the fact that the period of cold war has come to an end, we are returning now to a period of classic capitalist crisis.

As with any formation, capitalism has gone through three stages. That is, a coming into being, a maturing and a period where it declines. The classical viewpoint of Lenin and Trotsky is that we have been in the period of decline. I do not see any reason to disagree. I would go further and say that each of the three stages has its own sub-stages of coming into being, maturity and decline. In fact I would argue that we are in the period of the decline of the decline.

The law of value is being reduced in depth and in extent. This has seen the expansion in the economic role of the state, of governments, and the rise of giant firms, operating on a bureaucratic basis internally while fixing prices externally. Interestingly, John Galbraith's son, James, has written an article which argues that the US economy is only able to operate because of the role of the US state. He details all the various aspects of the economy that are funded or controlled by the state. Despite all the 'never buck the market' propaganda and all that rubbish, in reality the administration, the government and the pub-

**Arms spending: Hillel Ticktin at the CPGB's Communist University**

**To all intents and purposes, the United States effectively controls world oil as far as it actually needs to. If it had needed to 'gain control' over Iraqi oil, all it had to do was bribe Saddam Hussein**

lic sector are crucial for the economy of the United States.

Instead of the law of value we have administration, which is sometimes called planning - a term I reject. What we have is bureaucratic control and the rise and rise of the bureaucratic apparatus - not just in the public sector, but in the private sector as well. This relates to the question of profit.

The argument was that the United States had gone into a new paradigm, where profits were rising. But this argument is undermined because we do not really know what profits are. You cannot simply accept bourgeois statistics, for two reasons. Firstly, it is not clear what bourgeois statistics are actually describing. A Marxist looks at surplus value, which is more than just profit. To collate all the different aspects of this would be an enormous job, requiring the apparatus of the state itself.

Secondly, we know that the profits that have been estimated are extremely dubious. Take, for instance, pension funds. That was the scam to end all scams. Companies stopped contributing to pension funds, allowing profits to rise, and, because profits rose, so did shares. With share prices rising, pension funds could generate income from investments. In turn companies could continue withholding contributions and it all became a virtuous circle in which shares rose and pensions were paid. What this meant was that profits were artificially made.

Today of course we have exactly the reverse process. In the United States trillions of dollars have to be put back into pension funds, which means profits are effectively negative. It will take a very long time before this situation is resolved - if it can be resolved - unless the stock exchange improves once more, which is extremely unlikely.

It was even worse in the case of Enron, when pension funds were invested in shares of the company itself, which of course meant that when Enron ceased to exist the employees had no pension. One of the things Enron did was to include future profits in present-day returns. What I do not understand is how any accountant on earth would accept that, but apparently it is acceptable. In fact we know that companies no longer work purely on the basis of total result, which is of course what matters in the final analysis. Standard Life, which is the biggest mutual fund in Europe, is doing exactly the same thing, in order to increase its present-day return. What that means for mutual funds, who knows? So it is not clear what US profits were, and we could even argue that they had not increased at all.

Another device, as in the case of Microsoft, is simply to give the workers shares in lieu of wages. Again, profits would then automatically rise, because of the reduced salary bill. And, like Enron, companies can put all their loss-making sections in offshore hideaways, increasing profits even further. What I think is really wonderful is the way that Enron *et al* simply agreed to buy electricity each from the other, so they could show that the amount they were selling had increased. Another obvious way to achieve the same result is simply to drive the competitor to the wall, and then raise prices.

I have given five different ways - and I am sure there are many others - whereby profits were arbitrarily increased in the 1990s. What this implies is that in reality there was no additional extraction of surplus value. Of course there was a transfer occurring, but there was no new paradigm - except that of creative accounting. There was no question of profits having gone up or, if there was, you really have to dig to establish that was the case.

The third aspect of the present decline is an obvious one - the distance between the potential and actual growth of GDP. Productivity is rising, but it is not very likely that there will be a boom, given the increasing gap between productivity and sales. There is rising



# determinism

unemployment and underemployment, the dumbing down of education and the production of use-values of no human importance. It is clear that the gap between human potential and the reality of human misery is growing, most obviously in the third world. At the same time - and again James Galbraith makes this point - if one looks at expenditure, say, on mobile phones and what it could have been spent on - health, say - that gap is fantastically big. People love mobile phones, and there are millions in this country, but the fact is that we do not really need them. It is clear that no rational society would choose to produce mobile phones rather than the essentials it was actually lacking.

The fourth aspect is that crisis becomes the normal mode of existence of capital. And the solution, in the last 50 years or so, has been war, whether cold or hot. And fifthly, not simply the growth of forms alternative to value, but also decay, as the switch from industrial to finance capital is then reflected in the nature of employment. Finally capitalism is entering a new barbaric phase of irrationality.

What I am arguing, then, is that in this complex situation, capitalism needs to stabilise itself, given the end of the cold war. There are two sides to that.

Firstly, military production. In 1986 arms expenditure in the USA was \$300 billion - eight percent of GDP. After that it decreased slightly, until 1997, when it was less than three percent. In 2007 it is predicted to be 450 billion dollars. These are nominal figures. This increase comes at a time of a very considerable budget deficit for the United States - the International Monetary Fund has said this cannot be maintained. In 1981, in a previous period of downturn, Reagan reversed the previous policy and went for a straightforward Keynesian boom by putting huge amounts into the arms sector, arguing that he needed to do so in order to squeeze the USSR. In fact he did it not because of the USSR, but because of capitalism in the United States.

The point is, looking at those figures, increased arms expenditure is unlikely to have much of an impact. In principle of course it could be increased to something like \$800 or \$900 billion. But it is highly unlikely that that would be accepted by the bourgeoisie or would get through Congress. That means the arms sector cannot be used in the way it was used in the past, when it acted as a crucial lever on the economy though state expenditure.

One could ask, what does it matter if a section of the bourgeoisie does not like it? To control the considerable level of real unemployment and stabilise the United States, one could argue, they have to do it. But they are not going to go back to the period before 1970, simply because they are afraid of the result. Fully employed, the working class would be able to resist the ruling class, more able to demand concessions. The real levels of unemployment are very high by post-war standards. Logically therefore they have to take action, but they are afraid to do so.

If the current budget deficit of around four percent were, say, to be doubled, employment would rise considerably. Any policy of raising public expenditure to the level where the downturn could be halted would mean strengthening the working class immeasurably. They would end the economic crisis, only to be plunged into a completely new, working class versus bourgeoisie, crisis. That is why they will not do it.

The United States is therefore in very considerable trouble, and it cannot get out of it in the way it has done all through the cold war. In these circumstances we have the declaration that there are rogue states that have to be fought.

Secondly, of course, the controls provided by the cold war were crucial. The anti-communist ideology that existed in the United States had a great deal of truth in it. The fact is that the Soviet Union was awful: the standard of living was low and the Stalinist system was not something that anybody would actually want. There was a form of war against

the Soviet Union, and a great number of the US population accepted it was necessary, along with the sacrifices that went with it. At the end of the cold war they accept no such thing. Behind that, and running in tandem with it, were Stalinism and social democracy.

Through cold war ideology, social democracy and Stalinism, the working class was effectively controlled, but now all three have more or less ceased to exist. The United States has tried to replace the cold war with terrorism. This is working to a degree - we can cite the various strikes that have been brought to an end, the Patriot Act, the infringements on civil liberties introduced in the United States, as in this country. But this cannot work for very long - it cannot be pursued indefinitely when it is basically a myth. They have conquered Iraq, but they have not succeeded in defeating terrorism.

Going into Iraq was therefore driven by capitalism in decline, when the decline itself has gone so far that what is demanded is the propping up of the system itself. It was necessary to find a country to fight as an excuse to maintain the forms of control and the military expenditure. It is the system itself which demands such action, which actually demands war. Not necessarily to fight a war, but to maintain a war footing. The cold war was the most advantageous type, when they did not often have to actually fight.

So there was no United States conspiracy to seize Iraqi oil. There is a classic economic crisis, of a type that there has not been since 1940. It is an investment crisis, a situation where there is disproportionality between departments one and two, where there is underconsumption - that is to say, a difference between purchase and sale - a huge surplus of capital. The banks are replete with money, but where are they going to invest it? Telecommunications, shipping, the car industry - in all cases there is overcapacity on the one hand and huge surpluses of capital on the other. And of course a drop in the rate of profit. I have already pointed out that the real rate of profit is not very clear, but when there are large-scale bankruptcies it is obvious that things are not going too well.

At the point where the crisis is about to break out, finance plays a crucial role: in other words, lending increases and interest rates go up and then fall. For a long period now we have had low interest rates, in order to prevent a crisis. But this cannot continue forever. The problem is overlending, not just that total debt is too high. It cannot continue.

Crisis occurs when the poles of the system's contradiction cannot interpenetrate. They hold apart, so that instead of interacting they oppose one another. Opposition moves towards becoming absolute. As a result crisis only becomes manifest when these mediations break down. That means that the causation of crisis has to be seen as a totality, rather than as single events. A single event may trigger a crisis, but that is because the other parts of the causation come into play at that point. In other words the three basic forms - underconsumption, disproportionality and the declining rate of profit - are all operative, although it may be only one of them that appears as the immediate cause.

One could argue that capitalism has been in crisis since 1917; one could argue that the post-war settlement came to an end in the 1970s with the reintroduction of finance capital, and that itself was a crisis; one could argue that the present downturn is a new crisis - it depends on how you want to define it. But in the last period, since March 2000 or so, these different aspects have all come into play.

The crucial mediation at the present time is war: previously cold war; now an attempt at war, and the war against so-called terrorists.

Every capitalist crisis is a crisis of the capitalist system. It can only come to an end when one or the other side wins: either the working class or the capitalist class. If neither wins, the crisis continues. At the moment, it is highly unlikely that the bourgeoisie will be completely successful in driving down work-

ing class conditions, which it is quite evidently trying to do in various countries in various forms. But it is equally unlikely at the present time that the working class will take power.

That is not purely an objective matter: it is also subjective. I agree with the CPGB on the party question: one does need a party. In its absence an outcome favourable to the working class will not be achieved. We have seen numerous examples of breakdowns in society - Albania, Ecuador, Argentina, or wherever - even the declaration of soviets. Clearly, a working class goal is needed, and a party that is going to direct things towards that goal.

So I think it is extremely unlikely that the working class will be able to take power in the short term. The logic therefore of this crisis is that it will simply continue, although probably in different forms. There will be a stalemate - in a sense an historic stalemate which has existed since 1917.

The capitalist class cannot solve this crisis though imperialism. Imperialism's current form does not compare to what existed before 1914 and later, when the Bolsheviks were writing. It does not compare in terms of the extraction of surplus value. The actual cost of the war and occupation of Iraq is not that great, because the United States needs to replace its weapons in any case: it has to renew and improve them all the time and that costs money anyway. The fact that it is actually shooting them off is just a bonus. Therefore such ventures do not play the enormous role that imperialism fulfilled in earlier periods.

Imperialism is not the solution. Social democracy is effectively dead. Stalinism is dying or dead. Neither is there a basis for fascism in the shape of the petty bourgeoisie. An authoritarian state is clearly coming into being and 9/11 is being used for the purpose. If anyone believes the new measures will only be used against so-called terrorists and asylum-seekers, then they are daydreaming. At some point they will be used to attack the left, when that becomes necessary. But that is not quite the same thing as saying there will be a state like Hitler's Germany, for example.

To conclude, the measures that are being taken to counter the crisis are irrational - they cannot achieve the intended objective and, if anything, they are doing the reverse. The invasion of Iraq has unsettled the Middle East, which gives greater opportunities to anti-American forces and has caused increased divisions in the ruling class. Neither can military expenditure stabilise the system, and the various measures taken against the working class, and the population in general, are not going to work either.

That is not to say that there is going to be permanent stagnation. I think there will be an upturn, but it will be mild - there have been four already since March 2000 and the next one may be a more significant. But since 1989 there has in general been a very low rate of growth. Considering that we do not really know the true situation with regard to profit in the US, it is dubious whether there really was an upturn. And there certainly cannot be a new US boom. Finance capital can only remain at a distance from industrial capital, from which it parasitically extracts surplus value, for a limited period. If industrial capital continues to be run down, there can be no such extraction.

The United States balance of payments deficit is now catastrophic. It is not going to come down. If it is allowed to go on for another four years the US will be in incredible trouble. At the moment there is a net debt of three trillion dollars. That is four percent of gross domestic product, and is set to increase to eight percent, at which point it will become unsustainable. Logically the only way out is through devaluing the currency and stepping up protection, which in turn implies further downturn for the rest of the world.

Given the increasingly irrational form of capitalism at the present time, it is highly unlikely that the capitalist class will succeed in ending its current crisis ●

# Communist Party books



■ Which road?

The programmes of 'official communism' were designed to serve those in the workers' movement who had no interest in revolution, those who preferred compromise with capitalism rather than its destruction.

Jack Conrad also deals with the reformist programme of Peter Taaffe's group and lays the groundwork necessary for drafting a revolutionary programme.

£6.95/€11

■ From October to August

Articles by Jack Conrad, charting the rise and demise of the USSR from Stalin's monocratic dictatorship to the twists and turns of Gorbachev's perestroika and Yeltsin's counter-coup. Throughout there is a stress on the necessity of democracy.

£6.95/€11

■ In the enemy camp

Examines the theory and practice of communist electoral work. Particular attention is paid to the Bolsheviks' anti-boycottism and their strategy for revolution. Vital for Socialist Alliance activists.

£4.95/€7.75

■ Problems of communist organisation

What is the correct balance between democracy and centralism? Jack Conrad explores this thorny issue in his historically significant argument against a disgruntled minority who deserted the CPGB in 1992.

£4.95/€7.75

■ A plan for miners

The Communist Party's 'anti-submission' to the Tory government's 1992 coal review. The case is made for working class self-activity and socialism. Arthur Scargill famously disowned it.

£1.00/€1.50

■ Towards a Socialist Alliance party

Jack Conrad's book argues for the Socialist Alliance to move to a higher organisational and political stage. Drawing on an extensive study of history, this work presents the ways and means of arriving at that end.

£7.00/€11

Buy all 6 books for £23/€36 and save £8.80/€14  
Delivery free within the United Kingdom

Please send me a copy of:

- Which road? ☐
- From October to August ☐
- In the enemy camp ☐
- Problems of communist organisation ☐
- A plan for miners ☐
- Towards a Socialist Alliance party ☐

I enclose a cheque, payable to CPGB, for  
£/€ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to CPGB address

## IRAQI SELF-DETERMINATION



US armoured vehicle destroyed

# Solidarity with resistance

Iraq is rapidly becoming a quagmire for the US-UK coalition, in more ways than one. That is the message signalled by the sharp upsurge in violent resistance to the coalition and its allies over the past few weeks. The truck-bomb attack on the United Nations compound in Baghdad last week was a highly effective act of armed propaganda by whoever carried it out (remnants of the Ba'athist regime or Islamic fundamentalists being prime suspects).

This attack, in which UN chief envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello died, was greeted in Britain, the United States and elsewhere with a wave of media-stoked indignation. The UN and its personnel are portrayed as modern-day saints who tirelessly work for peace and justice the world over - to all intents and purposes they are in reality the supranational arm of imperialism. And in service to imperialism the UN imposed murderous sanctions on Iraq between 1990 and 2003, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, especially children, from starvation and disease due to lack of food and medicine. Frankly, in comparison to that, the deaths of a score or so UN personnel are a drop in the ocean.

The Anglo-US coalition has now openly admitted it is facing an effective, but so far fairly low-level guerrilla insurgency, which it has proved incapable of quelling. From the mainly Sunni area north of Baghdad around Tikrit, where US troops have suffered a steady stream of casualties since Bush officially declared 'major combat' over at the end of April, to the environs of the mainly Shia second city, Basra, in the south-east of Iraq, where the British army lost three men in a daring drive-by ambush on Saturday, casualties are beginning to mount.

Of course, the number of Iraqis being killed, both by the occupation forces and the consequences of war and occupation, is far greater. Iraqi society has suffered for decades under sanctions and a Ba'athist-imposed war regime (Iran and then Kuwait were invaded). Now virtually the whole of the state has been decapitated. The US-UK coalition brought not only the humiliation of foreign occupation, but a huge wave of lawlessness and gangsterism. Theft, rape, kidnapping and casual killing is routine.

Nevertheless the notion, recently pushed by George Bush's administration, that it is criminal gangs who are responsible for a string of attacks on US troops is hard to take seriously. Criminal bosses are more likely to seek an accommodation with the powers-that-

be than risk a head-on confrontation with them. Equally threadbare is Bush's statement that Iraq is still the front line in his 'war against terrorism', because supposedly thousands of Islamists have infiltrated into Iraq from Saudi Arabia and Iran to engage in a new  *jihad*  against the coalition. Resistance can, of course, draw in many strands from Iraqi society and beyond, but there can be no escape from the fact that the primary motivational factor behind it is national.

Certainly the main enemy of the Iraqi people is the US-led coalition. Its very presence means shootings, missile strikes on cars and buses and random brutality. More to the point, the occupation of Iraq visibly denies its people the possibility of exercising self-determination and freely deciding their own future. Class politics tend therefore to be spontaneously subsumed into national politics. Every grievance, every interest finds itself coming up against the US occupation rather than the clash of class against class.

Without a fully rounded programme - which alone provides the means for the working class to link pressing daily demands for security, work, food and electricity to the perspective of a democratic republic and socialism - the result can only but be disorientation and in certain cases paralysis. A problem much exacerbated by the decades of severe oppression suffered by the left and the workers' movement under the Ba'athist dictatorship. Generation after generation of left activists have been forced to flee, either to the relative freedom of the Kurdish north or abroad to western Europe. As to the mass workers' movement - which has in Iraq a proud history going back to the 1920s - it was forcibly incorporated into the Ba'athist state. For at least the last 20 years the only trade unions that operated were state-controlled.

Hence in the present situation the immediate likely conduit and beneficiary of national resistance against occupation are indeed the Islamists - the mosque, though rigidly policed by the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, continued to function and provided both an alternative ideology and social security system.

So what should our attitude be towards the resistance? We do not and cannot simply cheer on those forces which appear to be conducting an armed fight against imperialist occupation without taking into account their politics. Many of these forces are deeply reactionary in their overall social programme, certainly in terms of remaining supporters of

Saddam's regime and various different types of Islamists, whether Sunni or Shia.

There may, of course, also be elements with Arab nationalist politics unconnected to Saddam's regime, which have some democratic element to their programme and aims. It is not clear to us in the west, as we try to glean the truth through the fog of censorship and military disinformation, exactly what the weight of these forces actually are. What is clear, however, is that there is a crying need for a  *class*  axis to the struggle against imperialist occupation - otherwise the struggle against foreign occupation will be dominated by reactionary forces. This means that the Iraqi left must take the political initiative and aim to play the leading role.

In terms of what we currently know about the left in Iraq, there is of course the Iraqi Communist Party, the historic mass party of the Iraqi proletariat. Under the years of Saddam's dictatorship, the CPI endured savage repression, execution and torture of many militants, but also engaged in sporadic participation in coalition governments with Ba'athists and other strains of Arab nationalism. Integrally tied up with the class-collaborationist politics promoted by the former USSR regime among all its loyal satellite parties around the globe, the CPI has been reduced to a miserable state by this bankrupt form of politics.

The participation of the CPI in US governor Paul Bremer's puppet 'governing council' says all that needs to be said - about the CPI leadership at least. Whether or not the CPI's mass base, if it still has one after all these years, will go along with this blatant collaboration remains to be seen. This is a party that once had a secular, militant and left ethos, and a real following among militant sections of the proletariat, particularly in the oil fields of the northern Kurdish zone. It also had at least some history as an expression - however deformed and treacherous - of the revolutionary aspirations of Iraqi workers - as illustrated, for example, by its role in the 1958 revolution. Therefore there may still be surviving elements of the CPI who are capable of rebelling against its quisling politics; if that is not the case, this could well spell the end of the CPI as a credible force among Iraqi workers, who are daily coming face to face with the consequences of the occupation.

Much more positive for the Iraqi masses is the role of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq. These comrades, whose organisation was founded in 1993, having grown out of

**Every grievance, every interest finds itself coming up against the US occupation rather than the clash of class against class**

the failed insurrection against Saddam Hussein in Kurdistan at the end of the Kuwait war, seem to have a virtual monopoly of revolutionary politics in Iraq at the present time. Addressing the CPGB's Communist University earlier this month, their spokesperson, Nadia Mahmood, detailed the work done by WCPI comrades in its attempts to organise unemployed workers into the Union of the Unemployed People of Iraq (UUPI), to struggle against the desperate state to which dictatorship, blockade and now occupation have reduced the Iraqi workers (see opposite).

This WCPI-led unemployed agitation appears to have made a significant impact. Indeed, according to a statement issued by the WCPI on August 3, 55 of its militants, including UUPI president Qasim Hadi, were arrested by US troops for organising a sit-in in front of Saddam Hussein's former presidential palace in Baghdad, where American troops and administrators are now ensconced. The UUPI claims 85,000 members in Nasiriyah alone. This is a real base, and the job of socialist and class-conscious workers in Britain must be to initiate solidarity of the workers' movement here with these independent working class organisations in Iraq, who are facing repression and terror - not only from the imperialists, but also from Islamists.

One important point of disagreement we have with the WCPI is that, while they have firmly opposed the imperialist occupation, they have at times issued illusory calls for the UN to play a role in ending the occupation, even for the UN to send its own troops to replace the coalition and help organise 'democracy'.

In our view such calls can only undermine the comrades' best work and give a political weapon to Islamists against them - this could possibly be a sign of some residue of CPI-type thinking and political conceptions among the cadre of the WCPI, despite their heroic activities and agitation that are completely counterposed to the treachery of the present-day 'official' CPI. We raise these criticisms with the comrades with the aim of strengthening, not weakening, the independent class movement of the workers in Iraq.

In any case, we call on the Socialist Alliance, and all other socialist, communist and trade union organisations in Britain and internationally, to initiate campaigns in solidarity with these independent, working-class-based struggles in Iraq •

**Ian Donovan**



# Struggling against US-UK occupation

The Worker-communist Party of Iraq is making progress despite the US-UK coalition and the rise of the islamists. **Nadia Mahmood** of the WCPI spoke to the CPGB's Communist University earlier this month

The WCPI was established in July 1993 to bring into being a socialist republic in Iraq - by organising the socialist tendency within the working class; by escalating mass confrontation of the whole class against their oppressor, whether the oppressor came in the shape of a fascist party like the Ba'ath Party or occupation of any other kind; and by organising many sections of society around the working class political alternative, among, for example, young people, women, human rights advocates, freedom-lovers, etc.

That is the philosophy behind the establishment of the WCPI, and behind our political stand on the various issues and situations that we have been through since we formed our party. In our struggle to achieve our aims, we have always looked at political transformation and any changes or developments from the workers' point of view.

Before any policy could be made we had to analyse and evaluate whether these shifts would achieve the workers' aims and demands, whether it would push our struggle forward or not, and whether it would take us to new stage or push us back. That was, and is, our aim.

Dealing with the war and occupation, could they achieve workers' demands? Is it true that the war was launched to bring to us the freedoms we fought for years to gain? Was the war launched for our welfare, for human rights? Are the workers benefiting from the current situation? The answer is clearly no.

You might ask, what are the workers saying in Iraq, what are they doing? What are their demands and have they a voice? Have they organised themselves? As you know, we have had 35 years of dictatorship under the dominance of the Ba'ath regime. Thirteen years of economic sanctions and three wars have left the workers isolated and deprived them of the opportunity for political intervention to determine their future.

For that reason the US has brought onto the political scene the Iraqi bourgeoisie, islamic leaders, nationalists, heads of tribes, ex-generals, and former Ba'ath Party members. I could say the US has gathered the right wing of Iraqi society and formed from them the 'governing council'.

The workers and the Worker-communist Party of Iraq are forming the left wing in society. They are standing together. Now after four months of the war and occupation,

the whole of society has collapsed. There is no water, no electricity, no communications, no jobs, no security, no education, no health system, no policing - nothing. Most industry and service facilities and institutions have been rendered out of action and thousands of factories and smaller workshops have closed their doors, either due to lack of water and electricity or lack of security. Reports are being widely circulated that the US is thinking of privatising the public sector.

This clearly means an increase in unemployment among workers. Millions are out of work already with absolutely no means of earning a living. They are threatened with hunger, while food rations, which were distributed by the previous regime, are rapidly running out.

Now, in the aftermath of the war, we have started organising workers, the unemployed, talking to women in their own organisations and holding mass meeting. The media gave very little attention to this. Groups of activists in the labour movement, the workers and unemployed founded the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq on May 24. The UUI was formed to bring all unemployed workers together and to push forward their basic demands.

The Union of the Unemployed in Iraq has 85,000 members in Al-Nasria city alone. I don't have the latest figures from Baghdad and Kirkuk, as they are increasing on a daily basis. Since the founding of the UUI there have been weekly demonstrations to draw the attention of the occupying forces to our conditions, but there has been no response to its demands so far.

These demands are for securing either jobs or unemployment insurance, and also demands for emergency allowances to all those who are unemployed, with full payments to all those who lost their jobs because of the war. On July 29 the UUI organised demonstrations in the three major cities of Baghdad, Nasria and in Kirkuk.

In Nasria on July 29 it was agreed with the Italian forces, who control the city, that the UUI will distribute food to the people there. This will give some power to the workers and UUI. In Baghdad, the UUI organised a sit-in in front of the headquarters of the US civil administration (the former Republic Palace). The US forces arrested 19 members, among them Qasim Hadi, the secretary of the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq. The detained protesters were brutally assaulted and tortured.

There were other demonstrations organised in May, June and July. Yanar Mohamad, along with other women in the Worker-communist Party of Iraq, have established an organisation demanding freedom for women and have taken part in organising women in the UUI and workers' councils. The women's freedom activists calls on women to leave their homes and join the workers' movement. Workers have established the Workers' Councils and Trade Union organisation.

Other actions have been taken too: for example, there have been demonstrations amongst different sections of workers on the railways, in petrol stations and many other industries. Their demands range from paying the arrears owed to them, to calling for all casual workers to be made permanent, and to stop privatising petrol stations. The workers are sending delegates to negotiate with those administering their areas of work.

The Worker-communist Party of Iraq be-

lieves that the struggle of unemployed people, or workers' councils, will not only achieve economic gains for those who work in Iraq, but is also a political answer to the current situation. Achieving the demands of the unemployed, the workers and women will elevate the expectations of the masses, and will prevent the reactionary forces like the nationalists (Ba'athist) and islamic groups from exploiting the suffering of the workers and splitting their ranks. It will improve security and political stability and therefore will give the people a chance to return to their jobs.

The struggle of the Union of the Unemployed, workers' council and trade unions will help the masses to decide their future after decades of staying on the periphery. Our stand is to get the forces of the US out of Iraq. The existence of the US in Iraq will cause insecurity, and has turned Iraq into a field of political liquidation.

With the presence of US forces, the islamists and nationalists will be revived under the flag of 'Against occupation'. It will raise nationalist and islamic feeling among the most devastated and desperate people. Islamic and nationalist groups will appear on the political stage as 'liberators' from the 'invasion', which is not the case. They have no brighter agenda than the US has for the Iraqi people. They will hijack the people's resistance against the occupation and use it for their interests. In the demonstration that took place in Al-Nasria on July 3 the islamic groups attacked the 7,000 demonstrators on the UUI march. They could not bear the idea of political activities organised outside of their mosques.

Moqtada Al Sadir, who was trained by the Iranian intelligence, called for protests against the occupation by forming an Islamic Army. The Al Sadir group kidnapped our comrades on July 22, 23 and 24, and they burned our headquarters in Al-Nasria. So, in addition to the fact that the US occupation will keep the situation on the edge of explosion and exploits human and natural resources in the interests of a few companies, it is also supporting the most reactionary forces in Iraq, the heads of tribes and ethnocentric parties.

Let me say a few words about the situation for women - surprisingly we do not have any records or information about kidnapped or raped women in the days of the war, but now every day we are receiving new reports about the raping and abduction of women, by local people or by American soldiers.

The Worker-communist Party of Iraq and the working class have one aim: to end occupation and establish local councils. We have set up the first local council in Kirkuk city and we want to take this to other cities in Iraq. The occupation, as well as wars and economic sanctions, have been approved by bourgeois parties in Iraq, by nationalist parties and islamic parties, but have been strongly opposed by workers. Workers have no common interests with the puppet 'governing council'.

Finally I would ask you to support Iraqi people, Iraqi workers, morally and financially. International solidarity will empower workers in Iraq to stand on their feet. Any donations, from individuals or organisations, would be very much appreciated. Visit our website, read our newspaper. If you could arrange to visit Iraq, that would be a great initiative.

I believe strongly we have to end the unipolar world. We have to replace the new world order based on this unipolar world, with another one, and western government with the workers' council republic and help open the road to communism over the world again ●

## 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



Demonstrating for workers' rights



# weekly worker

Paper of the Communist Party of Great Britain

www.cpgb.org.uk

## Hutton enquiry exposes democratic deficit

# Lies laid bare

**F**ollowing the Hutton inquiry is like watching a striptease: you do not see anything you were not expecting, but somehow it holds your attention.

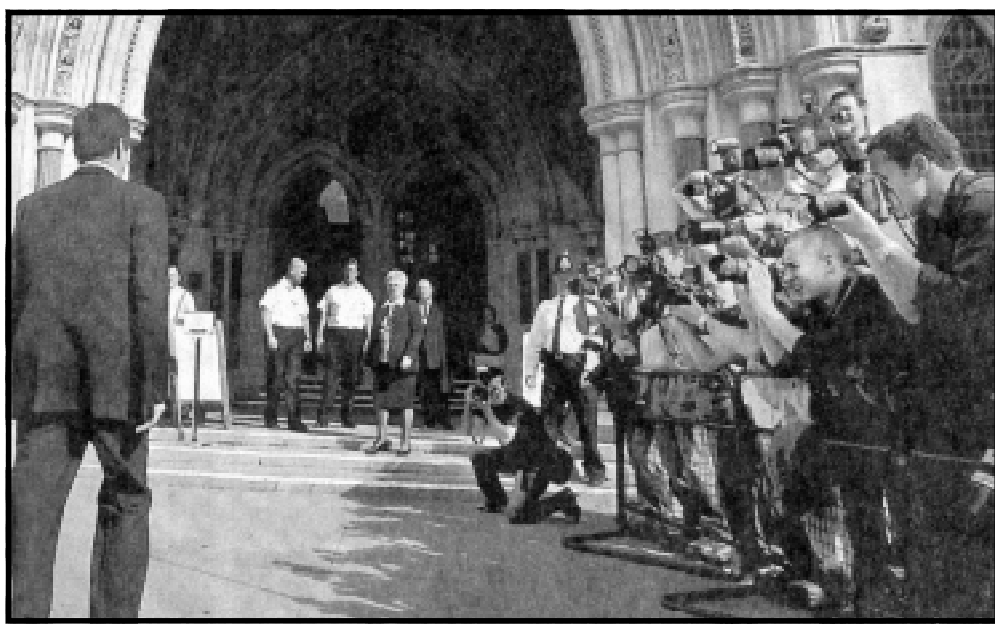
The idea that Iraq held weapons of mass destruction has become a joke: quite literally. *Dead ringers* recently broadcast an impressionist mimicking Tony Blair, wandering around a shopping centre and stopping bemused passers-by with requests to look through their purchases. Closely examining a can of deodorant, the fake prime minister caught the people's view of the genuine article, as he questioned its hapless owner on the possibility that it might once have been part of Saddam's chemical arsenal.

Joke or not, the need to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction was the nominal justification for the war. The 'dossiers' of evidence the government published arguing that Iraq possessed such weapons should therefore have been a vital part of the democratic process, providing the British people with the information they needed to understand government actions. The democratic deficit exposed by the invasion of Iraq therefore operated on two levels. Firstly, it was taken against the wishes of the British people, which was historically expressed when at least 1.5 million of them marched through London on February 15. Secondly, the people were lied to by a government which was neither accountable nor subject to recall.

This case was clearly made in the *Weekly Worker* as the story unfolded, and in a sense the Hutton inquiry adds nothing but confirmation. The confirmation, though, is spectacular in the cynicism and contempt for democracy it reveals. Through its website, the inquiry has published a huge selection of documents, including the internal memoranda and emails of the cabinet office. Studying these gives an extraordinary glimpse into the real nature of what passes for British democracy.

The inquiry is nominally investigating the suicide of Dr David Kelly, a civil service expert in WMDs. Dr Kelly was the source who provided BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan with the story that the nominally objective security reports on Iraqi WMDs had been 'sexed up' by the cabinet office. The government's director of communications, Alistair Campbell, was in the frame as Blair's top fiction writer, and decided (like that other stalwart of democracy, Napoleon) that the best defence was a good offence. He furiously and publicly denied the stories, and accused the BBC of bias and a lack of professionalism.

When Dr Kelly admitted to his employers that he had spoken to Gilligan, the government clearly felt they had an opportunity to rubbish the BBC's case. They wanted Kelly to give evidence to the foreign affairs select committee investigating the dossiers and deny claims of political interference. It now transpires that Blair and Campbell were both personally involved in releasing Dr Kelly's name to the press, and discussing the political use which might be



made of his evidence.

The problem was that Kelly substantially agreed with Gilligan's report. John Scarlett of the cabinet office emailed Campbell as follows: "I am sure that he does need careful briefing in advance, especially for the public session with the FAC. His views are supportive of our key assessment, but he will be sceptical about the trailers. It depends how widely the FAC seek to question him."

In fact, the government substantially underestimated Dr Kelly's scepticism. Gilligan had illustrated his original accusation of government evidence-tampering with the example of the claim that Iraq could deploy WMDs within 45 minutes, which he attributed to Campbell. When Susan Watts of BBC's *Newsnight* asked Dr Kelly if he could say Campbell was personally responsible, he answered: "No, I can't. All I can say is the No10 press office. I've never met Alistair Campbell, so I can't. But I think Alistair Campbell is synonymous with that office because he is responsible for it."

A later note from Scarlett revealed a hardening attitude: "... Gilligan has only talked to one person about the September dossier ... If this is true, Kelly is not telling the whole story. Gilligan must have got the 45-minute single intelligence report item from somewhere, presumably Kelly. Conclusion: Kelly needs a proper security-style interview in which all these inconsistencies are thrashed out. Until we have the full story, we cannot decide what action to take. I think this is rather urgent."

Torn between his own views and the pressure applied by the government, Dr Kelly gave his evidence haltingly and under obvious stress: though how much stress did not become clear until news of his suicide broke.

Ironically, this led to the inquiry, which in turn led to the publication of an email Campbell sent Scarlett about the dossier. In it can be read: "On page 17, two lines from the bottom, 'may' is weaker than in the summary." The 'may' became 'are' in "The Iraqi military are able to deploy these weapons within 45 minutes of a decision to do so." The

smoking gun had been found.

Not that this single line is the limit of Campbell's intervention. It is merely one of 15 recommended changes in one of many emails Campbell sent, and he was

not the only author of spin. The government's general approach is typified in this excerpt from the email of the foreign office's Daniel Pruce: "Can we insert a few quotes from speeches he has made

**Alistair Campbell: synonymous with No10**

which, even if they are not specific, demonstrate that he is a bad man with a general hostility towards his neighbours and the west?"

Overall, the material so far published by the inquiry tells us little we did not already know about the government's propagandising, but it does highlight the problem which all bourgeois democracies face. Whatever advantages they might enjoy in their propaganda - money, staff and access to mass broadcasting and print media - they are trapped in an inescapable contradiction. They must serve the interests of their own ruling class, while securing its continued survival and apparent democratic legitimacy in the eyes of the working class. As the aims of these classes are irreconcilable, the propagandists must lie.

Only communists - authentic communists, that is - who serve no minority interest, can consistently portray reality as it is. An unswerving commitment to the truth, simple and militant in the face of the sophistry of our enemies, patiently argued in front of our own class, is our most valuable weapon ●

**Manny Neira**

## Rough guide to Hutton

**T**he inquiry's publications can be found at [www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk](http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk). Click the 'Evidence' tab, and then 'Full documentary evidence'. This will display a list of sources. Begin by clicking 'Cabinet office' and have a look at: **CAB/11/0021** Daniel Pruce's attempts to spin the evidence in support of war.

**CAB/11/0066** Campbell edits the '45-minute' claim: the 'smoking gun'.

**CAB/1/0158** Blair lies about the cabinet office's involvement in the production of the dossier - not once, but 12 times.

**CAB/1/0094** Scarlett's email to Campbell about the need to 'brief' Dr Kelly.

**CAB/1/0046** Scarlett on the hardening attitude towards Dr Kelly. **CAB/7/009** Blair himself, Campbell and others discuss Dr Kelly's fate.

Also mentioned in this article was Susan's Watts interview transcript, which can be found at **SJW/1/0039** and makes interesting reading.

For some lighter relief, select the BBC documents and read **BBC/4/0156**, which contains some of the letters of complaint Campbell sent to the BBC over their coverage of the war. Here we have evidence not so much of the British democratic deficit, as Alistair's personal reality deficit:

"Of course, if we are looking at demonstrations, the BBC gave

immense coverage to the anti-war demonstration in London before the conflict began which, although claiming to be national, involved only a tiny proportion of the population and took place in only a small area of London. With regard to the demonstrations in Baghdad on Wednesday [when coalition forces arrived], neither Mr Edwards nor Mr Paxman could have had the faintest idea of what was happening in those areas of this huge city, where cameras and reporters were not present. I believe the BBC has much to answer for in its coverage of these events, and request your response."

My own immediate response is, sadly, unprintable ●

## Subscribe!

Subscription £ \_\_\_\_\_ € \_\_\_\_\_

Donation £ \_\_\_\_\_ € \_\_\_\_\_

Cheques and postal orders should be payable to 'Weekly Worker'

	6m	1yr	Inst.
United Kingdom	£15/€24	£30/€48	£53/€85
Europe	£20/€32	£40/€64	£70/€112
Rest of world	£40/€64	£80/€128	£140/€224

Return to: Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/city \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Special offer for new subscribers

## 3 months for £5