

weekly **worker**



**Michael Lavalette discusses
Respect's election campaign
and the role of socialists**

- ▣ Terrorism
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Towards a new workers' party

www.cpgb.org.uk

50p/•0.85



Victory to the Iraqi people!

**Ian Donovan:
This is just the
beginning of a
war of
liberation
- see p5**



PARTYnotes

Respect and Europe

Europe's capitalists may have been divided over the war in Iraq, but they are continuing their push for ever closer integration in the interests of capital accumulation.

Small national capitals continue to be swept aside by the rising tide of globalisation. Far from a new phenomenon, this tendency was emphasised within the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Marx and Engels wrote: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed."

This process did not put a stop to national antagonisms. While the post-World War II settlement ended conflict between Europe's great powers for a whole period, today European militarism has returned in a new form. The cold war and rivalry with the United States has forced the capitalists of Europe to come together economically, politically and militarily. This union will create the terrain upon which the European revolution is won or lost. Yet the Socialist Workers Party tells us that Europe is "boring".

We are eight weeks from an election for the European Union parliament. Yes, the occupation of Iraq is dominating the headlines, but the left is effectively silent on Europe. Respect - an attempt to weld the anti-war movement into a leftwing political force - has a threadbare and ultimately reactionary position on the politics of the EU. Apart from the bullet point, "Opposition to the European Union's 'fortress Europe' policies", its entire platform consists of three sentences: "We will strongly oppose the anti-European xenophobic right wing in any euro referendum. But we oppose the 'stability pact' that the European Union seeks to impose on all those who join the euro. This pact would outlaw government deficit spending and reinforce the drive to privatise and deregulate the economy and we will therefore vote 'no' in any referendum on this issue" ('Founding declaration').

Not only is this wildly illusory - implying that we should concern ourselves with a particular *means* (borrowing) by which national governments finance spending. (Ironically, last month's budget breaches the terms of the stability pact in any case, since Gordon Brown has made clear his intention to take "deficit spending" beyond the three percent of GDP the pact allows. The UK now joins France and Germany in exceeding this 'inviolable' limit.) Worse, it focuses on merely one aspect of the drive to European unity - that of the currency.

In two weeks time, the European Union is expanding to encompass 25 countries. The European powers have been locked in exhaustive but so far unsuccessful discussions to hammer out an EU constitution. A rapid reaction force is being assembled as a proto-European army. More and more

binding law is being made at a European level. What does Respect have to say on all this? Nothing.

Chris Nineham, leading figure in Globalise Resistance (an SWP front), has said at European Social Forum meetings that the European constitution is simply "not an issue" in Britain. What an indictment of the SWP's economism. This man obviously does not read the newspapers very much. The Tories are trying to turn the EU election into a referendum on the proposed constitution.

Far from being boring or a side issue, the question of the political and economic unity of Europe is one which Marxists - armed with our programme of extreme democracy from below - must contest. The European left, while befuddled by Keynesian reformist rubbish, at least is aware of the importance of the EU as a terrain for struggle. Many groups have been working towards a common day of action across the continent against the proposed constitution. A good start, but we need to go further. Communists must use such a political intersection to raise the need for a continent-wide Constituent Assembly and a republican federal Europe, shaped by the working class.

At present European unity is not being brought about under the direct or indirect impact of working class self-activity. It is proceeding fitfully through a whole series of tortuous, behind-the-scenes compromises and makeshift deals, hatched between member-governments - all presided over by an unelected EU bureaucratic elite.

There can be no doubt that the whole project is moving according to the rhythm, requirements and restrictions imposed by capital. The working class has no reason whatsoever to endorse, applaud or join forces with those who want to drive such a unity - any more than we would make common cause with the Atlanticists or those who stubbornly defend Britain's sovereignty.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's draft constitution contains a veritable paean of praise for the market and the virtues of competition (title VII, chapters I and II). However, capitalist Europe must, and will, give rise to an alternative. The working class has never been simply a passive victim. The power of capital has always been confronted by the power of labour.

Moreover, our class is ascendant. History is on our side. After World War II capital could only maintain itself through a far-reaching historic compromise - the social democratic state. And, with each year that passes, capitalism becomes ever more impossible and riven with contradictions. Hence, whereas Giscard d'Estaing and the EU governments are proposing half-democratic measures and palliatives, we require *our* alternative that can help create the objective and subjective conditions for the epochal transition from capitalism to communism.

Communists wish in general to bring about the closest voluntary unity of peoples - and in the biggest state units at that. All the better to conduct the struggle of class against class and prepare the wide ground needed for socialism. Hence our formulation, "To the extent that the European Union becomes a state, then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU" ('What we fight for').

Confronted with this enormous yet necessary task, Respect is completely disarmed. Its hopeless, King Canute strategy of simply saying 'no' to the euro is a capitulation to the little-Britain chauvinists. Of course Respect is not alone

in this. The entire British labour movement, with one or two honourable exceptions, falls in behind either the chauvinists or the bourgeois federalists.

We communists reject the terms of the capitalists. We argue for a positive programme. A social Europe, within which the political power and economic interests of the broad masses - albeit initially under capitalism - are qualitatively advanced. To bring forward these immediate ends we make the following seven demands, specifically concerning the EU:

1. For a republican United States of Europe. No to Giscard d'Estaing's EU monarchical president. Abolish the council of ministers and sack the unelected commissioners. For a single-chamber executive and legislative continental congress of the peoples of Europe, elected by universal suffrage and proportional representation.
 2. Nationalise all banks in the EU and put the ECB under the direct, democratic control of the European congress. No to the stability pact and spending limits. Stop privatisation and so-called private finance initiatives. End subsidies to, and tax breaks for, big business. Tax income and capital. Abolish VAT. Yes to workers' control over big business and the overall direction of the economy. Yes to a massive programme of house-building and public works.
 3. For the levelling up of wages and social provisions. For a maximum 35-hour week and a common minimum income. End all anti-trade union laws. For the right to organise and the right to strike. For top-quality healthcare, housing and education, allocated according to need. Abolish all restrictions on abortion. Fight for substantive equality between men and women.
 4. End the Common Agricultural Policy. Stop all subsidies for big farms and the ecological destruction of the countryside. Nationalise all land. Temporary relief for small farmers. Green the cities. Free urban public transport. Create extensive wildernesses areas - forests, marshes, heath land - both for the preservation and rehabilitation of animal and plant life and the enjoyment and fulfilment of the population.
 5. No to the rapid reaction force, Nato and all standing armies. Yes to a popular democratic militia, equipped with the most advanced and destructive weaponry.
 6. No to 'Fortress Europe'. Yes to the free movement of people into and out of the EU. For citizenship and voting rights for all who have been resident in the EU for longer than six months.
 7. For the closest coordination of all working class forces in the EU. Promote EU-wide industrial unions - eg, railways, energy, communications, engineering, civil service, print and media. For a democratic and effective EU Trade Union Congress. For the closest possible socialist unity as part of the process of establishing a single, centralised, revolutionary party: ie, the Communist Party of the European Union.
- Unless Respect adopts such a positive programme on Europe, its voice will be drowned out by other forces, not least that of the Tories. It is the duty of communists to fight for that programme as part of the struggle for Respect to adopt principled partyist forms □

Marcus Ström

LETTERS

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

Disrespect

So Marcus Ström urges us to support the latest 'alternative to Blair' vehicle - Respect!

Marcus reminds us that this new vehicle is a step back from the failed Socialist Alliance and he also points out that "At its centre is the Socialist Workers Party, the largest ostensible Marxist group in Britain, in alliance with the best known anti-war MP, George Galloway" ('Party notes', April 8).

And here of course for all to see is its weakness. The Socialist Alliance failed because the SWP (and its fellow-travellers) were at the centre of that barren 'alternative to New Labour' - stopping it from developing into a socialist movement in its own right, merely to be the 'electoral front' of the SWP whilst it took their fancy.

As for the eloquent and extremely bright George Galloway MP, he is nothing more than the latest star that the SWP think will win them Respectability and help channel naive radical youth into their ranks to become (in theory) the new revolutionary cadre so needed by this Leninist organisation, but (in practice) will end up as disillusioned paper-sellers.

Marcus goes on to say: "The working class, through its own struggles, needs clear principles in order for it to learn politics of the highest order." I should think the CPGB leadership have absolutely no principles left themselves - they have watched and participated in the pantomime performed within the SA since the SWP takeover in 2001 and yet they have decided to support yet another 'socialism-from-above' experiment. Yes, I can understand any humanist/socialist such as Tatchell joining the Green Party rather than Respect - which looks set to be just another version of the dictatorship by slates SA/SWP.

Even if Respect manages to gain a few decent results on the back of the latest 'anti-war feeling', where does it go after that? That support will evaporate just as it did after the great London march, which I recall many of your naive SA 'vanguardists' at the time took to be the prelude of revolution! Having continually criticised the SWP's antics only to fall in behind them yet again makes it appear that the CPGB leaders are playing to the SWP what Blair plays to George W Bush - lackey. Wake up before you have no credibility left!

Further on in your pages, Dave Craig still witters on about fighting to keep the Socialist Alliance alive - please put the light out, Dave, you'll be the last one out, old mate.

Bryn Jones
email

Party power

John Livingston says: "I am all for a strong socialist republic of England, but I oppose any form of totalitarianism, whether right or left. Socialism should be the highest form of democratic rule, because, if it's not, then it's no better than any other tyrannical regime that's based on oppression and slaughter. Stalin's USSR is proof of that" (Letters, March 11).

Communists judge societies by their socio-economic systems: that is, whether their means of production and distribution are privately or publicly owned, and by the programme of the party in power. Is it a bourgeois state or a workers' state? That is the fundamental question, and the means by which the working class achieves and holds onto power is a tactical question.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional phase on the road to socialism, and the working class will find itself having to exercise its totalitarianism against the capitalist class, just as the

capitalist class has historically done to the working class in order to hold onto power. The degree of totalitarianism will be inversely proportional to the degree that the working class is both economically and politically secure. There is no such thing as a 'polite' revolution.

Another of your correspondents, Guiam Wainwright, writes: "The essence of anarchism is for peace, for the abolition of all laws, as there will be no need for them: ie, there won't be a law against murder, because nobody would ever want or need to commit it. I view communism as a stepping stone towards this system, and your system of collectives especially is one I agree with."

"But is there a point at which you believe the party would find it possible to actually hand control to them? Is it possible that another Stalin-like regime will arise, or do you believe your Party leaders to be sufficiently in control and have enough faith in Marxism to prevent this from happening?" (Letters, March 25).

Guiam, communism would be the final stepping stone, identical to the scenario that you describe. That is the ultimate goal. The need for parties will have long since disappeared, for parties exist only because there is class struggle.

You need to read *The revolution betrayed* by Leon Trotsky to fully appreciate the fact that Stalinism didn't arise because the party was lax. It arose because of the extreme poverty that characterised the environment in which the Bolsheviks had to work. Leon Trotsky observes that, while it was much easier to take power in Russia than it would be for communists to take power in an advanced capitalist country, it would be infinitely easier for communists to hold onto power in the latter, as "we can only share the poverty". Read the book.

Michael Little
Seattle

Stalinist asylum

I agree with most of the immediate demands in your *Draft programme* except one - your policy to give migrant workers the right to become British citizens after only three months. With the number of people emigrating, immigrants will soon outnumber true British people. I believe that a Communist Party should adopt a more Stalinist attitude towards immigration and asylum.

Duncan Boughen
email

Boneheads

OK, people have their beliefs, but what right have you got to call them "boneheads" ('BNP gains from left default' *Weekly Worker* May 8 2003)?

I'm an 18-year-old skinhead. I have no connection with Nazi beliefs or Hitler. The German for 'nationalist' is Nazi, so you put them in the Nazi category. I'm a BNP supporter and I am a nationalist. I also believe that even Hitler had a point. I'm not saying I believe what he did was right, but you ask any historian who was the best political leader in the world in the 1900s. If they're truthful they will say Hitler.

We don't even know what Blair is doing with our money. If you are going to criticise Hitler's plans and actions, you should also criticise Europe and Tony Blair. The 12-region split-up by Europe was Hitler's plan for Britain. He was going to take us over and let us trade freely, but Tony Blair wants to put a 17.5% tax on trade. Now who looks like Hitler?

The only reason Blair is going to Europe is because it's more money in his pocket. He went to a catholic church and Europe is a catholic community, so Tony wants a seat. But the people of Britain are fooled by this man. If anybody should have their picture in an article with the title "boneheads" underneath it, it's the British community for not realising that Tony is the religious equivalent to the devil.

Knowing how these things go, I realise my comment will be filtered out as normal.
Carl Badger
 email

Housing crash

I would like to comment on the seemingly never-ending rise in house prices across the UK. It is the classic bubble - you know that when investors believe there's no place else to go.

You can't blame people for getting into home ownership. Cheap money is one factor. Another is that lenders have dramatically lowered their eligibility standards. Down-payments for first-time homebuyers now average 3%, down from 20% 30 years ago.

The implosion will start among first-time homebuyers with few other assets. They support the whole housing market through the move-up chain, whose links are tenuous. The current boom could end with a devastating crash, triggered by a rise in interest rates, which will hit those investors who have taken out 'buy to let' mortgages as a pension plan.

As prices fall, many property speculators will withdraw from the market, preferring to rent houses out in anticipation of a more buoyant market later on. There will be a bulge in the market for rented accommodation. The sudden appearance of many 'For rent' signs will exert downward pressure on an already vulnerable owner-occupier market.

The gap on the interest payable on a

mortgage and the return, which can be received in rent, on the capital value of a property, will widen. It will become far cheaper to rent property than to rent money, in the form of a mortgage, from a bank or building society. This will further deter house purchases and depress the values of residential property, adding to the self-feeding downward spiral.

There will be a steady increase in the number of houses on the market in all sizes and shapes, but sales will be very, very poor. By 2010, it is our estimate that the average house price in the UK will have fallen, from its peak, by 60%.

That is exactly what happened when the property bubble burst in Japan during the 1990s.

John Smith
 Cambridgeshire

PCSU STRIKE

Boost to action

Up to 100,000 members of the Public and Commercial Services Union walked out on another 48-hour strike over April 13-14.

The support held up well, compared to February's two-day action, with around the same numbers as last time following the union's call, although we have been helped to some extent by the fact that, this being Easter week, more people had applied for annual leave to coincide with the school holidays - around 80% of staff in some departments are women, many of whom will be prime carers. The atmosphere on the picket line has been good, despite the obvious lack of direction of the dispute so far. Will we be called out for another two days after a couple of months once again?

The biggest number of strikers - around 90,000 - were those employed by the department for work and pensions (DWP), and they were joined by 5,000 administration and training staff from the prison service and 2,000 workers from the office for national statistics (ONS). There is one factor which links the three disputes - the imposition of a pay settlement for 2003 by management. For the DWP the pay award is worth just over three percent on average, while prison members have had a one percent cost of living payment imposed and ONS workers a package worth less than three percent.

It is no coincidence that all three disputes have developed in the same way. The various departments have been instructed by the government to settle for a maximum of 3.5% - with or without union agreement. But the Socialist Party-dominated union leadership has hit back in what could turn out to be a morale-boosting move.

For years the left has been demanding a national pay campaign and

I am pleased to say - even before the 2003 disputes have been settled - the PCSU has launched a 2004 claim for 3.5% across the board, for all members in all departments. While this is a very low figure - the minimum salary would still only be £13,500 - it does at least represent an attempt to overcome the divide-and-rule splintering of the membership into over 200 bargaining units.

Of course, no department is genuinely 'independent' when it comes to negotiating pay rounds: budgets are fixed centrally. For instance, after the treasury solicitors seemed to have reached agreement following their dispute earlier this year, the deal was suddenly withdrawn because it was not to the liking of the government. The idea has been to weaken the union and restrict its ability to coordinate action across the whole civil service. This has resulted in a situation where identically evaluated jobs are paid differently according to the government department or agency concerned. For example, an administration officer in one section may receive up to £3,000 more than an AO in another.

The union is now talking about suing the DWP for its imposition of a new 'relative assessment' appraisal system. The PCSU's solicitors have advised that this is in breach of members' individual contracts, since the DWP is not entitled to impose unilateral changes relating to

"We need a more imaginative strategy along the lines proposed by the Socialist Caucus left opposition"



Support holds up

agreed methods. This development might also serve to boost members' morale and hold up management's plans.

In one sense, appraisal is a bigger issue than pay, since an attempt using dubious means to deny members what has come to be regarded as the entitlement of an annual bonus for performance has produced a great deal of bitterness, even though the sums are comparatively small. Under management's imposed scheme, only 10% of staff will receive the top marking, and therefore the biggest bonus, irrespective of their actual performance, because of a predetermined ratio.

The leadership's attempt to bring together negotiations across the whole of the civil service is an excellent development, but in the meantime we are still left struggling with our separate disputes in the here and now. We desperately need a more imaginative strategy along the lines proposed by the Socialist Caucus left opposition □

Lee Rock
PCSU London regional
organiser, DWP

Join the Respect Unity Coalition

Complete this slip and send it to:

Respect - The Unity Coalition
 Winchester House
 259-269 Old Marylebone House
 London NW1 5RA

Include a cheque for a minimum of £10, or more if you wish to make a donation, payable to Unity Political Fund.

I wish to join the Respect Unity Coalition

Name _____

Address _____

Town/city _____

Postcode _____ Phone _____

Email _____

ACTION

London Communist Forums

Sunday April 18, 5pm - 'The methodological unity of science and ideology', using István Mészáros's *The power of ideology* as a study guide.
 Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 (nearest tubes: Regents Park, Great Portland Street).

Respect events

Preston: Public meeting - Tuesday April 20, 7pm, town hall.

Rusholme: Public meeting - Tuesday April 20, 7.30pm, Al-Khayyam, Wilmslow Road.

Aylesbury: Launch meeting - Tuesday April 20, 7.30pm. Multicultural Centre, Friarscroft Way (near station).

Lye: Public meeting - Tuesday April 20, 7.30pm, Gausia Jamia Community Centre, Lye High Street, West Midlands.

Burnley: Public meeting - Wednesday April 21, 7.30pm, Red Triangle Café, St James Street.

Cheetham Hill: Public meeting, Thursday April 22, 7.30pm, Saffron, Cheetham Hill Road.

Chorlton: Public meeting - Friday April 23, 7.30pm, Chorlton library, Manchester Road.

Yorkshire and Humber: Meeting - Sunday April 25, 7pm, Platinum Suite, Sheffield United FC, south stand, Bramall Lane, Sheffield.

London: Social - Sunday April 25, 7pm, Mezze Café, 339 Harrow Road. Moroccan evening.

Leeds: Public meeting - Monday April 26, 7.30pm, Conference Auditorium, Leeds University.

Salford: Public meeting - Monday April 26, 7.30pm, Broadwalk library, Salford precinct.

Bury and Prestwich: Public meeting - Tuesday April 27, 7.30pm, Bury Arts and Crafts Centre, Broad Street.

Longsight and Levenshulme: Public meeting: Tuesday April 27, 7.30pm, Northmoor Community Centre.

Free the refuseniks

Picket Israeli embassy, Monday April 19, 5.30pm (and every two weeks - same day and time). Kensington High Street/Kensington Court, opposite Palace Green (nearest tube: High Street Kensington). For a Palestinian state with same rights as Israel.

Organised by Committee for Two States: 07748 185553; outnow@actionforsolidarity.org.uk

UK-US out of Iraq

Emergency lobby of Downing Street, Saturday April 24, 12 noon.

Defend asylum-seekers

Meeting to establish united coalition in defence of asylum-seekers, Saturday April 24, 2pm, School of Oriental and African Studies, Room 116, first floor, main building (nearest tubes: Euston, Warren Street, Goodge Street). Discussion of draft Unite Against Fascism leaflet.

Organised by Committee to Defend Asylum-Seekers, BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX; 07941 566183; info@defend-asylum.org

Labour Left Briefing

Annual general meeting, Saturday April 24, 10.30am to 5.30pm, Hungerford School, Hungerford Road, London N7 (free parking; nearest tube: Caledonian Road). Speakers include: Tony Benn, John McDonnell, Jeremy Corbyn, Christine Shawcroft, Glen Rangwala, Mick Shaw (FBU), John Rogers (Unison), Jeff Slee (RMT), Vi Huddart (Amicus).
 020 8985 6597; grahambash@gn.apc.org

Labour and the unions

Public meeting, Saturday April 24, 12 noon, University of London Union, Malet Street (nearest tube: Euston Square). Speakers: Matt Wrack (London organiser, FBU), Oliver New (president, London regional RMT).

Organised by *Solidarity*.

Renewing dialogues

Fourth annual day seminar on Marxism and education: 'Education and the labour process' - Wednesday May 5, 10am to 5pm, Clarke Hall, School of Education Foundations and Policy Studies, University of London Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, WC1.
 Registration from 9.30am. Free, but places limited. To reserve a place, contact Glenn Rikowski: rikowski@tiscali.co.uk

CPGB history

Exhibition: The story of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Tuesday-Sunday, 11am to 4.30pm. Ends Sunday April 25. Entrance: £1; children and concessions: free. First Friday of the month: 'Bluffer's guide to CPGB' tour.
 0161-839 6061; karenm@peopleshistorymuseum.org.uk

Long live May Day

March and rally, Saturday May 1. Assemble Clerkenwell Green, 12 noon, for march to Trafalgar Square. Speakers include Ken Livingstone, Frances O'Grady (deputy general secretary TUC), Globalise Resistance, Stop the War Coalition. Organised by London May Day Organising Committee, c/o GFTU, Central House, Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0HY. Sponsors include Sertuc, Unison, TGWU, GR, STWC.

Labour Representation Committee

Founding conference, Saturday July 3, 9am to 4pm, TUC Congress House. LRC, PO Box 44178, London SW6 4DX; 020 7736 6297.

RDG

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

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our Party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

CUBAN ESPERANTISTS

National Union of Teachers -
www.teachers.org.uk

Comprehensive but evasive

Another Easter and another boycott of the National Union of Teachers conference by the odious education minister, Charles Clarke. When challenged in parliament, this arrogant ex-Marxist claimed he had “better things to do” this Easter. A likely excuse - I am sure that the rough ride angry conference delegates would have given him had nothing to do with it. But this looks even worse when you consider the Tories’ conference record - they managed to send their ministers to an equally frosty reception every year. That alone sums up everything about the Blairites’ lack of political spine.

Anyone familiar with the website designs common to unions will experience a kind of *déjà vu* when visiting the NUT’s: it is neatly organised, very corporate looking, and has a few happy, smiling kids to brighten up the proceedings. Actually this is being slightly unfair, as the site is far more colourful than the dreary pages often maintained by similar organisations.

The main field itself is split into three. The central column is for news releases, NUT comment and the like. This is quite interesting as it does provide information of genuine use to teachers. For example, there’s a piece on the latest pay stitch-up that (it is alleged) is being backed by rival unions, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, and Association of Teachers and Lecturers. Also of interest is the NUT’s own submission to Blair’s ‘Big Conversation’ PR stunt. I would suggest the union is wasting its time, if Clarke’s non-attendance at conference is anything to go by. Overall these items are slightly dated, the most recent being posted up about a week ago. I can only assume that NUT boss Doug McAvoy brought his IT department with him to Harrogate for the conference.

The right-hand column has a few nice features, although the scrolling ‘Latest news’ is pretty pointless, to be truthful. ‘Stop it now’ contains a number of resource pages for the campaign against national curriculum testing (Sats). So expect to find posters, placards, printing advice and other similar nuts and bolts. But what is really missing here are the arguments against the government’s mania for tests (and by extension, statistics and tables). Does this imply the NUT would like its activists to wave campaigning lollipops at pro-testing parents and teachers instead of winning them over?

This feature is followed by a membership form, and a facility for calculating teachers’ pay. Finally there is the NUT shop, where viewers are invited to purchase “from our new range of exciting and stylish merchandising”. What more could a fashion-conscious teacher need? The ultra-trendy NUT rulers, post-it notes and mouse mats are sure to bedazzle classrooms the length and breadth of the country.

The site navigation bar is very comprehensive indeed, with each category having around half a dozen links apiece. ‘Student centre’ is a useful resource for would-be teachers still going through the motions at university and the cannily named *NUTshell* newsletter for student teachers has a few copies online in pdf format. This seems to be a well designed useful publication that outlines some of the ongoing issues facing the teaching profession, but none are particularly recent. ‘Treasure chest’ is useful too, with a number of thematically organised links to help students out with tricky essays. Also interesting, if rather bizarre, is ‘Jan’s guide to the universe’ - the nearest thing the site has to a links page. So if you fancy a bit of DIY or a game of chess, this is the place.

The ‘Professional unity’ page begins with the question, “Why isn’t there just one teacher’s union?” Sadly those seeking answers will have to look elsewhere, as this piece is deliberately evasive. Its claim that “those who ask the question do not really want to know only of the past” merely ducks the issue. How is the union to proceed if it keeps its members in the dark over past and ongoing disunity? Other features include pension advice; a text edition of the union journal, *The Teacher*; conference (report-backs from last year, so where is the current pre-conference material?); services (you can acquire a swish NUT platinum card to complete your collection of union memorabilia); and a Noddy’s guide to being a school representative.

The one big omission is that there is next to nothing on the NUT leadership. I often hear union activists complain about faceless bureaucrats, but this is taking it a bit too far □

Phil Hamilton



Communists launch collective

An ethos of friendship, hospitality and culture met those speakers of the international language who braved the US blockade and painfully high travel costs to reach the 6th All-America Esperanto Congress in the Cuban capital city of Havana, March 21-27.

The American Commission of the Universal Esperanto Association was unable to meet during the congress, as all but two of its members boycotted the event, evidently stretching their so-called neutrality to the point of total subservience to the US blockade. The main congress resolution complained to the UEA about the lack of help by the commission, whose specific task is to promote the language across the continent.

A number of US citizens, having travelled via other countries, made a significant contribution to the theme of promoting the teaching and utilisation of the language. One told me it was illegal for them to spend money in Cuba, but not illegal to be there - so don’t use your credit card - and not a few had been frightened off. Despite all this, 186 Esperantists from 29 countries made it to Havana.

Perhaps the best example of ‘specialist’ utilisation of the language in a particular field was the series of seven lively political seminars organised by the International Communist Esperantist Collective (IKEK). The president of IKEK, Stan Keable from London, chaired and led the discussions, which prioritised general political questions currently exercising leftwing minds, whether in Cuba or elsewhere, rather than Esperanto questions. Among the topics discussed were:

- The communist future - can it be a national phenomenon?
- The right of peoples to self-determination - a democratic principle aiming at integration.
- Why did the USSR collapse - internal or external cause?
- Who will liberate the USA from capitalism?
- Democratic or bureaucratic centralism - do party factions cause or cure splits and sects? The struggle to overcome sectism and reforge parties - Britain (Scotland), Italy, France, etc.
- the World Social Forum - Lula’s neo-liberal Workers Party of Brazil and the hypocritical banning of parties in the social forums.

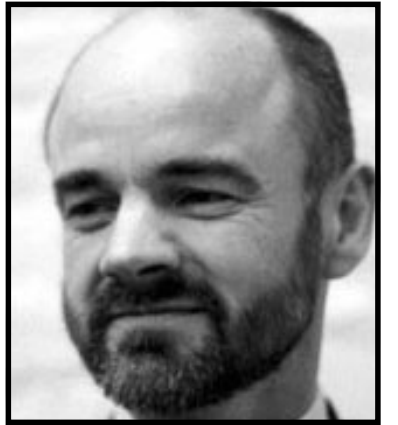
□ A protest petition signed by congress members to free the five Cubans imprisoned in the US for anti-terrorist activities.

□ The battle of ideas in Cuba.

Using the tried and tested method of open discussion, IKEK facilitated a much needed mutual mental nutrition to hungry leftwingers from a range of countries and political tendencies, who learned from each other. Can anything be more appropriate for an international language than the direct exchange of experiences and ideas?

During the week our attractive meetings grew from day to day until more than 30 from nine countries were participating. Half were Cubans and, surprisingly, a majority of the others came from Europe, not the American continent. Only two of our meetings were part of the congress programme. For the other five we hired a bus to take us to a comrade’s house during free time.

“IKEK facilitated a much needed mutual mental nutrition to hungry leftwingers from a range of countries and political tendencies, who learned from each other. Can anything be more appropriate for an international language than the direct exchange of experiences and ideas?”



Stan Keable writes from Havana

The Friday meeting gave birth to a communist Esperantist collective in Cuba to overcome the economic and practical difficulties which, until now, have hindered the effective participation of Cubans in the international work of IKEK - utilising the international language for communist, socialist and leftwing objectives. It was emphasised that the new organisation will function as part of the Cuban Esperanto Association (KEA), whose rules allow that three or more members with a common interest can propose a specialist group. Official permission, however, must be sought.

A 10-member collective leadership was elected, with the right to coopt, and met immediately to elect its officers and start work before the congress dispersed. Quarterly leadership meetings are planned, but it is the involvement of the local groups - meeting weekly as a rule - which will make a difference. A membership fee of 10 pesos per year will facilitate the participation in IKEK of many who have been unable to pay a European level subscription to the IKEK journal, *Internaciisto*.

This new step will enable Cuban comrades, who form a relatively strong national section of IKEK, to participate much more than before in the international political discussion in print, the most important aspect of our organisation. Articles are needed for *Internaciisto*, and collective study and discussion of all of its articles should form the basis of local activity. In this way the Cuban comrades can strengthen IKEK internationally, gain influence for their ideas and learn from their friends. The stronger we are internationally, the stronger at home □

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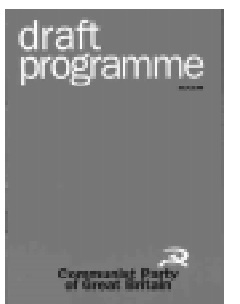
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Victory to the Iraqi people

The war of liberation against the occupation has begun, writes **Ian Donovan**

Since the US-UK 'coalition of the willing' invaded Iraq a year ago, they have faced increasing resistance. By last autumn, more US troops had been killed as a result of acts of resistance than died in the period of the actual invasion and occupation itself.

Numerous roadside bombs, mortar attacks and suicide bombings harassed the occupiers. That the peoples of Iraq are not prepared to tolerate the occupation is of course to be welcomed by partisans of national rights and independence for oppressed peoples from the kind of neo-colonial 'new world order' that Bush and Blair are attempting to oppose. However, these attacks were carried out by obscure forces whose real mass basis is questionable. Many of their actions seemed as designed to kill as many Iraqi civilians as occupying troops. Some could only be described as outright atrocities: from the bombing of the Red Cross to the criminal attacks on shia pilgrims in Karbala who were commemorating the festival of Ashura at the beginning of March. The latter particularly indicated a sectarian motive; the culprits were likely sunni fanatics and/or elements loyal to or manipulated by the occupying forces aiming to turn sunni against shia, for the benefit only of the coalition.

From these bloodthirsty actions it was reasonable to deduce that the forces involved were remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, or else islamist elements whose complete contempt for the Iraqi masses was emblematic of their adventurist nature and lack of roots in these masses. Thus, though it was correct to welcome any military setbacks inflicted on our 'own' government and its US allies, which is an obligation for communists active in one of the occupying imperialist powers, nevertheless we could not commit ourselves to give any positive support for these so-called 'forces of resistance'. But this period of low-level guerrilla activity, largely confined to Saddam Hussein's home territory in the majority sunni districts of north-central Iraq, has now been transcended by a qualitative change in the configuration of, and mass support for, the forces confronting the occupiers.

In the last couple of weeks, as a result of molecular changes in that preceding period, the situation has been transformed. The entry of previously uncommitted forces - shia islamist forces with real mass support and roots - into open, armed opposition has produced a real confrontation of the Iraqi masses themselves with the coalition. The eruption of what amounts to a mass-based Iraqi *intifada* against the occupiers means that the phoney war is over. The real war of Iraqi national liberation has begun. This evident fact has resulted in a major crisis for the imperialists, which has shaken Bush's presidency to the core.

In the US, imperialist veterans like senator Edward Kennedy openly talk of Iraq as 'George Bush's Vietnam'; indeed there are echoes of that conflict in this quagmire. Except that, owing to its oil resources, the Middle East region is much more strategic for the US than Vietnam ever was. While it is wrong to crudely state that the US invaded Iraq 'for oil', the implications of a major defeat for the US in the Middle East region are for this reason considerably more serious than over Indochina. The US bourgeoisie is therefore likely to fight harder, and be prepared to shed considerably more blood of the oppressed, in seeking to prevent such a defeat. It is the task of the international working class to find ways to intervene to stop them and help

make such a blow against imperialism a reality.

The imperialist declaration of war against Muqtada Al-Sadr and his thousands-strong militia, the Army of the Hidden Imam - also known as al-Mahdi - was an act of incredible arrogance. It also decisively tore the veil of 'democratic' hypocrisy the imperialists have been using to try and camouflage their occupation. The banning of al-Sadr's newspaper, which engaged in anti-occupation agitation, was followed by the issuing of an arrest warrant for Muqtada al-Sadr by the US-puppet Coalition Provisional Authority for the killing of a pro-American cleric who was attacked by a crowd of opponents early after the invasion last year. One of al-Sadr's close aides was then arrested and thrown into jail by the Americans. A demonstration against the closure of al-Sadr's paper in Sadr City, Baghdad, was attacked with rockets by American Apache helicopters; 39 people died and over 100 were wounded. The result was open revolt, as the al-Mahdi militia went out into the streets in several cities and effectively took over power locally - including in the cities of Najaf and Karbala, shia islam's holiest sites, overshadowed only by Mecca, which of course is common to sunni and shia.

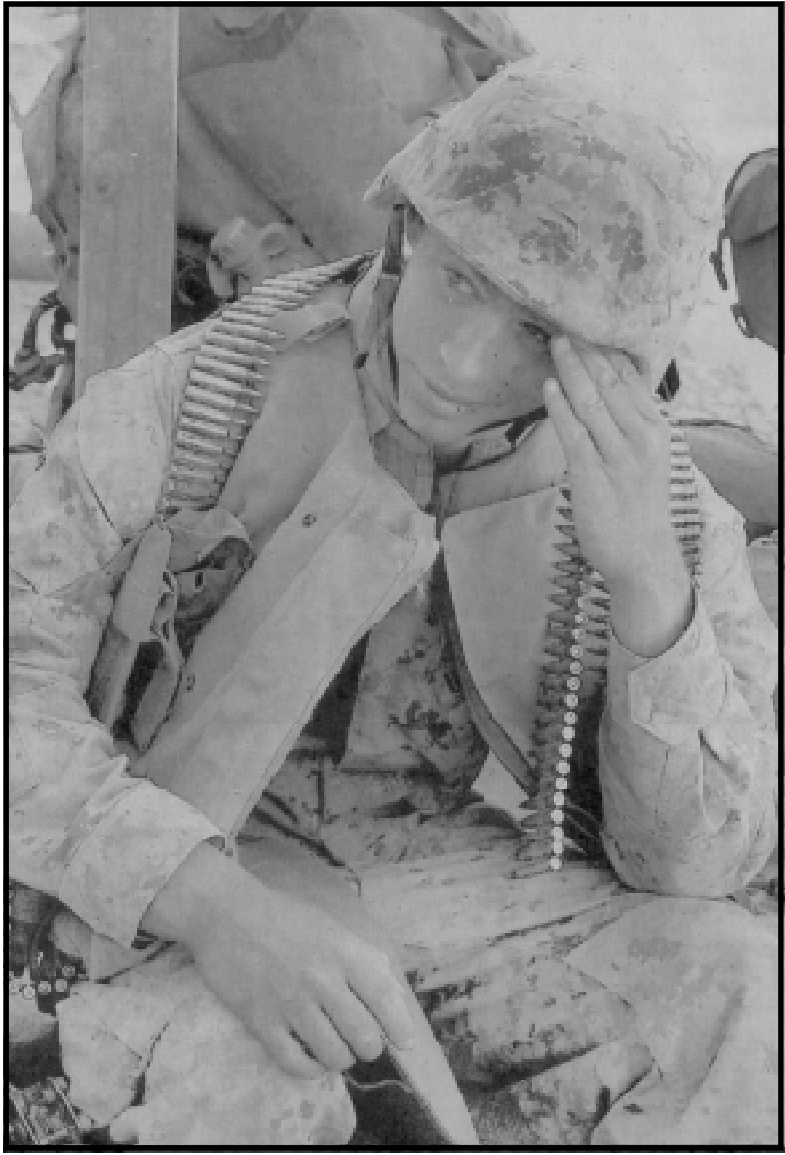
The *de facto* popular uprising, led by al-Sadr's forces, took the occupiers by surprise - and a very unpleasant surprise at that, as a whole swathe of towns and cities across the central belt of Iraq temporarily at least fell into the hands of insurgents from al-Mahdi. In fact, there was significant and undoubtedly under-reported conflict with British troops in the south of Iraq, centred in Basra, including the shooting dead of 15 people on a demonstration in the middle of last

week.

Incredibly al-Sadr was declared an 'outlaw' - directly equating him with such other 'outlaws' as Osama bin Laden and of course Saddam Hussein (the US military announced, wild west fashion, that al-Sadr is wanted 'dead or alive'). But, of course, there are glaring differences between him and the latter two figures - most clearly the fact that al-Sadr undeniably has the support of large numbers of Iraqi people. This is obvious from the fact alone that the mainstream leader of the shia majority, Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, who has previously condemned acts of resistance against the occupation, refused to condemn the actions of al-Sadr and his followers, and instead condemned the coalition forces for their brutality and violence against the Iraqi population.

Elements of the imperialists' own puppet Governing Council have felt compelled, evidently by mass pressure from below, to denounce the activities of their own masters in pretty scathing terms, one citing the US bombardment of the mainly sunni town of Fallujah as amounting to "genocide". And an even more startling indication of the mass character of the current upheaval was the 200,000-strong joint meeting in the environs of a sunni mosque in Baghdad last week, in which large numbers of both sunni and shia muslims gathered to protest and denounce the brutality of the occupiers in Fallujah. Large numbers of Baghdad residents, including many shia, have been queuing up to donate blood for the victims in mainly sunni Fallujah, which is an extremely encouraging sign of cross-communal solidarity that points in exactly the opposite, progressive direction from the sinister atrocities perpetrated earlier at Ashura.

US troops: not expecting such resistance



Fallujah has indeed become the front line in the past few days, with something of a pause in shia areas. American bombardments and attempts to take the city have - according to news sources such as the Arab television channel, Al Jazeera - caused the deaths of over 600 people, including many women and children. The US was compelled to negotiate with the insurgents who had taken control of the city, using their own Iraqi 'Governing Council' as intermediaries. The result was a series of very wobbly ceasefires over the Easter period. A bizarre form of imperialist hypocrisy was very much on display in the pronouncements of the US general who acted as press mouthpiece during this period. He demanded "the restoration of Iraqi control" of Fallujah, which only begs the question of just who the Bush administration thinks is running the place. The Martians?

In the meantime, the US is massing forces outside the city, seemingly ready to retake it under *American* control by force. However, the very fact that the US is prepared to negotiate with the rebels in this city of the 'sunni triangle', testifies to their own understanding of the mass nature of the opposition they are confronting now. Assuming the insurgents do not simply capitulate (an unlikely scenario), they will have to fight their way into it with land forces. Thus there is a real possibility of the coalition's nightmare scenario - urban house-to-house and street-to-street warfare against an entrenched and determined enemy. This failed to materialise at the time of the invasion due to the capitulation of Saddam Hussein, but now may actually come about. The difference is that the coalition forces are not prepared for it and were not expecting to be fighting like this at this time. The imperial hubris of the neocons in Washington is now meeting its nemesis in Iraq.

The arrogance of the American high command is being relayed around the world on prime-time television. And that is what they are particularly worried about. One key demand the Americans are pressing the insurgents to accept in their 'negotiations', is the withdrawal of Al Jazeera's staff and equipment from the city. A demand that is unlikely to be accepted; the stage would then be set for an out-and-out massacre without the presence of TV cameras to relay the resultant images around the world. This media presence has already led to major political problems for the US, as Al Jazeera news coverage of Fallujah hospitals filling up with civilian casualties, including large numbers of women and children, have already been broadcast in many Arab countries.

Western audiences have only seen a small fraction of this material, due to the self-censorship of the pro-imperialist media. In any case, it is necessary for all opponents of imperialism and defenders of the rights, and indeed the very lives, of the people of the core Arabic areas of Iraq, to demand the immediate withdrawal of the US armed forces and their British underlings, and rally to the defence of the people of Fallujah, and indeed Iraq as a whole, against the expected American onslaught. We must be for the defeat of our 'own' imperialist forces, which have no right to be in Iraq - none whatsoever. If they fail to withdraw from Iraq of their own free will, it is perfectly legitimate for the Iraqi people to send them home in body bags - that is the position that socialists should take regarding the war of resistance that has now broken out.

The Iraqi people need liberation - both

national liberation from the coalition jackboot that has been imposed on them by the likes of Bush and Blair, and social liberation from the domestic bourgeoisie, and the various clerical and petty bourgeois social formations that play a major role in their relatively underdeveloped, semi-ruined capitalist economy. Given the situation that Iraq has been reduced to by decades of reactionary Ba'athist/military dictatorship - openly supported and propped up for many years (recent myths to the contrary) by the United States, Britain and the rest of the imperialist gang - it is hardly surprising that the leadership the masses are now looking to are of a clerical stamp. Oppression on that grinding scale and duration grinds down consciousness, and religion often seems the heart of a heartless world, to evoke Karl Marx. Though the working class movement in Iraq, with its secular, socialist traditions and aspirations, has undergone some signs of revival in the space created by the sudden absence of Saddam Hussein and his secret police, nevertheless they have been massively outpaced by religious forces, both sunni and shia, many of whom have social programmes that are deeply reactionary.

This is something that socialists have to take account of in evaluating our position on the war of national liberation that has now openly broken out. It means that we openly state that many of the forces that are leading the resistance today, if they were to achieve victory, could pose a serious threat to the secular, democratic and working class forces. The Iraqi masses deserve better leaders than those who look to create a state similar to that of present-day Iran, for instance, or - perhaps even worse - something resembling Saudi Arabia. Yet we cannot be neutral when the masses are mobilised, even behind such reactionary or potentially reactionary forces, against imperialist conquerors.

This is an extremely difficult situation for the Iraqi left, for communists and working class socialists. The masses are in motion against the main enemy, and yet they are influenced on a mass scale by forces that themselves are certain to prove enemies of the Iraqi workers if they get their hands firmly upon the levers of power in the future.

Socialists and communists in Iraq must participate in the struggle for national liberation as an independent force, raising a progressive banner, a banner of democracy and freedom of religion or non-religion (secularism), as well as a programme for liberation from capitalism and social oppression in all its forms. One thing is clear: anyone who shrugs their shoulders at the war of the masses against the occupation, who equates the clerical-led masses with the coalition occupiers and proclaims 'a plague on both your houses', in present-day Iraq would be signing their own political suicide note.

We socialists and communists in the outside world, meanwhile, also have a twofold task of solidarity - we have to demonstrate, in words and deeds, our ability to generate real solidarity for the Iraqi masses in their life-and-death struggle against imperialism. At the same time, we must do all in our power to promote the progressive forces in Iraq, to help tilt the balance within the liberation movement away from the clericalists and towards those forces that seek a working class solution to the manifold oppressions that beset not only Iraq, but the entire Middle East region ☐

RESPECT

Not hiding his views

The Socialist Alliance's only elected councillor, SWP member **Michael Lavalette**, heads the Respect list for the European elections in the North West constituency. He spoke to **Peter Manson**

How is the campaign going? I think it's going well. We've had a number of really big meetings in the North West with as many as 400 people attending - two in Manchester, one in Preston, a couple in Liverpool. I have also been speaking at trade union annual conferences - NUJ, NUT, as well as the National Union of Students. By and large the reception we've had at all these meetings has been good.

Two RMT union branches, Victoria and Piccadilly in Manchester, have voted to support Respect and this question is on the agenda in the coming month for a whole number of RMT meetings, where we've been asked to speak. We have also been invited to their grades conference, which is taking place in Manchester next week. It is also significant that we are talking with the Fire Brigades Union - although obviously, until their annual conference, things are less clear-cut with them.

In terms of breaking through into the RMT, we've done incredibly well - probably up there with London. Of course Unjum Mirza and Greg Tucker are well known RMT members in London, whereas we have gone in cold. But we have managed to link up with a number of very serious and important officials. We are consulting with the RMT with a view to putting on a series of showings of Ken Loach's film, *The navigator*. Hopefully the North West region will sponsor this with us, and it should start in a couple of weeks time.

We also have what we call the 'North West on tour'. For the next week or two we've organised meetings where we've never had them before - Carlisle, Barrow, Whitehaven, Burnley - where Respect has not yet been launched. At least two of our candidates will be at each meeting.

Another important area is the Asian community and in certain places we have been invited to talk to people from the mosques. Last week we jointly ran an exhibition on Palestine with Bolton council of mosques - I managed to get two young students from the International Solidarity Movement to come to the North West. They had heard about our attempt to twin Preston with Nablus. In terms of breaking into the muslim community, that was quite useful. A number of key names in the Muslim Association of Britain have come on board and we are trying to arrange more meetings in those communities.

So in these three areas - the unions, anti-war groups and the muslim community - we're doing well. We've broken into the unions in a way the Socialist Alliance never did. I know things have changed after the anti-war protests, but we've still taken some significant steps. There's always more we could do, but overall things are going well.

Have the media shown any interest yet?

We've found it difficult to get any publicity, to be honest with you, but we've got a press conference coming up. We've given a commitment that our main candidates will all twin with asylum-seeker campaigns, so we're going to try and bring together the campaigns' representatives - this is something we want to highlight that distinguishes us from all the other political parties.

One problem we have is that some of the things that have been in *The Guardian* or *The Independent* nationally have not made the northern editions, so Respect isn't really getting into the papers



Won't take £70,000

up here yet. That's something we must try and address. But the Greens don't get in that often either.

It may depend on what happens in terms of the uprising in Iraq. If its level and intensity continues for another couple of weeks, the whole question will be thrown back onto the agenda in a much more obvious way. If so, we could start to get a hearing as the clear anti-war party.

Have you been able to use your status as a councillor to the benefit of the campaign?

We've managed to raise our profile in Preston Town Centre, where I was elected. People say none of the other parties ever bothered to come into the ward, but they have to now because 'Michael's there every week'.

It's also given us an advantage in terms of our support network - groups that we work with, such as Stop the War activists, amongst the unions and the muslim community. We can show what we've done over the last year. There are many more people from the muslim community in Preston who are now on board with Respect - more than those who voted for the Socialist Alliance. They've been a bit more proactive in making contacts with the community in Blackburn and Bolton, so getting elected was a huge step forward for us.

We've learnt from the experience of the way we've been recognised and taken seriously and used that to gain access in other parts of Preston and the North West. We are getting some coverage because I'm a councillor, where otherwise we'd get none.

You were elected as Socialist Alliance, but you've now switched to Respect, I believe.

I changed the designation, given that's the profile we wanted - I am the lead candidate in the Euros for Respect. We are also going to contest as Respect in the local elections - there's another seat up in my ward and we're going to stand in the neighbouring ward too. Hopefully some time in the next two weeks at least one Labour councillor is going to come over to us. There's one in Preston and another in Cumbria. Possibly they'll both come over together towards the end of this month. That way we may get some coverage.

It's for those reasons I changed my designation and I'm now known as Respect. Sometimes, to make it clear, I say, 'Respect councillor who was elected Socialist Alliance Against the War last May.'

What would you say were the achievements of the SA?

The Socialist Alliance started a process which is still continuing. It did bring people together who historically had not cooperated. But the difficulty was it didn't make any major breakthrough. It's sad that the most significant came in Preston.

But Preston wasn't really a breakthrough of the left coming together, was it?

No, outside some of the big cities the other groups on the left just don't exist. If anything, what happened here was the precursor to Respect - the same groups and communities were involved.

Once we made that breakthrough, we were taken seriously in the labour movement in Preston. Quite important trade unionists will come on our platforms now. For example, the Lancashire brigade secretary of the FBU will speak any time I ask him and the regional organiser of the Communication Workers Union will address our meetings, as will our contacts in Unison and Natfhe. When I was just Michael Lavalette from the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Alliance, that didn't happen.

The problem for the SA, though, was that there was only one council success. Sometimes I think the analogy with Scotland is a bit misplaced. I was sharing a platform with a Scottish Socialist Party comrade at the NUJ conference and he was talking about the achievement of the SSP, which now has 130,000 people voting for it, which is fantastic. But we need 130,000 votes just to get one MEP in the North West, which gives you some idea of the scale of things.

Proportional representation for Scottish parliamentary elections has clearly aided the SSP. The difficulty for the SA was that we were always contesting first-past-the-post elections - you can pick up 20% and that looks good, but you don't get anything. The SSP achieved their breakthrough with Tommy Sheridan through the single transferable vote for the Glasgow area and, once he established himself as an MSP, he used that position to gain credibility and eventually this produced six MSPs last time round.

For the SA, the cards were stacked against us because of the electoral system. Even then it might have been different if the breakthrough had come in central London or Manchester, but Preston is pretty marginal when it comes to political discussion in Britain.

SSP comrades say that, as well as PR, the fact that the Scottish Socialist Alliance transformed itself into a party, which became the permanent and main focus for the left groups, made the difference. Anyway, the SA failed for whatever reason. So how should socialists behave in Respect?

In the first instance, we should all be working as hard as possible to increase the membership, hold lively meetings and make the biggest impact so as to get as good a turnout in June. If that happens, then there are a whole number of possible scenarios. We've got to be membership-driven, which means we've got to get the membership first. We've got to become an organisation that can get substantial votes, and the most important thing is to get the best possible

result for Respect.

After that, there needs to be some assessment of what all those people want to do. Do we want to go forward and become the Unity Party, and start to focus on the general election, campaigning as Respect? Those are possibilities, but if we end up with one percent of the vote, then it may well be that we just have to accept that it failed. If we get one or two MEPs, if we save our deposit or if we achieve significant votes, then we can start to move forward, but in the short term it's all hands to the pump. You never hide your socialist politics and, as a socialist, I don't have any problems whatsoever with Respect's minimum programme. But many of those questions are the questions we start to address on June 13, after the votes have been counted.

What if you were invited by Granada Television to be interviewed and asked specific questions about current issues? Do you answer as a socialist or do you temper your answers so as to stay within the bounds of Respect's declaration?

I can't really think of an example where my answer as a socialist would be any different.

For example, recently the resignation of Beverley Hughes has brought the question of migrants into the limelight. Our policy is for the defence of asylum-seekers and refugees, but migrants from Romania are neither of those. As socialists you and I agree that they should be able to come here if they want to. So do you say that?

I would say that, yes. I suppose if I was on Granada and that kind of question was asked, I would start off by saying that Respect's position is for defence of asylum-seekers and refugees, but those who come here do so for a variety of reasons. Some flee their country because they are victims of political terror or war or because they're poor or they want to protect their family. I would go on to say that in the North West we also have a position where our candidates are twinned with a campaign to defend individuals threatened with expulsion from this country - that's a position we're proud of. We believe people should have the right to come to this country if the jobs are there.

That ties in with Respect's statement, but I'm not hiding what I think myself. **No, but some people have said that they're not going to stand on a platform of open borders.**

It's partly about what sort of organisation we think Respect will become. I don't think there's any difficulty. If Labour Party candidates were asked that question, Blunkett and Beverley Hughes would answer one way and, say, Tony Benn would answer a different way.

So we shouldn't get caught up in those kind of things. We have a general statement which places us clearly to the left of Labour and we want as many people involved as possible. But within that I'm not going to hide my position.

Another issue over which some people have refused to give a commitment is the idea that elected representatives should only accept an average worker's wage. Let's hope you are elected, but if you are you'll be entitled to a salary of £70,000. While I know that you wouldn't for one moment keep it all for yourself, in the Socialist Alliance all the candidates actually made

that clear.

In last week's *Weekly Worker* you said that it was ludicrous to turn this into a principle. I agree with that. Clearly it's something we should strive towards, but this is being used by some people just to have a go at George Galloway. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty were in the Labour Party for years and never placed a worker's wage as a condition for their support for Labour candidates.

I'm not going to say that all those elected for Respect should take an average worker's wage, because we haven't given that commitment - George can do what he wants and we can debate with him. But from my point of view I can guarantee I will not be taking the £70,000 - I didn't even know it was that much! I haven't thought how I would do it, but I would hand in my wage slips and make sure I don't take any more money than what is agreed.

That statement is clear enough. By the way, what we said was that it's not a principle to make voting for candidates conditional on their accepting a worker's wage, but it's certainly a principle that our elected representatives don't see it as a gravy train.

I don't have any huge problem with that. One difficulty is, though, the way the SSP calculate a worker's wage. They do so on the basis of what they consider to be working class jobs, so, for example, they take out teachers from the equation. I've got a different view of class perhaps.

There are a number of people who aren't revolutionaries and don't understand what this is about. If we were in the SSP we might be asking Steve Metcalf, an RMT railworker who is on our North West list, to take a salary cut. He's not a revolutionary, but it's fantastically good he's come on board, so we just have to be careful how this works. To be honest, it's not a huge question for him, because he's listed at number five, so if he gets to be in the European parliament we're looking at forming the next government!

But my answer to your question is the same as it was for migrants. We have a general platform which is the position of the coalition, but I'm not in the business at this point of time of imposing my revolutionary views on anyone or of saying they're the condition for anyone to stand. However, as a revolutionary socialist, I'm aware of these debates and, if elected, I will be acting in what I consider to be the appropriate way.

You mentioned the possibility of a Respect party. How would you hope things develop?

I'm really excited by what's happening. Last night I spoke at the NUT fringe meeting and there were 110 people in the room and we raised almost £800. One in seven of those at the conference came to the Respect meeting. It wasn't just the left - the Socialist Party and AWL didn't come because they both had their own meetings. The NUJ's conference was small, but there were about 45 people at our meeting. All these meetings are very lively and people are really up for it.

One of the difficulties has been that the time between our launch in January and the elections is short to build an electoral campaign, but, if we can capture that excitement, if we can pull in the votes, then I think Respect can start to coalesce into something more permanent, viable and to the left of Labour, which can provide a real challenge - not just in the Euros, but in other elections as well ☐

For political revolution within Respect!

Comrade Ian Donovan has found a new approach in countering the argument I presented last week under the title 'No unconditional vote for Respect!' He is trying to *confuse* me to death.

If you missed it, I, and indeed five other comrades, argued that we should reverse the following resolution passed at the CPGB aggregate on March 21: "Recognising the need for the anti-war, pro-working class opposition to Blair to take on partyist form, the CPGB will work to ensure the biggest possible vote for Respect on June 10."

His snappily titled 'Communist tactics, not sectarian subjectivism' (printed across the page in the same issue, but with prior sight of my own piece) asserts that I offer either *no* arguments, or only *irrational* ones. In fact, by my count, it argues this 17 times in the space of one page, so he clearly feels it quite strongly. I must have had a bad day: what *did* I fill the page with - recipes?

Presumably driven by the absence of any arguments in my article to respond to, Ian chooses the only possible course: write some of his own, and then knock them down. It was with a certain bemusement that I watched Ian's brutal shadow-boxing begin.

"I suppose one slight saving grace of Manny's article is that he does not seem to be pushing the idea that Respect somehow constitutes a 'popular front'. This confused notion ..."

Well, he's got himself on the ropes there. I don't know who to back in this fight: Ian or Ian. This swift uppercut to his own jaw seems to have woken him to the absence of an opponent. He turns to where he *thinks* I am standing ...

"Manny claims to be driven by some kind of principled programmatic intransigence ..."

... only to punch the air and fall over. Having read my article again several times, I cannot find this claim, do not support it, do not wish to make it, and (if all else fails to persuade him) would like to formally withdraw any intention of ever claiming it in the future. This is chiefly because, while I have no idea what it means, I feel confident it does *not* mean 'I'm happy with any tactic which advances the building of a Communist Party, and don't think unconditional Respect votes fit the bill'.

There is still not much for me to do in this fight.

"Nowhere does Manny even begin to put forward any coherent evidence that calling for a vote for Respect candidates in this election - which by a terminological sleight of hand he dubs 'unconditional' support - amounts to 'giving up' any aspiration to win Respect to a 'revolutionary perspective'."

Here, at last, is something I actually said. Now, first, let me explain the sneaky trick behind the "terminological sleight of hand" Ian accuses me of for using the word 'unconditional'.

I am arguing that we should only recommend votes for candidates on the *condition* that they commit themselves to stand for republicanism, open borders, and workers' representation on a worker's wage: hence 'conditional'. The resolution passed at aggregate imposes no conditions, and simply calls for the "biggest possible vote", hence 'unconditional'. I apologise unreservedly to anyone who was misled by this clearly dishonest use of these words.

Like Ian, for instance. "It is perfectly obvious to any intelligent observer that

Comrade Marcus Ström feels that Respect candidates would not support republicanism, open borders, and workers' representation on a worker's wage without a "political revolution within Respect".

Manny Neira argues that this is why we must continue to demand that they do!

our support is conditional on Respect maintaining basic class demands in its programme - such as opposition to privatisation, anti-union laws, the persecution of immigrants and asylum-seekers, imperialist war, etc. Those are our conditions for support for Respect."

But not republicanism, open borders, and workers' representation on a worker's wage, eh? This is fascinating. It seems that Ian *is* happy to impose conditions, but for some reason just not on those issues we presented to the founding conference and have been questioning Respect leaders and candidates about ever since.

So to impose republicanism as a condition is "sectarian subjectivism". To impose "opposition to privatisation" as a condition, though, seemingly is not. What possible logic can lie behind this?

A moment's thought makes it clear: Ian has chosen to make 'conditions' all those things he feels Respect is *already* committed to! This is truly a fighting stance. These are the conditions he is selecting: things that the Respect leadership have already volunteered *before the conditions were raised*. It is on these grounds that he considers the label 'unconditional' to be unjust.

Perhaps I can illustrate Ian's use of these terms by an example. Your employer demands a pay freeze. Your union strikes in support of a demand for a 10% increase. The union leaders then come back to you and recommend a return to work without additional pay. You are outraged: 'What, we're just going to give in unconditionally?' 'No,' you are told, 'not unconditionally. We're going back only on condition they don't *cut* our pay.'

And this brings us to his substantive question, and indeed the question on which the politics of this whole tactic depend: how is calling for an unconditional vote (or, in case anyone can see the difference, restricting our conditions to what was granted before they were raised anyway) giving up any aspiration to win Respect to a revolutionary perspective?

I cannot do better than quote comrade Marcus Ström in last week's 'Party notes'.

"Yet for these conditions to be generally accepted by mainly SWP candidates it would take a political revolution within Respect. Therefore to adopt such a position is to deliberately seek a situation whereby electoral support for Respect can be withheld. This must be rejected."

The statement deserves the most careful attention, because it is a direct answer to Ian's question, and goes right to the heart of the issue. Imposing these conditions is equivalent to withholding electoral support *only if we have already decided that the conditions will not be met*. And, as Marcus rightly says, for the conditions to be accepted would take a "political revolution" within Respect:

precisely the revolution we sought to bring about by demanding them in the first place!

Is it not transparently clear, therefore, that any hope of *winning* that argument, and *causing* that revolution in Respect, have been given up with the call for an unconditional vote? Do Marcus's words bear any other analysis?

Well, I think he is wrong, and I do not think we should give up. The pressure has been effective: we have exposed the regressive, rightward trend of Respect clearly, and I see no reason to stop now. *But, having said that, if I was as certain as Marcus and Ian that this fight was already lost, then I would question why we are still in Respect at all*. What would we have left to gain? John Rees MEP?

It has been argued that this, in itself, is a worthwhile victory - indeed, this is all that is left if the political revolution we

sought to bring about is really impossible. So let us finally turn to this question.

What is likely to happen if Respect is successful and John Rees elected?

I can see two consequences. Firstly, John Rees will argue that this is proof that his trajectory was right all along. Remember his speech at the Respect launch? "Whatever went before was not as strong as this. We fought for the declaration and voted against the things we believed in, because, while the people here are important, they are not as important as the millions out there."

This opportunist garbage was the high point of his speech: the central message. The Socialist Alliance failed because it was *too socialist*. We will not make that mistake again. We will give people what they want, whatever they want, if it gets us elected.

Of course, the real reason the SA failed was precisely because of the on-off electoral front treatment it received at the hands of the Socialist Workers Party leadership. Remember that no SA speaker was allowed onto the platform at Hyde Park during the biggest demonstrations in our history, though the Greens, Plaid Cymru and even Charles bloody Kennedy were welcome: Respect has been rather better treated.

But in the most cowardly move of all, rather than leave the SA, which would clearly have been more honest as they no longer believed in it, the SWP leadership used their majority to force it to commit suicide, hand over its support to Respect, and prevent it standing candi-



Marcus Ström:
"non-class politics
of populism"

dates of its own.

We understood and exposed this clearly enough at the time. In the *Weekly Worker* of January 29, Marcus wrote: "This is the two-faced nature of opportunism. Talk left, act right. It's already socialist, that's why we should have absolutely no socialist principle in it! Leave the socialist principle to the SWP and its recruitment machine."

"... We shall energetically work in Respect and seek a wider audience there for what is needed: a mass working class alternative to both Labourism and the non-class politics of populism."

The second consequence, perversely, is that John Rees will be in a more central position to peddle exactly the lack of principle Marcus decried so eloquently. And what is the usual course of opportunists once they have got their positions and their expense accounts? Do they tend to become more assiduous class fighters? Is John Rees playing a trick, acting soft now but ready to fight the corner of the working class once he has tricked them into electing him?

If this is the way to use elections to raise political consciousness and advance the argument for a workers' party, then I'm a sectarian subjectivist ☐

Manny Neira

Beleaguered in Wales

Respect in Wales has suffered a blow in its attempts to forge a left-of-Labour slate of candidates to fight the European elections in June. Already spurned by the Welsh Greens, Respect has now been rebuffed by Forward Wales, the party founded by John Marek AM.

At its meeting on April 8, Forward Wales decided to select its own list of candidates for the forthcoming elections, to be headed by the former New Labour cabinet minister, Ron Davies. Forward Wales has subsequently written to George Galloway asking Respect to stand down in Wales to give it a free run in the elections, as Respect has done in Scotland with the Scottish Socialist Party. According to a spokesman for Forward Wales, no reply has yet been received.

All this may come as a surprise to those who had been reading the public statements of Respect, which had been implying that a joint slate with Forward Wales was almost a foregone conclusion. As late as April 4, Respect was claiming on its website that a "provisional agreement" had been made with Marek. All the meetings so far of Respect in Wales have seen its Socialist Workers Party leadership confidently assert that negotiations were at an "advanced stage". So what went wrong? Did Forward Wales pull out at the 11th hour?

In fact, the truth is rather simpler. Ever since Marek shared a platform with Galloway in Cardiff in January, Respect has spun the story of a deal being made. Yet at no stage did Marek ever make a commitment to Galloway. Indeed

in private comments, members of Forward Wales close to Marek explicitly ruled out the possibility of a deal with Respect.

True, last summer Marek speculated on a left bloc for the European elections. In *Red Pepper* he stated that he sought to "involve other socialist groups - still small and disorganised - so as to develop a common platform and agree priorities for Wales and for Europe". Indeed some tentative negotiations did take place last summer with the Welsh Socialist Alliance and later with the Socialist Party - though to its credit the SP was far more circumspect about dealing with Forward Wales. After all, Marek believes that explicit talk about socialism would be a big vote loser (rather like Respect).

Yet with the defection of Ron Davies to Forward Wales early this year, Marek and his coterie of advisers, centred on the left nationalist group Cymru Goch, clearly believed that it was now time to push their own party name. With a 'star' like Davies aboard the ship, why bother to lumber yourself with the far left?

Respect has attempted to put a brave face on this outcome. SWPer Martin Chapman stated on the Respect website: "We would have preferred to have been on a joint list with Ron Davies, who has helped to highlight the problems with New Labour and who also seemed to understand the need for a united slate, but we have a brilliant set of candidates who represent the grassroots of the anti-war and progressive movement" (April 9).

Alas, if only this were so. For all its attempts to create a wider basis of support than that achieved by the Welsh Socialist Alliance, the SWP in Wales has

been unable to do this with Respect. Whilst attempting to isolate those in Respect to its left - ie, the CPGB - it has made few friends to its right. As well as being ignored by the Welsh Greens and Forward Wales, precious few of "the grassroots of the anti-war and progressive movement" have so far joined Respect.

Respect in Wales is now beleaguered. With the progressive anti-Labour vote likely to go to a myriad of fake and soft left parties - Plaid Cymru, the Liberal Democrats, Forward Wales and the Greens - Respect will undoubtedly receive only the normal fringe vote.

Yet, in one sense, Respect in Wales has a point. With its programme very similar to that of Forward Wales and Greens - and not too dissimilar from Plaid - it made no sense for the elections to be littered with so many 'progressive' parties. None were going to prioritise that dreaded word 'socialism'. Perhaps now Respect will stand down to give others its support. This would be logical from the perspective of the SWP. What is the point of electoralism if one has no electorate?

Of course, this points to another alternative, one that Respect will no doubt spurn. That is to reject the logic of electoralism and the bonfire of principles that flows from it. Instead, create clear red water between it and these so-called progressive parties.

Let's campaign for republicanism, open borders and a workers' party. Above all, let's argue that there is an alternative to capitalism and it is called socialism ☐

Cameron Richards

ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Terrorism, alliances and

Are the Madrid bombers and al Qa'eda potential allies in the struggle against imperialism or reactionary enemies of the working class? **Mike Macnair** gives a communist view

The Madrid train bombings have seen a major outpouring of talk about terrorism. Of course, since September 9 2001 we have been involved in the USA's 'war on terror'; but individual large-scale terrorist outrages, like the Madrid train bombings, the Bali night club bombings and 9/11 itself bring 'terrorism' to the fore of news and analysis.

On the left, the Socialist Alliance discussion e-list has seen an argument between comrades from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the Socialist Workers Party about terrorism. This argument was sparked by the fact that the Muslim Association of Britain had promptly condemned the Madrid train-bombings, as it did Bali and 9/11, while the SWP did not issue an outright condemnation because it is unwilling to appear to side with the oppressor and with the "real terrorists", Bush and Blair. The AWL comrades have insisted that this policy is an aspect of the unravelling of the SWP's Marxism. Gerry Byrne's article 'Madrid, morals and moralism' on the AWL's website insists that we purge ourselves of the poisons of Stalinism and "post-modern relativism" to retrieve a socialism based on human solidarity and dignity (see www.workersliberty.org). SWP comrades contributing to the SA e-list have argued that the term 'terrorism' has become meaningless.

It might help clarify this discussion to think a bit more about possible definitions.

Media-speak terrorism

The media-speak/political spin definition of 'terrorism' is clearly as follows:

- (1) military action involving the use of firearms or explosives;
- (2) by non-state actors - states are only called 'terrorist' by bourgeois politicians and the media by way of an allegation that they sponsor use of military force by non-state actors;
- (3) for political purposes (ordinary armed robbers, the Mafia, etc are not referred to in this way by politicians and the media);
- (4) of which the speaker/writer disapproves. Thus al Qa'eda are terrorists now, but when they were fighting the PDPA regime and the Soviets in Afghanistan were part of the 'Afghan resistance'.

This last feature of the media-speak definition makes it completely worthless and means that the claim that a group or action is terrorist is a judgment on its political goals and nothing more. If, however, this element were removed, the remaining definition would be equally clearly ideological and unjustifiable, since it would amount to no more than an assertion that the use of military force by non-state actors is wrong under any circumstances: ie, the 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes's defence of tyranny.

This media-speak definition has obviously got nothing to do with the opposition of Marxists around 1900 to the 'individual terrorism' of the Russian group, Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), and the old-time anarchists, or with the debate Trotsky was engaged in when he wrote *Terrorism and communism* in 1920.

Military terrorism

There is available an alternative definition with a military core, which is much more useful than that employed by the media. Under this alternative, terrorism is:

- (1) military action (as above);



September 11 2001: targeting civilians

- (2) which is deliberately targeted at civilians primarily;
- (3) with the aim of destroying the enemy's morale - for example, by showing that its armed or 'security' forces cannot protect the civilian population.

Under this definition area bombing in World War II was clearly terrorism, as has been much of the USA's bombing operations since (Vietnam and so on, down to the invasion of Iraq). So too, in part, was union general William Tecumseh Sherman's march through Georgia in the American Civil War. Equally the IRA's car-bombing campaign in the 70s (and most clearly its campaigns against commerce and on the mainland) was terrorist. So too are al Qa'eda's operations, including 9/11, Bali and Madrid; Israeli operations in the occupied territories and Lebanon; Palestinian suicide bombing attacks on Israeli civilians; and the bombs directed against Shia religious events and leaders in Iraq.

In contrast IRA attacks on police stations and army patrols in the past and the analogous attacks in present-day Iraq on the US occupiers and the puppet police force, etc are not terrorism, but ordinary guerrilla warfare. The deaths and injuries to civilians are collateral, just as they are in military operations between regular state armies.

Marxism and terrorism

The classic Marxist debates were not directed at terrorism in this core sense but at two related, but peripheral phenomena.

- (a) The first is 'individual terrorism': ie, assassinations of individual political figures identified as tyrants or public officials of tyrannical states, as practised by Narodnaya Volya, and more recently by the Red Army Fraction, Brigade Rosse

and so on.

(b) The second is the use of hostage-taking and collective responsibility as means of control of a hostile civil population, pioneered (in recent times) by the British in the colonies, applied to their occupied territories by the Germans in World War I, and adopted by the Bolsheviks as part of their strategy for controlling the middle classes and the peasantry during the civil war.

The classic Marxist critique of individual terrorism type (a) is that:

- (i) it is ineffective, since it is not individual tyrants who are the problem, but the ruling class as a whole and its regime (the individual assassinated is merely replaced);
- (ii) it is counterproductive, since it legitimates the repressive measures of the regime; and
- (iii) (most fundamentally) we consider that "the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself", not of self-appointed military 'saviours from on high'. On the contrary, the socialism which is our goal is only possible on the basis of the action of the working class majority.

Trotsky's argument in *Terrorism and communism* was that *majority-based* 'terrorism' of type (b) above - hostages and collective responsibility - was not subject to these objections. It was merely a type of warfare, and to renounce it - when the Whites had already begun to use terror against the masses in Finland in December 1917 - was to renounce any possibility of resisting the attempts of the minority (the former ruling elite) to coerce and terrorise the majority.

The overwhelming majority of the historical evidence of successful and unsuccessful revolutions, from the late 16th century Dutch Revolt onward, supports part of this argument: if the revolution is

not to be drowned in blood, the majority needs to be willing if necessary to wage full-scale war against elements of the old elite. It is less clear either that the Bolsheviks' use of terror tactics against recalcitrant peasant villages could properly be called 'majority-based', or that it actually achieved its goals.

Cold-blooded?

Both sides of these arguments - against 'individual terrorism', for 'mass-based terror' - may seem pretty cold-blooded. This is entirely correct. The point of Marxism is not to develop elevating moral sentiments, either of sympathy with the exasperation of the oppressed who are 'driven' to individual terrorism by the absence of an alternative (SWP), or of humanitarian horror at the loss of human life in terrorism and warfare (AWL). We can have the elevating moral sentiments without Marxism. They are politically impotent. The point of Marxism is to think practically about how it is possible to bring all this shit to an end. That means thinking cold-bloodedly about real constraints on economic and political dynamics and about the fact that some forms of resistance to oppression work and others do not.

When we apply this method to 'core military terrorism' - ie, attacks deliberately targeted on civilians in order to undermine morale - the overwhelming evidence is that it does not work. US terrorist bombing of Vietnam utterly failed in its objects. World War II saw experiments on the largest scale with terrorist bombing as an instrument for attacking morale - first by the Nazi regime in the English 'Blitz' and in Russia, and then by the USA and Britain in area-bombing. They were complete failures. Going further back, the effect of Sherman's march through Georgia was to strengthen the Confederates'

will to fight. It was its *military* achievement in cutting the Confederacy in half, taken together with union general Ulysses S Grant's unceasing pursuit of the Confederate army of Virginia, which forced a surrender.

A counter-argument which has been heard (usually but not exclusively from supporters of US policy) is that Madrid shows that al-Qa'eda's terror tactic worked. The bombs induced large numbers of Spanish voters to vote for the anti-war opposition. This is profoundly mistaken. The People's Party government attempted to blame the Basque nationalist guerrilla/terrorist group Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (Eta) in order to make party-political capital at the expense of its opponents (who were said to be 'soft on Eta'), and kept doing so even as it became increasingly clear that this was an al Qa'eda attack. It was punished at the polls for *lying* and attempting to make party capital out of the attack. If the PP ministers had held their fire till the first evidence indicating al Qa'eda responsibility came out, then campaigned around al Qa'eda and the 'war on terror', they would probably have won an increased majority.

These cold-blooded practical judgments *carry with them* moral judgments. Killing other humans we judge to be, other things apart, immoral. This is not uniquely Marxist, but a notion common to most, if not all, human societies, and one which has profound instinctual grounds. But it is an equally commonplace idea that killing in self-defence or in defence of someone else is morally justifiable. For people who are not pacifists these moral justifications for killing can be extended to certain wars: ie, wars of self-defence and in defence of others against aggressive war.

Marxists are not pacifists. Our judgments as to which wars are morally justifiable start from different grounds from those of mainstream politicians, etc. We start from class interests rather than the 'national interest'. We accept openly that insurrections and civil wars may be justifiable. But we still make such judgments. Even when war is justifiable it will not justify *useless* killing. Terrorism in the core military sense is immoral because it is pointless killing, and because it is a waste of human life. When a regular army does this, it is properly called a war crime, and it should be called a war crime when irregular forces (like al Qa'eda) do it, too.

Goals and justification

My argument so far has been about terrorism as a means. It has thus presupposed that the goal of the terrorist act is one Marxists share. No-one on the left has any difficulty at all in condemning terrorist acts committed by the far right, like the Milan and Bologna train-bombings (and others) in Italy in the 1970s or German army and SS massacres of civilians in World War II. Few have much difficulty in condemning colonial terrorism (eg, English air-raids, including use of chemical weapons, on Iraqi villages between the two world wars).

At the same time, Marxists do not condemn all military action, or all military action by non-state actors. There is nothing odd or hypocritical about this, as opponents of Marxism sometimes suggest. As I have already pointed out, *any* moral or political judgment on killing which is not purely pacifist involves a judgment about its purpose. It hardly lies in the mouths of those who - for example - supported Afghan 'resistance fighters' in the 1980s to condemn Marx-

class independence

ists for ‘hypocrisy’ in using the goals of military action as part of the grounds of political judgment on that action.

Al Qa’eda

The AWL’s approach to Madrid and other al Qa’eda terrorist attacks is partly governed by its view that al Qa’eda (and, indeed, Arab nationalist formations like the Iraqi Ba’ath party) are reactionary anti-capitalist - in effect *fascist* - organisations. Thus the AWL sees only those goals, as well as means (terrorism), which Marxists oppose. The SWP’s approach is partly governed by the assessment that al Qa’eda and similar *jihadi* formations in a confused way represent an *anti-imperialist* movement. Thus the SWP sees primarily goals which Marxists would support. Both of these analyses are profoundly unhelpful.

Al Qa’eda has a goal which Marxists share: that muslims and muslim countries should not be colonially dominated by christians and christian countries, or by jews or the one jewish country in the world, Israel. Its immediate goals - US withdrawal from the Arabian peninsula and the Persian Gulf, and a Palestinian state - are also ones we share. We share these goal because we are opposed to all forms of domination and inequality. But this carries with it the crucial fact that we are *also* opposed to domination of muslims over christians or jews, and to inequality within muslim countries - such as the claims of the *ulama*, the islamic scholars, to determine truth; or chattel slavery (which is authorised by the Qu’ran as well as by the sharia); or the various forms of women’s oppression which were originally part of or have grown up within islamic societies. Al Qa’eda and other *jihadi* tendencies, on the other hand, see the road to ending imperialist domination (‘the crusade’) as lying *through* the restoration of the ‘islamic social order’, through the Qu’ran and the sharia as guides to action. This is a goal Marxists oppose and will, if necessary, fight against arms in hand.

Petty-proprietor nationalism

The underlying problem is that fascism and colonial nationalism are both, ideologically, forms of petty-proprietor nationalism. Both politically represent the petty proprietors - peasants, small traders, artisans and small businesses - and the intelligentsia (petty proprietors of intellectual property). This class is in historical terms a class of the past. Its apogee was *before* capitalism, which tends to split it up into capitalists proper and wage-slaves (though there are counter-tendencies which mean that the petty proprietors remain an important class even in the most developed capitalist countries). The result is that petty-proprietor politics tends to look backwards with nostalgia to a lost golden age before the coming of capital. Hence the German nationalists looked to the Teutons who defeated Rome and to Frederick Barbarossa; the Italians to a revival of Rome. Hence islamism looks to the caliphate (sunni) or the imamate (shia). Within this context, petty-proprietor politics is opposed both to capital and to the working class.

The goals of petty-proprietor nationalism in general are utterly utopian. It aims simultaneously to restore the strength and autonomy of the nation, and to restore the old social order in which workers, women and youth ‘knew their place’. However, the global ascendancy of capital and hence of the imperialist powers flows from the greater productive capacity of the capitalist social order. The sharp edge of this is mili-

tary production. If nationalists (islamists) wish to restore the strength and autonomy of the nation (the faith) they need to have an arms production capacity which can do more than merely irritate the imperialists (the crusaders). They will be driven towards maintaining industry, and thus a sort of semi-capitalist nationalism.

But as long as there is industry there will be a proletariat - and with it markets, which undermine household petty property, and a labour market, which undermines the old authority of husband, father and priest/imam. The petty-proprietor nationalists’ hatred of the capitalist destruction of the old social order will thus be displaced onto the proletariat. In this form nationalism - whether imperialist or colonial - becomes an agency of mobilisation of the petty proprietors and their lowest edge, the ‘criminal class’, against the proletariat. This aspect of petty-proprietor nationalism was transparent in the role of the catholic antisemites in late 19th and early 20th century Europe and in their descendant, European fascism. But it has been equally visible in the destruction of the Communist Party in Indonesia at the hands of secular nationalists, and the modern role of the islamists in Turkey, in Algeria and most spectacularly in Iran since 1979. There are no doubt other colonial examples. As a result, if we urge the workers’ movement to give ‘critical support’ to nationalist (islamist) movements, we risk preparing a holocaust of the workers.

There is, however, another side to the coin. This is that *because* petty-proprietor nationalism is utopian, and *because* one aspect of its goals - an end to colonial or neo-colonial domination - is shared by Marxists, many individual militants and even whole groups have in the past been won from nationalism to Marxism. This was the origin of most of the communist parties in the colonial world. In a certain sense the seeds even of the Russian Bolsheviks came from Narodnaya Volya. If, however, we make a simple equation between forms of colonial nationalism and fascism, so that our only task in relation to the nationalists is to support anyone who fights them arms in hand, we rule out winning nationalists to Marxism.

How, then, to escape from this double-bind? There are two keys. The first is the distinction in our own tasks as communists and the tasks of the workers’ movement between tasks of persuasion and military tasks. The second is related to the first, and concerns the problem of united action where there is limited agreement and wider disagreement.

Peacefully if we can

“Peacefully if we can, forcefully if we must.” This phrase, taken (originally) from the left wing of the Chartists, can be found in this paper’s ‘What we fight for’ column. It expresses the fact that we do not *prefer* the course of violence. Even in Trotsky’s *Terrorism and communism*, which is almost a manifesto of the need for violence and majority-based terror in revolutions, we can find the following: “If our November revolution had taken place a few months, or even a few weeks, after the establishment of the rule of the proletariat in Germany, France and England, there can be no doubt that our revolution would have been the most ‘peaceful’, the most ‘bloodless’ of all possible revolutions on this sinful earth. But this historical sequence - *the most ‘natural’ at the first glance, and, in any case, the most beneficial for the Russian working class* - found itself infringed - not through our fault, but through the will of events” (emphasis added, www.marxists.org.uk/archive/trotsky/

works/1920/dictatorvs/ch04.htm).

The fact that we prefer persuasion to violence relates back to two points which I have already made. First: Marxist socialism - communism in its proper sense - is not about an enlightened minority reshaping the world. It is about the large majority taking control of our own lives collectively and individually. At present communists in this sense are a small minority everywhere. Our task, if we are to achieve our aims, is to *persuade* the majority.

Second: killing other people without very good reasons is wrong and is generally understood to be wrong. The core examples of generally accepted ‘very good reasons’ for killing are self-defence and the defence of others. These then provide the best grounds for communists, or the workers’ movement more generally, to use force. Suppose, for example, that communists won a large majority at an election and proceeded to create laws to bring in a radical-democratic republic, expropriate the major capitalists and so on. If no-one resisted these laws by force, there would be no reason to use force against anyone. In practice that is not very likely. The capitalist elite expect their ‘rights’ to be protected by force through the law. They already simply disobey the law where it suits them, such as when the law relating to the Sunday opening of shops was ignored on a large scale in the 1980s. They use force against strikers routinely overseas and occasionally in Britain, and would have little hesitation in doing so against a communist majority. At this point the use of force against them, up to and including civil war, would be a matter of self-defence.

It follows that even in relation to far-right nationalist organisations like the British National Party our primary tasks are tasks of *persuading* people who might vote for them that nationalism and racism do not represent a political alternative to the existing order. It is only insofar as they attempt to ‘conquer the streets’ or to terrorise workers’ or minority groups through organised violence (Combat 18, etc) that our tasks become those of forcible self-defence against them.

At the same time, we argue that the workers’ movement should place no trust in the capitalist state to protect it against the actual or potential violence of nationalists or reactionary forces. In all historical instances of nationalist violence, sections of the state security apparatus have been either actual participants in its organisation (as in Italy in the 1970s) or ‘friendly neutrals’ towards it. The workers’ movement needs - as I have already said - its own independent capacity for defensive violence.

Communists thus call for the workers’ movement to organise and train *for self-defence* (see, for example, Ian Donovan’s article on the miners’ Great Strike - *Weekly Worker* March 18). We fight for such self-defence organisations to grow into workers’ militia, and argue that “As the circumstances allow, the working class must equip itself with the most advanced, most destructive weaponry available” (*Draft programme*, §3.7, http://www.cpgb.org.uk/documents/cpgb/prog_demands.html#3_7). Self-defence remains the starting point.

This reasoning applies with equal strength both in the colonial world and where what is involved is open war. The Chinese Communist Party under Mao rightly rejected Stalin’s advice that in the light of the Japanese invasion of China they should subordinate their independent armed forces to those of the Kuomintang nationalists. They fought against the Japanese *alongside* the

Kuomintang, but *independently* of them. They were then in a position to fight *against* the Kuomintang when the Japanese were defeated. That the CCP itself became a peasant-based nationalist formation does not alter the fact that its judgment in the 1930s was right and Stalin’s wrong. Many years later, the CCP advised the Indonesian communists to subordinate themselves to the nationalists led by Sukarno. The result was that in 1965-66 the Indonesian communists were massacred in a military coup led by the right wing of the nationalist movement with the backing of the USA. But this does not mean, either in China in the 1930s or in Indonesia in the 1950s to early 1960s, that communists’ primary task was to fight the nationalists arms in hand. It was to endeavour to persuade as many as possible of them to come over to the workers’ movement, while still preparing, *in case it became necessary*, to take up arms against them.

This may seem to have taken us some way from our starting point. But the principles are equally applicable to *jihadi* islamist groups which practise terrorism. To the extent that these groups are attacking, or will attack, the workers’ movement or are attempting to take control of the streets, we fight for organised workers’ self-defence. We do not place trust in the existing capitalist states (eg, the US-UK occupiers of Iraq; let alone the US-UK’s ‘war on terror’ measures at home) to defend the working class against the islamists, etc. To the extent that we are not forced to fight them arms in hand, we endeavour to *persuade* them that their approach to politics is a dead end. Terrorist bombing operations, like 9/11, Bali and Madrid, fall into the first category. The workers’ movement needs to develop *its own* self-defence against these attacks. Unlike the US-UK’s ‘war on terror’, such a self-defence could be conducted within the framework of recognising the legitimate grievances against the US-led world order articulated by islamists, and fighting alongside them - but independently of them - against these grievances.

80-20, 20-80 (or 10-90)

The Socialist Alliance was widely said to operate on the basis of the ‘80-20’ principle: ie, that the groups and individuals of the socialist left should act in common on the 80% of ideas on which we agree, while discussing democratically (or, in one version, agreeing *not* to discuss) and, if necessary, acting independently on the 20% on which we disagree. The principle is transparently correct. It is commonly understood on the left also to apply to more limited campaigns - like the anti-war movement - where the participants in the campaign agree on much less. In this situation we can act together on the basis of, say, 10% agreement, while remaining free to argue and act separately on the remaining 90% of disagreement. The general principle is, in fact, the basis of any democratic political action.

It *ought* to be obvious that this approach applies equally to the parties of the petty bourgeoisie and even, in appropriate circumstances, of the bourgeoisie. Thus, for example, the Liberal Democrats turned out on the big February 15 2003 anti-war demonstration: quite correctly, no-one on the left suggested that the left should organise to try to drive them away by force. Equally, the Tories have engaged in demagogic opportunist opposition to top-up fees, and rebel Labour MPs have as a result found themselves going through the same

voting lobby as the Tories. It is the Labour leadership, not the left, which has accused the rebels of betrayal by acting in common with the Tories. Under these circumstances, however, the *class political independence* of the workers’ movement is critical. We have to say, as loudly as possible: though we and the Lib Dems (or even the BNP) are both marching against the war, we do so for radically different reasons; though we and the Tories are both voting against top-up fees, their opposition is mere opportunism; and so on.

In other words, we *can* have episodic united action with people and parties who, strategically, we oppose, who represent classes opposed to the working class, and against whom, in other circumstances, we will fight arms in hand. But we have to combine this limited united action with vigorous political opposition and with warning the workers that our temporary and partial allies are not to be trusted, and that it may, in future, be necessary to use force to defend the workers’ movement against people who are now momentary allies. Equally, we have to combine it with a rigorous and consistent defence of the independent interests of the working class: which implies the right to organise, nationally and internationally, and the rights of women and youth *as against* petty-proprietor patriarchs. This approach applies to the islamists just as much as it does to other petty-proprietor parties.

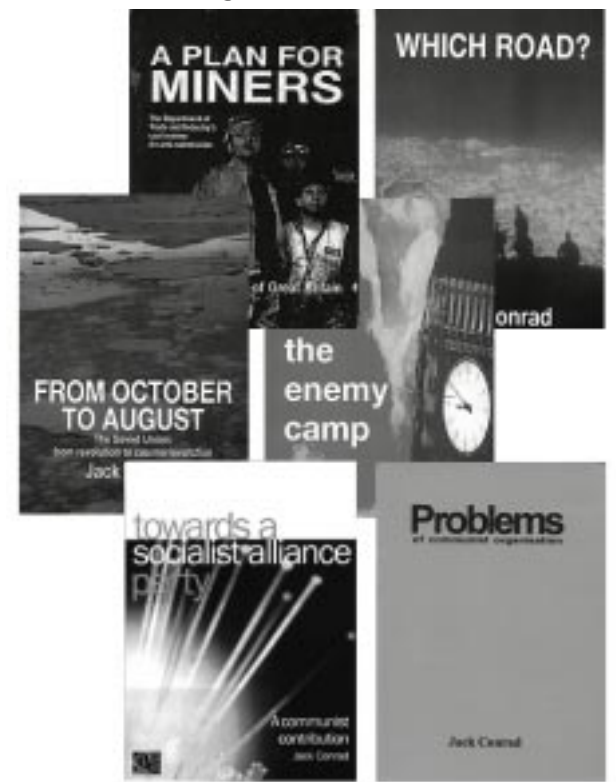
The bulk of the left is startlingly unable to grasp this simple approach. The reasons for this inability are too complex for full discussion here. They include failure to think seriously about the interests of the petty proprietors as a class; dogmatic attachment to the ‘united front’ and ‘popular front’ categories used in communist debates of the 1920s and 1930s; and the poisonous effects of inner-party monolithism and petty-bureaucratic interests on the character of organisations’ alliances. A critical element, however, is the refusal to *think strategically about how to achieve the positive goals of the workers’ movement*. For example, for the SWP there is nothing but an endless succession of short-term tactics to build the SWP and a romanticised image of ‘revolution’; for the AWL all political judgments resolve into moral judgments made in complete abstraction from questions of what will not and what might work.

Both approaches in different ways reduce the tasks of the working class to ‘taking sides’ in relation to initiatives launched by parties and movements of other classes. In the case of the SWP this can have the superficial appearance of taking initiatives, where the SWP *substitutes itself for* left social democracy (Socialist Alliance), anarchists (Globalise Resistance), liberals (Anti-Nazi League and Unite Against Fascism) or ‘the anti-war movement’ (Respect).

Again, this may seem to have taken us some way from the question of terrorism. But this is not the case. The SWP’s and AWL’s judgments on *jihadi* islamist terror, with which we began, reflect exactly the same methods. Islamists are *both* misguided anti-imperialists (SWP) *and* utopian-reactionaries who if they obtained power would crush the workers’ movement (AWL). Communists need to fight *both* for united action with them in the very limited cases where it is possible, *and* to struggle against their politics and fight for workers’ self-defence organisations which could defeat any attacks they launch on the workers’ movement ☐

MULTICULTURALISM

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Fighting for assimilation

Communists are anti-racists. Then again, so are Tony Blair, Charles Kennedy and Michael Howard. So are we subscribing to a bourgeois ideology then? No, of course not. But what this shows is that anti-racism - like democracy itself - is an essentially *contested* category or ideology. Scientific socialism would not be scientific if it did not aim to go beyond the mere surface appearance of things.

This brings us to the long simmering debate over multiculturalism. Does it automatically follow that anti-racists are also multiculturalists? Is multiculturalism just another word for anti-racism? For our Socialist Workers Party comrades, for instance, the answer is obvious - since the experience of multiculturalism has been “overwhelmingly positive” (*Socialist Worker* December 21 2001). The editor of *Tribune*, Mark Seddon, echoes this view in a recent letter to *The Guardian*: “The opposite of multiculturalism is the monoculturalism that defined Britain in the 1950s, much as it probably still does in places like the Falklands or the white suburbs of Australia” (April 13). Many others, whether on the left or not, would endorse such multiculturalists sentiments.

However, we communists argue that multiculturalism - like the institutionalised anti-racism of the state - is a fundamentally bourgeois ideology, the theory and practice of which acts as a *rival* to our internationalism. Yet this in no way means that we are insensitive to the definitional complexities and political-cultural nuances that surround the multicultural debate.

The current round of soul-searching was sparked off by an interview that appeared two weeks ago in *The Times* (April 3) with Trevor Phillips, the “race relations chief” - to use the argot of the rightwing press. In this interview, the current chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality appears to have done something of a *volte-face* by severely criticising, if not renouncing, multiculturalism. Hitherto the Caribbean-born Phillips had been regarded as one of its leading advocates.

He told *The Times* that multiculturalism was out of date because it encouraged “separateness” between communities - it was now urgent to “assert a core of Britishness” because we find ourselves in “a different world from the 1960s and 1970s”. He added that multiculturalism stood for the wrong things: “What we should be talking about now is how we reach an integrated society, one in which people are equal under the law, where there are some shared values.”

Interestingly, and topically, Phillips focused on the situation of young muslims in the UK, claiming that they were being “indocinated by extremists” who told them they would never be part of British society, because of their colour and religion. Phillips stressed: “The first thing we must do is call them British again and again and again. Tell them they are British muslims and we accept them.”

Minor mayhem erupted when this interview appeared. On the one hand, howls of outrage that a major liberalistic shibboleth had been slain. On the other, the likes of Norman Tebbit and the half-mad Melanie Phillips in the *Daily Mail* welcomed Phillips’s ‘conversion’. A sinner repents! So Phillips attempted to clarify his position in a follow-up interview for the same newspaper, where he says: “It is important to differentiate the idea of a multicultural society, which is a fact of life in Britain, from *multiculturalism*” (original emphasis, April 10).

One way to respond to Phillips’s argumentation is just to damn him as a reactionary and apostate - or worse. Thus Simon Woolley, the coordinator of Operation Black Watch, fumed: “Trevor’s remark’s have opened the floodgates to bigotry. Many people think being

African, Caribbean or muslim is incompatible with being British.” We can see that comrade Dave Osler was not too impressed by Trevor Phillips’s comments either (see opposite).

But for communists and socialists there is a kernel of truth to Phillips’s words. The ideology of multiculturalism has been divisive and *anti-integrationist*, acting to erode class politics and class identity. Since the late 1970s, if not earlier, we have witnessed the establishment’s *racialisation* of local government, acting under the guise of official anti-racism or ‘political correctness’. Concretely, the burgeoning corrupt culture of anti-racist jobbery and ‘regeneration’ grant handouts (fancy a community centre - with maybe some nice full-time posts?) gave the council bosses a weapon *against* the working class. Councils have ruled over *rival* supplicant groups, each defined on the basis of so-called ethnicity. This tick-box anti-racism ensured that our class was split-up into white British, Irish, Asian, Asian-British, West Indian, Jewish, Bengali (northern and southern of course), Chinese, Vietnamese, Somali, etc - and near endless sub-divisions thereof. Unsurprisingly, the local government bosses - and their backers in Whitehall - were all too happy to promote the virtues of ‘diversity’ and ‘difference’, as this effectively put the kibosh on the development of class consciousness and class *unity*.

The ideologues of multiculturalism provided a handy philosophical well from which the government could draw upon when needed. One of the best - and perhaps notorious - examples was the 2000 government-sponsored inquiry headed by Lord Parekh and published under the good auspices of the Runnymede Trust, *The future of multi-ethnic Britain* (Trevor Phillips was one of the report’s signatories). Here we see the doctrine of multiculturalism at its most extreme and damaging. This large report was stuffed with phrases about Britain becoming “a community of communities” and, at the very least, it was a recipe for communalist and separatist division and disintegration.

Somewhat predictably, upon publication *The future of multi-ethnic Britain* was essentially applauded by the SWP - the only problem with it, as far as our comrades were concerned, was that it ‘did not go far enough’. Sound familiar? Yes, this was almost exactly the same way it greeted the Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence - by attempting to out-Macpherson

“We communists argue that multiculturalism - like the institutionalised anti-racism of the state - is a fundamentally bourgeois ideology, the theory and practice of which acts as *rival* to our internationalism”

Macpherson. Our comrades, like many others on the left, did not have the theory or courage to develop an independent *proletarian* critique of the establishment’s bourgeois anti-racism, as this would have meant confronting and confounding one of the SWP’s central dogmas - that the bourgeois state, or capitalism, is inherently racist.

Ditto with multiculturalism and Lord Parekh’s report. The bourgeoisie cannot *really* be multiculturalists - can they? In the SWP thought-world, if members of the bourgeoisie or ruling class say that they are pro-multiculturalists then either they are lying bastards or - at best - they can only be half-hearted about it. Hence comrade Hassan Mahamdallie wrote in *Socialist Worker*: “Those attacking [*The future of multi-ethnic Britain*] are exactly the same people who attacked the Macpherson report into the Stephen Lawrence scandal The report says that there is a ‘multicultural drift’ in society in general. It means by this that on a day to day basis people of different ‘ethnic’ groups tend to mix together. The report says state institutions should speed up this process through legislation and positive declarations of multiculturalism.

“There are two faults with this argument. Firstly, the way in which black and white have integrated with one another has not been due

Fighting fund

Standing appreciation

Comrade TR doesn’t have a standing order with the *Weekly Worker* - but he still remembers to send us a cheque every month. As usual, I have received his donation of £55 and, as usual, I thank him for his generosity.

However, not everyone has such reliable memories. Some comrades add a bit to their annual resubscriptions, while others send us the occasional one-off. But, if you really want to help us on a regular basis and in a way you probably won’t even notice, there’s nothing like a standing order. MM has had one for some time and it’s for a sum that is noticeable - £60. And much appreciated it is too!

But it’s really all those web readers who I am appealing to again. Last week we

notched up 8,325 hits, but once again we got no web donations via our PayPal facility. It’s really so easy using a credit or debit card and it would help ensure that the service all you internet readers obviously find so useful continues.

Nevertheless, thanks to the comrades mentioned above, plus BP, LK and RF, our April total now stands at £310. Let’s try to bust right through our £500 target this month - we could do with it!

Robbie Rix

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

to a 'drift'. It has been the result of battles that have taken place largely at the base of society Secondly, the report looks to the very institutions that are part of the problem for the solution to racism. It asks the government to declare itself 'anti-racist'. Yet this is a government that has passed anti-immigration controls that have boosted racism. Studies have shown for decades that major employers discriminate against black workers, yet only a handful a year are taken to court. The idea that the police can be reformed by a top-down approach of the 'carrot and the stick' will not work. For 40 years and more black organisations have been saying that the police are racist to the core, yet the police are still allowed to get away with racist stop and searches, and black deaths in custody" (October 21 2000).

As the above passage clearly reveals, the SWP's comrade Mahamdallie just *assumes* that multiculturalism is a progressive ideology that acts to integrate the white and black working class.

It is worthwhile examining the recent comments of Tariq Modood, professor of sociology at Bristol University, who was also a signatory to the Parekh report. Professor Modood suggested that Phillips "was in danger of arguing for assimilation rather than integration" (see *The Times* April 10). Unfortunately, this is a very common, though erroneous, viewpoint - that is, the *counterpoising* of integrationism and assimilationism. But for communists the idea that we are faced with a dichotomous choice between the two concepts is arrant nonsense. Indeed, it is surely the case that there can be no real integration *without* assimilation and - cardinally - the actual fight for assimilation. Thus the real debate that needs to be had is around what *sort* of assimilation we fight for, not whether assimilation is desirable. Obviously, for us communists the assimilation we are fighting for one is one that is democratic and voluntary - which originates *from below* and not from above.

That, of course, is what brings us directly into conflict with the parched and pinched vision outlined by Trevor Phillips - not to mention Norman Tebbit and unbalanced *Daily Mail* hacks. Phillips's "core" British values seem to revolve around the bard, queen and country. In other words, Phillips and his co-thinkers want migrant workers to 'assimilate' the values of *official/establishment* Britain, with its boundless national myths and inventions. There is no room here for our proletarian, progressive Britain - held

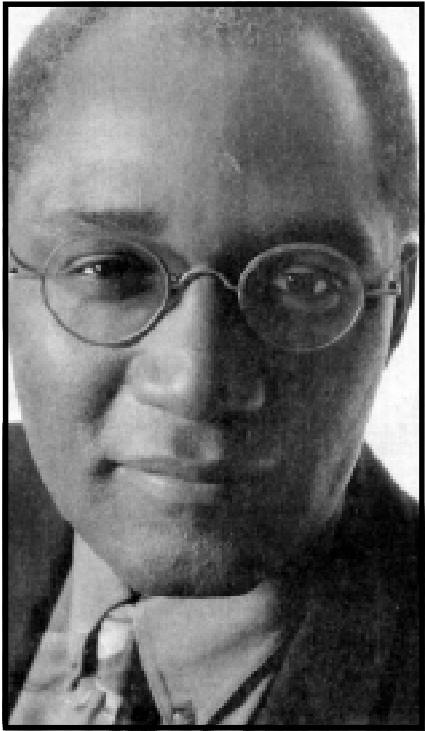
together by the universal bond of class commonality. (Which is not to say that it would not be excellent indeed if workers of Somali, Bengali or Bulgarian origin were reading - and enjoying - William Shakespeare, or Milton, in the original English.)

This message is not new, of course. In this context, the 69-page Cante report published in the wake of the so-called 'race riots' that erupted two years ago in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham takes on some importance. Being also a semi-inchoate bourgeois critique of multiculturalism, in many ways this document supplied the template for the 'new patriotism' of Phillips and others. Just like him, the report's intended crusade was to impart a new feeling of national belonging - we all need to learn to love the monarchy and the benevolent UK state. The document declared that "a meaningful concept of 'citizenship' needs establishing and championing" - which is to be "based on a few common principles that are shared and observed by all sections of the community". Suggestions for "common elements of nationhood" include respect for the law, support for women's rights, respect for religious differences, etc.

Notoriously, the report went on to demand that "immigrants should adopt norms of British life and speak better English". That logic led directly to Cante's prime recommendation - that a 'loyalty test' was required, which should take the form of a clear "statement of allegiance" (or a US-style "oath of allegiance") to the UK state. In order to get your British passport, you will need to demonstrate "a clear primary loyalty to this nation". As we know, the establishment has now introduced this "statement of allegiance", which two months ago saw no other than prince Charles himself preside over the UK's very first - and gruesome - citizenship ceremony.

Communists treat such nationalistic rituals and ceremonies with contempt. We also utterly reject the 'cure' offered up by pro-multiculturalist die-hards like Madelaine Bunting, who writes: "But the way forward is unlikely to be the 'integration' recently called for by Trevor Phillips, the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality. It smacks too much of assimilation. What British muslims need is *more of their own* schools, better-resourced mosques and community organisations and British-educated imams" (my emphasis *The Guardian* April 12).

We need this like we need a hole in the head. The pernicious separatism advocated by



Trevor Phillips: parched and pinched

Bunting is certainly in tune though with the Blairite line of recent years, which has been to push faith schools in the name of 'promoting excellence' - the argument being that it is wrong to deny parents of non-christian religions the opportunity to send their children to a faith school in the state system. Bizarrely, the very same people have also been heard to say that to expand the number of denominational and faith-based institutions is somehow to 'promote inclusiveness' - talk about having your multiculturalist cake and eating it.

But we communists say away with *all* faith-based schools and colleges. Just look at the British-Asian youth in the northern towns and cities - the object of so much concern in the Cante report and in the Trevor Phillips's *Times* interview. With their broad and distinctive accents, they sound, and are, as British as Yorkshire pudding and *Coronation Street*. We now have *new* ways to be British and Asian. That is surely something to be celebrated, not condemned or reversed.

Communists eagerly look forward to the voluntary and democratic merging of all the peoples, nationalities and cultures of the world ☐

Eddie Ford

Why Trevor is far right

Just too damn genteel to stanley-knife an unaccompanied asylum-seeker on the way home from the kebab shop after kicking-out time? Why not use your broadsheet column to beat up on every immigrant in Britain all at once instead? Congratulations! You have met the liberal intellectual head-hunters.

New Labour is in headlong retreat over racism. And people once associated with the left are providing the theoretical justification. Imagine a broadcast on Radio Milles Collines - suitably laden with polite euphemism and read out in an awfully, awfully Balliol-boy accent, of course - and you get the picture.

So *Prospect* editor David Goodhart gets a two-page spread in *The Guardian* to agonise over his 'progressive dilemma' theory. Several thousand posh words are devoted to the neo-Powellite proposition that the working class is too thick to tolerate further immigration.

Next up is Trevor Phillips, a man who allied with the old Communist Party as a 70s student politician and supporter of black community self-defence against the National Front. These days he turns up in the Murdoch press, demanding the abandonment of multiculturalism. When leading black members of Britain's ruling party start pandering to golf club prejudice, you just know things are getting bad out there in the mean, mean streets of London N1.

Phillips calls for the assertion of a "core of Britishness", which he somehow seems to equate with Shakespeare. But what ex-

periences will an alienated Asian youth in a bog-standard comprehensive in a high-unemployment northern town have in common with - and hey, let's pluck an example totally at random here - a politically-connected former television executive currently pulling down a six-figure salary as the head of a race relations quango?

Then increasingly batty ex-feminist Melanie Phillips - no relation to the Commission for Racial Equality chief, presumably - steps in to "welcome" these arguments to her *Daily Mail* readership, even commending her namesake for being "brave". To cap it all, former SDPer Polly Toynbee writes a supportive polemic titled 'Why Trevor is right'. All on first name terms in this little circle. But shouldn't that be 'Why Trevor is far right', Polly?

Meanwhile, cabinet ministers freely employ the sort of language that hasn't emanated from mainstream politicians for almost three decades. David Blunkett speaks of Britain being "swamped" by people of a different culture. The last person to talk like that was Maggie Thatcher, when I was still a zit-covered teenage punk rocker spinning Buzzcocks 45s on my bedroom Dansette.

When the BBC catches trainee police officers dressing up in Ku Klux Klan gear and praising the killers of Stephen Lawrence, depend on Blunkett to home in on the real villain of the piece. That's right - the reporter who did the story. And this bloke was once considered a municipal socialist.

But then, what else to expect from the party that subjects those asylum-seekers that man-

age to avoid Britain's *Konzentrationslager* gulag to life on less-than-income-support benefit levels, all the time under the threat of seeing their kids trundled away if their application is finally rejected?

It's not that most Labour Party members are actually racists, when it comes down to it. The problem is, the whole Third Way crew - not just Goodhart, Phillips, Phillips, Toynbee and Blunkett, but the likes of Peter Mandelson and Anthony Giddens as well - have been mesmerised by the rise of neo-fascism on mainland Europe.

They theorise that much of the far right's electoral support comes from former core social democratic voters. Probably that is correct. Yet instead of trying to promote a left agenda that disarms discrimination by connecting with real working class concerns, they argue that Labour needs to head off neo-fascism at the pass by getting 'tough on immigration'.

Sadly, there are two major flaws with this strategy. The first is, it doesn't work. Nick Griffin will always make a more convincing racist than David Blunkett, no matter how hard Blunkett tries to goosetep. The second is, even if it did work, it is simply immoral.

Open borders is not just an academic demand. On June 11, the BNP will wake up celebrating their first batch of MEPs and dozens of councillors around the country. Respect may well lose all its deposits. And the English left will still be puzzling themselves over how it all happened ☐

Dave Osler

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 Communist Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.**

☐ **Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.**

☐ **Communists oppose the neo-conservative war plans of the Project for the New American Century and all imperialist wars but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.**

☐ **Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.**

☐ **The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.**

☐ **Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.**

☐ **Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.**

☐ **The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be readied to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.**

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

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

☐ **Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.**

☐ **Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.**

☐ **Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.**

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

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

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weekly worker

**Preparations
continue
despite
bureaucratic
hitches**

ESF democracy vital

Only six months to go before the European Social Forum comes to London. Up to 50,000 people are expected in the capital from October 14-17, hopefully to be greeted with an inspiring programme, affordable charges, lots of cultural events and, of course, smooth organisation.

Well, we are not quite there yet. Money is still in rather short supply, with London Unison's donation of £50,000 being the only 'real' financial subsidy so far. There is talk about other contributions, including from the GLA, regional and local trade union branches and NGOs. However, the ESF company structure, which was supposed to clear the financial blockage by sorting out the issue of 'legal liability', has still not materialised and various sets of lawyers have been working on it for several weeks. A working group charged with finding accommodation for the tens of thousands of visitors has only just met for the first time. Another group on 'venues' has just begun to book meeting halls in Bloomsbury (our "overflow location") - not an easy task in view of the shortage of money.

If one is to believe the main organisers (around the Socialist Workers Party and the Greater London Assembly), the reason for our slow progress is that we have "wasted months discussing organisational structures", as Redmond O'Neill, who officially represents mayor Ken Livingstone at our meetings, recently put it. Comrade O'Neill, a leading member of the shadowy sect Socialist Action, has done his best to keep democracy out of the process. For months, the 'official bidders' around the SWP and GLA rejected all calls for meetings to be held in public. Instead, they put together the bid in private and refused access to interested organisations not to their liking.

Groups like the CPGB actually had to *fight* in order to get involved and we even had to gatecrash some meetings. Not surprisingly, many people tried to reverse this undemocratic process - by putting forward proposals for transparent structures. Rather than "wasting time", our insistence opened the way for the - admittedly limited - democracy that we enjoy today: meetings are now open to everybody, minutes are taken and published on the temporary ESF website and even the exclusion of CPGB members from meetings of the coordinating committee has stopped. This latter victory was mainly down to our European comrades insisting at the March 6-7 ESF assembly in London that it was "unacceptable" to enshrine the right to exclude people from meetings in our official ESF statement.

However, control-freakery has not been beaten yet. It is the main reason why we are so behind in our preparations. It is difficult to believe, but again a hard *fight* was needed to set up certain much needed working groups, which are only now starting to emerge. For example, for months Redmond O'Neill and the SWP rejected the establishment of a body that would facilitate communication between ESF groups, set up email lists and liaise with the private company that will design our website. Because comrade O'Neill refused to allow anybody but a GLA

employee access to the officially advertised email address ("we cannot decentralise such an important task"), incoming emails were not answered for over four weeks. We had to *fight* to establish correspondence as a standing item of the coordinating committee's agenda (since then, the item has fallen off it most weeks).

The vital programme working group gathers every two weeks - for a maximum of 90 minutes. Calls to increase either the frequency or the time of those meetings have been rejected by the SWP-Socialist Action majority. This has led to the predictable outcome where items fall off the agenda over and over again and decisions are then made either outside the meetings or have to be rushed through without proper discussion - because "we are running out of time".

Debates or rallies?

The group has finally started to put together a proposal on the themes for the plenary sessions and how to select the speakers for these. Plenary sessions are the only centrally organised meetings during the ESF and are therefore top of the programme hierarchy. Seminars and workshops, on the other hand, are organised by groups from across Europe themselves.

For a few months, proposals made by comrades from the CPGB, Dave Timms from the World Development Movement and others on how to put together plenaries, seminars and workshops were ignored by the SWP-SA majority and pushed off the agenda. However, at the latest pinched meeting of the programme group, Socialist Action member Anne Kane (who officially represents the group Abortion Rights) put forward similar proposals to ours. Unfortunately, her paper does not benefit from our previous very fruitful discussions - like all other Socialist Action members, Anne shunned the working group for months, only getting involved at the beginning of February. Since then though, a minimum of 10 SA members attend the meetings, always arguing for exactly the same points - like a bunch of clones. The SWP (also in pretty heavy attendance) immediately accepted her paper as the main discussion document and it has become the only item on the agenda since.

In the discussions, CPGB comrades stressed the need for these plenary sessions to be more than mere rallies, where speaker after speaker repeats similar points (this is what often happened in Paris and Florence). Instead, we should utilise these meetings to organise *real debates* around the big, living issues that concern the left across Europe - recognising debate and discussion as positive, not something to be ashamed of.

Quite a lot of people disagree - amongst them our friends from the SWP. Not known as a big fan of debate, Alex Callinicos rejected the idea of selecting speakers so as to make sure that they would represent different opinions across the European left. "Plenary sessions are the public face of the ESF. They set the tone of the whole event. They need to be an advertisement for our views" - and naturally, in the SWP's methodology, open debates are not a good advertisement. They are seen as a divisive nuisance, rather than as a method to arrive at a common view and

perhaps common action.

However, at the meeting of the bigger organising committee on April 13, the comrades changed their mind and surprisingly supported my proposal - which was all that was needed to declare a 'consensus'. Our definition for a plenary session will now include the formulation, "Themes in the plenary sessions will introduce the broad issues that bring us together in the ESF. Speakers should reflect a broad range of views. Where possible, debates should be encouraged."

This is a great step forward in making sure our ESF will actually be an interesting event that can surpass the first ESFs in Florence and Paris. A little throwback, however, occurred at the end of the coordinating committee: Milena Buyum (National Assembly against Racism) proposed that none of the very obvious disagreements that exist amongst us should be raised at the ESF assembly in Istanbul: "We have to present our proposals in a very united way. We all have a duty to put disagreements aside". When some people, including myself, showed our dissent, she snapped: "You don't have to shake your head, Tina. These are the official proposals, whether you like them or not."

The comrades can just about stomach disagreement and debate when they are organised on a proper platform - but in our meetings? Never!

Europe 'not important'

Anne Kane's paper also makes some suggestions for titles for the plenary sessions. It argues that there should be no more than 10 plenaries - and then goes on to list 14 topics, including 'Trade unions in the global economy', 'A sustainable planet', 'Public services - resistance to privatisation', 'For equal rights' and so on. All worthy causes, but hardly exciting stuff. These are to serve not just as titles for the plenary sessions, but as programmatic threads for the rest of the ESF programme.

More disturbing, however, was what was *missing* from comrade Kane's list of themes. At first I thought the lack of any theme to do with the European Union or its constitution was an oversight. However, the responses to my proposal to include such a theme served as a real eye-

opener on the state of the British left.

"Well, we have got 'Euro-fascism' and 'World and European responses to the new American imperialism'. I really don't see why we need another meeting on Europe", said Milena Buyum. Her Socialist Action comrade, Anne Kane, added: "The EU and its constitution is just not a big issue. Why should we have a whole plenary session on it?"

Comrades from the SWP were not much better: "We will probably have to have a plenary on the EU constitution, as I can imagine that our European friends will insist on it. It is probably unavoidable," mused Alex Callinicos. Someone else thought we would have to go along with it - otherwise we would look "isolationist".

It is not 'isolationism' the British left is suffering from - it is economism: questions of democracy and how we are ruled are seen as a *diversion* from the 'real issues': trade unions, the NHS, public services, etc, important as these are. Debates on the state, our rulers or the monarchy are "boring" and "not important". Is it "boring" that the proposed EU constitution will stipulate that postal services across Europe have to be privatised? Is it "not important" that the free market must be given access to all spheres of society? Is it of no consequence that the European ruling classes are moving towards a super-state with its own army?

Meeting the next day, the coordinating committee was not any keener on the issue. "It just doesn't make for a very exciting meeting," said Jane Fisher from Friends of Ireland (and Socialist Action). "Think of something exciting." I was told by Sarah Colborne (Palestine Solidarity Campaign and SA). As exciting as 'Anti-war and for peace' or 'For equal rights', I presume.

However, all proposals have to be ratified by the April 16-18 European assembly which meets in Istanbul. I expect our European comrades will have something to say on the importance of the EU and its new constitution.

More work needed

Although I am confident the third ESF can be a big success, at the moment we are far behind in our preparations. We have already missed the deadline we set

ourselves to begin the application process for seminars and workshops. From April 2, groups should have been able to put forward their suggestions. However, because we are never able to get through the agenda at our meetings, we have not yet decided the actual mechanism for proposing a seminar: The comrades from the SWP, for example, have argued that any proposal would have to be presented by a minimum of "three groups from across Europe".

Seminars will of course have to be merged. Last year, for example, over 1,000 proposals were made - but there was only room for 300. However, we should approach this question from a different angle: Would it not actually be a *good* thing if organisations from across Europe, who might have never heard of each other, find that they share similar ideas or campaigning priorities? We should *encourage* organisations to *voluntarily* come together - and possibly form Europe-wide networks in the process. Surely, this is the main function of the ESF in any case. We must get our own act together if we are serious about building an alternative to the bosses' European Union.

To demand in effect that only groups that have already established European connections can propose seminars is entirely counterproductive. It favours the 'big players' - the big trade unions and sects like the SWP, which has its very own International Socialist Tendency. How exciting would a seminar be that brings together the Turkish, Polish and Scottish section of the IST? □

Tina Becker

ESF Diary

Tuesday April 20, 6pm - accommodation working group, City Hall, Greater London Authority.

Wednesday April 21, time and venue to be confirmed - outreach working group. Contact emma_d@lineone.net to get involved.

Thursday April 29, time and venue to be confirmed - programme working group. Contact dave@wdm.org.uk to get involved.

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