

Workers ***ACTION***

No.18

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Blair can be stopped

**Build the
anti-war
movement**

Labour and trade union news and analysis,
political history, debate, reviews

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Workers Action – what we stand for

Workers Action is a Marxist tendency in the labour movement.

In the present situation, after two decades of defeats, with strike action at a very low level and a leadership all too happy to accommodate to the pro-free market climate, Workers Action believes that the most important task is a struggle to renovate the existing labour movement, politically and industrially, so that it can fight effectively in its own interests.

This means a struggle in the labour movement as it is, with all its problems and weaknesses. Most workers continue to support the Labour Party in elections or by union affiliation. At present, attempts to get round this political fact by mounting electoral challenges to Labour are, in most cases, futile and sectarian, and are likely to lead to greater demoralisation. Most importantly, they represent an abandonment of any serious political struggle against the Labour leadership. Workers Action supporters are therefore active in the Labour Party as well as the trade unions and political campaigns.

Capitalism condemns millions to exploitation, poverty, disease and war, so that when its leading international bodies meet, they have to do so behind lines of police. However, Workers Action believes that the relative importance of the anti-capitalist movement over the last few years is a sign not of the strength of the left, but of its weakness and marginalisation. The new free market world order is based on 20 years of defeats for the international working class. Protests outside the conferences of organisations such as the WTO are important, but must not be a substitute for building a socialist leadership in the working class.

Workers Action supports all progressive national struggles against imperialism, without placing any confidence in the leaders of such movements. Neither bourgeois nationalism, nor petty-bourgeois guerrillaism, nor religious fundamentalism can advance the interests of the oppressed workers and peasants. We are for the building of a socialist leadership on an international scale.

The collapse of Stalinism in 1989, compounded by the move to the right of the Labour Party and the European Socialist parties, has resulted in an ideological crisis for the left. Some, like the SWP, deny that such a crisis exists – indeed, they claim that this is the best period for a generation in which to fight for socialism. Others question whether the socialist project, fought for by the working class and its allies, is still viable. Workers Action believes that it is, but that to rebuild a fighting left relevant to the concerns of workers means rejecting the methods of sect-building and self-proclaimed vanguardism.

However, Workers Action has a non-dogmatic approach to this crisis of the left. We see it as an opportunity to evaluate critically many of our previously held conceptions in the light of experience. Marxism is a critical ideology or it is nothing. Socialists cannot march into the 21st century with their programme frozen in the 1920s.

If you are interested in joining us or discussing further, write to us at PO Box 7268, London E10 6TX or e-mail us at workers.action@btinternet.com

Editorial

War against Iraq – a decisive issue for the labour movement

As we go to press Tony Blair has made a concerted effort to present the case for war with Iraq. His warmongering is probably the biggest risk of his career. Never before has Blair been so at odds with public opinion, his own party, and most of the rest of the world over such a crucial issue. Even the Parliamentary Labour Party contains a significant level of opposition, although if it came to a vote it's unlikely that Blair would have to rely on the Tories. But of course, if Blair decides to take Britain into an all-out war with Iraq, it's almost certain that parliament won't get to vote on it – the arch-'moderniser' will rely on the feudal royal prerogative.

The Blair-Bush axis has developed a good cop/bad cop strategy in relation to a war on Iraq. Publicly, Blair poses as a 'cautious' friend of US imperialism, warning against a unilateral attack on Iraq. There may indeed be a grain of truth in this public image; a war may be a fairly popular move in terms of US domestic politics, but it faces mass opposition anywhere else in the world. It is possible that the US president could be genuinely unaware of the levels of opposition to his sabre rattling.

Whatever the truth of their relationship, Blair has clearly adopted the role of PR adviser to the White House. The current strategy appears to be to cajole a somewhat reluctant United Nations into giving cover for their war. In fact, it will probably be sufficient for China, France and Russia to support – or at least not to veto – a new resolution that Iraq will not be able or willing to fulfil.

As a declining imperialist power, Britain can punch above its weight by virtue of the fact that it has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and because it consistently acts as a loyal servant to the world's only superpower. From this standpoint it is in Blair's interest to maintain the relevance of the United Nations, while at the same time pushing for war at the earliest possible opportunity.

Saddam Hussein's acceptance of weapons inspectors may have created a problem for Bush and Blair, but it hasn't stopped the march to war. Already, British and American officials have started talking about 'armed escorts' going in to enforce inspections – in other words, that Iraq must not only accept inspections, but military occupation as well. The next weeks and months are going to be filled with endless wrangling at the UN, with the US constantly threatening to go it alone, or at least with just Britain as an ally.

Divisions in the ruling class

The one thing that may make Blair think again is the possible damage to him domestically in the face of a massive anti-

war movement. Both in Britain and the US there are significant concerns about the advisability of launching a war. Even Henry Kissinger, who must be responsible for more death and destruction than any living person, is opposed to it. Many of the political and military figures who served in George Bush senior's administration think it is a somewhat precarious plan, and in Blair's cabinet a number of ministers are opposed to a war.

We shouldn't be under any illusion that vast swathes of the ruling elite have had a road-to-Damascus conversion to pacifism. All serious bourgeois strategists are only too aware of the risks involved in such an adventure. There is significantly greater opposition to a war now than to any of the previous unjust wars launched by the US in modern times. We should not rule out the possibility that this opposition might dissipate quickly when a war is launched and the full power of the state propaganda machine moves into action, but neither should we dismiss the impact a mass anti-war movement with developed organisational structures can have.

Probably the biggest risk as far as the US and British leaders are concerned is that of creating such turmoil in the Middle East that it blows up in their faces, leaving them with little influence or control over the world's richest supply of oil.

Lies, damned lies and Blair's dossier

Tony Blair has been planning to release his dossier on Saddam Hussein for months now, though he hasn't hinted as to what it might reveal beyond the fact it will prove just how evil the Iraqi leader really is. According to Blair, he has been waiting until the time is right to release it. Whilst there are plenty of things that prove that Saddam is a tyrant, some of them were done with US and British approval, and even support, at a time when he was a western ally.

According to recent opinion polls, about 40 per cent of the British population oppose war with Iraq, as do 88 of the 100 Labour MPs polled for BBC Radio 4's Today programme. Bush and Blair are almost alone amongst world leaders in supporting a war, with the notable exception of that well-known supporter of international law and human rights, Ariel Sharon. One might be forgiven for thinking that now would be a good time to release a dossier of damning facts showing why Saddam Hussein must be stopped at all costs.

The problem is that if the dossier is released too soon there will be plenty of time for independent observers to check its claims. Whilst stories of Iraqi troops massing on the Saudi border, and of their throwing babies out of incubators, proved use-

ful propaganda in 1991, they were also completely false. On September 6, Blair flew to the US and held a joint press conference with Bush. Bush claimed that a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency proved Iraq's nuclear capacity. But, according to the IAEA website, 'with reference to an article published today in the *New York Times*, the International Atomic Energy Agency would like to state that it has no new information on Iraq's nuclear programme since December 1998 when its inspectors left Iraq. Only through a resumption of inspections in accordance with Security Council Resolution 687 and other relevant resolutions can the Agency draw any conclusion with regard to Iraq's compliance with its obligations under the above resolutions relating to its nuclear activities.'

Vice President Dick Cheney told a Veterans for Foreign Wars convention in Nashville last month that: 'The Iraqi regime has in fact been very busy enhancing its capabilities in the field of chemical and biological agents, and they continue to pursue their nuclear programme they began so many years ago. . . . We've gotten this from the first hand testimony of defectors, including Saddam's own son-in-law, who was subsequently murdered at Saddam's direction.' (*Chicago Tribune*, September 10, 2002.)

Scott Ritter, former head of the UN weapons inspection team (UNSCOM), tells a different story. After speaking to the US and British intelligence teams about the subject and reviewing the complete transcripts of Hussein Kamal's (Saddam's son-in-law) de-briefings, Ritter concluded that Kamal's evidence was completely in line with the findings of UNSCOM, that all weapons – biological, chemical, missile and nuclear – either never existed in the first place or had been destroyed.

US war aims

It is difficult to discern the exact thinking behind the current US policy, but one thing is absolutely clear – it is not about non-compliance with UN resolutions. The US used the weapons inspection teams as a means of getting CIA and Mossad agents into Iraq to spy on the regime and then pulled them out so they could start bombing. After a decade of bombing raids and crippling sanctions there is little incentive for Iraq to let in inspectors, and Bush has made it clear that even if Saddam did comply with UN resolutions, the US would still be pursuing a policy of 'regime change'. In reality, what the US would be angling for is some sort of coup launched from amongst Saddam's generals rather than a popular uprising, since the latter would be likely to result in a new regime at least as hostile as Saddam's to American interests.

A clear motivation for Bush is control of oil supplies. The world's largest and most pro-western oil producing country is Saudi Arabia, although al-Qaida's links to the country and the increase in anti-government feeling in the population does put its role as the US's second (next to Israel) most important ally in the Middle East into question. This has been re-enforced by the flight of billions of dollars of Saudi investment out of the US. According to Mo Mowlam, of all people:

'The possibility of the world's largest oil reserves falling into the hands of an anti-American, militant Islamist government is becoming ever more likely – and this is unacceptable. The Americans know they cannot stop such a revolution. They must therefore hope that they can control the Saudi oil fields, if not the government. And what better way to do that than to have a large military force in the field at the time of such disruption.'

'In the name of saving the west, these vital assets could be seized and controlled. No longer would the US have to depend on a corrupt and unpopular royal family to keep it supplied with cheap oil. If there is chaos in the region, the US armed forces could be seen as a global saviour. Under cover of the war on terrorism, the war to secure oil supplies could be waged. This whole affair has nothing to do with a threat from Iraq – there isn't one.' (*Guard-*

ian, September 5, 2002.)

This might all sound a bit far-fetched, but when you look at the other important oil producing countries, there is a growing dislike of the US throughout the Middle East, a pro-western coup in Venezuela has just failed, and oil from Uzbekistan is dependent either on paying tariffs to go through Russia or the development of a pipeline through Afghanistan, which seems even less likely than the US's ability to bring peace and prosperity to the country.

Build the anti war movement

The conditions for building an effective anti-war movement have never been better. Almost the whole of the trade union movement, a large number of Labour MPs, and the vast bulk of the ranks of the Labour Party oppose waging war on Iraq, along with a substantial proportion of the British population. We shouldn't get carried away by all this, however. Now is the crucial time to build a mass anti-war movement on a solid political footing. Many people have simply stated that they oppose a war 'without the backing of the UN', and there is a very real possibility that military action will either be sanctioned by, or get tacit approval from the UN. The political argument that has to be won is that the war must be opposed whether or not the UN gives it its blessing.

The Stop the War Coalition has correctly aimed at building the broadest possible alliance against a war. Anti-war groups need to be established in every locality, helping to build public support for the campaign and reaching out way beyond the left and the religious groups of which it is currently composed.

For socialists, mobilising Labour movement opposition has to be a key concern. The fact that 133 Labour MPs have supported Alice Mahon's early day motion opposing the war is fantastic, as is the fact that so many trade union general secretaries have voiced their opposition. But this on its own is not enough. There needs to be a movement built from the bottom up throughout the Labour movement, that includes Labour movement leaders, but is by no means limited to them. Labour Against the War, whilst it is still a small campaign, is of crucial strategic importance if we are to co-ordinate a struggle throughout the Labour movement. The fact that it has produced a counter-dossier on Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction way before Blair has been able to stump up his evidence has been of key propaganda value to the movement. However, the campaign cannot exist just on the basis of propaganda coups – it needs the affiliation of as many Labour Parties and trade unions as possible. As well as building the mass public protests, activists must be doing the nitty-gritty work of establishing labour movement policy against the war, of getting affiliations to both STWC and LATW, and of encouraging labour movement bodies to play a leading role in public debates and activities on the issue.

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Building the anti-war movement

Andrew Burgin
Press Officer, Stop the War Coalition

September 28 will see one of the largest ever anti-war marches to take place in this country. The march will travel under two slogans – ‘Don’t Attack Iraq’ and ‘Freedom for Palestine’.

Of course, in politics, there is always a danger in making such a prediction. At the time of writing this march is still five weeks off and the political situation is, to put it mildly, somewhat fluid. But what is fixed is the determination of the present US administration to attack Iraq as soon as politically and militarily possible.

The decision to invade Iraq was taken last January. Soon after September 11, 2001, some in the US administration saw the extended possibilities of what Bush called ‘Operation infinite justice’ but it was not until January that the actual planning for the invasion started. Buoyed by what they considered an easy victory in Afghanistan, Pentagon strategists set to work: bases were to be constructed in Qatar and Jordan; war games initiated and bulk carriers readied. In early April, Blair went to meet with Bush at his Texas ranch and emerged parroting Bush’s ‘regime change’ line.

Riding on a wave of popular sympathy after September 11, Bush and Blair clearly believed that they only had to mention al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein in the same breath and the world would support them. The reality has been different. The early claims of links between the New York terrorists and the Iraqi regime have been disproved. A whole series of lies was constructed to give credence to the allegation that the Iraqi regime was conspiring with Hizbollah or Hamas or whoever. Blair had a dossier of Saddam Hussein’s war crimes which he failed to release. We will see it soon no doubt.

Eventually the one remaining cry was ‘weapons of mass destruction’. Now as we know, only selected countries are allowed these special weapons, not all of them paragons of democracy: Pakistan and Israel to name but two. We also know, however, that this whole question is another fabrication. Not only do the former UNSCOM officials like Scott Ritter state that Iraq has been

effectively disarmed but privately US administration hawks concede that Iraq is no real threat.

Divisions have appeared within the American ruling class over its short-term tactics towards Iraq. On August 25, James Baker, former secretary of state, argued that Bush needed to carry the Congress with him and should allow a new weapons inspection programme in Iraq. His comments follow hard on the heels of those of Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft and ‘Stormin’ Norman’ Schwarzkopf and others. All urging caution and delay.

This infuriates those surrounding Bush, with defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleeza Rice, Richard Perle and Vice-President Dick Cheney all pushing for an immediate attack. For this extreme right-wing administration, Iraq is just the first destination on their shopping spree. The axis of evil: Iraq, Iran and North Korea is already much expanded and now includes Cuba, Somalia, Syria and others. In fact, the one remaining superpower with its massively increased military budget will brook no opposition anywhere on the planet. Operation infinite justice is in fact ‘operation infinite war’, with pre-emptive action the policy of choice.

However, Bush is now having to contend with a growing anti-war movement in America. There have been significant demonstrations opposing his policies towards Iraq and also attacking his support for big business – notably the April 20 demonstration in Washington which drew tens of thousands of anti-war activists.

Not only is the anti-war movement growing in America itself, it is an international movement. The recent opposition voiced to the proposed attack from the leaders of Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia expresses the concern of those regimes for their own futures. Demonstrations in the Middle East have included the demand ‘stop the slaughter – cut the oil’. There have even been reports of demonstrations by groups of women in Saudi Arabia. China and India both oppose Bush’s threat of pre-emptive action. In Europe the anti-war movement is growing and the slogan at the recent marches in Rome and Barcelona was ‘Against capital – against war’. In Germany, Bush’s recent visit was greeted by massive demonstrations and Schroeder started his re-election campaign by distancing himself from Bush’s war plans.

In Britain, the Stop the War Coalition has built one of the largest anti-war movements in Europe. On September 21, 2001, ten days after the horrific attacks in New York, over 2,000 people came together at a public meeting to express their wish for peace and their opposition to military retaliation. The Stop the War Coalition was born out

of that meeting. It has proved a durable instrument of the anti-war movement. Together with CND, the Muslim Association of Britain and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign it has organised six national demonstrations on the questions of Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan. Hundreds of rallies and local meetings have been held.

One of the essential features of the coalition is that it operates as a genuine coalition with the active participation of many diverse groups and individuals. Some critics have tried to dismiss it as a front for the Socialist Workers Party but this is just not true. Certainly the SWP is an important component of the coalition but what is new is socialists and others from different backgrounds working together around a limited number of political demands: 1) Stop the war; 2) Defend civil liberties; and 3) End the racist backlash. Around these demands have coalesced not only socialists but many from the Muslim community and the broader labour and trade union movement. Support has come from Plaid Cymru and leading members of the Green Party and the peace movement.

Central to the stability of the coalition has been the support of the trade unions. Many national unions have either affiliated to the coalition or have decided to support the September 28 march – Unison, CWU, FBU, Aslef, TSSA, RMT, NUJ. Emergency resolutions opposing war with Iraq are going to both the TUC and Labour Party conferences. In parliament, 161 members have signed Alice Mahon’s early day motion against the war.

As a coalition our main task is to build the largest and broadest movement against the ‘war on terror’ in Britain. We have to break the Bush/Blair alliance. What concerns a section of the US establishment is that they might have to go it alone on Iraq and that the attack might not be as straightforward as predicted by the ‘hawks’. Blair is increasingly isolated in British politics and could fall on this question.

Over the last few weeks there has been a surge in anti-war activity. As it became clear that Bush and Blair were moving inexorably towards war with Iraq and as they made it obvious that they were not prepared to either debate or allow discussion in the US congress or the British parliament, there was a huge outcry. From bishops to retired generals and cabinet members, large sections of the establishment began to voice doubt about the proposed attack. Their concerns centred on the legality of the attack: there needed to be a new UN resolution. Weapons inspectors should go back into Iraq, the sanctions should continue.

A danger for the anti-war movement would be to concentrate its fire on the ques-

tions of arms inspectors and United Nations resolutions. Although Rumsfeld and Cheney have made it clear that arms inspectors and UN resolutions are irrelevant, Jack Straw, the British foreign secretary, is arguing for the resumption of weapons inspections and Iraq to be given a deadline for resumption. This would only be a prelude to an attack further down the line.

What socialists in the anti-war movement should stress is that September 11 did inaugurate a new era in US foreign policy. After September 11, John Negroponte, chief US envoy to the United Nations, said 'we [the United States] may find that our self-defence requires further military action with respect to other organisations and other states'. Iraq with its oil reserves is just the next port of call.

Take the case of Iran. In his notorious 'axis of evil' State of the Union address, Bush said of Iran that it 'aggressively pursues these weapons [of mass destruction] and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom'. He couldn't be clearer. On August 28, the Bush administration issued a statement calling on Iran to 'stop harbouring al-Qaida members'. This follows Rumsfeld's assertion that al-Qaida are in Iraq and 'everyone knows it'. The bigger the lie the better.

The American ruling class has always had its eyes on central Asia with its vast oil and gas reserves. The war in Afghanistan has allowed it to establish bases throughout the region. What is new are the terms of engagement. The rules have changed since September 11. Pre-emptive action and the development of battlefield nuclear weapons to be used against those without them are the order of the day. In this respect the Bush regime finds echoes in the current Labour government with Geoff Hoon, Blair's defence minister, talking of using nuclear weapons in Iraq.

However, it is this reliance on its overwhelming military superiority which demonstrates the actual weakness of US global power. The rest of the world must be brought into line by military force or the threat of such force.

So September 28 requires us to expand our work and ensure the largest possible demonstration. As George Galloway says, 'on September 28, the STWC will mount what I believe to be the most significant demonstration in modern political history. On the eve of the Labour Party's conference the march and rally can shake the Labour leadership to the core. A mammoth demonstration will be heard across the Atlantic and around the world'.

An attack on Iraq is not set in stone and we have, through our action now, the possibility of preventing it.

Sizing up the Iraqi opposition

According to reports in the media, Iraqi opponents of Saddam Hussein favour a 'regime change' brought about by US-led military intervention, but Neil Murray discovers that the opposition groups are divided on this question

As Human Rights Watch and other organisations continually report, the Iraqi government engages in a broad array of human rights violations, including mass arrests, torture, summary executions, disappearances, and forced relocations. In Iraqi Kurdistan, armed Kurdish political parties and Iraqi security forces are also responsible for a wide variety of human rights violations, including the arbitrary detention of suspected political opponents, torture, and extrajudicial executions.

For socialists, our opposition to US war plans is not based on a defence of Saddam Hussein and his government; on the contrary, we have a more consistent record of opposition than those belatedly lining up to condemn them now. Our opposition to the war plans is based on a denial of the right of imperialism to determine the nature of governments of other countries, a recognition that they would impose a government compliant with their wishes (as they have done on many occasions, in many countries, including Iraq, in the past), and that any real 'regime change' must come through the organised opposition of the Iraqi working class and oppressed. Sanctions have already led to the deaths of many innocent Iraqis; war would lead to many more. While we oppose the use of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction', we oppose the arrogance of imperialist countries, which insist that only they have the right to possess (without inspection!) such weapons.

The US and Britain have been encouraging meetings of organisations opposed to Saddam Hussein and promoting them in the media. Colin Powell and Dick Cheney have fêted these meetings. However, not surprisingly, they have been selective in this, only giving succour and publicity to those organisations which generally agree with the US government's view of how change is to be brought about in Iraq. The US has been pouring money into these organisations. In 1998 the US Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act, which granted \$97 million to Iraqi opposition groups. \$15-\$20 million were allocated to efforts to cultivate ties to military and security officials around the Iraqi leader in the hopes of fomenting a coup d'état. The published accounts suggest that some funds might have gone to opposition Shiite, Kurdish, and other exiled opponents of Saddam, but that Bush administration officials reportedly focused on promoting a narrowly-based military takeover.

Herein lies the rub for both the US and the various opposition organisations that broadly support its intervention. While the US talks of the fight of democracy against

terrorism, it is aware that the institution of stable bourgeois democracy would be difficult to achieve in Iraq after 23 years of Saddam's rule, and that even such a democracy would not necessarily be as compliant with the US's 'world order' as it would like. Moreover, the fall of Saddam would as likely lead to the break-up of Iraq, with Islamist, secular and Kurdish groups arguing over the spoils. Much better a different military dictator who would rule the country with an equally strong arm as Saddam, but in line with US interests. Those in the US government favouring such a 'solution' are strengthened in their view by the fragmentation, fragility and constant falling out of the different Iraqi organisations. Their scepticism is reinforced by the fact that even some of the organisations most supportive of an invasion are opposed to the sanctions regime because of the suffering it is causing inside Iraq.

On the other hand, even those organisations most in favour of US intervention are rightly (and necessarily) wary of their ally, recognising that it left the uprisings of Kurds and Shiites to be crushed by Saddam in the aftermath of the Gulf War of 1991. Rather than rejecting such an unreliable ally, however, this often makes them shriller in their demands for intervention, calling on the US 'not to hold back'. They all have blueprints for a democratic (and federal) Iraq, but what relationship those would have to any reality after a US invasion is a moot point.

The Kurdish organisations seem to believe that any invasion by imperialism (or their more favoured option, a rebellion backed up by US force) would result in a democratic, federal Iraq with guaranteed rights (if not autonomy) for the Kurdish people and regions. This is an incredible illusion, given both the lack of concern for such rights by imperialism and the fact that it needs support for the invasion from other countries in the region, such as Turkey, which not only have an abysmal record of treatment of their own Kurdish minorities, but would also oppose giving autonomy to Kurds anywhere in the region on the grounds that it would encourage them elsewhere.

A constant theme of the different Iraqi oppositions seeking imperialist patronage (and funding) is the extent of their support inside Iraq and, in particular, in the Iraqi military, the latter being seen as essential to Saddam's downfall. It is nearly impossible to assess the reality of such claims, beyond recognising that there is a vested interest in exaggerating them. It is clear, however, that the politics and

background of some of the leading opposition figures casts doubt on their commitment to democracy.

Among those prepared to go along with any American military operation, provided it seriously aims to destroy the regime rather than merely deal it a blow, is the **Iraqi National Congress**, nominally an umbrella organisation for opposition factions, which in the past has championed the idea of using American military protection to carve out a 'safe haven' in Iraqi territory from which putative opposition forces could mount a guerrilla campaign against the regime. The INC's London-based spokesman, banker Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein, has said the INC would not favour an attack that sufficed with 'punishing the regime' and would reject one that targets the country's 'armed forces or infrastructure'. Rather, the INC 'calls for the Iraqi people to be helped to topple the regime'.

Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein is the cousin of King Faysal II, who was assassinated in 1958. Neither he nor the other main leader of the INC, Ahmad al-Chalabi, also a banker, has been to Baghdad since the 1950s. Washington may see them as potential figureheads with the real power remaining with the military.

About 22 per cent of Iraq's population are Kurds. The INC includes the two main Iraqi Kurdish parties that share control of northern Iraq through the Kurdish Regional Government and Kurdish National Assembly in the northern no-fly zone, the **Kurdistan Democratic Party** and the **Patriotic Union of Kurdistan**. They have long sought to balance their uneasy coexistence with the central government in Baghdad against their need to retain the goodwill of the US, whose aerial policing of the 'no-fly zone' above their enclave they see as the ultimate guarantor of their defence. They maintain that while they want political change in Iraq and a federal system under which the Kurdish areas would enjoy greater autonomy, they won't be party to attempts to overthrow the regime by external force. Thus the PUK said in a statement that while there was a desperate need for 'democratic change' in Iraq, 'such change cannot be brought about by means of foreign conspiracies, indiscriminate bombing, or the plotting of military coups'. That would 'inflict enormous harm on the Iraqi people and lead to a repeat of the tragedies we have suffered for so long', it said.

The differences within the INC eventually have previously led to its virtual collapse as a viable challenge to Saddam Hussein. In May 1994, the two main

Kurdish parties began fighting with each other over territory, revenues obtained from duties levied at the Iraq-Turkey border, and control over the Kurdish regional government based in Irbil. To bolster their positions against each other, the two factions sought outside support. The KDP, always more amenable than its rivals to pursuing autonomy negotiations with Baghdad, sought backing from Saddam Hussein. The PUK obtained a measure of support from Iran. The two Kurdish parties called on the INC as a mediator in their internecine disputes, but this task diverted the INC from its principal mission of fighting the regime. In 1996, the KDP invited in Iraqi forces in an attempt to wrest control of PUK territory.

The other organisations making up the INC are Iraqi National Accord, the Constitutional Monarchy Movement and the Tehran-based Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

The Iraqi Shiite Islamic fundamentalists came into the INC under the banner of the **Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI)**. SAIRI was set up in 1982 to increase Iranian control over Shiite opposition groups in Iraq and the Persian Gulf monarchies. Although SAIRI has distanced itself from Iran to some extent, Iran's Revolutionary Guard reportedly continues to provide it with weapons and training. SAIRI's close ties to Iran contributed to the failure of the Shiite uprising in southern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War; most Iraqis do not want an Islamic government or to be controlled by Iran. SAIRI's leader, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim, was the late Ayatollah Khomeini's choice to head an Islamic Republic of Iraq. Along with the main Kurdish groups, SAIRI is the main armed opposition to Saddam. It is made up of exiled members of Iraq's Shia

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community – which is based in the south and represents about 60 per cent of Iraq's 22 million inhabitants. SAIRI claims to have a sizeable guerrilla network inside Iraq. Western governments estimate that the group has a force of between 7,000 and 15,000 men. According to reports, the group's leadership does not agree that a US strike against Iraq is the best way to topple Saddam Hussein. And it is unlikely that its Iranian backers will agree to work with America. There are other Shia opposition groups operating within Iraq. The Shia community was involved in a failed uprising against the Iraqi president in 1999, partly in response to US encouragement. But America did not give the rebellion any military backing and the insurrection was suppressed. Thousands were killed.

During a visit to Kuwait, Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim said that a US attack on Iraq would be a 'natural' development in Washington's 'war on terror'. 'The Iraqi regime is a terrorist regime, which has used chemical and biological weapons and continues to hold on to them. And from this perspective, it is a natural thing for it to be targeted as part of the war on terror,' he remarked. 'We have our own plan for changing matters in Iraq so that the Iraqi people can rule in place of the regime's tyrannical dictatorship.' But Hakim's spokesman, Dr. Hamed al-Bayyati, said the SAIRI leader's remark in no way implied support for a prospective American bombardment. 'American military action would not be to the advantage of change in Iraq, of the Iraqi opposition or the people,' he said. 'Regimes aren't removed by air strikes,' he said, adding that the idea of Washington providing military support for a 'safe haven' in southern Iraq that could be used as a springboard for overthrowing the regime was also a non-starter for purely practical reasons. Bayyati indicated that SAIRI was not necessarily opposed to the use of external military force against the regime, such as enforcement by the UN of its resolutions demanding that the Iraqi authorities stop repressing the population, but was against any 'unilateral American action'. He said that previous American offensives against Iraq had not been intended to bring down the regime, and argued that Washington had no apparent plans for doing that now. It was instead hoping that an attack would trigger a coup from within the regime 'by the military or security forces or a member of the ruling family', and that is not the kind of change the Iraqi people aspire to, he said.

A spokesman for Iraq's other major Shiite Islamist opposition group, the **Daawa Party**, said an American attack

would only make life harder for the long-suffering Iraqi people, and would provoke ferocious repression from the regime to pre-empt any popular uprising. 'That the regime is terrorist and has destructive weapons is something no one disputes, but history has shown that bombing, destruction and sanctions do not lead to its collapse, but further compound the suffering of the Iraqi people,' said Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Jaafari added that if the international community wanted to promote political change in Iraq, it could do so by non-military means, such as indicting Iraqi leaders for war crimes. The failure to do so has left Iraqis unconvinced that the US really wants to replace the regime, as has the bitter memory of the 1991 uprising that immediately followed the Gulf War which Washington verbally encouraged, only to sit back and watch as it was mercilessly crushed by government forces. Jaafari also stressed that it was wrong-headed to think that because intensive American air strikes against Afghanistan led to the collapse of the Taliban regime, that the same could apply to Iraq, emphasising that the social fabric of, and power structure in, the two countries is so different as to make comparisons invalid.

Like the Daawa Party, the **Iraqi Communist Party** is not part of the Iraqi National Congress. Sobhi al-Jumaili of the Iraqi Communist Party said that while an American attack on his country looked likely, it would not serve the interests of the Iraqi people or the cause of political change in the country. 'We have always been against the military option and continue to be. Changing the regime is the responsibility of the Iraqi people,' he said. External powers could help by lending 'political and moral support' to the Iraqi people and opposition, above all by lifting the draconian UN economic sanctions, which he argued were strengthening the regime's hold on power and making the people suffer. Jumaili said sanctions should be decoupled from the issue of disarmament, and the international community should seek to enforce the UN Security Council resolution upholding human rights in Iraq while continuing to subject the government to diplomatic isolation and an arms embargo. Jumaili also urged the US to 'stop interfering in the affairs of the Iraqi opposition' to suit its own purposes, charging that American meddling was impeding efforts to form an independent broad-based opposition front.

The **Iraqi National Accord** (INA), headed by Iyad Alawi, consists primarily of military and security officers who had defected from Iraq and who were perceived to have residual influence over

military and security elites around Saddam. The INA's prospects for success appeared to brighten in August 1995 when Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamal al-Majid – architect of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes – defected to Jordan. The defection suggested to many in the region that Saddam's grip on power was weakening; King Hussein subsequently denounced Saddam and agreed to allow the INA to operate from Jordan. However, Iraq's intelligence services were able to penetrate the INA's dissident operations and, in June 1996, Baghdad arrested 100 military officers linked to the INA and executed 30 others. Alawi claims that INA sympathisers continue to operate throughout Iraq. The unsavoury nature of those the US is supporting is shown by the fact that the INA made its name by planting bombs, including in a Baghdad cinema. Many of the exiled former members of Saddam's military elite are also strongly implicated in the use of chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds.

The most resolute of the known organisations against imperialist intervention is the **Worker Communist Party of Iraq**, which condemns US policy towards Iraq as not being intended to replace the despotic rule of Saddam Hussein with a regime based on civil rights and political liberty, but to establish a puppet government of the Iraqi bourgeoisie. The threatened US actions would risk the lives of thousands of Iraqis, cause widespread destruction and lead to even more hardship, poverty and starvation, says the party's resolution on US aggression. It calls for the overthrow of Saddam to be carried out by the 'workers, toilers and freedom lovers' of Iraq.

WA

Anti-war contacts

Stop the War Coalition

PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ
www.stopwar.org.uk
 tel: 07951 235 915
 email: office@stopwar.org.uk

Labour Against the War

PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU
 tel: 020 8985 6597
 fax: 020 895 6785
 email: latw@gn.apc.org
 Affiliation/sponsorship of LATW is £10 for organisations, £5 for individuals

Bruised but capable of fighting

On the eve of the Labour Party conference, **Pete Firmin** examines the state of the party and the strengths and weaknesses of the Labour Left

To listen to some on the left, particularly in the Socialist Alliance, the Labour Left is virtually non-existent and those few socialists still in the party are wasting their time. While it is true that Blair currently retains almost total control over politics within the party, and that open opposition, as reported in the media, is usually restricted to 'the usual suspects', that is only part of the picture.

At the national level, of course, the Blairites maintain pretty much 100 per cent control of policy and election candidates. Every effort is made to prevent independent-minded, let alone left, candidates standing, and most election material is bland, often impenetrable, Blairite rubbish. Few left candidates have managed to get through this minefield; most of the left MPs were selected in the 1980s or earlier. Even at local level the picture is similar, with selection procedures now in place to block uppity lefties standing for Councils, though control being less absolute here some have managed to get through.

Blair and Brown essentially make all policy. Even the Cabinet rarely meets, and although the Parliamentary Labour Party has become increasingly critical, it has no role in policy-making (and, formally, never has had). The National Executive Committee can now only take policy resolutions with the agreement of the chair. While annual conference is meant to be sovereign, in fact, outside of lengthy policy documents drafted under the guidance of ministers, it can only discuss an extremely limited number of 'contemporary' resolutions, almost exclusively decided by the major trade unions. Until this year, this was four resolutions, decided by a priorities ballot from those submitted. This year, because of complaints that this meant CLP resolutions were rarely taken, the 'concession' has been made that resolutions which obtain the support of more than 50 per cent of CLP delegates in the priorities ballot will also be taken. However, this is an almost impossible hurdle.

Before presentation to conference, policy documents go to the National Policy Forum, a body made up of delegates from all parts of the party, although extremely divorced from rank-and-file input. In theory, policy documents can be amended by the policy forum; in practice, this has rarely happened, primarily because of its structure, but also because of the behaviour of union delegates. Every affiliated union has delegates on the National Policy Forum, but, as on the NEC, they have, at least until recently, followed the lead of ministers rather than their own union's policy. Similarly, any amendment presented at the National Policy Forum which, while defeated,

gets the votes of over one-third of the total number of delegates (regardless of attendance) can be presented to conference. In practice, this has never happened.

Even when a resolution gets through this Byzantine structure to be passed at conference, such as the one two years ago suggesting that the link between the state pension and earnings be restored, this has been ignored by the leadership.

At a local level, branches and constituency general committees are able to pass their own policy, and many do. However, with the decline in membership and activism, local councillors doing their utmost to prevent critical policy being agreed dominate many CLPs. Even if passed, such policy really has nowhere to go; outside of the run-up to conference they can only go to the Policy Commissions (the bodies which, in theory, draw up policy documents) for their 'consideration'.

In fact, quite a few CLP general committees no longer meet regularly, having been replaced by the annual election of an Executive Committee, which is the only constituency-wide body to meet regularly throughout the year (the 'model' recommended by party headquarters). Local policy forums were introduced with a fanfare several years ago, as supposedly 'more democratic' than delegate-based general committees, allowing all constituency (or region) members to take part in policy discussion. In practice, participation never rose much above that at general committees and has fallen considerably as members realised that they were mere talking shops, unable, in most cases, to take resolutions.

Positive developments

Despite a steady haemorrhaging of members (down to about two-thirds of what it was in 1997), in the election to the constituency section of the party's National Executive, the opposition to the Blairites consistently wins half the six places, despite the blatant way in which the party machinery has often attempted to influence the outcome. While this is only a small proportion of the total NEC places, now that the unions have become more critical, this has begun to worry the party hierarchy more. The move to prevent contemporary resolutions being automatically tabled came after discussion of a resolution from *Tribune* editor Mark Seddon and GMB president Mary Turner calling for no further privatisation. While this was kicked into touch (aka the Policy Commission), many union delegates got a hard time for ignoring their union's policy in doing so. The move to readmit Ken Livingstone to party membership was only defeated by 17

votes to 14, and would have been carried if all the trade union delegates had attended and followed their mandates.

The leadership's 'control freakery' around election candidates has come adrift on several occasions, resulting in either the election of the candidate they attempted to stop – such as for Welsh First Minister and Mayor of London – or a 'strike' by activists refusing to campaign in elections where they saw the hand of the leadership determining the candidates – such as the most recent elections to the European Parliament.

Despite the changes to the party decision-making process made in the last 20 years which significantly decrease the ability of Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions to have an input into, let alone influence on, party policy, many CLPs persist in putting oppositional resolutions to party conference.

Since the start of Bush and Blair's 'war on terrorism', and in particular since the threat of war against Iraq emerged, Labour Against the War has been growing significantly, with more and more CLPs passing resolutions against the war. However, activism within the party is at an extremely low level, primarily because members often feel they have little real say, and come election time the candidates and public material are most often bland and Blairite.

It is one thing for branches and CLPs to pass critical motions, it is another for them to move beyond that to link up with other CLPs and unions to make that opposition more effective or even to 'go public' with that opposition, linking up with campaigns not purely made up of Labour Party mem-

bers to attempt to reverse government policy. It is here that the Left has a role to play in encouraging, building on and generalising that opposition, and it is against this task that the various left formations in the party need to be measured.

Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs

The 'usual suspects', known for speaking out and campaigning against many aspects of government policy (such as Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbott, Alan Simpson and Tony Benn until his retirement as an MP) are to be found in the Campaign Group of around 25 MPs. While the best of them are tireless campaigners and critics of the government, others are more or less invisible; obviously fearing that making their opposition to government policies known will get them in hot water with the whips. In the last couple of years the group has had some success, after being the only vocal opponents of the Blairite programme, in both drawing in new members and in linking up with other MPs around particular issues, whether it be cuts in the welfare state or the war against Iraq. The group as a whole, rather than individuals within it, tends to be ineffective, rarely making collective policy – indeed, their views differ widely on issues seen as important to the Labour Left. This has improved recently with the 'After New Labour' conference they hosted on July 20 and plans to repeat this on a regional basis. The changes in recent years at the top level of the union leaderships appear to have breathed new life into the Campaign Group, with the best of them linking up with the RMT in its new

group to campaign on key issues. It is early days yet, but the Campaign Group seem about to do what many activists have been encouraging them to do for years – use their platform in parliament to go out and build opposition in the party and beyond.

While the MPs operate primarily in parliament and see their link to the unions as being with general secretaries, activists have the task of actually organising the opposition at rank-and-file level and attempting to link up with left activists within the unions.

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance organises the slate for the NEC and other elections among the CLPs. It is not an organisation as such, but an umbrella under which various organisations and publications come together to campaign for agreed candidates. In the early days there was some hope that it might try to organise those who voted for the slates, who are many times greater in number than the combined membership of its constituent organisations, but it has settled down into being purely a slate machine. This has arisen not so much because it is an uneasy alliance between 'Old Labour' and the left, but because of the routinism and conservatism of some organisations of both left and right. In the early days of the CLGA this was expressed as a fear that 'Trotskyist' elements would try to hijack any attempt to organise supporters, but since the departure of many such to the greener pastures of the Socialist Alliance this argument no longer has the credibility it might once have had. It has become apparent that major sections of the alliance prefer slates and platforms to be decided between organisations in 'smoke-filled rooms' rather than involve the membership, even if the latter tactic could lead to broader involvement and a strengthening of the Left. This has even extended to a reluctance to approach union branches and regions for political and financial backing, even though the CLGA has constant debts.

This is not to say that individual candidates for office, from both the left and right wings of the alliance, are not tireless campaigners, speaking at meetings, reporting back from the unminuted NEC meetings, and generally stirring up opposition, but this is not reflected back into the CLGA as a whole.

The early days of the CLGA also saw attempts by some, particularly the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), to block candidates for the NEC whom they regarded as too left wing. This was the case with Liz Davies before she left the party, and later with Christine

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Shawcroft, who is now the longest continuous serving NEC member in the constituency section. In time-honoured fashion this was rarely expressed in open political discussion, more often in a fruitless search for other 'more acceptable' candidates.

Component organisations of the CLGA

The component organisations of the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance are the Campaign for Socialism (Scotland), Labour Reform, CLPD, the Labour Women's Action Committee, the Labour Black Representation Committee, and the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, backed up by the support of the publications *Chartist*, *Labour Left Briefing*, *Tribune* and *Socialist Campaign Group News*.

Labour Reform is very much an organisation of 'Old Labour' – 'Hattersleyite' might be the best description if Roy Hattersley were a supporter. Its supporters generally supported the scrapping of the old Clause IV and policy and anti-democratic reforms prior to 1997, but became horrified at where this has led to in government. While opposing much of the anti-democratic practice of the Blairites and policies such as privatisation, some of its supporters have been deeply involved in making cuts in services as local Councillors. They have little policy on wider issues, though some supporters, such as Ann Black, an NEC member for the last few years, have been willing to campaign against the various wars conducted by the Labour government. The class struggle is really a closed book to them. *Chartist* magazine supports Labour Reform.

CLPD is probably one of the oldest of the organisations of the Labour Left. Although only a fraction of the size it was in its heyday of the early 1980s – the 'Bennite' years – it still commands a lot of respect among activists for its dogged pursuit of issues. Its failing is that this is primarily restricted to 'rule book' issues rather than wider issues of policy, limiting its appeal to those most absorbed in the minutiae of internal party matters, instead of what has a much broader appeal, and is of greater significance: the disastrous policies pursued by the government. To compound this, many of its leading activists are of the view that the Labour Left should not 'wash its dirty linen in public', i.e., should not campaign publicly – beyond the party boundaries, and in particular in the bourgeois media – putting severe restraints on its ability to draw in new forces. Its concept of 'working with the unions' has often been limited to a letter to general secretaries to elicit support. It is CLPD, rather than Labour Reform, which has been the main restraining force on the development of the

CLGA, asserting that it, together with Labour Reform, has a veto over the other organisations' proposals. CLPD makes no attempt to organise its forces on the ground beyond regular mail shots.

Both the Labour Women's Action Committee and the Labour Black Representation Committee are tiny organisations, only a shell of what they were in the 80s. While they should be supported and encouraged in their attempts to ensure policy reflects the needs of women and black people and that they are properly represented at all levels of the party and elected representatives, it often seems that their involvement in the CLGA is promoted by some, not for these reasons, but for the less laudable reason of being a further bulwark against those seen as 'too left'.

The Campaign for Socialism (Scotland) is a network of activists that provides a candidate from Scotland for the CLGA NEC slate. It has some members in the Scottish parliament and has played a role in ensuring the Scottish parliament has made some policy decisions which go well beyond what the Blairites would like to see. It has played a prominent role in building opposition to the war in the party in Scotland, with George Galloway playing a key role.

The Network of Socialist Campaign Groups has its origins in the 'Labour Party Socialists', part of the Chesterfield conference movement of the 1980s. It has been the most forthright part of the Labour Left on policy issues, willing to be part of campaigns not solely organised by the Labour Left, such as Defend Council Housing, the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers and the Stop the War Coalition. However, the number of local Campaign Groups has dwindled over the years of domination by the right, with very few now in existence. The Network is probably the part of the Labour Left that has suffered most from activists leaving the party. Nevertheless, it still has a broad layer of support based on a democratic structure and alone amongst the organisations of the Labour Left attempts to link up with rank-and-file trade unionists. With its concept of organising on the ground, the Network is best placed to begin breaking out of the corner into which the left has been painted in recent years and grow into a real force.

Labour Left Briefing occupies a similar space politically to the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, although it is only a publication and an annually elected Editorial Board rather than an organiser.

Socialist Campaign Group News is the monthly publication of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs. It specialises in printing the views of the MPs, but also reflects their concern with relations

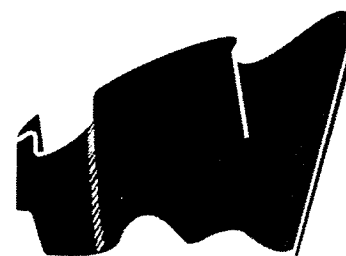
with left (and not-so-left) trade union leaders, rarely printing the views of rank-and-file union and party members which might be critical of their performance. It has often been difficult to get it to publish news of developments of the left in the party when these differ from the priorities of those responsible for the publication.

Tribune, seen by the media as the 'paper of the Labour Left', certainly has the widest readership. However, it is eclectic in that as well as printing extremely critical articles, it also prints many by ministers. Its editor, Mark Seddon, is a member of the NEC elected on the CLGA slate.

The Constituency Parties are, of course, only part of the picture as regards the Labour Party. Affiliated trade unions have nearly half the votes at conference and considerable weight on the NEC and National Policy Forum. Until recently the major unions were fairly docile supporters of the leadership on these bodies, and share a large amount of responsibility for the creation of structures which seriously curtail democracy.

However, with the unions becoming more critical, things are less comfortable for the Blairites, financially and politically. One of the key tasks of the Labour Left has to be to link up with this change of mood in the unions, not simply with the general secretaries, but with activists in the branches and regions.

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TUC Congress

The sleeping giant stirs

Richard Price

For most of the 1990s, the TUC, under the leadership of John Monks, turned itself into a polite lobbying group, encouraging its constituent unions to become service providers, offering credit cards and cut-price holidays. Trade union membership plummeted, trade union leaders were ignored by both government and employers, and strikers became an endangered species. The media routinely portrayed unions as irrelevant and ineffective. In recent years, if you'd asked for a list of serious campaigns the TUC was leading to defend rights in the workplace, the average trade unionist in a smoke-filled room would have had difficulty covering the back of a fag packet.

But despite numerous reports of its demise, the 134th TUC Congress, held in Blackpool from September 9-13, showed distinct signs of life. A number of factors have contributed to this new mood of combativity. Reflecting the spreading disillusion with the second Blair government, there has been a revival in industrial action. While strikes by council, railway and London Underground workers and teachers were somewhere short of a 'summer of discontent', they nevertheless added up to the most significant action taken by trade unionists for years. Victories by left of centre candidates in a string of trade union elections have changed the landscape, and removed from the scene a swathe of the right-wing bureaucrats. The loss of Ken Jackson of Amicus and Barry Reamsbottom of PCS – two of Blair's most slavish supporters – within the space of a few weeks during the summer completed Blair's discomfort, and left him to deal with a generation of trade union leaders among whom he has few remaining close allies.

On the other hand, the idea that Blair was almost friendless, and that he would receive a mauling at the hands of Congress was wide

of the mark, as the results of several important card votes would show. Moreover, even where the TUC did pass lengthy motions critical of government policy, the real issue is what intention there is to campaign and fight around them.

Blair's speech to Congress showed a keen awareness of the scale of the trade union opposition to war, with nearly half of it devoted to international issues. Although its message was hawkish, Blair carefully couched his appeal for support by pressing traditional trade union buttons – he paid tribute to the 'ordinary citizens' of New York; he praised the role of trade unions in Colombia and Zimbabwe; he dwelt on Saddam's brutal internal record; he spoke of the need 'to deal with Saddam through the United Nations; he called for a 'viable Palestinian state'; and – how about this for chutzpah – he argued that: 'Internationalism is no longer a utopian cry of the Left; it is practical statesmanship.' On domestic policy, the buzzwords were 'solidarity' and 'partnership'.

Over the years, Congress has only rarely challenged British foreign policy to any significant degree, preferring to see this as the job of the 'political wing' of the Labour movement. Hardly ever has it mobilised its membership against a war in which Britain was a leading participant. This year saw a passionate debate over war with Iraq, in which most of the right and the centre opposed war unless the UN sanctioned it, and the left called for outright opposition.

Blair was listened to with scarcely an interruption, and avoided the rough ride which had been predicted. That being said, right-wing Amicus bureaucrat Roger Lyons was the only trade union leader prepared to back Bush and Blair going it alone, and a General Council statement attempted to make TUC support for military action dependent upon evidence being produced of Iraq's military capacity, and UN approval. But that position was in turn attacked as, one after another, the leaders of Aslef, the NUJ, the RMT, PCS, Natfhe and the CWU laid into Bush and Blair. Mark Serwotka, general secretary of PCS, insisted: 'We oppose war on Iraq, UN or no UN . . . we oppose sanctions that have killed some 40,000 children since 11 September. We should grasp the fact that the population is with us. We should mobilise people to say no to war and to join the demonstration on 28 September.' In the event, a TSSA amendment to the General Council's statement, which called for outright opposition to war against Iraq, was carried on a show of hands, and only lost on a card vote of 3.4 million to 2.6 million.

On another issue to which Blair had referred in his address – entry into the Euro – there was a similar division, although this was less clearly a right-left split. Despite

cooling enthusiasm for early entry into the single currency on the part of the TGWU and Amicus, Congress passed by 3.5 million to 2.3 million a somewhat fudged composite motion which implied support for entry, provided Gordon Brown's five tests are met, and a 'sustainable exchange rate between the pound and the Euro' is achieved.

Two composite motions on employment rights called upon the government to facilitate easier trade union recognition, repeal key elements of anti-trade union legislation and enact a programme of positive rights at work, especially in relation to unfair dismissal claims, and to employees on temporary and fixed-term contracts. This was somewhat undercut by welcoming the review of the Employment Relations Act which is being conducted by the Department for Trade and Industry, and is expected to recommend only marginal changes to the current legal framework. While there were references to a conference and a programme of meetings to promote positive changes in employment law, there was little in the way of real campaigning, beyond lobbying the government and MPs.

In an important related development, however, Derek Simpson – the newly elected joint general secretary of Amicus – told a fringe meeting he was not prepared to support any more no-strike 'sweetheart' deals of the kind supported by his predecessor Sir Ken Jackson. While appearing not to rule out single union deals, he said of no-strike agreements: 'We've been undermining other unions and it's a disgrace.'

Pensions were another key area of concern, as the number of private companies terminating final salary pension schemes continues to grow alarmingly. The numbers of employees covered by such schemes dropped from 5.6 million in 1991 to 3.8 million a decade later, with a third of firms surveyed by the CBI having either closed their scheme or considering doing so. This has resulted in the loss of up to 30 per cent of their value, and in the run-up to Congress, the ISTC was engaged in industrial action against Caparo, the steel firm owned by Labour peer Lord Paul. Again, the motion passed contained a good wish list of demands, but little in the way of a campaigning agenda to achieve them.

Similarly, the composite motion on the burning issue of privatisation and PFI/PPP in the public sector contained a long list of things that the trade unions should and must oppose. But what to do about it? Beyond a commitment to organise a Public Services Conference prior to the next budget, the motion confined itself to 'continuing discussions' with the government, 'holding it to its commitments', and 'obtaining assurances' from it.

For several years, the far left, while not

abandoning the unions, downplayed their significance, in favour of electoral interventions and the anti-capitalist movement. Years of defeats led to one after another left group deciding that the real action lay elsewhere – in the SLP, in the Socialist Alliance or on the streets. Misplaced optimism outside the labour movement led to pessimism within it. An example of where this thinking led was the decision of the Socialist Party to oppose standing a left candidate in the PCS general secretary election in 2000. In spite of Left Unity's failure to stand a candidate, Mark Serwotka, supported by no major grouping in the union, beat two right-wing opponents.

Now, two years on, there is an opposite danger – of sowing illusions in the 'awkward squad' of left union leaders. First of all, it's necessary to recognise that we are

dealing with a spectrum which ranges from left of centre reformists, like Dave Prentis of Unison and Derek Simpson of Amicus, through Communist Party-trained syndicalists like Bob Crow of the RMT, to a handful of leaders like Mark Serwotka who have a principled history as rank-and-file activists.

While the left's victories in recent trade union elections have been impressive, the elections to the TUC's General Council were more sobering. In the 11-seat section reserved for unions with fewer than 100,000 members, Bob Crow slipped to 13th place and wasn't elected, while Mick Rix of Aslef just won election in 10th place. However, fellow left-wingers Jeremy Dear of the NUJ and Paul Mackney of Natfhe were also elected in this section, and join the likes of Dave Prentis, Derek Simpson, Billy Hayes

and Mark Serwotka on the General Council. Meanwhile, right-wing teachers' leader Nigel de Gruchy of the NASUWT was elected TUC president, and the latest in a line of faceless TUC backroom boys, right-winger Brendan Barber, is being groomed to take over next year when John Monks retires as general secretary.

The revival of the left in the unions is very important. So is not losing your bearings in relation to the left-wing leaders. The best of these leaders need militant rank-and-file movements to back up their good intentions; the rest will tend to compromise, and we should be prepared to fight them too when necessary. Above all, the left must seize the opportunities that have opened up, and concentrate its efforts on building activist-based movements in every union, which aren't merely dusted off at election time. **WA**

No blank cheque for New Labour – make the link work!

The following statement is being circulated to bring together those who want to make the case for critical Labour Party affiliation. To add your name to the statement, or for more information, contact petefirmin@gn.apc.org or write to PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU.

The Labour Party was formed by the trade unions, and those trade unions remain an integral, though autonomous, part of the Labour Party at every level.

The sight of a Labour Government acting against the interests of trade unionists – privatising public services and attacking us when we take industrial action – makes us believe it is time for affiliated trade unions to act collectively and assert our voice within the Labour Party.

Too often our representatives on Labour Party bodies (National Executive Committee, National and Regional Policy Forums, Regional Boards, etc) fail to reflect trade union policy in motions and votes. Significant financial contributions in addition to affiliation fees are given to the party, especially at national level, regardless of whether the campaign or candidates oppose key union policies. MPs promoting policies in conflict with those of the sponsoring union are given support.

We call for a campaign to give trade unions an effective voice for our policies in the Labour Party, based on the dual principle of maintaining affiliation fees in full and renewing trade union participation at every level of the Labour Party with representatives who are accountable to their trade union members, who promote policies in the interests of trade unionists and who refuse to subsidise the anti-union policies of an unaccountable Government.

Initial signatories (all in a personal capacity):

CWU

Pete Firmin, Political Officer, West End Amal branch, Chair, Brent Trades Union Council; Bryan Harrod, Political Officer, South & East Thames Amal branch; Mick Houghton, Branch Officer, CWU West London branch, President Ealing Trades Council; Linda Kietz, Chair & Political Officer, CWU West London Branch; Mick Kyriazopoulos, Political officer, N/NW London branch; Sam Neave, Political Officer, Mount Pleasant branch; Gerry Ryan, Branch officer, London City West branch; Paul Stygal, Secretary and Political Officer, London East branch; Alan Tate, Secretary, London Region Political Committee; Archie Taylor, Political Officer, South & East Thames Amal branch; Colin Tull, Eastern Region Political Officer, Political Officer, Northern Home Counties branch; Lee Waker, Political Officer, East London Postal branch; Tom Walker, Branch Secretary, Northern Home Counties Postal branch.

Fire Brigades Union

Mick Shaw, National Executive member.

RMT

Jeff Slee, President, South East Regional Council; Diana Udall, RMT representative, London Region Board, Labour Party.

GMB

Terry Scott, Lewisham Borough Councillor, Lewisham Deptford CLP; Dave Statham, President, GMB Holborn Branch, Trade Union Liaison Officer, Brent East CLP; Pete Turner, Secretary Hammersmith & Fulham Trades Union Council, and President GMB Fulham 1st branch.

T&G

Jimi Adefiranye, Lewisham Borough Councillor, Lewisham Deptford CLP; Danny Considine, prospective shop steward, Leighton Hospital, Crewe and Nantwich CLP; David Harris, committee member 1/1347 branch, Brighton; Kevin Flack, Secretary 1/427 Branch; Richard Hughes, Branch Secretary, 5 / 610 ACTS (North Staffs Voluntary Sector) branch.

Usdaw

Andy Walker, Usdaw, prospective Labour candidate, Redbridge Council.

Amicus-MSF

Ian Malcolm-Walker, Secretary, Derby General Branch; Roger Stevens, Secretary, North & West Kent branch.

Ucatt

Sean Cullen, Secretary, Harlesden branch.

Unison

Andrew Berry, Deputy Branch Secretary, Islington Unison, London Region, Local Government Executive; Jacqui Brown, Unison Housing Association Branch Political Officer, member London Region Political Committee; Mike Calvert, Assistant Secretary, Islington branch, Convenor, Social Services Shop Stewards Committee, Islington Unison; Gwen Cook, Political Officer Hammersmith & Fulham Unison, member London Regional Political Committee and Hammersmith & Fulham CLP; Luci Davin, Publicity Officer, Camden Unison; Simon Deville, Secretary, Unison Voluntary Organisations Branch; Richard Forth, APF Officer, Birmingham branch; Valerie Graham, Unison, Chesterfield Borough Councillor; Ian Griffiths, Education Convenor, Lambeth Unison; Patrick Hall, Unison, vice-chair Leeds Central CLP; Philip Lewis, Shop Steward, Camden Transport Services, Depot Staff Section; Camden Unison APF Officer; Terry Luke, Islington Unison retired members secretary; Dorothy Macedo, Unison representative, London Region Board, Labour Party; Jon Rogers, Secretary, Lambeth Unison; John Stewart, Publicity Officer, Unison Voluntary Organisations branch; Bob Wood, Unison, Secretary, Leeds Central CLP; Peter Woodward, Branch Chair, Lambeth Unison.

This statement is also supported by Labour Party NEC members Mark Seddon (editor, *Tribune*) and Christine Shawcroft.

September 11: a day of infamy

Nick Davies remembers the day in 1973 when Pinochet's US-backed military coup overthrew the Popular Unity government in Chile

As the sun rose on September 11, 2001, millions of Chileans knew that they were in for a difficult day. This was the anniversary of the day in 1973 when terror, planned, financed and armed by the United States, was unleashed upon them. In Chile itself, or scattered in their places of exile, they would commemorate September 11, 1973, and the days that followed, as the last time they saw the family members, friends and fellow workers carted off for torture and summary execution.

Their only crime was to support an elected left-wing government. In 1970, Popular Unity, a coalition chiefly consisting of the Socialist and Communist Parties won the election and formed a government. The government nationalised the big US copper companies. Full compensation was to be paid, based on book value, and after deducting excess profits from 1955 to 1970. Private banks, iron, coal, cars and other sectors were put under public control and following revelations concerning interference by the US multinational ITT in Chilean politics, the telephone system that it controlled was also nationalised. There was a programme of low-cost house building, and the availability of free health care and education was massively expanded. If not socialism, this was still a considerable achievement, and, of course, far too much for the United States. The US government and the multinationals began a campaign to undermine the Chilean economy. The Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank both suspended most credits and loans to Chile. The US came out in open support of the attempts by the Chilean ruling class to bring down the government by way of lockouts and sabotage. These attacks triggered a huge popular response, led by the organised workers and peasants.

The final straw was in 1973 when Popular Unity had the temerity to win a further election, increasing its share of the vote.

President Richard Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger came to the conclusion that the Chilean workers and peasants had had enough democracy for now and it was time to put into action Kissinger's sinister maxim that 'I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people'. Kissinger was chairman of the Forty Committee, a CIA working group which had the task of causing chaos and panic in the country by sabotage, rumour and panic. Finally, on September 11, 1973, the Presidential Palace was bombed, President Salvador Allende killed and a military junta led by Augusto Pinochet proclaimed itself the new government. The number of dead has been estimated at between 20,000 and 40,000 in the few months after the coup. Some 2,000 are still missing, denied a funeral even after three decades. The lucky ones fled into exile, or were victimised out of their jobs. Workers' organisations were repressed, with strikers facing execution. The gains of the Allende government were destroyed. Giving evidence to a US Congressional Committee in 1975, William Colby, the director of the CIA, was quite open in his description of Chile as a prototype of how to bring down a government of which the US disapproved.

Of course, Chile is not the only or worst example of terror, either covertly backed or openly executed by the United States. In Latin America alone, Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic and, most famously, Nicaragua, have all felt the lash. And then there is the USA's blank cheque to Israel, its support for the murderous Unita in Angola and, of course, the carpet-bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. It is, however, a historical irony that September 11, for almost 30 years a symbol of the power of the United States to unleash terror in support of its own interests all around the world, will now be indelibly associated with the one terrorist attack on the United States itself.

What happened in Chile, and elsewhere, does not excuse, still less justify the attacks in New York. The 3,000 innocent office clerks, firefighters and janitors in the World Trade Centre and the passengers in the four aeroplanes did not deserve to be crushed or burned to death any more than the victims of Pinochet's US-backed junta deserved to be tortured with electrodes attached to their genitals, or anally raped by police dogs, before being thrown from aeroplanes into the sea. However, the awesome power of the media to make millions of people look at the world through American eyes means that while the victims of

the World Trade Centre attack are being remembered, the millions of victims of terror administered or backed by the USA will be merely 'collateral damage'. The memories of those who died in New York will be used to bestow an odour of sanctity on every brutal exercise of US power carried out in the name of the 'war against terrorism'.

While around the world there are millions who have good reason to hate the United States, there was, with hardly any exception, no display of glee or exultation at the attacks on the twin towers. This is because most people had the sense to realise that the victims were not Bush, or Kissinger and their ilk. More importantly, their sombre reaction was borne of a knowledge of what was to follow, and of course they were right. First Afghanistan was pulverised, next it will be Iraq's turn, followed by any other country deemed to be sufficiently hostile to US interests. It is only a matter of time before there is another coup attempt in Venezuela, and recently Bolivia was warned not to elect a government based on 'drugs and terrorism' (i.e., opposed to privatisation and supportive of coca growers) lest it go the same way as Colombia. Unlike those Americans who, cocooned by the most parochial mass media in the world, were asking after September 11, 'Why do they hate us?', millions of people throughout Latin American, the Middle East and Asia understand perfectly the reality of international power relations. The Chilean workers who, in the weeks leading up to the 'first' September 11, chanted 'Allende, Allende, the people will defend you' and demanded that the government arm them had a good idea what was in store for them if it didn't. If Allende had listened to them instead of trusting his 'loyal' generals he might be alive today.

With the working class atomised and its organisations destroyed, Chile became a test-bed for the neo-liberal Friedmanite economic policies now imposed by the 'free trade' regime of the WTO all over the world. Thus the terror in Chile was a bridge between the two ways in which the US has imposed its hegemony on Latin America: up to the 1970s by military juntas, and over the past two decades civilian governments locked into the agenda of the IMF, World Bank and WTO.

George Orwell's *1984* is turning out to be a pretty accurate glimpse into the future, with its account of never-ending wars against an unseen, undefined menace, and censorship and repression against internal 'enemies'. Only Orwell's Ministry of Truth, or the White House, could justify an all-encompassing campaign of terror as a 'war against terrorism'.

Costing the Earth

Charli Langford

What is 'sustainable development'?

Sustainable development is 'development which meets the needs of present generations, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The term and definition first appeared in 1972, but came to prominence in the report 'Our Common Future', by Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1987. The Brundtland report analysed the role of inequality and poverty in environmental damage and concluded that overcoming poverty and inequality required sustained economic growth in both the developed world and the developing. Unfortunately, by growth the report meant Gross National Product – a measure that takes absolutely no account of sustainability. This leaves the report contradictory and fatally flawed and permits its use as a fig leaf for developed countries to justify their continuing environmental crimes – precisely what has happened at the WTO-friendly summit.

But the faults of the report do not render the term 'sustainable development' useless. It can also be read as 'development which replaces resources used'. By this definition, use of fossil fuel is clearly non-sustainable since the fuel is used up at a greater rate than it is renewed. Conversely, hydroelectric energy is sustainable because water used to drive turbines is replaced through the rainfall cycle. (That is not to say that hydroelectric power is necessarily a good thing – the flooding of large areas of land often creates other problems such as the disruption of water supplies and increased methane production from decaying drowned vegetation.)

The central problem is that at present renewable energy sources cannot provide all the energy the planet requires. To resolve this, we need to find ways of exploiting new renewable energy sources and making existing exploitation more efficient. We also need to cut down on the amount of energy we use.

Probably the most telling point about the World Summit on Sustainable Development – which ran from August 26 to September 4 this year in Johannesburg – was that George W. Bush didn't bother attending it. While one might argue that this showed a refreshing lack of hypocrisy, given his willingness to promote a (possibly nuclear) environmental disaster in Iraq, the real reason lies in the economic interests of the most developed states, of which the US is the clear leader.

Johannesburg is the third Earth Summit, following on from Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Kyoto (1997). Rio was hailed by the world press as 'the summit to save the world' and the magical ingredient was 'sustainable development'. Taking a different line, *Workers News* (No.39, July 1992) said of Rio: 'It should come as no surprise that the Earth Summit . . . achieved very little in terms of protecting or improving the environment. To have thought otherwise would be to expect the major capitalist countries and multinationals to renounce their imperialism and turn into charities.' We are saying that under conditions of economic competition there is an inbuilt pressure to maximise profit by minimising costs, and because there is a cost associated with environmental measures there is therefore constant pressure to cut them. Theoretically, this pressure can be alleviated by requiring companies to repair the environmental damage they cause; the problem comes first in associating particular damage with a particular company (which CFC maker caused the hole in the ozone layer?) and second in companies exercising control over governments to prevent them from passing measures detrimental to company profits. Ian Willmore ('Follow the money', *Observer*, August 18, 2002) explains how Exxon Mobil funds conservative pressure groups who exhort G.W. Bush to avoid Earth Summits – to the tune of \$830,000 per year; this is of course in addition to sordid direct campaign funding, or supplying a Vice-President from the oil industry.

Derailing the environmentalists

In fact, the Earth Summits have now definitively moved from being a problem big business needed to neutralise to becoming yet another tool of exploitation. The process is well illustrated through the history. In Rio, the prime global concern was (rightly) global warming, which is caused principally by the burning of fossil fuels in the advanced capitalist countries. The very modest aim of Rio was to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels. Even so, the US – by far the greatest polluter – refused to sign up to this. The Kyoto

summit relieved the pressure of the date 2000 by substituting a 5.2 per cent decrease on 1990 levels by 2010 – and Bush the younger refused to accept this, declaring it to be against the economic interests of the US fossil fuel companies. The Johannesburg declaration makes no reference to Kyoto and sets no emissions targets at all, thereby abandoning Kyoto, and moves the goalposts by prioritising water supply and sanitation instead. Meanwhile carbon dioxide emissions globally have risen 10 per cent since 1990. Big oil, clearly with no intention of meeting any target, has successfully pushed target dates into the future and eventually disposed of them entirely.

And this is in a context of massive evidence of the dangers of global warming – terrible drought in Africa, giant clouds of pollution over Asia and even Australia, meltback in Himalayan, Alpine and Antarctic glaciers, shrinkage of the northern ice sheets such that the mythological north-west passage may become a reality. There is also a likely connection between global warming and the devastation caused by El Niño, as well as the unprecedented flooding in Europe this August. There is a global temperature rise and noticeable weather change throughout the temperate zones of the planet. A half-metre rise in sea level will lose huge amounts of land in low-lying areas, among them the Netherlands, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Tuvalu.

A business-friendly summit . . .

The prioritisation of clean water – even though it is in part a smokescreen to hide the retreat on global warming – is in itself a good thing. There are over a billion people globally without access to safe water, and over three billion without adequate sanitation. Each day, 30,000 people die from water-related causes, mainly cholera. Global warming is causing increased drought in arid areas. Access to water supplies is a growing problem in the Middle East, where it is a major factor for Israel in determining whether land should be reserved for settlements, and both Turkey and Iraq have been accused of stealing water from other states in their dam projects.

The problem is that the aid granted to countries to improve their water supplies has to be acceptable to the World Trade Organisation. The history of the WTO is that of a drive to commodify and privatise all things. The people with inadequate water and sanitation are likely to be the poorest people on the planet. They are unlikely to be able to pay water supply bills. South Africa is a case in point – it has recently taken over from Brazil as the

state with the greatest differences in wealth between its richest and poorest people, and while as a state it is by far the wealthiest in Africa, it still has huge numbers of very poor people. In South Africa, charges for water supplies have increased dramatically in preparation for privatisation. Nick Mathiason, ('Turning off the tap for poor', *Observer*, August 18, 2002) quotes Witwatersrand university academics' claims that 22,000 people each month are disconnected from water supplies in Johannesburg alone. Ten million South Africans, one in four, have had their water supplies cut off for non-payment. Water prices have increased by up to 400 per cent, according to South African trade unions. With statistics like that, it is hard to see the Johannesburg Earth Summit as anything other than a defeat for the poor of the world and a massive gain for big business. Privatisation, as ever, does not mean competition-driven low prices from a choice of suppliers; it means cartels of suppliers carving up territories between them and prices fixed high to provide shareholder profit.

... and designed to be so

Most governments realised they would lose political credibility if they didn't send a heavyweight delegation to Johannesburg – though Australia's John Howard had to be seriously pushed. Blair got some favourable publicity for urging Bush to go, even though the main reason he did this was probably an attempt to diminish the Iraq poodle factor. Certainly, his attempt to exclude the relatively green Michael Meacher from the British delegation in favour of

born-again neo-liberals such as Clare Short gives a clear indication of British government priorities. It was Short who made the clumsy effort to divert the conference from fossil-fuel use to 'tackling poverty', as if the two could be separated. (That said, the destruction of British coal mining has left Britain with few fossil-fuel interests, clearing the way for Blair to appear favourable to 'sustainable development'.) The US, of course, has no credibility to lose and – beyond sending enough delegates to defend its interests against climate controls, and in favour of GM (genetically modified) crops and a WTO role – had no pressure to attend.

However, the reason for the failure of the summit does not lie with Bush. The summit invited 'all concerned' – governments, lobbies, environmentalists and corporations. Much of the funding was through corporate sponsorship, and it does not take a genius to realise that the corporates would not sponsor a summit that would attempt to regulate their actions and hit their profits; they would go for green, but only voluntarily with non-binding codes, and only for as long as their immediate benefits of doing so exceeded the costs.

Most government leaders – themselves funded by big business – offered platitudes at best. The worst – Colin Powell – offered views diametrically at odds with the summit, attacking Zambia for refusing GM crops, defending the US stance on emis-

sions, and attacking Robert Mugabe for 'pushing millions to the brink of starvation' on land policy.

There were a few who spotted the real problem. Mugabe himself said: 'The programme of action we set for ourselves at Rio . . . has been ignored, sidelined and replaced by a half-baked unilateral agenda of globalisation in the service of big corporate interests in the North. The focus is profit, not the poor. . . . The objective is exploitation, not liberation.' Hugo Chavez (Venezuela) said: 'Neo-liberalism is inhuman. . . . It is guilty of all the disasters in the world. We have to fight it. We do not pretend to fight fires by respecting those who light them.' Felipe Roque (Cuba), Sam Nujoma (Namibia) and Yoweri Museveni (Uganda) also spoke out. While we may have serious disagreements with these – Mugabe's attitude to democracy comes to mind – that does not invalidate their criticism of neo-liberalism.

But while these five raised cheers in the hall, they were excluded from the conclusions of the summit. Instead, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the corporate lobby group founded at the Rio Summit, carried the day with their vision of poor countries permitting privatised development of basic needs for profit. Post-Enron, post-Arthur Andersen, post-WorldCom, it is hard for any independent person to give a shred of credibility to this plan. **WA**

Protests at summit

The United Social Movements of South Africa organised a march of 25,000 people against the Earth Summit on August 31. Starting in the poor township of Alexandra, the demonstration went to the ultra-rich suburb of Sandton, where the summit was taking place. As well as opposing the summit, the march was against the neo-liberal policies of the South African government, which have exacerbated poverty in South Africa. The presence of thousands of armed police and troops at Sandton did nothing to deter the marchers. (Information from United Social Movements).

Other protesters had a rougher time. On September 2, soldiers fired rubber bullets and water cannon at a pro-Palestinian demonstration, organised to coincide with the speech by Shimon Peres, the Israeli foreign minister. Several protesters were severely injured.

What is to be done?

The prime environmental problem is global warming, which is linked to the use of non-sustainable fossil fuels. The first necessity is to reduce the need to use fuel – which means restructuring the ways we live. Work needs to be brought more into the local community. Housing needs to be more energy-efficient and more collective ways of living need to be developed. The second necessity is to make fuel use more efficient – public transport must be cheaper and attuned not to the profits of the transport companies but to the needs of the community (in order to remove the need for private cars), and alternative fuels such as electricity or cheap hydrogen must be developed.

Problems of food and water supply, health and sanitation cannot be solved by privatised capitalist concerns, driven by a need to make profit rather than to provide services. The richer states have to support the poorer ones, and the control of service supply must lie with the communities receiving the services. A first step down this road would be the cancellation of debt owed by the poor countries to the rich.

Genetically modified foods are not in themselves bad. The problems lie partly in lack of safety testing, partly in lack of complete knowledge of the uses of the crop (as for example the substitution of short-stalk, high yield rice for the usual long-stalk lower yield in parts of India – the post-crop use of rice stalks as thatching material for village roofs had been overlooked), and partly in genetic modification used to protect private profit (as in crop varieties which are more pest-resistant but also sterile, requiring the farmer to buy further supplies of seed each year rather than keep some of the previous year's crop by).

Land reform is needed for many reasons in the developing world. Land must be commandeered from capitalist firms intent on growing profitable export crops and redirected to use by indigenous populations to feed themselves. The destruction of rainforests must cease, not only to maintain the photosynthesis cycle which removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but also to maintain biodiversity, and to prevent wind erosion of topsoil.

Anyone but England?

Nick Davies takes issue with those who think that socialists should never support the national football team

During the last World Cup, a few days before England's quarter-final match against Brazil, there appeared in the *Guardian* a letter from Keith Flett (who else?) arguing that whether the opponents were Brazil or Belgium, 'for the left, it has to be anyone but England'. Really? When, exactly, did Belgium become a workers' republic? And if Keith was worried at the thought of the patriotic frenzy that would greet an England victory, did he fondly imagine that Brazil's victory was greeted in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro with detached, phlegmatic understatement?

To some socialists, the 'anyone but England' argument is attractive in that it recognises that sport does not exist in a vacuum, but is frequently the continuation of politics, or war, by other means; that it is invariably exploited by governments and opportunist politicians; and that many fixtures, such as England v. Argentina, carry a loaded political sub-text. However, it is also absurd. Did Flett and co. expect to gain the ear of those working people lucky enough to scrape together the fare to Japan by asking them to support England's opponents? No doubt in a crude parody of the socialist response to war, 'the main enemy is at home', the 'anyone but England' advocates ask all supporters, everywhere, to call for the defeat of their 'own' team. While this might have made for a very agreeable atmosphere at international fixtures, it might conceivably have taken the edge off the occasion. Should the players take on board this particular version of internationalism the results could be very interesting indeed. While it is common to witness games in which both teams *appear* to be trying to lose, this would amount to the real thing! It is tempting to assume that the advocates of 'anyone but England' do not really enjoy or see the point of competitive sport, hearing only the good luck messages from Tony Blair and seeing only the white vans flying the St George's Cross.

Those socialists who do like football but are tempted by the 'anyone but England' argument will find themselves tied up in all sorts of knots. Should they always support England's opponents, or does it depend who England are playing? In following the reductionist understanding of the relationship between politics and sport adopted by the 'anyone but England' advocates, socialists should have wished nothing but ill on two of the three greatest international sides of the 20th century, unless, of course, they were playing England! The Hungarian team of the early 1950s was used as a propaganda tool of the vilely repressive Stalinist regime of Matyas Rakosi. Almost all its players were members of the Hungarian army side, Honved, apart from

those who played for MTK, formerly the favourite team of Budapest's Jewish community and 'adopted', after the Second World War, by the hated secret police, the AVH. It is a double paradox, surely, that a team from such a rigidly repressed society should play in such an exuberant style, and that a society in which only 16 styles of shoe could be obtained produced a team which, in terms of its tactical sophistication, was years ahead of the rest. The success of the Brazil team which won the 1970 World Cup in such style was exploited by the then military government as a way of trying to create an atmosphere of national unity, diverting attention away from the torture and abduction of political opponents. The real architect of the team, Joao Saldanha, was sacked in 1969 because his radical political views were unacceptable. Because of the large number of black players in this team, Brazil were adopted by many black people in Britain, although Brazilian football, mirroring the rest of society, was run by a small number of extremely corrupt, rich white men. Presumably, the third team in this trio, the Dutch team of 1974, could be admired by socialists without any qualms, coming as it did from a (then) liberal, tolerant, democracy.

It is possible to be a socialist and an internationalist and to support England *at football*. This does not imply that there is an acceptable 'left-wing' patriotism, still less that this position involves singing 'Rule Britannia' or 'God Save the Queen' or giving an inch on the need to drive racism and fascism out of football. Socialists with this position did not, as a result of England's World Cup run, become supporters of Tube privatisation, become happy with the level of spending on health or education or become more hostile to asylum seekers, for the sake of 'our boys in Japan'. If this were to have been the case, then it suggests that even the presence of the most basic socialist principles depends on an aversion to competitive sport, in which event this presence is so fragile as to be worthless. Conversely, would racists become less racist had England won the World Cup? The 'bread and circuses' argument will only go so far. Harold Wilson famously blamed his election defeat in 1970 on England's exit from the World Cup, but might his defeat have had more to do with the end of the post-war boom, and the City's opposition to him following the devaluation of Sterling?

Many justify their support purely on the grounds that the players are familiar to them and that the better the team plays, the more English football in general will benefit. Most have 'other' teams as well, which shows that the patriotic brainwashing has

England's nemesis – Ronaldo



not been very effective! In fact, in any high street or pub there are any number of replica shirts of Brazil, Italy, or even Argentina. Inside many of them are people who also support England. Work that one out!

Only supporters of Tebbit's racist 'cricket test', or indeed Blunkett's 'citizenship test' would argue that people in England *have* to support England. During the 2002 World Cup people in England, for all sorts of reasons, supported, among others, Nigeria, Ireland, Poland, Italy, China, and South Africa. Scots tended, with exceptions, to support whoever England were playing, and Welsh people, whether they were living in Wales or England, were divided between supporting England or their opponents. The presence of a BNP-Combat 18 element, together with a larger racist (although not necessarily fascist) contingent, is a powerful reason why many black and Asian people will not support England, but in itself it does not constitute a justification for the 'anyone but England' position, and the fraternisation between groups of supporters before and after games in international tournaments, while not very 'political', is a better weapon against the BNP than a thousand letters by Keith Flett.

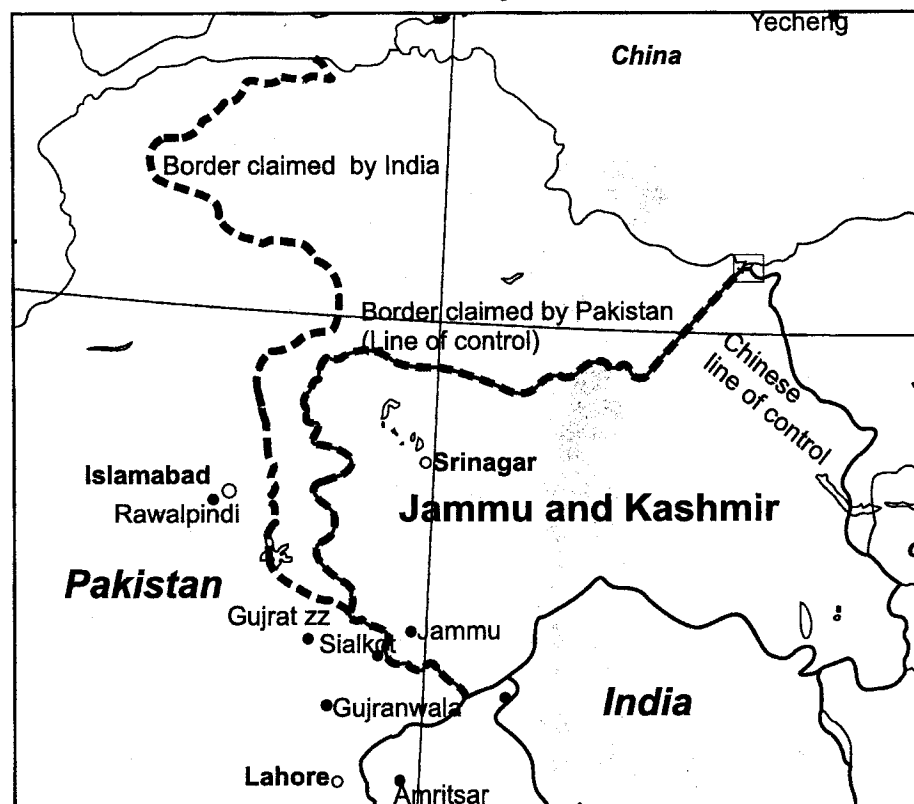
As well as the weeping sore of the racist element among the England support, socialist and anti-racist England supporters already have to cope with predictable, pedestrian football, and the regular dashing of ludicrously inflated expectations, without fellow socialists writing to the *Guardian* calling for their team to be defeated. Many would agree that the most desirable outcome, probably not realisable this side of a socialist revolution, is for sport to be organised in a way other than as a competition between nation states. Until then, support for England, based on opposition to racism and a respect for opposing teams and supporters, makes some sense for some. For others, it might make sense to support someone else, or no one. In 1974, Chilean refugees in Germany attended the West Germany v. Chile World Cup match not to support the Chilean team but to demonstrate against the Pinochet regime. In Brazil this year, some journalists argued that defeat in the World Cup final would have the advantage of undermining the notoriously corrupt 'football lobby' which holds a powerful sway over Brazilian politics. In particular circumstances it might make sense to call for a defeat for England. (A hypothetical example is if in the 1970s the FA had refused, or failed, to pick black players.) It is only the elevation of 'anyone but England' into a doctrine that makes no sense at all. **WA**

Self-determination for Kashmir!

Nick Davies

Back in May, the British media seemed more concerned with the political demise of Stephen Byers than with the possible physical demise of 20 million Indians and Pakistanis. Incredibly, as a million soldiers faced each other on the border, and the two nuclear powers ratcheted up the tension, media coverage remained low-key, possibly betraying a racist disregard for the lives of people in the sub-continent, as opposed to Europeans. What coverage there was flagged up the apparent role of the British and US governments in trying to defuse the tension between the Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan and the Hindu fundamentalists in India. In an echo of the banal coverage of the Yugoslav wars, that old cliché 'ancient hatreds' was given a good airing. With a few honourable exceptions there was no mention of the role played by the West, particularly the USA, in bringing the situation to its present pass. Instead, by having his underlings shuttle between India and Pakistan, Bush could pose as a peacemaker, trying to stop two 'hot-headed' nuclear powers wiping each other out.

Although the dispute over Kashmir goes back to at least 1947, September 11 is a good place to start. If in the name of the 'war against terrorism' the USA can threaten the first-use of nuclear weapons against any country whose government it doesn't like, then it is hardly surprising that its loyal ally in that war, General Musharraf's Pakistan, feels free to threaten the same. Pakistan has refused to rule out a possible first-use of its nuclear weapons.



At the same time, India can, in the name of that same 'war against terrorism' (in this case Islamic insurgents fighting inside Indian Kashmir but based and trained in Pakistan), threaten Pakistan that if attacked by nuclear weapons, India will 'wipe out' Pakistan. In the meantime, as New Labour regards the arms industry as the sacred cow of the British economy, conventional weapons continued to be sold to both sides. The spectacle of the Whitehall gun-runners and the Washington Christian fundamentalists lecturing the peoples of south Asia on how to coexist in peace and harmony brings home the hypocrisy and double-standards of the 'war against terror', but of course, there's more.

Pakistan has for years been sponsoring Islamic militia in Indian-occupied Kashmir. There is no real dispute about this. The only dispute is whether they are 'terrorists' or not, and really, this depends on the point of view of the state which is arming and supporting them. Support for the militia goes to the very highest echelons in the Pakistani state apparatus, up to and including the intelligence agency, the ISI. Many of the militia are veterans of the guerrilla struggle in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation; after 1990 they simply turned east and moved into Kashmir. (In fact, some of the Afghan Mujahadeen originally cut their teeth in Kashmir.) In the 1980s they were the USA's favourite 'freedom fighters', but now the rules of the game have changed and they find themselves on the wrong side of the law, as made up on the spot by Bush, Rumsfeld and Rice.

The Islamic guerrillas' relationship with their erstwhile sponsor Pakistan is even more complicated. The Pakistani government has to disavow the militias, on the orders of its paymaster, the USA. But for the Pakistani political class, and many ordinary Pakistanis, support for Muslim rebels in Kashmir is fundamental to their sense of identity, and justifies Pakistan's claim to be the natural homeland for south Asia's Muslims. Pakistan was formed in 1947 as the state for the Muslims living in what was then called British India. Support for Muslims living under Indian rule in Kashmir is what Pakistan is *for*. Musharraf, an army officer who has therefore built a career on the Kashmir dispute with India, has now, on the say-so of the US, had to proclaim a clampdown on a number of Muslim factions operating in Kashmir, although it is difficult to tell whether he is actually clamping down on them but pretending that he isn't, or not clamping down on them but pretending that he is.

Of course, no Pakistani government, least of all this one, has actually done anything

to really improve the position of the inhabitants of Azad Kashmir, as Pakistan-administered Kashmir is known, or for the Kashmiris on the other side of the Line of Control. Kashmir is an excuse for patriotic drum beating, arms purchases, and a clampdown on dissent.

In India, the stakes are equally as high. Unlike Pakistan, India is in theory a secular state, but the coalition government headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee is dominated by the Hindu-nationalist BJP. The government has staked much of its credibility on fighting a war against 'terrorism' in Kashmir, and uses the 'terrorist' threat to stoke up communal tensions in areas such as Gujarat. It is significant that the state of Gujarat, where there have been mass killings of Muslims, is the only Indian state to be controlled by the BJP. India is also, along with China, the globalisers' favourite pupil in Asia, and the Vajpayee government is pursuing an energetic privatisation programme. If government policies make millions of Indians poorer, the answer, of course, is to blame Pakistan and the Muslims. Allegations, such as those put about by the BJP and its paramilitary counterpart, the RSS, that the Muslims are taking over the economy makes it easier to brand them as a terrorist fifth column.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir was created in 1846 under the Treaty of Amritsar, between the East India Company and Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu. By the 1930s, this majority Muslim state was ruled by the repressive Maharaja Hari Singh, a member of the Dogra dynasty and a Hindu. When India and Pakistan became independent in 1947 the rulers of the various states were allowed to accede their states to either country but were encouraged to accede to a geographically contiguous dominion, taking into account the wishes of the population. In the event of a dispute, there was to be a plebiscite. The principle of a plebiscite had been proposed by India, and one had taken place in Junagadh, a state with a Hindu majority which had acceded to Pakistan. Kashmir was a mirror image of Junagadh, but when Hari Singh acceded the 75 per cent Muslim Kashmir to India there was no plebiscite, and despite repeated assurances until 1952 that one would be held, there never has been.

Thus, the people of Kashmir have been deprived of a basic form of self-determination, the right to choose whether to belong to India or Pakistan. However, the two states have fought three wars (including the present one), presumably on behalf of the people of Kashmir, and the 1949 cease-fire line (now known as the Line of Con-

trol) divides Jammu and Kashmir so that India holds most of the Kashmir Valley, which according to the 1981 census has a 95 per cent Muslim majority, as well as Jammu and Ladakh (predominantly Hindu and Buddhist respectively). Pakistan controls the remainder of Kashmir proper, Azad Kashmir, and the Northern Territories, with a 100 per cent Muslim majority.

The Indian government considers the accession of Kashmir to India final, and in refusing to recognise the Line of Control, implicitly claims the whole of Kashmir for India. There are reports by human rights organisations of arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and extrajudicial killings by Indian security forces, giving the lie to Indian government claims that all would be well but for Pakistan-directed cross-border terrorism. Pakistan's claim that it is providing support for a liberation struggle in Kashmir has an element of truth, but Kashmiris also suffer under Pakistan's repressive rule in Azad Kashmir and the Northern Territories, and from violence against civilians from pro-Pakistan militants.

Kashmiris are caught between the hammer and the anvil, repressed by and alienated from both India and Pakistan. Since 1990, over 40,000 people have been killed in Kashmir, over half of them civilians. At the same time an estimated 36,000 Hindu families and 20,000 Muslim families have fled the Kashmir Valley. Kashmiris must have the right to self-determination, without conditions being imposed by India or Pakistan. Elections are no substitute for this basic freedom of choice, even if they are not rigged (which they tend to be). Whatever the Kashmiris decide, to be part of India or Pakistan, or even to form a separate state, for there to be any chance of a peaceful settlement, there must be guarantees of the democratic rights of all minorities.

- Indian and Pakistani troops out of Kashmir!
- Self-determination for Kashmir!
- Down with the warmongers Musharraf and Vajpayee!
- For a nuclear-free south Asia! **WA**

Under their thumb – Street Fighting Man comes home

Richard Price welcomes Mick Jagger's knighthood

Later this year, Mick Jagger will collect the knighthood he was awarded in the Birthday Honours list, and join the select band of rock luvvies who have taken the queen's shilling. Cliff Richard, although he has admitted to one count of sexual intercourse in the early 60s, has led a saintly existence since becoming a born-again follower of Billy Graham (whose anti-semitic rantings as unofficial adviser to Richard Nixon have recently been exposed). Paul McCartney hasn't done anything remotely radical since recording *Give Ireland Back to the Irish* over three decades ago. And while Sir Elton John's drug-fuelled exploits once made tabloid headlines, all is now forgiven – he's one of Princess Diana's representatives on earth, after all. Sir Michael Jagger, in contrast, has maintained an enduring reputation as a rebel.

Apparently Prince Charles had a hand in Jagger's knighthood, after expressing surprise that he had hitherto not received any honours. Tony Blair, whose take on family values is somewhat different to Jagger's, was, according to some accounts, less enthusiastic about honouring someone with seven children by four different women, and a high-profile drugs bust under his belt. Others point out, however, that Blair has lunched with Jagger, likes his music, and that his college band, *The Ugly Rumours*, was – saints preserve us! – modelled on the Rolling Stones.

In recent years, both the Blair government and the royals have put a sustained effort into associating with leading figures in the rock aristocracy. Whether it's the embarrassing 'Cool Britannia' initiatives or the Prince's Trust, 10 Downing Street and Buck House want to be seen connecting with popular culture in a way that would have been unthinkable in the past. And although it was Harold Wilson who first saw the PR opportunities in honouring pop stars back in the 60s, this came spectacularly undone when the Beatles handed back their MBEs over the Vietnam War, and it would be another three decades before anything similar was attempted.

Of course, the idea that you can reach out to young people through the medium of a 59-year old multi-millionaire rock granddad is in any case ridiculous – the fans who sustain the 'classic rock' market are much more likely to be 40-plus *Mojo* readers. But if the establishment has learned one thing from Diana, it's that implying an association with people who, although they are thoroughly domesticated, have a whiff of rebellion about them can be a useful marketing strategy. The good news for Blair, in any case, is that Jagger's rebelliousness is – and always has been – entirely fictitious.

The Rolling Stones were a product of the British blues boom – an odd period of the early 60s when spotty suburban youths ear-

nestly attempted to impersonate Delta and Chicago blues singers. The Stones were at least honourable in crediting the original composers of the songs they covered, in contrast with others like Led Zeppelin, who had 'an unusually cavalier attitude' when it came to royalties.¹ And, because they were in at the beginning, before R&B took over the mainstream, their peculiarly British mix of Chicago blues and rock and roll had 'no prospects for immediate financial gain'.²

But the Stones' reputation as bad boys when compared to the boy-next-door chirpiness of the Beatles was never based on any social radicalism. 'Both the Beatles and the Rolling Stones,' comments one rock historian, 'were by the end of 1966 effectively absorbed into the establishment of British culture which they earlier had promised to deny, attending the ritual premieres in their versions of formal dress, enjoying the conspicuous comforts of Rolls Royces and country mansions.'³ If anything, as the 60s wore on, it was the Beatles who became more politicised, while the Stones were consumed in self-centred hedonism.

But if it had absorbed them, the establishment had also developed something of a love/hate relationship with Jagger and the Stones. Being the 60s, sexual morality took centre stage, and when Jagger sang about 'spending the night together' there was a strong implication that he wasn't yet married to the object of his desire. The police, keen to secure some high profile drug convictions, busted Jagger, Keith Richards and Brian Jones in February 1967, but the *Times* ran an editorial pleading for clemency, comparing Jagger to a butterfly. It solemnly predicted that Jagger – unlike the Beatles – would never rate a mention in the honours list: 'Mr Jagger will become an MBE the day General Moshe Dayan has lunch with President Nasser'⁴ But while police chiefs and judges no doubt thought Jagger needed teaching a good lesson, society heiresses were reciprocating what one former girlfriend describes as his 'obsequious interest in the upper class'.⁵

By 1968, the Stones' lifestyle 'centred on Decca, Swiss bank accounts, hard deals with promoters, fast cars, servants, retinues of gofers, bodyguards and drug peddlers – the flashy, stoned display of the new rich'.⁶ Jagger took part briefly in a single anti-Vietnam War demonstration, but left before serious hostilities commenced in Grosvenor Square – just long enough to get the idea for *Street Fighting Man*.⁷ The Stones also appeared in *One Plus One* (aka *Sympathy for the Devil*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard during his Maoist phase. It's barely watchable, but a useful reminder that for all its radicalism, 1968 gave all sorts of people a licence to talk, sing and film pretentious nonsense.

In fact, while youth culture became more



radical, the Stones spent much the late 60s, according to one insider, 'strung out on smack'.⁸ (The 'jacks' that inspired *Jumping Jack Flash* were pharmaceutical heroin pills available in Britain on prescription to registered addicts and frequently sold on.)⁹ Jagger appeared to be playing himself in Nicholas Roeg's brilliant and disturbing film, *Performance*, shot in 1968, in which he portrays Turner, a reclusive rock star. Another rock aristocrat, John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas, saw the film's portrayal of exclusive withdrawal from society as positive: 'With the really intelligent people, it's almost a matter of inbreeding at this point ... You estrange yourself from the world, you create your own society, and that's what *Performance* is about.'¹⁰

The Stones were far more interested in cultivating their 'satanic' image and making huge amounts of money than they were in radical chic. During their 1969 US tour, which earned \$2 million – a vast sum for those days – Jagger pointedly refused to donate to the Chicago 8 Defence fund, a cause supported by a number of prominent stars, including John Lennon. On December 6, the Stones topped the bill at a huge open-air free concert at a disused speedway stadium in Altamont, near Berkeley, California. Despite the icy temperatures, their satanic majesties, arriving by helicopter, made the crowd wait 90 minutes so that they could have total darkness for the shooting of the documentary *Gimme Shelter*. While the crowd waited, the Hell's Angels – 'satanic' and racist – who had been hired by the Stones to provide security, proceeded to beat up members of the audience, and by the time the gig finished four people were dead, including an 18-year old black man, who had come with a white woman, and was stabbed by Hell's Angels in front of the stage. Much has been written about Altamont representing 'the death of the 60s'. In fact, it was the product of much less epoch-ending factors – bad organisation and a reliance on racist thugs.

The Stones have never been keen on benefit gigs – 'I don't believe in being a charity queen,' explained Jagger once. The only benefit all members of the band have ever played was a concert for Nicaraguan earthquake victims in Los Angeles in January 1973, organised by Jagger with his wife Bianca. Even then there was an ulterior motive. Because of a previous drugs bust, a Stones world tour date in Hawaii was in jeopardy. According to bass player Bill Wyman: 'Mick favoured a Los Angeles venue since this could help our status with the US government.'¹¹ The benefit did the trick, and the band quickly received visas to play Hawaii.

Jagger undoubtedly sees himself as someone who 'loves women', and his entire career has been based on a quirky Anglo-Saxon

take on black culture. But if Jagger's record as street fighting man doesn't bear examination, then some of his attitudes to women and black people – two staple sources for his song lyrics – make for very uncomfortable reading.

Jagger's part in the sexual revolution bears out the old feminist line that in the 60s women exchanged being oppressed by one man for being oppressed by several. While Marianne Faithfull got to warble *This Little Bird*, Jagger was writing *Under My Thumb*:

*It's down to me
The way she talks when she's spoken to
Down to me, the change has come
She's under my thumb
Under my thumb
Her eyes are just kept to herself
Under my thumb, well I
I can still look at someone else*

Jagger's often-expressed liking for black women is even more dubious. When Jagger first contacted the star of *Hair*, Marsha Hunt, it was to ask her to dress up as a prostitute for a publicity photo for *Honky Tonk Women*.¹² During his brief relationship with her, he encouraged her to become pregnant, then immediately dropped her and spent years denying paternity and refusing to pay any maintenance for his daughter Karis.¹³ She mentions that *Brown Sugar* was written about her.¹⁴ I wonder if she's checked the lyrics (none too distinct in the recording), because they're part of the well-worn sex 'n' slavery genre:

*Gold coast slave ship bound for cotton fields
Sold in the market down in New Orleans
Scarred old slaver knows he's doing alright
Hear him whip the women just around mid-night
Brown sugar how come you taste so good
Brown sugar just like a young girl should*

Or how about *Some Girls* for some racist sexual stereotyping:

*White girls they're pretty funny
Sometimes they drive me mad
Black girls just wanna get fucked all night
I just don't have that much jam*

In *Miss You*, friends ring up and offer to deliver some Puerto Rican girls along with a case of wine.

Then there's *Sweet Black Angel*, written in support [sic] of Angela Davis when she was facing a murder charge:

*She's a sweet black angel,
Not a sweet black slave
Ten little niggers
Sittin' on de wall
Her brothers been a fallin'
Fallin' one by one*

Later on in the lyric, Jagger seems to have forgotten that she's 'not a sweet black slave' and throws in the line 'Free de [sic] sweet black slave'. With friends like these . . .

(None of this, of course, should worry Blair, whose contributions to 'celebrating diversity' include a willingness to accept donations from Richard Desmond, the publisher of *Asian Babes*.)

In his defence, Jagger could argue – like Eminem – that he merely writes 'in character'. Even if you accept that, the point is that he consciously chooses his characters. For all his rude boy posturing, Jagger is intelligent, articulate and well read. (He was briefly a student at the London School of Economics, he quoted Shelley at the 1969 Hyde Park concert, and *Sympathy for the Devil* is said to be inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*.¹⁵)

When it comes to splitting up with women and holding on to as much of his fortune as he can, however, let it be said that Mick is colour blind. His divorce lawyers argued that his 1991 Hindu wedding ceremony to Jerry Hall (Texan, blonde and mother of four of his children) was invalid – an odd argument unless he was forced into it.

So was Jagger a rebel without a cause? Rock critic Nick Gillespie gets it right when he says that Jagger even in his heyday 'only promised to debauch himself and whoever he was with, to push the limits of human excess and degradation'. Unlike many of his contemporaries who had embraced utopian dreams of a better society in the late 60s, Jagger didn't suffer any spiritual shipwreck when the 70s came along. And this was the reason why 'rare for a big 60s act, the Stones segued relatively easily into the decadent, androgynous 70s'.¹⁶ It was, after all, only rock and roll.

Since then, the Stones have gradually grown into a parody of their 60s and 70s persona, touring from time to time, releasing the odd album and solo project, but most of all looking after their bulging investment and real estate portfolios. Jagger's a long time tax exile, with a personal fortune estimated at \$250 million. There's a chateau in France, homes in Mustique, New York, Hollywood and London. He's even a member of the MCC. So we should welcome his knighthood – it goes with the territory.

Notes

¹ C. Shaar Murray, *Blues on CD: The Essential Guide*, Kyle Cathie, 1993, pp.328-9, 366.

² *Ibid.*, p.328.

³ C. Gillett, *The Sound of the City*, Sphere, 1971, p.328.

⁴ D. Caute, *Sixty-Eight: The Year of the Barricades*, Paladin, 1988, p.36.

⁵ M. Hunt, *Real Life*, Chatto and Windus, 1986, p.133.

⁶ Caute, *op. cit.*, p.38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.38-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.40.

⁹ D. Crosby and C. Gottlieb, *Long Time Gone*, Mandarin, 1990, p.20.

¹⁰ B. Hoskyns, *Waiting for the Sun: Strange Days, Weird Scenes and the Sound of Los Angeles*, Bloomsbury, 1997, p.179.

¹¹ D. Crosby and D. Bender, *Stand Up and Be Counted*, Harper, 2000, p.72.

¹² M. Hunt, *op. cit.*, pp.118-19.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.125.

¹⁵ D. Cruickshank, 'Sympathy for the Devil', *salon.com*.

¹⁶ N. Gillespie, 'What a Drag It Is Getting Old', *Reason*, June 27, 2002.

Home-grown sectarianism

Dear comrades,

Richard Price's article in the last *Workers Action* ('Communists and the Labour Party, 1927-29: a sense of déjà vu') draws some instructive parallels between the politics of the Socialist Alliance today and those of the Communist Party of Great Britain when it made its turn to 'Third Period' Stalinism. But I would question his analysis of the CPGB's political development in the 1920s, both before and after the turn to anti-Labour sectarianism.

First of all, I think more emphasis should be placed on the fact that the CPGB's slide into ultra-leftism cannot simply be explained as the result of a political line imposed by the Communist International. There was in fact an indigenous dynamic to the process, arising from the specific character of the labour movement in Britain and the CPGB's attempts to relate to this.

Also, while it is fair enough to point out the contrast between the lunacies of the Third Period and the more serious approach towards the Labour Party adopted by the CPGB in earlier years, this leads Richard to adopt a rather uncritical attitude towards the Left Wing Movement, the organisation through which the Communists sought to co-ordinate their fraction work in the Labour Party during the mid-1920s. It was the incoherence and impracticality of this strategy, I would argue, that ultimately destroyed the CP's Labour Party work and laid the foundations for the shift towards sectarianism.

The CPGB's flawed approach to Labour went back to its foundation. The first Unity Convention of July-August 1920, which established the CPGB as the British section of the Communist International, voted only narrowly, by 100 votes to 85, to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party. If it hadn't been for Lenin's intervention in support of this proposal it is doubtful whether the conference would have agreed to it. As it was, many of the newly-elected CPGB leaders were fiercely opposed to joining the Labour Party. Lenin, in an attempt to placate the ultra-left, had stated that if the CP affiliated to Labour and was then expelled this would be a positive development, as it would expose to the masses the reactionary character of the Labour leadership. The anti-Labour faction on the CPGB executive grasped this lifeline, reasoning that there was no point going through the rigmarole of joining and then getting thrown out, when the same result could be achieved by provoking the Labour leadership into excluding the CP in the first place.

So the application for affiliation which the CP sent to Labour's national executive was couched in terms – stressing the CPGB's re-

jection of reformism, its commitment to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so on – that guaranteed the application would be rejected. Not only did this provide the Labour leadership with a pretext to exclude the CP, but it also alienated rank-and-file members of the Labour Party and trade unions, who in their overwhelming majority were not of course revolutionaries. When in the early 1920s the CPGB made repeated attempts to overturn the national executive's decision, by sending motions to Labour Party conferences supporting the CPGB's right to affiliate, these were invariably rejected by huge majorities. So, far from 'exposing' the Labour leaders and winning sympathy among the rank and file for Communism, the CPGB succeeded in politically marginalising itself within the labour movement and reinforcing the political domination of the right wing over the Labour Party.

Not only were the CP's appeals for the right of affiliation turned down, but during the 1920s increasing restrictions were imposed on the Communists' ability to operate within the Labour Party. At the 1924 Labour Party conference Communists were disbarred from standing as Labour candidates in either municipal or parliamentary elections. More important, a motion proposing that CPers should not be allowed to be individual members of the Labour Party was passed by a comfortable majority. This was endorsed at the 1925 conference, which also agreed that affiliated trade unions ought not to appoint Communists as their delegates to Labour Party conferences.

These years, it should be borne in mind, marked a crucial period in the development of the labour movement. Millions of working people were abandoning their loyalty to the Liberal and Tory parties, and turning for the first time to the Labour Party, with the result that in the December 1923 general election sufficient Labour MPs were elected to enable the formation of a minority Labour government. As a strategic blunder, the failure of Communists to integrate themselves into the political wing of the labour movement during this period was on a par with the decision of the Social Democratic Federation to walk out of the Labour Party a year after its foundation.

By the mid-1920s it was becoming increasingly difficult for Communists to function legally in the Labour Party. They could still get delegated from trade unions and other affiliates to local parties but, as we have seen, unions were asked not to send CPers as conference delegates and, crucially, Communists were banned from individual membership of the Labour Party. The CP responded by encouraging sympathetic local parties to defy the conference decisions and refuse to exclude Communists, which of course provided the Labour leaders with a welcome opportunity to expel their leftist critics.

As Richard points out in his article, when the Left Wing Movement held its first national conference in 1926 it took place against a background of mounting repression against Communists in the Labour Party and against those local parties that failed to bar them from membership. By the following year, when the Left Wing Movement held its second conference, most of the local parties represented there were in fact no longer in the Labour Party, having been disaffiliated by the national executive. Was this really the basis on which to organise a viable left-wing opposition in the ranks of the Labour Party?

By 1928, when the Labour Party conference tightened the rules still further by specifically banning affiliates from sending Communists as conference delegates, almost all avenues for Communist intervention in the Labour Party had been closed down. Certainly, the Left Wing Movement no longer represented a workable strategy. So the Third Period line of withdrawing the remaining Communist forces from the Labour Party and challenging it at the ballot box made some sort of sense, from the standpoint of building the CPGB. It was not a case of a new sectarian line that emanated from Moscow destroying a successful orientation towards the Labour Party, as Richard seems to suggest, but rather of a failed strategy towards Labour fuelling 'domestic' ultra-leftism.

What ought the CPGB to have done? By the mid-1920s it should have been clear that maintaining a separate Communist Party and conducting effective political work in the Labour Party were mutually exclusive objectives. In 1925 Frank Horrabin, the editor of *Plebs* magazine and himself a former CPer, proposed that the CPGB should dissolve itself and Communists should join the Labour Party as individuals. I think he was right. Communists could have organised more loosely around a publication like the *Sunday Worker* (a CP-edited weekly, directed towards a broad Labour and trade union readership, which reached a circulation of 100,000 in the mid-1920s) while promoting a more theoretical approach through an explicitly Marxist journal.

However, this strategy would have been impossible, given the dogmatic insistence of the Communist International that its supporters must, as a matter of principle, be organised in a distinct Communist Party (a party-building fetish that continues to afflict Leninist organisations today). So, in a sense, the cause of the failure of the CPGB's Labour Party work and the shift towards anti-Labour sectarianism was indeed to be found in the politics of the Communist International – not so much in its degenerate Third Period phase, however, but rather in the mistaken organisational basis on which the International was founded. But that's really another story.

Bob Pitt

Ceylon, 1953 – a revolutionary opportunity?

**We Were Making History: The
Hartal of 1953**

Edited by Wesley S. Muthiah and
Sydney Wanasinghe
Young Socialist Publication,
Colombo, 2002, 526pp, £12.00

Al Richardson

This is the third in a series of documentary collections dealing with high points in the history of the Ceylonese LSSP. The Great Hartal was perhaps the most important turning point in the evolution of this party from its revolutionary origins into a party of merely parliamentary opposition, and for this reason the richness of this book's documentation merits careful study. This is all the more so because observers of this process in Europe and America have always neglected its development within its national setting, and concentrated upon the party's involvement with the Fourth International, as if external relations alone could explain it.

Obviously a work of this size could not avoid minor factual slips, even if it is surprisingly free of them. Thus HMS Newfoundland was not a 'battleship' (p.viii), and to describe *Socialist Outlook*, Healy's entry paper in 1953, as 'the weekly of the British Labour Party's left wing' (p.440) is a bit naïve, to say the least. Much more serious is the attempt to put a gloss on the scant involvement of Ceylon's Communist Party in the affair, a by-product of the present unity negotiations going on between the two organisations. The introduction tells us that the Hartal 'had the active support of the Ceylon Communist Party' (p.vii), but, as Prins Rajasooriya notes, its contribution was to try and get the credit for initiating the action by calling for the Hartal some days before the agreed date (p.511), whilst Bala Tampoe points out that 'not a single Communist Party member or "Democratic" Youth Leaguer was charged with a Hartal offence in any court' (p.506).

In fact, the main preoccupation of the Stalinists seems to have been to use the struggle as a diplomatic adjunct to the foreign policy requirements of 'the Socialist bloc'. First they tried to gag LSSP criticism of Russia and China as a precondition for left unity in the struggle (p.121), and then they came up with the bright idea that all foreign embassies should be closed and that 'new embassies should be opened in Red China, Russia, and other Communist countries to save the country from bankruptcy' (p.165).

Since the Hartal was in effect a general strike, however limited in duration, there has always been speculation among revolutionaries abroad as to whether the LSSP should have made a bid for power. Since such an attempt would obviously have failed without a similar movement in South India, the opinion had been expressed only months before that 'a militant working class in Ceylon cannot hold power unless they receive support from the Asiatic mainland. To obtain such support they must extend the struggle from Ceylon to the

mainland' (D[ennis] L[evin], 'The Lanka Sama Samaja Party', *Workers Review*, June-September 1952, p.24). Mandel later even described the LSSP leadership in 1953 as 'a really revolutionary team at the head of the insurgent masses, fighting in the streets simultaneously for immediate material gains for the impoverished masses and for the socialist overthrow of the capitalist regime' (Ernest Germain, 'People's Frontism in Ceylon: From Wavering to Capitulation', *International Socialist Review*, vol. xxv, no. 4, Autumn 1964, p.105 – our emphasis). And the preface to this book itself notes that 'today there are some people who are of the view that the left leaders should have continued the Hartal until they captured state power from the ruling class' (p.vii).

However, it is also clear from the documentation that the seizure of state power was not seriously considered at the time, either by the leaders of the Fourth International or by the LSSP leaders on the spot (pp.508-12), and it first came up as an afterthought in the 1970s (p.506). We should remember that in 1953 the Fourth International was splitting between the supporters of the International Secretariat and the International Committee, and since the LSSP was the largest Trotskyist party in the world, both groups were anxious to win the party to their side by not asking too many embarrassing questions. As for the party itself, its leaders were convinced that sooner or later they would come to power through the ballot box in any case. The day S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was assassinated (September 25, 1959), Leslie Goonewardene was discussing with John Fairhead, Sam Bornstein and G. Selvarajatan in London's Soho Square. 'He wanted to cancel his trip to Europe and return to Sri Lanka the same day. His argument was that "The masses believed in the UNP and became disillusioned. They then believed in the SLFP which did not deliver the goods. Now inevitably they are bound to turn to us. I want to be there to conduct operations and form the government. I must get back"' (British Friends of the Sri Lankan Trotskyists, *A Strange Alliance – The British Militant and the Vama Samasamaja Party*, August 1978, p.4). From then on there were no further Hartals, or anything like them, but a series of knightly jousts in parliament whilst the country slid into chauvinism and communalism.

There is enough material here for you to make up your own mind on this contentious issue, which is why you should go out and get the book.

WA

Defending Bennism

**The End of Parliamentary
Socialism: from New Left to
New Labour**

By Leo Panitch and Colin Leys
Verso, 2001, 360pp, £15.00

Darren Williams

The advent of New Labour and the failure of the left to agree a concerted response makes it particularly important to examine the past record of the Labour Party, in order to understand current developments in historical perspective. The way that these developments are characterised in the far left press often has more to do with confirming the current line of the left group in question than with making a sober analysis of the long-term significance of New Labour. Serious academic studies can therefore play an important part in allowing a more considered assessment to be made, and this book by Leo Panitch and Colin Leys is a valuable addition to the body of work on this subject.

The title harks back to Ralph Miliband's classic *Parliamentary Socialism*, initially published in 1961, which was the first substantial historical examination of the Labour Party from a Marxist perspective. Panitch and Leys are from the same tradition of independent socialist academics as Miliband, and indeed Panitch co-edited the *Socialist Register* with Miliband. Their book covers the development of the party from the fall of the Wilson government in 1970 up to the election victory of 1997, and the current edition adds an epilogue, co-written with David Coates, which deals with the first three years of the Blair government.

Panitch and Leys recount the widespread disillusionment among party members and supporters with the failure of the 1964-70 Wilson governments to implement socialist policies. Rather than simply abandon the party, however, many rank-and-file activists took it upon themselves to campaign for a greater degree of democratic control over the policies of their parliamentary leadership. The main organisational expression of this was the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), founded in 1973. Their efforts were sufficiently serious to convince large numbers of activists from the trade unions, local government, community organisations and new social movements to become involved in the party for the first time, in the hope of transforming it into a tribune of the working class and oppressed. The figurehead of this movement, which Panitch and Leys call the Labour New Left, was Tony Benn, whose experiences as Minister for Technology up to 1970 had convinced him that the innate conservatism of both the British state and the Parliamentary Labour Party represented a formidable obstacle to necessary social, political and economic reform. If radical change were to come, it would require the mobilisation of popular forces in the Labour Party and beyond, to exert a countervailing pressure.

At the same time, an analysis of the structural problems of the British economy was developed which recommended a radical interventionist role for the state, involving the nationalisation of numerous profitable private companies, the introduction of compulsory planning agreements with major corporations, and the implementation of wide-ranging plans for industrial democracy. While these ideas were formally adopted by the party, they were quickly shelved by the Wilson and Callaghan governments, who sidelined Benn and dealt with the growing economic crisis by abandoning Keynesianism in favour of massive public expenditure cuts and statutory pay restraint.

The experience strengthened the determination of the CLPD and others on the left to secure methods for holding their representatives to account. Their efforts resulted in the introduction of a series of democratic reforms in the party in 1979-81: mandatory reselection of MPs; introduction of an electoral college to choose the party leader, etc. The defeat of Benn's bid for the deputy leadership in 1981 marked the downturn in the fortunes of the left. Kinnock was subsequently able to co-opt large numbers of 'left' MPs and bureaucrats, marginalising the remaining 'hard' left, and the push to the right continued throughout the remainder of the 1980s and 1990s, with social-democratic policies increasingly abandoned in the search for electoral respectability. Finally, Blair reversed many of the hard-won democratic reforms of the early 1980s, under the hypocritical guise of giving the party back to the ordinary members, enabling him to reposition the party in the mainstream of neo-liberal politics.

This book is valuable in a number of respects. It gives a very detailed account of the battle for party democracy through the 1970s and early 1980s, from a historical distance, but drawing comprehensively on the accounts of those personally involved. Thus, it is able to give the lie to the Blairite version of events, which suggests that the party was hijacked in the early 1980s by an unholy alliance of 'Trots' and irresponsible union militants and was subsequently restored to the ordinary, decent party members by the good offices of Mr Blair. The book also demonstrates that there is nothing new in the party being controlled by a right-wing leadership which is prepared to abandon longstanding commitments and ignore the views of members in order to do what it believes to be in the national interest. In particular, it is noteworthy that the Callaghan government began to adopt economic policies, under pressure from the US government and the IMF, which would

now be described as neo-liberal as early as 1976 (only to revert to Keynesianism once in opposition in 1979). Contrary to the analyses of (say) Arthur Scargill or the Socialist Party, then, the Labour Party did not suddenly cease to be 'socialist' or a 'workers' party' in 1995, when Tony Blair rewrote Clause 4. There was no pristine record of faithful adherence to social-democratic principles, which has only been sullied in recent years. Instead, the right has consistently been willing to ditch any policy, if electoral expediency or 'the national interest' should so dictate. But Panitch and Leys also demonstrate that it is not inevitable that the right wing should win every battle in the party. Given the right political conditions, *if* the left is open to the broader working class and *if* it organises around clear political objectives, it can win significant victories.

There is at least one clear lesson to be drawn from this book: 'left' politicians and trade union leaders cannot be relied upon to pursue socialist policies unless there are robust mechanisms in place to hold them accountable to the people they represent. At present, we do not have even the luxury of a cohesive left social-democratic caucus in parliament, with a clear alternative agenda to the programme of the Blairites. But the recent election of a number of left-wing union general secretaries holds out the prospect of the unions bringing pressure to bear on the government to moderate its right-wing policies and offer more concessions to working people. Panitch and Leys remind us, however, of the example of the 1970s, when another generation of 'left' bureaucrats – like Jack Jones of the TGWU and Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW – actively participated in developing a socialist programme for Labour, only to abandon it when ministers convinced them that such ideas were inconsistent with *realpolitik*. Democratisation of the unions, then, is as essential as democratisation of the party.

The book's main fault is shared by most academic histories: in their concern to give a comprehensive account, the authors become somewhat lost in the detail of the debates between, and manoeuvring among, the key participants (Benn, Callaghan, Jack Jones, etc.). This can give the impression that the outcome of the political conflicts they describe is determined by a battle of wills between individual leaders and factions within the government and party; the 'bigger picture' is thereby neglected. Thus, the debate within Callaghan's cabinet over the 1976 IMF crisis is recounted in detail, but there is less discussion of the constraints imposed by capital internationally, or the structures of the British state or by

the limited political vision of the participants. (This methodological shortcoming is at least no worse than the opposite fault, which often characterises far left accounts. This is the tendency to see specific political events as merely the manifestation of eternal conflicts among social forces, so that the subjective motives and beliefs of individual politicians or bureaucrats become irrelevant. If these leaders reject or undermine socialist policies, they are merely doing what 'their kind' always do, as if betrayal of the workers were encoded in their genes.) Another problem is that the focus of the book is limited almost exclusively to events within the party itself: little is said about the international context and even the unions appear only tangentially. This is particularly striking with re-

gard to the miners' strike, which is covered in a couple of paragraphs, on the basis that 'this is not the place' to tell its story. This is not really adequate, when one considers the enormous impact that the defeat of the miners had on the left throughout the British labour movement – not least, the way it is assisted the Labour leadership in its rout of the Bennite left.

These caveats notwithstanding, this is a useful and timely book. It should be a valuable resource in rebutting the arguments of both the Blairites, who rubbish the record of the 'Labour New Left', and those on the far left who dismiss the possibility of any serious movement for socialism ever developing within the ranks of the Labour Party.

WA

Revolutionary History

Current issue

Vol. 8, No. 2, Summer 2002

Mutiny: Disaffection and Unrest in the Armed Forces

Armies, navies and other military forces are at the heart of the capitalist state. Engels referred to the 'bodies of armed men' ultimately defending capitalist property. Mutinies, unrest and disaffection in the armed forces have therefore been viewed with concern and alarm by the ruling class – and with great interest by socialists.

The new century will be troubled by war, and it is of prime importance that socialists take advantage of past experiences of working-class and peasant mutinies and disturbances during capitalist wars, unrest that was not only the result of war-weariness and pacifism, but also of conscious political opposition.

In addition to the descriptions of disaffection in the armed forces during the First and Second World Wars, we also present material that investigates the relationship between socialism and militarism, an intriguing British 'Red Officer Course' from 1920, and a secret Communist International document on work within armed forces. We have also provided extensive bibliographical material to help readers with further study.

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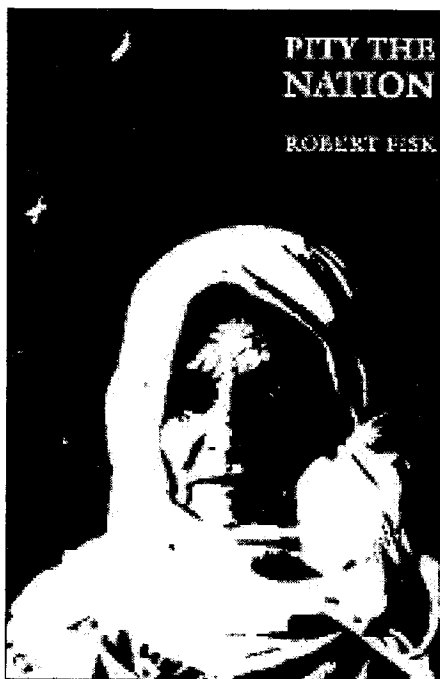
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Lebanon's descent into chaos

Pity the Nation – Lebanon at War

By Robert Fisk
Oxford University Press, 2001,
727pp, £10.99

Simon Deville



First published in 1990, *Pity the Nation* charts the course of the Lebanese civil war, through to the occupation by foreign armies including Syria, Israel and the French, US and Italian 'Multi-National Force'. At one point there were over 30 separate armies operating within Lebanon's borders. According to Fisk, each foreign army arrived with a naive optimism that gradually turned to demoralisation and defeat:

'The more recent armies to arrive in Lebanon all suffered similar indignity. The Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Syrians, the Saudis, the North Yemenis, the Sudanese, the Israelis, the Americans, the French, the Italians and even the tiny British contingent, all left Beirut hopelessly humiliated or ashamed. They were welcomed, always welcomed by the happy, friendly, shrewd, suspicious Lebanese. . . .

'From their balconies the Christian Lebanese threw rose water and rice at the Syr-

ians, a phenomenon which we journalists archly describe as "a traditional Arab greeting." Just over five and a half years later, I stood on the same spot and watched Israelis . . . greeted in precisely the same way. "See how they welcome us . . . we have come to liberate their country; they have been waiting for us."'

Robert Fisk has lived and worked in West Beirut since 1976 as Middle East correspondent first for the *Times* and later the *Independent*. At times he was one of only two western journalists in West Beirut (excluding those such as Terry Anderson who were being held hostage). The third edition of this book was published last year as Ariel Sharon, the butcher of Sabra and Chatilla, was elected Israeli Prime Minister, and includes additional chapters about the release of the western hostages, the 1991 Gulf War, the Israeli retreat from Southern Lebanon and their massacre of Lebanese at Qana. A revised and updated hardback version is due to be published this November.

Whilst *Pity the Nation* concentrates on events from 1976 onwards, the period that Fisk has been reporting from West Beirut, he refers back to Lebanese history both ancient and modern, explaining the origins of Lebanon's religious and ethnic groupings, the artificial creation of the state as part of a French divide-and-rule policy in 1920, and the origins of the modern day political parties in Lebanon.

One of Israel's key allies in Lebanon, the Maronite Christian Phalange, drew their name from the Spanish fascists. Fisk interviewed their then leader Pierre Gemayel about how he was inspired by Hitler's Nazi party on a visit to the 1936 Olympic Games: 'I saw then the discipline and order. And I said to myself "Why can't we have the same thing in Lebanon?" so when we came back to Lebanon we created this youth movement.'

In the first chapter, Fisk recounts an interview with Holocaust survivor Szymon Datner in which they discuss the creation of Israel and how Israel has become responsible for atrocities such as those at Sabra and Chatilla in 1982. Then he talks to Palestinians living in refugee camps, who still possess the ownership documents and keys to the properties they were driven out of in 1949, expecting to return home within days or weeks. He describes how their children and grandchildren, born in the camps, see these keys and documents as a symbol of ownership to their rightful homes.

The main focus of *Pity the Nation*, however, is the turmoil from the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 up to when the Israelis were driven out by Hezbollah. Historical references are used to help explain the

contemporary situation. Fisk explains the point of view of the various armies, militias and political parties through interviews with all the key leaders, as well as with middle ranking officials and rank-and-file soldiers. He has a critical attitude to all the key actors across more than two decades of civil war and foreign occupation. Whilst being fiercely critical of the Israeli invasion and US complicity in it, he has little sympathy for the Palestinian militias who drove most Lebanese off the streets of West Beirut with their internal feuds, and were quite happy to accept civilian casualties if it could be turned to their political advantage. The years of war had a corrupting influence on all political and military forces in the region. Fisk's real sympathies lie with the Palestinian refugees driven out of their homes in the 1948 war, many of whom were made refugees again in 1967, and for the ordinary Lebanese poor who, in contrast to the military and political leaders, showed an integrity, generosity and kindness despite all they had been through.

The other story running through the book is a commentary on standards of journalism. A number of journalists remained in West Beirut throughout the wars and reported things first hand. Often this meant risking their lives to get as close as possible to combat zones, checking first-hand reports of military advances or retreats, of massacres or human rights abuses. As the Lebanese and Syrian attempts at censoring journalists failed, the Israeli army increasingly imposed its censorship. Too many journalists became content to be drip-fed stories by the Israeli government or military as they became more and more slick in their news manipulation. Time and again carpet bombing of civilian areas became 'surgical strikes' to root out 'nests of terrorists', in 'newspeak' that has become all too familiar not only from Israel, but from the US and Britain during their imperial adventures. Other journalists never ventured out of the Commodore Hotel in West Beirut, submitting reports compiled from press releases handed out in the hotel lobby. Anyone who regularly reads Fisk's reports on the Middle East will understand how he and a few others stand head and shoulders above the barely disguised government propaganda that is too often passed off as news reporting.

Many people of my generation have grown up in Britain against a continuous background of news reports of 'warring factions' in Lebanon, as if civil war were some inherent national trait. Robert Fisk's brilliant book gives a clear explanation of the two decades of conflict, and gives some essential background to the Palestinian national question and the role of Israel in the region.

Ceri Evans

1965-2002

It is difficult to make an objective assessment of the life of someone who has only just died, especially when that someone was as close to us – as a friend and comrade – as was Ceri Evans, who took his own life at the beginning of August at the age of 36. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mark his passing.

Ceri was first drawn to revolutionary politics as a teenage activist in the anti-missiles movement of the early 1980s. He joined the International Marxist Group, British Section of the Fourth International, in 1981 – in the same month as his sixteenth birthday. From then until the day he died he remained a revolutionary socialist, an internationalist, a Marxist, and an irreconcilable atheist.

As a revolutionary socialist in Wales for over 20 years Ceri participated in a range of struggles. He played a prominent role in CND and Youth CND in the early 1980s. He was arrested on the picket line during the 1984-5 miners' strike. He worked full time for *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg*. He acted as secretary of the Cardiff Miners' Support Group during the fight against pit closures in 1992. He was active in the struggle against the poll tax and against the Blair clique's rewrite of Clause Four.

For Ceri revolutionary socialism was nothing without internationalism. He was a consistent opponent of British imperialism's presence in Ireland, which led him to oppose the Good Friday Agreement. He was infuriated by the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people. He recently came to the view that Palestine occupied the same place for the left today that Spain had in the 1930s and suggested the setting up of a Medical Aid for Palestine campaign in Wales.

But Ceri was not just an 'activist', pursuing one 'good cause' after another. He wrestled with Marxist theory and came to a deep understanding of its fundamentals. For Ceri, not only was it true that 'without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice', but that Marxist theory, divorced and separated from practical living struggles, would only finish as meaningless dogma. The dialectical unity of theory and practice – the heart of the Leninist conception of revolutionary organisation – was at the core of his understanding of politics.

Ceri's foremost political contribution is in relation to the national question: both in general and specifically with regard to

Wales. The IMG had taken – almost uniquely among the English-dominated revolutionary left in Wales – a serious and enquiring approach towards Welsh national identity, its history, and its consequences for revolutionary socialism.

Ceri built upon the work of the IMG and related it to the rise of national movements both in western Europe and in the former Soviet Union and East European 'people's democracies'. Aided by other comrades and by the work of the late Raymond Williams, he developed an understanding of how the struggle against national oppression lay at the heart of the struggle for socialist revolution.

Ceri favoured Welsh self-government, expressed in the demand for a Constituent Welsh Assembly: an Assembly which would have full power to decide on all aspects of its functioning and its international relations, without being subject to a veto from London.

His theoretical understanding was matched by a commitment to practical work. Ceri fought for a serious position on Welsh self-government within the Welsh Labour Party. He was a key instigator of Welsh Labour Action, a pressure group within the Labour Party set up to deepen policy on democratic accountability and representation, and on the powers that the Assembly would have. Ceri was also a key figure in the Socialists Say Yes campaign, and he campaigned hard in the 1997 referendum itself. Such was his role that figures within Welsh Labour Action, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Labour Party – including First Minister Rhodri Morgan – have acknowledged that without Ceri's efforts, it is moot whether Wales would have an Assembly today.

But Ceri vigorously opposed the fake 'regional' politics of the European Union with its meagre handouts and sham structures of representation. The united Europe that he fought for would be one in which there would be real democracy – with self-determination for the peoples of Europe guaranteed – and in which regional inequalities would be addressed on the basis of the needs of working people, not capital. To this end he was one of the central organisers of the demonstration held to counter the June 1998 EU Summit in Cardiff.

Ceri was not alone among socialists to be disappointed at the aftermath of the 1997 Assembly referendum – and especially with the way that the Labour left failed to use the positive result to consolidate a socialist politics in Wales. He decided that the Welsh Labour Party was no longer the best place for his energies. Last February he publicly broke with Labour and joined Plaid Cymru – with the inten-

tion of organising with the left in Plaid to advance working class and national struggles throughout Wales (his letter of resignation can be read at www.tribancoch.com).

The degree to which the left in Plaid will build struggles – and the correctness of Ceri's decision – remain to be proven. But to characterise his move as some kind of 'break from socialism' would be a travesty – a knee-jerk response based on a Greater British chauvinist economism which can only see in national struggles a diversion from the 'pure' 'class' struggle. Revolutionaries must make tactical decisions about which mass organisations they participate in, flowing from their assessment of how best to advance the class struggle in specific social and political conditions.

Ceri, who was Welsh-English bilingual, was brought up in Ynystawe and Swansea. He lived his adult life in Pontypridd and Cardiff, and briefly in the Rhondda. He worked as a researcher and lecturer in electronics at the University of Glamorgan. He was regarded as an expert in his field – control systems for gas turbines – and won prizes for his work in international academic competitions. Although he was no saint – he could be irascible in argument – he was also sensitive, witty, intelligent and engaging.

Ceri had been ill for over four years when he died. In 1998 he was diagnosed with Repetitive Strain Injury, which developed as an occupational injury – he couldn't get his department to give him a proper typing chair until it was too late. This was followed by the onset of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Over the past two years he suffered from depression – possibly as a consequence of his other illnesses. From

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March to June of this year he suffered a severe manic episode and although depressed, he appeared to be recovering recently. On August 2, however, he killed himself. It appears from his last actions that this was a considered decision. A note he left says that what prompted his suicide was despair brought on by fear of a future that could be filled with physical and mental pain.

Such are the facts of his death. But his closest friends believe he was let down badly by the mental health system, which provided no follow-up after his breakdown in March. He was particularly let down by the 'specialist' he went to for treatment of chronic fatigue. This man put him on a combination of anti-depressants, something regarded as dangerous in clinical psychiatry because of the risk of triggering a manic attack – including by the so-called 'safe' SSRI's (the Prozac-type drugs). But he would not take calls from Ceri's partner when he reacted badly to the doubling of a drug dose in February.

This negligence was exacerbated by the stigma attached to mental illness, which inhibits discussion of mental ill health, drug treatments and their associated risks. If we are to avoid similar tragedies in the future, the left must take up the fight for user-centred mental health services; and deal with mental illness if it arises in our own lives and the lives of our friends in an informed and candid way.

The mark of Ceri's contribution, and the deep respect and love with which he was held by friends and comrades alike, was evident at a memorial meeting held in Pontypridd just two weeks after his death. Close to 100 attended. Moving and often inspiring tributes were paid to his memory; and messages of condolence from all over the world were read out. A Ceri Evans Memorial Fund was launched, with a view to publishing a collection of his writings.

Where do we go from here? One of Ceri's closest comrades reminded us at the memorial of Trotsky's words, written shortly before his assassination in 1940, with which Ceri, even right at the end, would have agreed: 'Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full.'

Honouring Ceri's memory surely means taking this message to our hearts, and fighting to realise it.

Ed George, Darren Williams, Leanne Wood and Brendan Young

August 29, 2002

■ Donations can be made to the Ceri Evans Memorial Fund, c/o 2 Wellington Mews, Wellington St, Cardiff CF11 9BE or contact edgeorge@usuarios.retecal.es

Introduction to archive material

Richard Price

As a recent oral history of the 1947 Partition of India has argued, the scale of the crisis surrounding that event has rarely been officially acknowledged. Yet it was of huge significance: 'The Partition of India caused one of the great human convulsions of history. The statistics are staggering. Twelve million people were displaced; a million died; seventy-five thousand women were said to have been abducted and raped; families were divided; properties lost; homes destroyed.'^{*}

But Partition was not only a vast human tragedy. Its political consequences have been scarcely less significant. Partition's legacy of mistrust and sporadic inter-communal violence between Hindus and Muslims was paralleled by longstanding military and political rivalries between India and Pakistan. This has been compounded more recently by the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India, and Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan. The potential for catastrophic conflict between the two countries, both armed with nuclear weapons, remains considerable, and has come to a head once more this year with the crisis over Kashmir – another disputed legacy of Partition.

Marx understood long ago that religions cannot be understood in terms of their own beliefs, but only through their interaction with the material conditions of life that sustain them. The article which follows is a timely analysis of the historical and social roots of communal antagonisms between Hindus and Muslims, written shortly before Partition. It rejects a simplistic approach to the conflict, viewing it neither as a national one, nor one which can be understood in terms of the religious convictions of the two communities.

Instead, it suggests that the rise of communalism, which had previously taken the back seat to Indian nationalism, reflected antagonisms between the Hindu bourgeoisie on the one hand and the Muslim landowners and 'feudalists' on the other, while the social bases on which the two leaderships rested varied significantly. In opposing Partition and the demand of the Mus-

lim League for a state of Pakistan, the article nonetheless sketches a way to meet Muslim grievances by supporting the right of Muslims to forms of territorial autonomy within a Federated Indian republic. It seems probable that the proposal for Muslim states and enclaves the author suggests would have been the of endless dispute. But the practicality of such a proposal to head off communal strife couldn't be put to the test. Within months, violent conflict and huge population transfers would take place, and any possibility of solving the dispute with the framework of a federal India was lost.

The article first appeared in *The New Internationalist*, Vol. XII, No. 10, December 1946, which was the journal of Max Shachtman's Workers Party in the United States. Henry Judd – along with Sherman Stanley – were pseudonyms used by Stanley Plastrick (1915-81), who was a long-time member of Shachtman's tendency, and its main writer on Indian affairs.

In relation to the 'Resolution on Pakistan' by the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, which accompanies the main article, readers interested in the history of Indian Trotskyism prior to Partition are referred to *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Winter 1988-89, which contains the article 'Trotskyism in India, Origins Through World War Two (1935-45)' by Charles Wesley Ervin. In its editorial introduction, *Revolutionary History* notes: 'Contact was established between the Socialist Workers Party of the USA and the BLPI during the War years, and the theses of the BLPI and numerous articles on India were published in *Fourth International* magazine from 1942 to 1946, 'The Manifesto of the Fourth International: To the Workers and Peasants of India' appearing in the issue for October 1942. The Workers Party of Max Shachtman also maintained an interest in India, and in November 1942 published *India in Revolt*, a pamphlet by Henry Judd (Sherman Stanley). Trotsky's study 'India faced with Imperialist War' appeared on July 25, 1939, and is included in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, second edition, New York 1973, pp.28-34. Much of the material of the Fourth International on the Indian situation, as well as other documents and articles by the Indian Trotskyist Gour Pal and by Pierre Broué, appeared in a special issue of the *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* (No. 21, March 1985).' The second part of Ervin's history, 'Trotskyism in India, 1942-48', appeared in *Blows Against the Empire, Revolutionary History*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1997.

* U. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, Viking (India), 1998.

National or religious question?

Behind the Hindu-Muslim strife

Henry Judd

What are the basic facts of the Hindu-Muslim problem?

- 1) India is a country with 6,000 known years of history, during the course of which countless migrations, conquests, assimilations, divisions, unifications, etc, have occurred. The ethnic-racial mixture of today is the consequence of these 6,000 years of inter-marriage and social relations.
- 2) The first Muslim invasion took place in the year 664, into north India, but large-scale migrations did not begin until the year 1200, approximately 700 years ago, after which they took place regularly, leading to the foundation of the Mogul dynasties.
- 3) The Muslims mixed freely with the Aryan peoples, assimilating their culture and proselytising for the Islamic religious system among these people. To escape the rigid, pre-determining grip of the Hindu caste system, many of these Aryans became converts to Islam – that is, *became Muslims*. This, of course, also elevated them to the ranks of the ruling class officialdom.
- 4) 'Probably as many as 90 per cent of India's 90 million¹ Muslims are descended from Hindu converts to Islam.' (Sir Frederick Puckle, 'The Pakistan Doctrine', *Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, p.528.) Of the 12 million Muslims in the Punjab province, ten million are of Hindu descent, having embraced the new religion to escape caste and Hindu laws.
- 5) According to the latest census figures (1940), India is divided, along religious-communal lines, as follows:

Hindu	255 million
Muslim	92 million
Sikh	6 million
Christian	6 million
Tribal	26 million
Total	385 million

Approximately two-thirds of the Muslim population of 92 million (59 million, to be exact) live in six of India's northern provinces. The remaining 33 million Muslims live scattered far and wide in India's five other provinces, native states, etc, constituting enclaves within the broad Hindu population. In the six northern provinces of Muslim concentration (reading from left to right on the map: Baluchistan, Sind, Northwest Frontier, Punjab, Bengal and Assam provinces), the 59 million Muslims constitute 56 per cent of the total six-province population strength of 108 million. The other 49 million people are, of course, almost entirely Hindus, except for the six million Sikhs who live in the Punjab.

Not a traditional national question

Such are the basic facts. Now, what are the essential differences between Hindu and

Muslim, from a social standpoint? These differences fall under the general heading of *religious-communal* differences. That is, we are dealing with two *communities*, BUT communities that overlap in many fundamental respects: language, culture and tradition, racial and ethnic mixture, common conditions of life (particularly in the village-peasant areas), etc. In a word, the Hindu-Muslim problem is *not* a national problem in the traditional sense of the word. That is, the Muslims do not form a distinct national minority grouping, with a distinct culture, language, etc. We are dealing with a special form or expression of the national question – a problem in which the *specific* features of difference between the two vast communities are determined more by psychology, feelings and sentiment than by easily observable facts. The Muslim people are not a viable nation; they are an organic part of the Indian nation, but a part with viable differences and problems that cannot be dismissed.

As the resolution on 'Pakistan' (the demand of the Muslim League for recognition of the Muslims as a separate nation) adopted by the Indian Bolshevik-Leninists asserts, the real national differences within India consist of differences between peoples residing in regions, or separate provinces, of the country. That is, regional peoples such as the Punjabis, the Bengalis, the Pathans of the Northwest Frontier, the Madrasis and Tamils of south India, etc, have far greater differences and points of division, with respect to language, race, history and customs, than do the Hindus and Muslims considered as abstract categories of people! For example, a Muslim and a Hindu living in the Punjab region of India (that is, Punjabis) have far more in common with one another culturally, linguistically, etc, than they do with a Muslim and a Hindu living in, let us say, Bengal or Madras provinces. To express it differently, their common characteristics as Punjabis are more apparent and significant than their characteristics in common with, respectively, a Bengal or Madras province Hindu; or a Bengal or Madras province Muslim. But this is *not* to deny a common *religious-communal* bond between the Punjab Muslim and the Bengal or Madras Muslim; or such a bond between the Punjab Hindu and the Bengal or Madras Hindu. Such a denial would, of course, imply that the Hindu-Muslim antagonism has no reality and as such would be nonsense. At the same time, we must again call attention to the general, all-pervading *Indian-ness* that reaches into every region and province of India and covers each religion, sect, community, caste and class with its all-embracing *national* qualities.

'These special features of the geography of India are reflected in her civilisation. To the variations in topography, climate, flora and fauna, and natural resources correspond wide differences in cultural patterns and social institutions, as evidenced by the richness and variety of art, literature, philosophy and religion in India. Nevertheless, the existence of facilities for communication within the greater part of the country has led to the growth of social relationships among different racial groups and created a profound cultural unity in the midst of diversity; and the comparative isolation of this great country from the rest of the world has preserved the conditions for the evolution of a civilisation that is unique and specifically Indian.' – *Industrial Labour in India*, published by the International Labour Office, Geneva, 1938.

This quality of *Indian-ness* is revealed in common origins of language and their deep inter-connection (not to mention the fact that Hindustani, the plurality language, is spoken by one-third of the entire population); common social and economic life; common traditions and historic experiences; elaborate communications, etc.

What is the specific nature of the Muslim community of 92 millions? The vast bulk of this community (over 80 per cent) are poor, illiterate peasants – either tenant farmers or small landholders. They live within the lower scales of the socially depressed Indian population. It is wrong to think that the Muslim community is not internally divided along economic and class lines. On the contrary, its top sector is an extremely reactionary and oppressive clique. In Bengal province, with which the author is most familiar, the Muslim castes are indistinguishable from the Hindu castes who occupy the other half of the province. The Muslim landlords, princes (Nizams) and feudal aristocrats are precisely symmetrical to their class brothers in the Hindu community. In Hyderabad, the largest and one of the most oppressive of the so-called native states, a Muslim ruling class of landlords and feudalists tyrannises over a Hindu peasant population in exactly the same manner as do the princes in Hindu native states.

William Phillips, Roosevelt's personal envoy in India and the gentleman who was declared *persona non grata* by the British, declared in a report, '... the Muslim community as a political party has only an artificial unity. Like other religious groups it comprises various classes which have been more or less welded together politically by the device of separate electorate. There is already evidence to indicate that Muslim workers and peasants are becoming increasingly aware of their unity with Hindus of the same class.' (*The Voice of India*, February 1946, p. 248.)

The Muslim community then consists of:

- 1) A small handful of landlords, princes and feudal rulers.
- 2) A small strata of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, government officials, students, priests and religious teachers, unemployed college graduates.
- 3) A small strata of industrial workers.
- 4) A small strata of skilled handicraft workers.
- 5) An overwhelming strata of peasants and small land-owning farmers.

Unfortunately, we do not possess exact figures on the actual numbers of the above groups. It is important to note there are hardly any Muslim industrial bourgeois and comparatively few Muslim proletarians. In addition, since the Islamic religion

India: the road to partition

- 1600 – British East India Company is established.
- 1857 – The Indian Mutiny or The First War of Independence.
- 1858 – The India Act: power transferred to the British government.
- 1885 – Indian National Congress founded by A.O. Hume to unite all Indians and strengthen bonds with Britain.
- 1905 – First Partition of Bengal for administrative purposes. Gives the Muslims a majority in that state.
- 1906 – All India Muslim League founded to promote Muslim political interests.
- 1909 – Revocation of Partition of Bengal. Creates anti-British and anti-Hindu sentiments among Muslims as they lose their majority in East Bengal.
- 1916 – Lucknow Pact. The Congress and the League unite in demand for greater self-government. It is denied by the British.
- 1919 – Rowlatt Acts, or 'Black Acts', passed despite opposition by Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council. These were peacetime extensions of wartime emergency measures to suppress sedition. Their passage causes further disaffection with the British and leads to protests. Amritsar Massacre. General Dyer opens fire on 20,000 unarmed Indian civilians at a political demonstration against the Rowlatt Acts. Congress and the League lose faith in the British.
- 1919 – Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (implemented in 1921). A step towards self-government in India within the Empire, with greater provincialisation, based on a dyarchic principle in provincial government as well as administrative responsibility. Communal representation institutionalised for the first time as reserved legislative seats are allocated for significant minorities.
- 1920 – Gandhi launches a non-violent, non-cooperation movement, or Satyagraha, against the British for a free India.
- 1922 – Twenty-one policemen are killed by Congress supporters at Chauri-Chaura. Gandhi suspends non-cooperation movement and is imprisoned.
- 1928 – Simon Commission, set up to investigate the Indian political environment for future policy-making, fails as all parties boycott it.
- 1929 – Congress calls for full independence.
- 1930 – Dr. Allama Iqbal, a poet-politician, calls for a separate homeland for the Muslims at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League. Gandhi starts Civil Disobedience Movement against the Salt Laws by which the British had a monopoly over production and sale of salt.
- 1930-31 – The Round Table conferences, set up to consider Dominion status for India. They fail because of non-attendance by the Congress and because Gandhi, who does attend, claims he is the only representative of all of India.
- 1931 – Irwin-Gandhi Pact, which concedes to Gandhi's demands at the Round Table conferences and further isolates Muslim League from the Congress and the British.
- 1932 – Third Round Table Conference boycotted by Muslim League. Gandhi restarts civil disobedience. Congress is outlawed by the British.
- 1935 – Government of India Act: proposes a federal India of political provinces with elected local governments but British control over foreign policy and defence.
- 1937 – Elections. Congress is successful in gaining majority.
- 1939 – Congress ministries resign.
- 1940 – Jinnah calls for establishment of Pakistan in an independent and partitioned India.
- 1942 – Cripps Mission to India, to conduct negotiations between all political parties and to set up a cabinet government. Congress adopts Quit India Resolution, to rid India of British rule. Congress leaders arrested for obstructing war effort.
- 1942-43 – Muslim League gains more power: ministries formed in Sind, Bengal and Northwest Frontier Province and greater influence in the Punjab.
- 1944 – Gandhi released from prison. Unsuccessful Gandhi-Jinnah talks, but Muslims see this as an acknowledgement that Jinnah represents all Indian Muslims.
- 1945 – The new Labour government in Britain decides India is strategically indefensible and begins to prepare for Indian independence. Direct Action Day riots convince British that Partition is inevitable.
- 1946 – Muslim League participates in Interim Government that is set up according to the Cabinet Mission Plan.
- 1947 – Announcement of Lord Mountbatten's plan for partition of India, June 3. Partition of India and Pakistan, August 15. Radcliffe Award of boundaries of the nations, August 16.
- 1971 – East Pakistan separates from West Pakistan and Bangladesh is born.

frowns upon the garnering of 'interest' and money-lending, the Muslims rarely are found among the commercial groups of the Indian population. The Hindu *bania*, the village money-lender and storekeeper, has a free field, thus providing a constant source of irritation in Muslim village communities and farming areas.

Sources of Muslim communalism

The sources of Muslim communalism are not hard to uncover, once we grasp the basic facts outlined above. In general, the Muslim people occupy a lower place in the all-India community than other groups. They do not share proportionally in the general production or distribution of social wealth; nor do they occupy social positions commensurate with their numbers and significance. They therefore feel discriminated against. The ruling ranks of the Muslim community likewise strive to share places with the corresponding ruling ranks of the Hindus. Muslim landlords and princes wish to retain their class privileges and powers; Muslims wish to become capitalists and share the profits of the Hindu textile, steel, iron and coal industrial magnates; Muslim intellectuals are in violent competition with the Hindu intellectuals and college graduates over jobs in the British civil service and administration, etc. The Hindu-Muslim struggle is, then, a general struggle between rival communities for social and economic positions, within the iron-grip of British imperialism. It is a *real* struggle, having its own objective reality, despite the undeniable factor of British imperialism and its deliberate stimulation of conflict between these two groups.

Muslim communalism, with its separatist demands, is and has been led by the famous Muslim League of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. We must examine briefly the history and nature of the Muslim League. It was first founded in 1906, by a group of Muslim intellectuals, for 'promotion of loyalty to the British Government' – to quote the original constitution – and the safeguarding of Muslim interests and the placing of Muslim 'needs and aspirations before the Government in temperate language'. (*Condition of India*, p.121.) The original Muslim League was, in a word, a reactionary organisation of landlords, princes and religious leaders who desired to conciliate their moderate demands within the British *Raj*. In later years, the League merely became the instrument through which the Muslim people, in distorted fashion, expressed their resentment against discrimination and their general suspicions of the Hindu community; as well as an organisational method by which

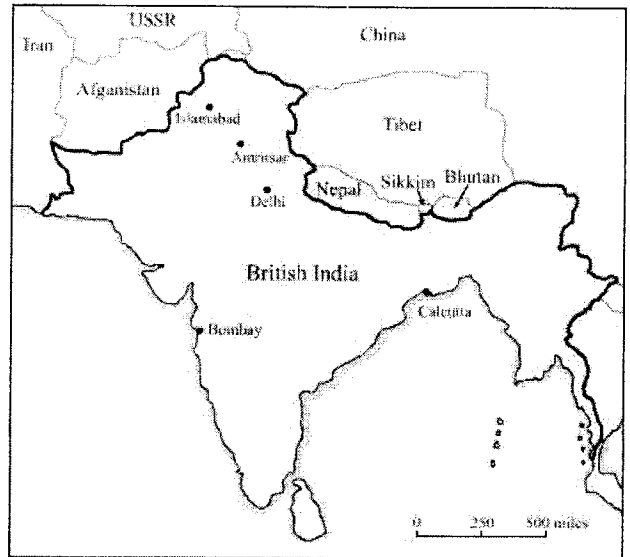
the Muslim leadership could canalise Muslim popular sentiment without, at the same time, having to organise the Muslim masses into militant organisations of combat.

For many years, the Muslim League had an active united front with the Congress party, collaborating in many of its political campaigns against British imperialism. Membership of both the Muslim League and the Congress was a common occurrence and not at all surprising. It is not a generally known fact, but M.A. Jinnah – present head of the Muslim League – was, for a long period of time, one of the foremost Congress party leaders. But, as the economic and social factors that tend toward communal divergence became tighter and sharper, owing to the general economic depression that hit India, and suspicions of the Congress party among Muslims mounted (see below), the Muslim League gradually turned away from the Congress party nationalist policy and developed into the full-blown communalist, separatist organisation that it is today.

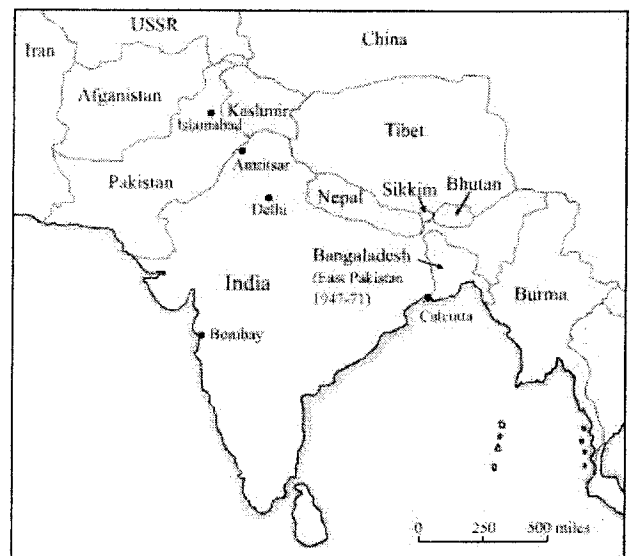
The League and the Muslim masses

In no sense of the word can it be considered that the Muslim League speaks authoritatively for the Muslim peasant masses. Comrade Murarji has excellently summed up the class character of the Muslim League in explaining how 'Muslim communalism was . . . the solution of the Muslim upper classes to the sharpening class antagonisms of Indian society . . . it was a piercing flank attack on the anti-imperialist mass movement'. The Muslim League is the organisation of the Muslim landlords, princes, intellectuals and petty-bourgeois. Jinnah, a wealthy Bombay lawyer, is a petty tyrant ruling over this organisation in much the same fashion that Gandhi rules the Congress party. *The truth of the matter is that the great Muslim masses are still politically and organisationally voiceless: no one can pretend to fully voice their sentiments or know precisely what they are thinking.*² Why is this

India before 1947



India after 1947



the case? Because no one – neither the British Government, nor the Congress party, nor the Muslim League – have yet given them the opportunity of expressing themselves on any basic questions.

We have indicated some of the general factors underlying Muslim communalism, and leading to the struggle between the Congress party (the party of the Indian bourgeoisie and Hindu capitalists) and the Muslim League (the party of the Muslim feudalists, landlords, etc). This is the essence of the struggle as viewed from above, from the standpoint of the top strata of both communities. Strictly speaking, the Con-

gress party is not the exact Hindu counterpart of the Muslim League, but only appears so on the popular political scene. Behind the Congress party stands the infamous *Hindu Mahasabha*, the narrow, confined organisation of the top Hindu bourgeoisie, in its own way, equally as fanatic and reactionary as the Muslim League. It is this organisation that manipulates the top leadership of the Congress party (Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, etc).

Below this top strata of both communities, the Hindu-Muslim antagonism is expressed in a variety of ways. We have already indicated some – the competition

between intellectuals, college graduates, etc, over civil service jobs; the struggle between Muslim peasants and Hindu *banias*; the struggle between Hindu peasants and Muslim landlords, etc. And, suspended over all this, there stands the broad experience of both communities resulting from that period, in 1937, when the Congress party formed independent ministries in 7 out of India's 11 provinces. This was an experience that the Muslim League has played up to the full. It was a test of 'Hindu rule', and the Muslims didn't like it.

We cannot review that lengthy experience here, but will merely summarise the

Resolution on Pakistan

The following resolution on the slogan of Pakistan (separation of India into Hindu and Muslim states) was adopted by a majority vote at the First Representative Conference of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, the Indian section of the Fourth International, at its September 1944 gathering.

The Pakistan slogan epitomises the demand of the reactionary Muslim League 'that geographically contiguous units . . . [be] . . . demarcated into regions which should be so constituted . . . that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones in India, should be grouped to constitute "independent states" in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign'.

The slogan is politically reactionary and theoretically false. It is politically reactionary in that it constitutes an effort through an appeal to communal sentiments to divert the rising discontent of the Muslim masses away from its true enemy, namely, British imperialism and its native allies, against the Hindus. It is theoretically false in that it proceeds from the indefensible contention that the Muslims in India constitute a nation, which is declared to be oppressed (equally false) by a Hindu nation. There is no basis, whether of common historical tradition, language, culture or race, or in respect of geographical and economic factors, for the arising of a distinct Muslim nationality. Religion (together, of course, with any common element of culture which that may entail) is the only unifying factor, and is clearly insufficient, on the basis of all historical experience, to produce any sentiment which can constitute a national consciousness. The slogan of Pakistan is therefore purely demagogic and must be fought not only by laying bare its treacherous purpose but also by exposing the cunning attempt to give to its communalist nature a 'nationalist' colouring.

It would be incorrect to believe that the growth in strength of the Muslim League in recent years is due to its support of a demand or demands for national self-determination. The principle reasons for its growth are the following:

1) The opportunity presented to the Muslim League to turn to communal channels the discontent created by the reactionary policies of the Congress Ministries (all non-League) which came into office in the various provinces in 1937.

2) The powerful backing given to it by imperialism during the period when Congress moved into open opposition and ultimately direct struggle, including the jockeying of Muslim League ministries into office in province after province.

3) The utilisation by the Muslim League of the fact that a large majority of Indian capitalists and landlords are Hindus, in order to divert the class struggle into communal channels.

4) The coming under its influence of layers of the masses (hitherto outside the influence of any political organisation), coming to consciousness for the first time and turning to the Muslim League as the organisation nearest to hand. With the turn of Congress once more toward co-operation with imperialism, and the progressively declining need of the Muslim League as an instrument for British imperialism, the Muslim League has passed the pinnacle of its strength, as is evidenced by the numerous splits and quarrels within the League.

The Indian nation consists of various nationalities (e.g., Bengalis, Punjabis, Andheras, Tamilians, Caneras, etc) who are bound together by common language, culture, historical tradition, etc. British imperialism has drawn its administrative boundaries regardless of these distinctions, with the result that the demands for a redefinition of boundaries and the formation of new provinces, paying a due regard to the existence of these different groupings, has gained in strength in some areas. But nowhere have these demands gone beyond an aspiration for provincial autonomy, thus demonstrating the insignificance of such 'separatist tendencies' in relation to the developing national consciousness of the modern Indian nation. The policy of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India in relation to these nationalities and their demand is clear. Not only does the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India stand for a federated India on the basis of these distinct nationalities, but it stands for their right of self-determination.

The Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India must, however, expose the misapplication of the principle of national self-determination by the Communist Party of India, which, while denying the existence of a Muslim nation in words, recognises it in fact in its proposed redefinition of provincial boundaries. It proposes to draw the boundaries in the Punjab and Bengal in such a manner as to separate West Punjab and East Bengal, where populations are predominantly Muslim, from East Punjab and West Bengal respectively, which are predominantly Hindu. In the absence of any genuine growth of a West Punjab or East Bengal national consciousness, this attempt to divide, on the basis of mere difference of religion, the territory occupied by two distinct nationalities, namely, the Punjabis and the Bengalis, is clearly a concession to the theory of a Muslim nation.

Since neither the Muslim League demand for Pakistan, nor the Communist Party of India variation of it constitute genuine national demands, there can be no question of any support to these demands helping to bring the masses into the struggle against British imperialism. On the contrary, such support would only help to draw the masses away from this struggle by helping the Muslim League to divert the rising discontent of the Muslim masses into communal channels.

role of the Congress governments when they held power. '... the Congress ministries have done the bidding of the British; supported the employers as against the unions; the landlords as against the peasants. They have moved steadily to the right by ignoring the Election manifesto and have alienated the peasant and toiling masses.' In many provinces where it held power, the Congress ministries 'jailed and murdered Congressmen, Congress Socialists and above all, *kisan satyagrahis* (peasant leaders), dispossessed tenants and gave open support to terror organised by the landlords'. (See *The New International*, February 1939, pp.61, 62.) These actions against the peasantry fell equally, of course, upon Hindu and Muslim. As for discrimination measures against Muslim culture, even Mr. William Phillips is forced to reluctantly admit some basis for these charges. In his report he states, 'The charges that the Congress Governments did their best to destroy Muslim culture rests principally upon a few isolated instances of the elimination of Urdu from school curriculums and such measures as the Wardha (Gandhi) Scheme of basic education, or the use of certain text books...' (*The Voice of India*, February 1946, p.248.) A few 'isolated instances', perhaps, but sufficient to furnish fuel for the Muslim League fanatics, who point out that if the Congress Ministries, with their limited powers, behaved in such fashion what would they stop at if they ever took real power, on an all-India basis? The Ministries were, in a word, political governments of the Indian bourgeoisie, carrying on its class warfare against the Hindu and Muslim workers and peasants and, at the same time, definitely exerting a 'Jim Crow' pressure against the Muslim minority community. This experience is the most powerful basis for the present Muslim League campaign for Pakistan.

Bearing in mind the qualifying features that a Muslim can *only* vote for a Muslim, and that the great bulk of Muslim masses (at least 85 million out of the 92 million) are excluded from voting by various qualifications, the results of recent elections nevertheless indicate the trend toward Muslim separatism and communalism, as represented by the League of Jinnah. In the 11 Provincial legislatures, 512 seats were allotted to the Muslim community. The Muslim League won 445 of these seats (87 per cent), but, curiously enough, only got 73 per cent of the seats in the Pakistan area of India.³ In the elections to the Federal Legislative Assembly, the Muslim League won 22 out of the 30 seats allotted to Muslims. While such results are in no way decisive, they certainly are indicative of

Muslim League support among the top and petty-bourgeois layers of the Muslim community. What would be the attitude of the Muslim masses? This remains the great unknown in the whole situation.

The proposed solutions

In general, there are three proposed solutions to the Hindu-Muslim problem, none of which fail to violate basic democratic principles and none of which could conceivably achieve a harmonious resolving of the differences.

a) The British imperialist proposal for a united, Congress-led India and semi-autonomous Muslim provinces can only be understood as the latest in a long history of constant effort to play off one community against the other, depending on the concrete tactical needs of the moment – that is, the given world situation of the Empire. We cannot, of course, review this lengthy history. Today, with the Empire weakened from the war strain, with added threats from American and Russian imperialism, the British are anxious for an agreement, a 'deal' to stabilise the country. The Attlee government must, before all, have order and stability in India, so as to use its possession of that country's resources in Britain's struggle for the world market. This requires (1) an agreement by which the Indian bourgeoisie (Congress party) share ruling power with the British imperialists, and (2) an agreement for a new government in which the Muslim ruling class (Muslim League) shall have a satisfactory share. But British imperialism, if required, will make this arrangement only with the Congress leadership, excluding the Muslim League if the latter is adamant and insists upon Pakistan.

The British solution is, accordingly, proposed only within the arena of its imperialist mastery. It means arrangements with top leaders, deals, endless negotiations, etc. It is counterposed to a democratic Constituent Assembly; withdrawal of British troops from India; dissolving of all ties between master and subject nation. It is an adaptation of British imperialism to 1946 needs, and recognition that the British *Raj* cannot continue except by sharing power in some form with the Indian bourgeoisie.

b) The solution of the Congress party of Indian capitalists and Hindu landlords is not fundamentally different from that of the British. It is motivated by the same desire – that is, sharing in the exploitation of India's resources and manpower. The Congress proposes a united India, in which it shall guarantee the Muslims and other minorities their democratic rights. 'Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his

religion, subject to public order and morality. The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.' (*Congress Election Manifesto*, January 1946.) The Congress, of course, rejects out of hand the Muslim proposal for a clear division of India into two.

For the Congress leaders, the problem of India is *not* that of solving the communal question; that is secondary. The problem is how to satisfactorily share power, as a junior partner, with British imperialism; how to win room for the further expansion of Indian, native capitalism and its desire to directly exploit greater masses of Indians, Hindu and Muslim alike. But the Muslim areas and the Muslim masses are a significant part in India's economy, and the Hindu bourgeoisie will not let them go easily. Needless to say, these democratic guarantees of the Congress leaders are insufficient to still the suspicions of the Muslim peasantry, or to down the fanatic demands of the Muslim extremists. Indian capitalism, now trying to make a long-range settlement with British imperialism, would like to include in this arrangement the right to free exploitation of every nationality, community and group within the

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Indian population. This is the gist of the Congress proposal.

c) The separatist, 'Pakistan'⁴ proposal of the Muslim League, demagogically supported by the Indian Communist Party, is a reactionary, utopian scheme calculated to perpetuate the position of the Muslim ruling strata at the expense of the Indian nation in general, and the Muslim peasantry in particular. It proposes to take the provinces of Assam and Bengal in the eastern part of India; along with the provinces of Punjab, Sind, Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan in north and western India, and from these two areas, separated by 1,500 miles, form an autonomous state, not only separated from the rest of India (Hindustan), but separated from each other! The social, economic and political objections to this reactionary proposal are too numerous to mention. Firstly, 49 million Hindus and six million Sikhs live within this Pakistan area – what is to be their fate? Secondly, the Pakistan area contains the major agricultural regions of India (Punjab grain), most of India's heavy industry and the nation's greatest port (Calcutta). Cutting it off from the rest of the nation, surrounding it by an artificial national boundary, etc, could only further depress the economic life of the nation as a whole and, ultimately, subject the Hindustan nation to the rule of the minority Pakistan section. Thirdly, what of the 33 million Muslims who live outside the area and are not covered by the Pakistan boundaries? Are they, at a later stage, to form separate states and then struggle for unification with Pakistan? In other words, is there to be constant warfare between a divided India, along national, communal and religious lines? This seems to be the meaning of Pakistan, as proposed by the League whose leaders have visions of the Mogul Empire days, when the Islamic conquerors ruled the entire subcontinent.

In short, from a democratic or socialist point of view, from the viewpoint of the development of a harmonious and balanced Indian nation, the Pakistan conception is disastrous and could only lead to sharper division. But at the same time, an outright rejection of the Pakistan plan cannot answer the question. Something positive must be proposed to the Muslim people.

Resolution evades issue

And here, in conclusion, we come to the programme and resolution on Pakistan offered by the Indian Bolshevik-Leninists, the Indian section of the Fourth International. Insofar as it goes, this resolution – which we are publishing – proceeds along the correct line but, in our opinion, does

not go far enough and, in a sense, evades the Muslim issue.

The resolution correctly describes the character of the Muslim League and its separatism, as well as the hopelessly retrogressive nature of Pakistan. It places India's national problem on a realistic level by pointing to the fact that regional divisions, according to nationalities (Punjabis, Bengalis, etc), constitute the real problem. A united, socialist, *federal* India is the solution proposed, similar to the Leninist plan for the solution of Russia's national question. To quote from the original constitution of Soviet Russia, 'The workers and peasants of each nation are free to decide independently at their own plenipotentiary Soviet congresses whether they desire, and if so, on what conditions, to take part in the federal government and other federal Soviet institutions.' (Part II, Chapter 5.) The principle of socialist federalism assumes, of course, the right of secession from any Federated Indian state. As the programme of the Indian Trotskyists states, only a democratically-elected Constituent Assembly can decide these questions of Indian independence, and create the broad outlines of the future nation. But the proposal of socialist federations is undoubtedly the correct answer to the basic aspects of the *national problem*.

But the Muslim problem and relations between the two major communities overlaps the national, or regional problem! In the present tense situation, it even tends to dominate the former and replace it. Muslims live everywhere in India, regardless of nationality, and form enclaves within the body of India itself, including the predominantly Hindu sections. And, since it evades this question, the resolution we publish can be considered satisfactory only insofar as it goes. It does not go far enough. It is not sufficient to characterise the reactionary Muslim League, nor lay bare its class motives, since *behind* the League stands the dispossessed and degraded Muslim mass, with its deep and justified suspicions against the Congress party and its leadership. This cannot be ignored without the charge of 'pro-Hinduism' being levelled against the resolution and its authors.

If Lenin could consider that the Russian anarchists had the right to found a state, or community, of their own; if Lenin could believe that, in general, *any* group of people with a common set of beliefs and ideas had separatist rights – then we cannot deny this same right to a group of people such as the Muslims. Not, indeed, merely because Lenin said so, but because we revolutionary socialists stand for the utmost of democracy, above all at a time when the entire bourgeois, Stalinist and reactionary

world has discredited itself. The very tenacity with which the Congress bourgeois leadership opposes Pakistan and demands that the Muslim people subject itself to its tender graces, this alone would almost suffice to make us hold an opposite opinion, lest we be identified with Gandhi, Nehru, *et al.* Thus, we must clearly state that the Muslim people shall have the right to form independent states, including enclaves within Hindu territory, *if they so wish and so decide for themselves*. We will point out the general economic disadvantages of such separation and the greater advantages that lie in regional affiliation to a Federated India, but we cannot deny the right of the Muslim masses to attempt such a separatist experience, *if they so wish*. Above all, the Indian Trotskyists must openly proclaim the right of the Muslim people to *vote* on such a proposal. Everybody, the British government, the Muslim League, the Congress party – literally everybody denies the Muslim people the right to vote, to express their sentiments. Shall we be among these opponents of elementary democracy? No, in a free India the Muslim masses must have the right to vote, after democratic consideration and discussion, on the issue of separatism. In our opinion, the programme of the Indian Fourth Internationalists will not be correct or complete until this is added, in unambiguous form, to the resolution.

Notes

¹ The 1940 India census records 92 million Muslims, rather the Puckle's figure.

² It must be borne in mind that only a minute percentage of the Indian people can participate in any election. Franchise is based upon property qualifications, education qualifications and various special qualifications. The literacy qualification *automatically* eliminates 89 per cent of the Indian population! Perhaps 5 per cent (20 million), usually less, of the population participates in voting for the provincial legislatures. Furthermore, the reactionary electoral system *compels* a voter to vote according to his religion, or communal grouping. That is, a Muslim can vote only for a Muslim; a Hindu only for a Hindu and so on.

³ This is doubtless due to the fact that the Pakistan area includes the Northwest Frontier province which, although 90 per cent Muslim in population, constantly gives overwhelming support to Gandhi and the Congress party.

⁴ The name is derived from the initials of the Muslim provinces which are to constitute Pakistan.

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