

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

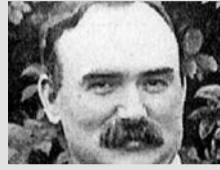


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For a workers' government

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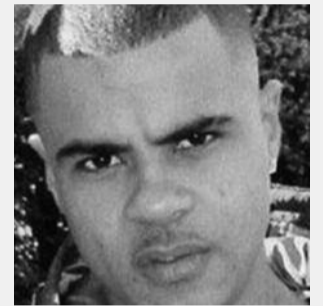
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# RACIST POLICE:

Killed by the police: Mark  
Duggan; Smiley Culture; Jean  
Charles de Menezes



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● **120 police officially found  
“racist” by Met: just 1 dismissed**

● **58% of those prosecuted after  
August 2011 riots were non-white**

● **Black people 7 times more  
likely to be stopped and searched**

**The facts**

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.



Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

### We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
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# Galloway's victory is not a victory for the left

By Charlie Salmon

The landslide victory of George Galloway in Bradford West has been hailed by many on the left as a "victory" for our side.

Tony Mulhearn of the Socialist Party — and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for mayor of Liverpool — writes "I applaud George Galloway's victory". Anindya Bhat-tacharyya writes on the Socialist Worker website that "his win is a boost for the left in Britain".

Meanwhile the Labour Party leadership has thrown itself into a fake "soul searching" exercise, promising to reflect on the defeat and learn the lessons. Such a tactic dodges the need for real accountability, but will it generate positive reassessments?

### COMMENTS

Not if Yvette Cooper's comments are anything to go by.

When interviewed by Andrew Marr on the BBC after Galloway's victory, Cooper announced Labour's major theme for upcoming local elections: "We're going to be campaigning on crime and anti-social behaviour because that is the sort of thing people are very concerned about in streets and communities across the country."

No serious assessment, then!

So how did Galloway manage to turn a 5,000 majority for Labour into a 10,000 majority for himself in the space of just three weeks? One argument is that he out-did Labour's communalist approach.

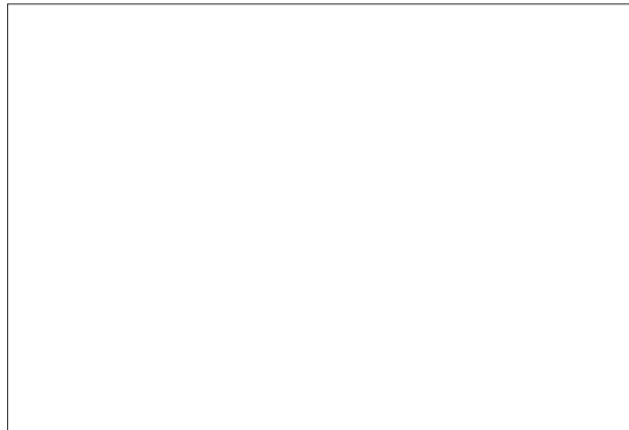
We know from previous experience that Galloway and Respect run communal campaigns, cynically harnessing the power and prestige of local imams and mosques to mobilise support.

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We know that Galloway and his campaigns push aside class approaches to politics and focus on his record as a "fighter for Muslims". We already know that during the Bradford West campaign, Galloway supporters distributed a letter which contains the following:

"God KNOWS who is a Muslim. And he KNOWS who is not. Instinctively, so do you. Let me point out to all the Muslim brothers and sisters what I stand for:

"I, George Galloway, do not drink alcohol and never have. Ask yourself if you believe the other candidate in this election can say that truthfully.

"I, George Galloway, have fought for the Muslims at home and abroad, all my life. And paid a price for it. I believe the other candidate in this election cannot say so truthfully".

### COMMUNALIST

A determined communalist slant from the Galloway camp definitely played a part in the victory.

However, Labour's candidate, Imran Hussein, was a Muslim of Pakistani heritage, and for the past five elections Bradford West has returned a Sikh man to Westminster. So while we should criticise Galloway's antics and note that communalism played a role, let's not paint a complex picture in just one shade as some right-wing critics have done.

The election in Bradford West was a by-election and in such circumstances, strange voting patterns can occur.

By some accounts, although Galloway had the support of Labour's former election agent and, one assumes, a number of former Labour activists, his campaign team was not substantial. It's doubtful if the campaign managed to visit many houses in the constituency and win an argument on the doorstep.

It is claimed that the Respect campaign focussed on mobilising people who

wouldn't have otherwise voted — the young, students etc... Even then, can such a swing be explained by such tactics?

The facts of the current political situation must have fed into Galloway's victory. These are:

- a Tory government determinedly seeing through an austerity campaign;
- a massively unpopular traditional "third party", the Liberal Democrats, who look on the brink of electoral collapse;
- a Labour Party that seems to have learned nothing from the experience of Blairism and New Labour.

Galloway's "headline" campaign message — against war and cuts — will have chimed with a great many people.

The factors leading to Galloway's victory are a complex mix of communalism, anti-government sentiment, the "celebrity" status of the candidate and the political ineptitude of Labour.

The overriding feature of Galloway's victory is the fact that Galloway has been returned to national politics and the fact that many on the left have fallen behind "Galloway the personality". This is most definitely a bad thing.

In parliament, Galloway never acted as a tribune of

the working class, trade unionism and socialist ideas. He is best remembered for using the backbenches as a platform to promote himself and his allegedly anti-imperialist credentials. For Galloway, anti-imperialism amounts to siding with Saddam Hussein against the Iraqi people, siding with the Iranian regime against the Iranian people, and lauding the murderer Assad for being the "last Arab leader". Galloway even informed the people of Syria that they are a "free people"! The story of Galloway's anti-imperialism is a book-length catalogue of demagogic lovmaking to some of the foulest characters on the planet.

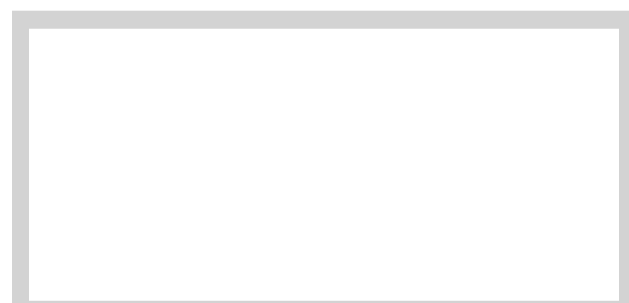
### BREATHE

The result in Bradford West will no doubt breathe new life into the idea that there is an electoral short-cut to dealing with the political problems our movement faces.

It will boost the idea in unions and among leftists to back initiatives like TUSC and characters like Galloway. And that we do not need to organise for a fight inside Labour against the remnants of Blair and New Labour.

Such false conclusions will generate a false political outlook for our class and our movement. The left — even those who've been at the receiving end of Galloway's politics in the recent past — have learned nothing because they seem to care nothing for consistent working class politics.

**We say: learn the lessons, get a grip on reality, call Galloway out for what he is and build a serious working-class politics.**



Sixteen Barnet residents briefly occupied Friern Barnet library on 5 April against Tory planned closure. We got to the library early, waited for the librarians to close for lunch, then refused to leave. Most occupiers were women activists from the Save Friern Barnet Library campaign plus a couple of their teenage sons. Throughout the afternoon supporters gathered outside, including many children upset that their library is closing. Although we left at 6pm, we discussed staying over the Easter weekend. Better planning would have made this possible: our occupation was organised in just 12 hours. The Labour group has supported the campaign against closure, but the group should declare it will re-open the library if re-elected in 2014 — that would make it harder for the council to sell off the site.

Vicki Morris

● Campaign website: <http://alturl.com/yrwba>

# Fight for women's rights in North Africa

By Dan Katz

## MOROCCO: WOMEN ACTIVISTS FIGHT FOR EQUALITY

**On 10 March 16-year-old Amina Filali killed herself by swallowing rat poison.**

Amina had been badly beaten during a forced marriage to Mustapha Kelak, a man who had raped her. Although there have been some limited legal improvement in the position of women in Morocco, the state still allows a rapist to marry an underage victim as a way of avoiding prosecution. The law — known as Article 475 — says a “kidnapper” of a minor can marry his victim so that dishonour is not brought on her family.

Legislation designed to outlaw all forms of violence against women, planned since 2006, has yet to appear.

Amina's parents say a local court pressured them to accept the marriage. They are from a backward, conservative rural area.

### Demonstration for Amina Filali

On 17 March several hundred women's rights activists demonstrated in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, demanding that the man who raped Amina be jailed and that Article 475 be abolished. Outrage continued after the *Al-Massae* newspaper invited the rapist to discuss the matter at a conference in Casablanca.

Eric Goldstein from Human Rights Watch says that many other barriers to equality persist in the Moroccan legal code, includ-

ing a provision that makes it a crime to give refuge to married women who have escaped their husbands.

Another article in the code makes sex outside of marriage a crime. If a woman reports a rape, and she doesn't prove her case, she is then admitting to sex outside marriage, opening up the possibility of prosecution.

Women's rights in Morocco are becoming a battleground between liberals and the left, and the Islamists who have been

brought to power in the wake of the Arab Spring.

To head off a revolution, the King made concessions and allowed the formation of a government led by the Islamist Justice and Development Party. Bassima Hakkaoui, minister of women and the family — and the only woman among the 29 ministers in the government — acknowledged that there was a “real problem” and called for a debate on changing the law. But Hakkaoui also claimed that Amina Filali had consented to the marriage.

And Justice Minister El Mostafa Ramid denied Amina Filali had been raped.

17-year-old Layla Belmahi, a founder of a women's rights group denounced the Minister:

“He was talking about it like it was something that was normal, that the only thing that really shocked him was the fact that she killed herself.

**“The problem wasn't the fact that she killed herself. It was that she was forced to marry her rapist.”**

## TUNISIA: DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHTS FROM ISLAMISM!

**Two Tunisian bloggers, Jabeur Mejri and Ghazi Beji, have been given long prison sentences after they posted a cartoon of Muhammad on Facebook.**

Ghazi Beji is still being looked for by police, while Jabeur Mejri faces seven years in jail.

On Sunday 25 March 10,000 marched in the capital, Tunis, demanding the country introduce Islamic sharia law. The ultra-conservative Salafists are pressing the leading party in the government, Ennahda, a somewhat milder Islamist party, to make the changes. Some marchers demanded a war on Jews — alarming Tunisia's Jews, a 1500 minority among a population of ten million.

Also last month, Salafist students at Manouba University on the outskirts of Tunis fought secular students and burnt the Tunisian flag.

Last year, Salafists protested outside Nessma

TV when it screened the French-Iranian film *Persepolis*. They also attacked a cinema that was showing “Ni Dieu, Ni Maître,” (“No God, No Master”), a film by secularist filmmaker Nadia al-Fani. Some Salafists were jailed.

Ennahda, which won 41% of the seats in the constituent assembly elected last October, declares that the new constitution will not base Tunisia's law on sharia.

The Islamists have not gone uncontested. A large march took place in Tunis to celebrate International Women's day.

On Monday 9 April 2000 protesters marching from the nearby headquarters of the main trade union federation, the UGTT, which has been at the forefront of opposition to the Islamist-led government, fought riot police at the interior ministry on Bourguiba Avenue.

**On Saturday 7 April the police had attacked and dispersed a march by jobless workers in central Tunis and the unions were demanding their right to protest.**

# US election: lesser evils and... Ron Paul

By Barry Finger

**The contentious character of the Republican primaries has revealed one startling fact.**

The Democratic Party under Obama has come to occupy so much of the political terrain, from moderate right to centre left, that there is no space for the Republicans to define themselves beyond the realm of sheer lunacy.

The Republicans' Obama Derangement Syndrome, as this condition has become to be known, is characterised above all by a shared certainty that the US is marching in lockstep down the path to a Fascist-Stalinist-atheist-Islamic hell-hole bankrolled by Hollywood liberals and abetted by a sinister agit-prop media taking its marching orders from some mist enveloped Democratic Kremlin.

True believers on the right have emerged from the Great Recession, a study in the abject failure of capitalism, with a renewed faith in “free markets” reinforced by an unshakeable conviction that socialistic regulations both caused the system to collapse and prevent its ro-

bust revival.

Ironically, the Republicans are about to nominate Mitt Romney, a candidate characterised by his detractors as a “Massachusetts moderate” who, by any light, is more compatible with the blue-dog wing of the Democratic Party than with the current mood of conservatism.

Were it not for the sheer number of inept contenders to his right splitting the reactionary vote, Romney may well have been disqualified from the outset.

Still, in his path to victory Romney has chewed up and repudiated virtually every belief he once professed to hold, lending to the term “opportunism” an unchallengeable new standard.

### UPTURN

**The Republican primary process at its margins has revealed some critical fissures within the Democratic façade.**

Were the future prospect of Ron Paul's son, Rand, in the Republican Party not in the balance, a third party run by the “libertarian” Paul senior would have otherwise peeled a part of the anti-war left

from the Democratic Party.

Paul is a dyed in the wool reactionary, homophobic and racist, but he is also the only serious anti-interventionist in either party seeking a public platform.

It makes little immediate difference that he dates American imperialism from Lincoln depriving the slave-holding south to its putative right to self-determination.

What makes him appealing to at least part of the left is his relentless attack on the military-industrial complex.

### CONDEMNING

**Paul is virtually alone in condemning the surveillance state fertilised by this dynamic, which presents a simmering threat to civil liberties not only of the Muslim community but also of the anti-war and Occupy movements.**

Current law, signed by Obama, surpasses even the Patriot Act in its authoritarian intrusiveness, now permitting the indefinite detention without trial of American citizens suspected of terrorist affiliations.

And Obama has perma-

nently rendered the War Powers Act, requiring prior Congressional approval before military action is undertaken, void while arrogating to himself the right to authorise targeted killings of American citizens far from any battlefield.

Paul is alone in seeking to end the odiously counterproductive “war on drugs.”

Nonviolent crimes associated with drug possession have been among the largest rationales for the mass incarceration of poor black youth, effectively giving rise to a new form of Jim Crowism.

The Democratic Party, for all its professed commitment to racial equality, has ever been a willing partner to this form of institutional oppression.

Were there an independent Paul campaign, the with-us-or-against-us ethos that keeps the left in line with the Democrats would likely fray at the edges. For the reality of such a campaign would elevate the thorny issue of navigating between various evils to an unfamiliar dimension, one of choosing among mixed, rather than lesser, evils.

It would immediately raise unanswerable questions and hold a mirror up to the Democratic Party.

Why are the reactionary attitudes and programs — the shredding of the social safety net, massive business deregulation, the elimination of reproductive autonomy — of a Ron Paul more odious than a Democratic foreign policy imposed by drones and cluster bombs, or a domestic program that continues a racist war on drugs, and enriches health insurance companies and big pharma, while failing to hold the line against runaway costs?

### DISMEMBERING

**Why is a programme of dismembering the Fed and public austerity more reactionary than shielding the Fed from transparency?**

Or protecting mortgage defrauders from prosecution, standing idly while millions lose their homes, repeatedly reneging on promises to labor and environmentalists, empowering former Goldman Sachs executives and other bankers to write law and pursuing policies that redistribute income from

workers to corporate conglomerates?

Were it not for a conflict of family ambition and timing on Ron Paul's part, the left could not avoid facing up to its own self-imposed dilemmas.

As it is, American progressives have been spared the need to choose between civil liberties and legal abortion; between a permanent peace dividend and social entitlements; between dismantling a racist justice system and maintaining the right to collectively bargain.

Yes, the choices that Ron Paul represents should be utterly unacceptable to any healthy left.

A victory for whatever is positive in his program would come at the cost of a massive setback for workers, the poor, the sick and the elderly. It would rollback a century of struggle.

But what line would Obama and the Democrats have to cross before the same could be said about them?

**At what point would the labor movement and the oppressed finally pursue instead a course of class independence?**

# A miners' strike moment? We wish!

## Letters

**Tory commentator Charles Moore speculated in his *Daily Telegraph* column that the leadership of his own party is deliberately seeking a high-profile confrontation with the labour movement in order to contrive its own "miners' strike moment".**

In Moore's own words, "all hell broke loose" after the speculation (which spoke of a "private message" being handed down from Tory HQ to constituency activists) was misinterpreted as Moore leaking an actual document. He has since issued a public apology.

But the government's response to the threat of strike action by fuel tanker drivers, including Francis Maude's advice to stockpile petrol (despite the fact that no strikes had even been announced), certainly suggests a strategy of brinkmanship and attempted escalation. The advice quickly led to a woman suffering serious burns (stockpiling car fuel in domestic garages is not exactly safe) and Maude and the Tories were widely criticised for scaremongering.

What really prevents this or any current dispute from becoming a "miners' strike moment" is that the labour movement is neither strong nor combative enough. Unite have held off naming strike dates in the tanker drivers' battle because "talks" have resumed — the basic trade union principle of using industrial action to put pressure on ongoing negotiations apparently lose on them.

**We can create a "miners' strike moment", with a different outcome, by reclaiming our unions from the cautious and conservative officials who currently run them and turning them into weapons we can use to take on the Tories.**

*Ira Berkovic, north London*

## Greece and a workers' government

**There are both timeless and concrete arguments for the workers' government slogan (discussed in 'Greece: a workers' government?' *Solidarity* 239).**

The Communist International resolved at its Fourth Congress in 1922: "As a general propagandistic slogan, the workers' government (or workers' and peasants' government) can be used almost everywhere." As Trotsky said the reason for this, and for the slogan's educative potential, is that it "opposes the working class as a whole politically to all other classes, i.e., to the groupings of the bourgeois political world."

A more pressing purpose, applicable to Greece today is, in outline, in the same 1922 resolution: "As an immediate political slogan, however, the workers' government is most important in countries where bourgeois society is particularly unstable, where the relationship of forces between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie places the question of government on the agenda as a practical problem requiring immediate solution. In these countries, the slogan of the workers' government flows unavoidably from the entire united-front tactic."

The stagnating support for Pasok and New Democracy threatens to set in train a crisis in the bourgeois parliamentary system if the electorate refuse to endorse a government acceptable to the Troika. It is quite possible that the question "who governs?" will soon be posed quite sharply and revolutionaries need to have an answer.

However the workers' government slogan is intended not as a free-standing panacea but as an advanced link in a chain of transitional demands, leading ultimately to the seizure of power by the working class.

Consistent with this logic, the International's resolution on tactics at the Fourth Congress states that "Communists propose the united front of all workers and a coalition of all workers' parties, in both the economic and political arena, to struggle against the power of the bourgeoisie and ultimately to overthrow it." The workers' government can be therefore seen as a transitional stage towards the democratic rule of the working-class.

This scenario envisages a workers' government with a strong Communist component going on the offensive, using the already-existing state machinery to wage the class struggle: "The most basic tasks of a workers' government," continues the resolution, "must consist of arming the proletariat, disarming the bourgeois counter-revolutionary organisations, introducing [workers'] control of production, shifting the main burden of taxation to the shoulders of the rich, and breaking the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie."

There exist in Greece no major political parties which would be prepared for such a task. Certainly not Syriza, definitely not Democratic Left. What about the KKE? The Greek Stalinists are so removed from the ABCs of genuine Marxism that they reject even the tactics of the united front and instead operate as a sectarian propaganda organisation.

Does this mean that a call for a workers' government in Greece is wrong? I do not think so. Also discussed in the 1922 resolutions are other scenarios of a workers' government playing out.

In context of mass working-class struggle, of the sort we are certainly witnessing in Greece, "even a workers' government that arises from a purely parliamentary combination, that is, one that is purely parliamentary in origin, can provide the occasion for a revival of the revolutionary workers' movement."

In the case of a coalition of reformist workers' organisations being forced to assume power on a wave of working-class struggle, even an example of what the Communist International called an "illusory workers' government... can, under certain circumstances, speed up the decomposition of bourgeois power."

Such circumstances would be the vigorous opposition of all bourgeois political forces to even the idea of a workers' government, sharpening the class struggle and creating the potential for a revolutionary situation. In this context, "the slogan of the workers' government thus has the potential of uniting the proletariat and unleashing revolutionary struggle."

It is doubtful that any potential workers' government which would arise from the current balance of political forces in Greece would be "one that is determined to take up a resolute struggle at least to achieve the workers' most important immediate demands against the bourgeoisie," it is inconceivable that genuine revolutionaries could enter into it, even if they were in a position to do so.

This also assumes that the reformist organisations in question, Syriza, Democratic Left and the KKE, would even be capable of coming together to form a workers' government in the first place. Given their respective programmes and the sectarian attitude of the KKE, this too is unlikely.

Nevertheless, even an "illusory workers' government" of the reformist type or, more likely, the mere process of challenging the reformist organisations to form a workers' government have immense educative potential.

As well as simply giving an immediate answer to the question of who should govern after the elections, and raising the idea that workers' should, as a class, aspire towards political power, the workers' government slogan can test the character of the dominant leftist parties and potentially win over wider sections of the working-class to a genuinely revolutionary programme.

It should not, however, be raised in isolation but as part of a wider call for a united front of workers' organisations to fight for a series of transitional demands.

**Given the possibility of disappointment, revolutionaries must also link the slogan to the demand for the creation of alternative structures of power and the replacement of the capitalist system with socialist democracy.**

*Liam McNulty, Cambridge*

## Strong women in Italian politics

**Whilst I was delighted that *Solidarity* 240 contained not just one but two articles about Italy (Hugh Edwards, "Strike wave sweeps Italy", and Kate Devine, "Italian feminism resurgent?") and agreed with much of their content, I did feel that cumulatively they gave a somewhat skewed impression of the current role of women in Italian politics and public life.**

Although the Berlusconi period marked a nadir in this respect, the controversies of the last four months over pensions and Article 18 have in fact seen three strong intelligent women as their principal protagonists — Elsa Fornero, the Minister of Labour, Emma Marcegaglia, the President of Confindustria (the employers' federation), and Susanna Camusso, the general secretary of the CGIL trade union confederation.

Obviously, the first two represent the class enemy and the last, however imperfectly, our side; but their prominence in public life — and it should be stressed that Marcegaglia was the first woman to head Confindustria and Camusso the first woman to lead the CGIL — should serve as a demonstration to the younger generation of Italian women that women can rise on the basis of their intelligence and ability and not through being a "showgirl".

Whilst Camusso is a classic social democratic trade union bureaucrat, not a Rosa Luxemburg or even a Janine Booth, she has been far less willing to compromise than Democratic

## The two Bayards

**The exchange on Bayard Rustin (*Solidarity* 239, 240) was fascinating.**

I met Bayard in 1949, when I was a young student at UCLA. He had a profound effect on me, and when I came to New York in 1956 to work for *Liberation* magazine, he was one of the editors (the others being Dave Dellinger, A. J. Muste, and Roy Finch) who met weekly. And then I went to work for War Resisters League, where Bayard, as Executive Secretary, was my boss. He and Muste were my two primary mentors.

We have essentially two Bayards. The one up to 1963 was a radical pacifist. He was not linked to Max Shachtman or to the Socialist Party. But after 1963, when his homosexuality had been "outed" by a US Senator in a failed effort to derail the great March on Washington, he finally gave in to Tom Kahn, his young lover at the time (and a member of Shachtman's group) and to Mike Harrington (also a Shachtmanite), and left the WRL for "the more important work" he could do as the director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute [a not-for-profit organisation focused on making links between the civil rights movement and the trade union movement].

I note in Eric Lee's piece (*Solidarity* 239) that Bayard did get to Israel to raise questions about the black Jews — but nothing about the Palestinians. And he acted on the "boat people", but had been silent all through the Vietnam War.

Why Bayard was drawn to a defence of Israel I have never understood — though once he shifted, after 1965, toward the social democrats (read: early neocons), a defence of Israel was part of the liturgy. I know there have been some tendencies to see Bayard as always having been influenced by Shachtman, but I am quite sure that did not happen until fairly late in the game, and that he did not take his role in the Social Democrats USA (of which he was a co-chair) at all seriously.

**I've always felt that Bayard's "second life" as a part of the establishment was explained by Brecht's poem To Posterity.**

*David McReynolds, USA*

• More first-person accounts of the US "third-camp" political tendency that Max Shachtman helped found will appear in future issues of *Solidarity*.

Party (PD) leader Pierluigi Bersani and former PCI member President Giorgio Napolitano hoped (both of them subjected her to massive and sustained pressure).

At the tripartite meeting on Tuesday 20 March between government, employers and unions over Article 18, which ended without any agreement, Camusso alone refused to sign or even to concede a positive judgment on any part of the package. Moreover, the last minute desertion of Angeletti, the UIL leader, of which she was unaware until that moment, did not weaken her resolve in any way and her angry but icy closing exchange with Mario Monti drew a clear class line.

It has been Camusso's intransigence which has forced the PD to backtrack over the last week and talk about watering down Monti's labour market "reform", just as it has been her intransigence that has led the leaders of not just the vacillating UIL but even the supine CISL to start having retrospective reservations about the proposals.

I would agree with Hugh that an earlier date for the proposed general strike would have been preferable, and I acknowledge that having a craven careerist like Sally Hunt as the General Secretary of my own union may soften my reservations about a union leader like Camusso.

I would like to end by pointing out that Mara Cafagna is about the worst possible example of a woman in Italian public life that Kate could have picked.

Unlike Letizia Moratti, the education minister in Berlusconi's 2001-06 government and until recently mayor of Milan, who clearly had some degree of competence as a bourgeois politician, even if family wealth may have assisted her rise, Cafagna's appointment was entirely due to Berlusconi's attraction towards her.

The flirtatious exchange between the two on national television on the entertainment programme Telegatti was what led to the first public protest by Veronica Lario, Berlusconi's second wife, even if the marriage survived on a precarious basis until his subsequent relationship with the 18 year old Noemi Letizia.

**The appointment of a former topless model to the role of Minister of Equal Opportunities made Italy an international laughing stock.**

*Toby Abse, London*

# The police are racist!

On 30 March the *Guardian* published a video recording showing Mauro Demetrio, a twenty one year old from Beckton, East London, being subjected to racial abuse and violence by police officers in the back of a police van after his arrest during the riots in August 2011.

In the soundtrack, one officer admits to strangling Demetrio and calls him a "cunt". Another officer, PC Alex MacFarlane, can be heard justifying the assault because Demetrio would "always be a nigger".

A couple of days after the Demetrio recording, evidence was published that on the same day in August 2011, also in East London, PC Joe Harrington, assaulted a 15 year old black male.

Harrington has been put on desk duty; MacFarlane has been suspended; 21 people are being currently investigated, and eight have been suspended, in an ongoing Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) investigation.

Yet Channel Four TV has reported that 120 police were officially found guilty of racist behaviour by the Metropolitan Police between 1999 and 2011; and only one was dismissed.

During and after the riots in August 2011, sparked when police shot dead Mark Duggan, police arrested about 3000 people. Some had little connection to the riots. Of those brought before courts by October 2011, 58% were non-white. In magistrates' courts, 42% received immediate jail, though the rate was 12% for similar offences in England and Wales in 2010. The average sentence was 5.7 months, though for similar offences in England and Wales in 2010 it had been 2.5 months.

## MACPHERSON

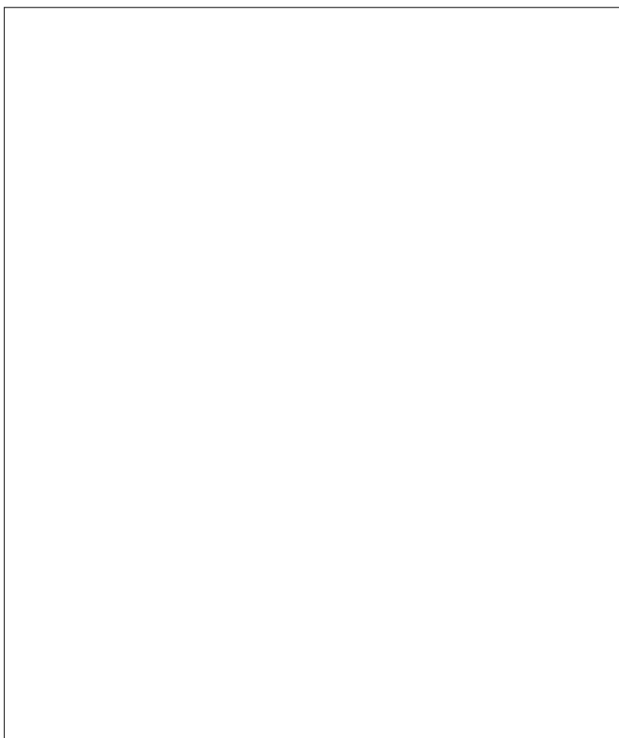
Back in 1999, the Macpherson enquiry into the killing of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 officially declared that the Metropolitan Police was "institutionally racist".

Everyday experience — waiting outside school gates, use of metal detectors in public, interactions with victims of crime, and the daily harassment of stop-and-searches — shows the same.

On Home Office figures, black people are seven times more likely than white people, and Asians twice as likely, to be stopped and searched by the police. There were over 1.1 million searches in 2008/9 alone.

The Newham Monitoring Project, which has worked since 1980 at monitoring the police in east London, warns that things will get worse in east London with the Olympics.

"For under 16s alone, the use of powers to stop without reasonable suspicion under Section 60 — which are incidentally those that are most prone to accusations of racial profiling — saw a staggering increase in Newham of 2,540% from 2007-2010... we are gravely concerned about how local communities will survive the anticipated militarisation of Newham [during the Olympics]".



At G20 and student demonstrations, the police have used shields, batons, tasers, pepper spray, dogs and horses, kettles, assault, and the fear of arrest or jail to enforce their will. And got away with it.

From 1990 to today, according to the Inquest group, 1428 people have died in police custody or been killed in police pursuits. 176 black or ethnic-minority people died between 1993 and 2011. Not a single police officer has been charged with a related offence.

## INSTITUTION

The solution is not better anti-racist training, the recruitment of more black police officers, or IPCC investigations. There has been plenty of that sort of thing since the 1990s. The problem lies with the institution itself.

The labour movement should demand:

- An independent, elected and properly resourced police complaints authority;
- The sacking of cops found guilty of racist behaviour;
- Elected local authorities to control the police, with power over operational policy and budgets. (Existing Police Authorities have little power, are only partly elected, and can be ignored by the police);
- Repeal of arbitrary stop-and-search powers, and other attacks on civil liberties under "anti-terrorism" legislation;
- The disbandment of all armed units, Special Branch, and the immigration police.

But the job of the police is to maintain the power of the state. Its job is to maintain unjust laws and an exploitative economic system, and to quell dissent against such a system. Everything else it does — including the things that are uncontroversial — is built round that.

The police are deliberately separated off from the general population, trained as a separate corps, and structured in a strict hierarchy of control. They are accountable only to their commanders, not to the people. Such a separate corps is bound to distill and concentrate all the reactionary and authoritarian prejudices in the society around it.

The only fair society is one based on democratic workers' self-management and collective ownership, and short of that all reforms of the police will be limited. Under a workers' government, those functions of the police that we would retain could be taken on by patrols elected from and accountable to local communities.

The mother of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, Doreen, stated in 1999:

"Black youngsters will never be safe on the streets. The police on the ground are the same as they were when my son was killed... I think we have had enough of police policing themselves, because they have always given themselves a pat on the back."

Remember Ian Tomlinson, Smiley Culture, Jean Charles de Menezes, Mark Duggan: those names should inform any discussion about the police.

- August 2011 cases: [bit.ly/maurod](http://bit.ly/maurod), [bit.ly/kicking15](http://bit.ly/kicking15), [bit.ly/terelle](http://bit.ly/terelle), [bit.ly/augriots](http://bit.ly/augriots) • 120 racist cops: [bit.ly/120racist](http://bit.ly/120racist) • Deaths in custody: [bit.ly/deathsc](http://bit.ly/deathsc) • Stop-and-search: [bit.ly/stopsearch](http://bit.ly/stopsearch) • Newham Monitoring Project: [nmp.org.uk](http://nmp.org.uk)

# Help the AWL raise £20,000

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● Organising a fundraising event

● Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.

● Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

More information: 07796 690 874 / [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Rd, SE1 3DG.

Total raised so far: £11,425

We raised £684 this fortnight from donations, increased standing orders and new subscriptions. Thanks to Justin, Eric, David, AWL students, Chris, Ed, Elise and Gemma

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# The Irish Trotskyists

## Introduction

**On Easter Monday 1916, some hundreds of republicans and socialists rose in arms in Dublin to overthrow the centuries-old British rule in Ireland. Among their leaders was James Connolly, who for most of the years since 1892 had been the leading writer and agitator in Ireland for socialism.**

Ever since 1916 Connolly's name has been widely honoured in nationalist Ireland, and ever since then significant minorities have tried or pretended, in one way or another, to continue his combination of revolutionary socialism and revolutionary commitment to Irish freedom.

Mostly the "Connollyites" have been people for whom socialism is a vague add-on to militant Irish nationalism. Some of them have been Stalinists, or Stalinised republicans.

The authentic revolutionary Marxist strand has been weak. Before the 1960s, the only Trotskyist group to have existed in Ireland was one called the Revolutionary Socialist Party, active in the 1940s.

The article we reprint here, from *Labor Action* (paper of the US Trotskyist group led by Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, and others) of 9 June 1947, is reported there as coming from "the first issue" of *Workers' Republic*, the "new organ of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, Irish Section of the Fourth International".

The leaflet reproduced on this page, originally published in 1948, also comes from the RSP. In that leaflet the RSP advocated a policy which resembles what AWL has long argued on the question of relations between the Protestant (or British-Irish) or Catholic communities in Ireland. It called for a "wide degree of Protestant autonomy in Northern Ireland".

It seems to us that a federal united Ireland is the only feasible arrangement now, but our fundamental idea has been expressed like this since 1969: "As much autonomy for the Protestant Irish minority as is compatible with the rights of the Irish majority". The exact details will be worked out in negotiation.

The RSP was initially linked to the British Revolutionary Communist Party, and then a separate organisation. In the late 1940s discussion amongst Trotskyists about the class nature of Stalinist Russia, it adopted the position of Shachtman, Draper, and their comrades, that it was bureaucratic-collectivist. One of its members was Matt Merigan, who wrote on Ireland for *Labor Action* in the 1950s, and was secretary of a major union in Ireland, the ATGWU, from 1960 to 1986. The RSP's secretary and most prominent activist was Bob Armstrong.

A note accompanying the Connolly article in *Labor Action* relays a report that the RSP had recently organised a Connolly commemoration meeting with 600 workers attending; but the RSP itself was always tiny, and it disappeared at the end of the 1940s.

Very little is known today about the RSP. We have been unable to trace any surviving copies of its publication *Workers' Republic*. The *Labor Action* reprint of the Connolly article was billed as an abridgement, and on internal evidence may include typographical errors (though we have corrected obvious ones); but is the only version available.

The Connolly article gives little attention to the question of relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities, or how the partition of Ireland might be overcome given the solid opposition of the Protestant workers in Northern Ireland — at that time by far the strongest contingent of Ireland's industrial working class — to Dublin rule. It appears to dismiss fears of Protestants suffering disadvantage in a Catholic-majority united Ireland as mythical, and thus to dismiss the Protestant workers' concerns as mere bigotry, to be dispelled simply by strong agitation against capitalism; but the 1948 leaflet shows that this was not the RSP's settled view.

Maybe on this point, and others, the article is skewed by the pressures of the RSP's polemic against the other

### Dublin after the Easter Rising

socialistic and labour groups with which it had to compete. The Irish political scene then was very different from today.

The IRA scarcely existed. It was demoralised and discredited by its attempts to cooperate with Nazi Germany during World War Two.

The Communist Party had divided itself into two parties, North and South, during World War Two, the better to navigate the constraints imposed on it by Russia's wartime alliance with Britain. The Communist Party of Northern Ireland had become effectively a Unionist party, and won a large following among Protestant workers and trade unionists.

The Northern Ireland Labour Party was a major force, winning 19% of the vote in the 1945 Stormont election. Other "Labour" groupings had some weight in Northern Ireland.

The Commonwealth Labour Party, discussed in the article, had been formed in 1942 by former NILP leader Harry Midgley when he split from the NILP on anti-nationalist grounds. By 1947 Commonwealth Labour was in sharp decline. It would dissolve later that year, and Midgley eventually joined the Unionist Party.

Another former NILP leader, Jack Beattie, won the Westminster seat of Belfast West in 1945 as an independent, more pro-nationalist than the NILP: he would later join the 26-Counties-based Irish Labour Party, which for a time contested elections in Northern Ireland. Harry Diamond was elected as a "Socialist Republican".

The Irish Labour Party prospered less: its vote had gone down from 16% at the 1943 general election in the 26 Counties to 9% in the 1944 and 1948 elections. It was weakened by a split (broadly right-wing, but unclear) which formed a rival "National Labour Party" between 1944 and 1950, and by the rise of a leftish republican-turned-parliamentary party, Sean MacBride's Clann na Poblachta.

As the RSP said, the Irish Labour Party was heavily hegemonised by the main bourgeois nationalist parties. Subservient to De Valera's Fianna Fail at the time of the 1947 article, the Irish Labour Party would join a coalition government under Fine Gael, the more conservative of the big nationalist parties, after the February 1948 election.

**The coalition government formally declared the 26 Counties a republic, breaking the last tenuous and notional link to the British Crown, and started a noisy campaign of "Anti-Partition" publicity, response to which may well have informed the 1948 RSP leaflet.**

### From *Workers' Republic*, 1947

**Only the Unionists unreservedly scorn Connolly's memory. The Eire ruling circles have to be more circumspect. They are even compelled to acknowledge him as a national hero.**

For, as the Irish capitalists are unable to falsify the history of Easter in the manner that Stalin has falsified October, it remains common knowledge to every schoolboy that he was one of the two outstanding leaders of the Easter rebellion. Thus it is that Connolly, the revolutionary socialist, has suffered the unusual and curious fate of becoming an object of involuntary homage rendered by capitalist exploiters.

To be sure, the Fianna Fail conservatives, while paying cautious homage to his memory, piously lament his "tragic error" in embracing the class-war doctrines of Marx. They would prefer to erase the socialist imprint from the hero's pedestal, and to insert "purely national" in its stead. On the other hand, the fascist fringe of the nationalist movement, posing as the champions of the downtrodden unemployed and low-paid workers, freely cull excerpts from Connolly's teachings to suit their own reactionary purposes.

Within the republican wing of the labour movement, Connolly is hailed by all as the final authority in matters of socialist principle. Unfortunately, however, the much quoted texts from his works are seldom understood and frequently perverted.

To revive the genuine tradition of Connolly among the youth, and among the members of the labour movement generally, is the major task of *Workers' Republic*. This tradition, however, is not like a dish of Irish stew which can be apportioned to the various sections of the labour movement, in accordance with the requirements of each of them. If by Connollyism is meant uncompromising class struggle against every shape and form of capitalist exploitation — and an honest study of Connolly's teachings cannot lead to any other interpretation — then only the sprinkling of socialist workers grouped around the banner of the Revolutionary Socialist Party have the true right to designate themselves Connollyites.

We assert this tranquilly and confidently, happy in the knowledge that we shall hardly offend the leaders of official labour who love to drape themselves in Connolly's cloak on holiday occasions. For most of them won't even read our paper and, if they do, they will give broad, tolerant grins.

### REALISTIC

**The class-war doctrines of Marx seem realistic to these people only when they seem to relate to past history and have come to rest in the works of someone already dead and famous.**

Long experience has likewise habituated us to the sarcastic jibes of the so-called Communist Party, North of Ireland and British, whose Connolly Club — a part of the Stalinist solar system — is designed to divert the patriotic and class militancy of Irish émigré workers into channels useful to Stalin's diplomacy. We recall how, during the Stalin-Hitler pact period of the war, the Irish Stalinists played the role of anti-partition crusaders, and how later, during the Churchill-Stalin pact, with breathtaking effrontery, they proclaimed themselves adherents of the constitutional position of the Six Counties.

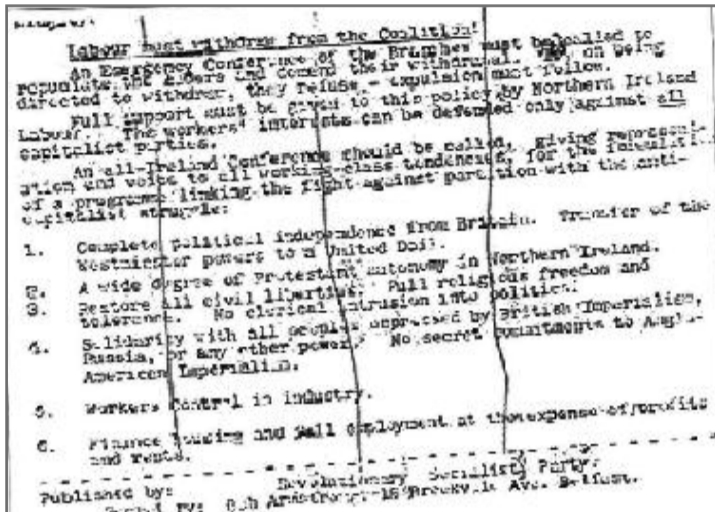
They hailed Brooke as the leader of the "progressive" wing of the Stormont Tories. They flew the Union Jack, symbol of imperialist oppression, at their demonstrations. And — make sense of this who can — they demanded the substitution of the Civil Authorities Special Powers Acts by the British Emergency Powers (which in the hands of the Tory Unionists would have fulfilled precisely the same function). And during this period, the bust of Connolly escaped the indignity of being decorated by an orange sash by a hair's breadth; for while bowing and scraping before Brooke and "our" Irish generals, the Communist Party continued to profess allegiance to Connolly, Lenin, and Marx.

Connolly, first, last, and always, based himself on the class struggle, and his Citizen Army grew directly out of the picket of the great 1913 strike in Dublin. He was an internationalist whose fiery denunciations of imperialist brigands of 1914 are still the most invigorating writings that have ever appeared in the British labour press.

Liebkecht's slogan, "Down with war! The main enemy is at home!", and Lenin's, "Turn the imperialist war into civil war!",

# on James Connolly

## Trotskyists, workers' unity, and Irish unity



This leaflet was produced by the Revolutionary Socialist Party in 1948. The “coalition” referred to is the Dublin government formed after the the February 1948 election in the 26 Counties.

**Labour must withdraw from the Coalition! An Emergency Conference of the branches must be called to repudiate the leaders and demand their withdrawal. If on being directed to withdraw, they refuse — expulsion must follow.**

Full support must be given to this policy by Northern Ireland Labour. The workers' interests can be defend only against all capitalist parties.

An all-Ireland conference should be called, giving representation and voice to all working-class tendencies, for the formulation of a programme linking the fight against partition with the anti-capitalist struggle.

1. Complete political independence from Britain. Transfer of the Westminster powers to a United Dail.
2. A wide degree of Protestant autonomy in Northern Ireland.
3. Restore all civil liberties. Full religious freedom and tolerance. No clerical intrusion into politics!
4. Solidarity with all peoples oppressed by British imperialism, Russia, or any other power. No secret commitments to Anglo-American imperialism.
5. Workers' Control in industry.
6. Finance housing and full employment at the expense of profits and rents.

found a ready echo in Ireland. Connolly was full of praise for the heroic Liebknecht. In his *Forward* articles he urged the leaders of the European labour movement to throw their influence into transforming the imperialist war into a struggle for socialist liberation. The northern star gleaming beyond the shadows of night is no further distant from this orb of ours than Connolly's programme of class struggle is from the reformist vapourings of the republican socialists of today.

However, it was the tactic of harnessing to the goal of socialism that earned Connolly a distinctive place in history. All other aspects of his greatness he shares with others. But this uniqueness lay in the circumstances themselves.

What, then, was the Easter Week tactics? Was it a putschist effort? An act of desperation arising out of a loss of faith in working-class mass action? Was it a desertion of the socialist goal, as Connolly's socialist critics allege?

Putschism, whether left-wing or right-wing in character, is characteristically based on the notion that the mass of people will remain passive onlookers, while an attempt is made at the seizure of state power by an elite of politicians turned militarist, or, more familiarly, by the members of the officer caste itself. The insurrection of October 1917, for example, was not in any sense of the word a putsch, although accomplished by a comparatively small number of Red Guards. The Tsarist and capitalist reaction inside the country was demoralised, and foreign intervention had not yet begun. The mass of workers, fully conscious of all the issues at stake, stood ready to answer a call to arms as they had done against the putschist attempt of General Kornilov.

### REVERSE

**The Irish war of liberation took place in reverse order to the Russian Revolution. There, the popular mass struggle of February paved the way for the October overturn. Here, the insurrection of Easter preceded and, in fact, produced the popular upsurge.**

Thus, Easter Week had every appearance of putschism; for here was a small body of fighters, numbering not more than several hundreds in all, who challenged to battle a mighty empire whose soldiers were undemoralised and armed for a large-scale war.

Connolly, Pearse, and their comrades were the nation's idealists. Yet nonetheless they were a part of a trampled populace, whose dream they expressed and whose understanding they sought to gain through struggle. Hundreds of years of imperialist tyranny had made the vision of liberation so much a part of the personalities of Irish men and women that, trading with Britain and even fighting for her, they scarcely took account of their yearning to be free. The Easter battle broke the habit of compliance, it brought the dream to life. Going down in defeat, it touched potent springs of revolt and brought welling out of the nation's heart a flood of patriotic courage and resolve. The British had won a Pyrrhic victory. Their power over most of Ireland was broken.

It is not the military debacle in itself which is of first consequence when a popular insurrection goes down to defeat, but the political conduct of the insurgent leaders. The magnificent struggle of the Asturian miners in 1934, although bloodily suppressed, left the Spanish workers undismayed and paved the way for the bitter resistance to Franco.

On the other hand, the battles which raged in the streets of Madrid in 1939, between the forces of the Spanish “Communist” Party and those of Colonel Casado — their erstwhile ally in the Popular Front — were prestige-saving putschist actions. The rival factions grappled while the victorious fascist army stood at the gate, and while the Spanish working masses, bewildered by betrayal and bled white by the war, looked on impotently.

The valiant uprising of the Warsaw Jews against the Nazis, in the latter part of the war, was strikingly reminiscent of the Easter Week rebellion in some of its features. Here were representatives of a people doomed to physical extirpation who rose against their oppressors and fought with legendary courage until they were overwhelmed and massacred. The situation of the Irish under Britain in the 20th century did not parallel the plight of the Jews under Hitler. But in the threat of the Northern Carsonite, the presence of a strutting alien soldiery in the land, the slaughter of Irish youth enlisted with the British, there was inflammable material enough at hand to light the flames of the Easter insurrection.

The patriotism of capitalist exploiters is a quality altogether different from the selfless idealism of rebels fighting to free their land. To insist that Connolly was above all an international socialist is not thereby to fall into the error of supposing that the passion of patriotism was absent from his feelings. His patriotic fervour was intense, and his fiery hatred and contempt for his country's oppressors inevitably betrayed him into occasional exaggerations. For instance, in his *War Against the German People* he favourably contrasts the German industrialists to the brutal, mean, and slothful ruling class of England. On the other hand, in other articles of the same period, he heaps equal hatred and contempt upon the German imperialist brigands.

It is worth noting that the Stalinist party, during the Stalin-Hitler pact period, published Connolly's *War Against the German People* without a word of criticism. Within two years, however, they were describing the German people as “Huns”.

An erstwhile revolutionist, Koestler, makes a mock of those Marxists who continue to harbour feelings of passionate personal animosity toward their political enemies, in apparent contradiction to the doctrine that the evil lies not, in man but in his circumstances. But this is theorizing out of time and space. It is the “whips and scorns” of capitalist society which shape the rebel soul of the revolutionist long before he has worked out his philosophy of life. Lenin understood this when, writing of Gallagher in his youth, he spoke of “his noble proletarian hatred”. And noble, too, was the patriotic

wrath of Connolly and Pearse, contemplating the trampled pride of the Irish people.

### ACCUSED

**It would be interesting to discover how many of those who accused Connolly of abandoning the working-class struggle found themselves later in the bandwagon of capitalist imperialism, or else found comfortable posts in the official opposition — in reality, the junior partnership, of the De Valera regime.**

These guardians of purity notwithstanding, the revolutionary military alliance with the Volunteers was entirely in accordance with socialist principle. “Keep your arms, your allies of today may be your enemies of tomorrow” was the warning issued by Connolly to the Citizen Army on the eve of battle; and when it is borne in mind that Pearse and his friends were men who wielded no means of coercion over the workers — unlike the allies of Stalinism, such as de Gaulle and Churchill — but were, indeed, men prepared to live or die as outlaws in the eyes of official society, then the principal difference between the revolutionary tactic of Connolly and the opportunist politics of the Stalinist Popular Fronters, or of the labour reformist capitulators to the capitalist state, is apparent.

At the end of the Second World War, the European capitalist classes found themselves in perilous circumstances. War and occupation had reduced the capitalist economy to conditions of chaos. The professional armies and the police, formerly reliable instruments in holding down the workers, had either been shattered or dispersed; or else had so compromised their standing through Quisling collaboration with the Nazis as to have forfeited the allegiance of even the backward elements of the population.

The working-class forces emerging from the underground had won sufficient moral authority among the middle classes to have been able to lead virtually the whole of society in a struggle against the capitalist exploiters. Intervention, blockade, as well as the exhausted state of the economy, would have presented huge difficulties to the newly-arisen workers' states; but the Russian workers survived such conditions and, in any case, no lesser dangers and difficulties can be envisaged for the future.

However, the Stalinists and reformists used their influence to dissolve the militias, and formed coalition governments with the exploiters to work for the restoration of the capitalist state. Had the militias of the working class been trained in the Citizen Army tradition by leaders of the stamp of Connolly, the rotting structure of capitalism would have been swept away. Connolly would have fought the Nazis in the underground and would have formed military alliances with non-socialist sections of the Resistance Movement, but he would not have dreamed of liquidating the independent military formations of the working class in the interests of re-

Continued on page 8

From page 7

constituting bankrupt capitalism; and far from entering into political partnership with Badoglio and de Gaulle, he would have described them as criminals on an equal plane with the Nazis.

It may be added that whereas the Stalinists incessantly preached racial hatred against the German workers there can be found nowhere in the works of Connolly, even by the implication of a chance phrase, a single word of insult directed against the English working class.

The Easter Week proclamation was revolutionary nationalist in tone, and capitalist-liberal in content. But as the German Marxist Lassalle has taught, the essence of constitution lies in the balance of power between the classes. It was far from a foregone conclusion that, once the British power had been vanquished, a new native capitalist state would take its place. The final outcome of the struggle begun in Easter Week depended on the further course of the international class struggle. Meanwhile, the supreme immediate task lay in smashing the coercive power of the British and casting out of the Irish race the spirit of submissiveness.

But nevertheless, argue the critics, the capitalist state *did* consolidate itself, and the Easter rebellion led to the triumph of Cosgrave and De Valera's regime. These utterly superficial critics belong to the same camp as those who attribute Stalinism to the thought and action of Lenin. The truth is, however, that the triumph of the reactionaries took place despite the revolutionaries, and because of the aid afforded them by the treacherous leaders of the workers.

Had the conflagration which consumed the Russian state extended to the West, then the role of the Citizen Army, thanks to the prestige won in the struggle of Easter Week, would have been immense in advancing the cause of the workers' revolution throughout the whole of the British Isles. But the Western capitalist powers stood immune from the fires of revolution, and, in Central Europe, reformist socialism extinguished the flame. The survival of capitalism in the decisive centres ruled out the prospect of a revolutionary development in Ireland.

The struggle between the partisans of the treaty and the wing of irreconcilable republicans, and the partitioning of the country by the British, led to the victory of the De Valera regime in the South and the rule of the Carsonite Tories in the six Northeastern counties. Two generations of ardent youths expended themselves in the apparently hopeless effort to oust the British from their Orange bridgehead in the North. The more fiercely and resolutely glowed the spirit of struggle among the baffled republican forces, the more firmly the Tory regime consolidated its support in the ranks of a misled, bigoted working class. Today, the proof that the Irish working class is the most conservative in Europe lies in the longevity of the rival governments.

De Valera strengthened his influence during the war. His neutrality policy protected the Eire state from the shocks, upheavals, and devastation which shook the political stability of the belligerent capitalist states. The safety valve of emigration prevented the unemployment question from becoming a threat to stability.

## CHURCH

**An immense force for the indoctrination of conservative ideas is the church, whose historic power as a national (and nationalist) institution is perpetuated by the stagnant condition of living standards and the consequent absence of a sharp hunger for social change among the workers.**

And, in place of rebellious, landless peasants of former days, there are the petty proprietors of today who, though hostile to the monopolies which exploit them, are nonetheless imbued with a conservative dread of change.

Every child knows that the overriding political issue of the past quarter century has been the country's disunity and the presence of Britain in the North. The capitalist system maintains itself on the division of the workers, and no working class has ever been more effectively divided than the Irish. A unified, independent Ireland, or union with Britain? Over this problem reformist socialism has floundered helplessly for a generation. Labour reformism is by its nature compelled to keep in step with the popular prejudices. However, the thorny problem is what to do when two rigidly opposing sets of prejudices divide the workers. This split on the constitutional question has led to division among the reformist socialists themselves.

The Commonwealth Labour Party is the avowed defender of the British connection within the Northern labour movement. The Commonwealth Party justifies its position on the grounds of the cultural affinities and common traditions of the peoples of England and Ireland; of the superior social services under Britain; and of the anti-labour role of the Catholic Church, as demonstrated, for instance, during

the Spanish War.

However, while it is true that speech, literature, history, trade unionism, politics and economics tend to cement the closest bonds between the Irish and British workers, on the other hand the tradition of greatest political consequence to the Protestant workers (whom Commonwealth aspires to represent) is the one which they share with their nationalist fellow workers; namely, the "Irish Question", under which heading we place religious bigotry, church politics, the Orange Order, the IRA, the special powers, partition, and all, in short, that keeps the workers behind the banners of Orange or Green Toryism.

The sectarian hatreds can be finally burned away only through working-class unification around a programme of all-sided struggle against the vested interests. Down with the factory bosses and the landlords, the partition politicians and the Orange leaders, the police dictators, the church politicians and sectarian ideologues of every hue! It is only through engaging in the creative task of transforming the social system and establishing the workers' republic that the consciousness of the workers will be changed.

It is undeniable that the Westminster subsidy allows six county residents superior social services to Eire's. But it is equally true that two generations of British workers have had to spill their blood on Europe's battlefields in defence of these standards, won through class struggle and made possible by Britain's world exploitive power. Let us recall in this connection the efforts of the Commonwealth leaders to persuade the six county workers to accept conscription.

High prices and ever-mounting taxation weigh down the gains which the Northerners share with the British. A merciless trade war and a further military struggle loom ahead. Viewed against such an oncoming of ruin and bloody destruction, the question of the relative level of social amenities between Eire and the North is of minor importance. In raising the question of social service levels, the Commonwealth leadership demonstrates its essential adherence to capitalism, and its belief in its reliability.

## CHOOSE

**It does not seriously occur to them that the duty of socialists is not to choose between De Valera and Brooke regimes, but to advance the goal of workers' power.**

The harsh conditions of capitalism drive thousands of fresh layers of workers yearly in the direction of the labour movement. A few thousand workers, influenced by a fighting movement, would win the masses of people behind them in a social crisis.

Meanwhile the greatest counter-pressure to the growth of a socialist consciousness in Ireland is the Northern regime, its subsidised services notwithstanding. Tory unionism is an exceptional regime, neither fascist nor democratic, which preserves itself by playing on the Protestant fears arising out of the size of the nationalist minority and the proximity of the Eire republic. To keep green the seeds of sectarian division among the people must inevitably remain the guiding principle of its policy.

It is fantastic to suppose that within even a capitalist republic the roles would be reversed and that the Protestant workers would become the object of sectarian discrimination. The concentration of the Protestants and the anti-sectarian bias which partition has given the nationalist workers, are sufficient guarantees. In contrast to Stormont exceptionalism, there is a normal, reactionary capitalist regime. Far from providing a base for the Catholic indoctrination of Protestant children — as the Protestant Action demagogues allege — the unification of Ireland would weaken the power of the anti-socialist crusaders of Catholic Action by providing a superior mobilising point for the class struggle.

Between Stormont and the Dail we therefore make some distinction. To choose a hypothetical example, we would support strike action protesting attempts to force a reunion with Britain on Eire. On the other hand, we would denounce as reactionary a strike action aimed against the incorporation of the six counties into an Irish republic. Such considerations could only be modified in the event of a fascist government coming to power in the South.

At no time would we assume any shred of responsibility for the political actions of the capitalist parties of either side, or sacrifice working-class independence for the sake of dubious "in-between" policies. Our supreme task is to heighten the socialist consciousness of the workers, to arm them with an understanding with an understanding that the Fianna Fail and the Unionist politicians are the agents of the employers, to convince them that capitalism is bankrupt, and to equip them with a programme for power.

The main republican wing of the labour movement, the Eire Labour Party, by its demonstrated alliance with De Valera on questions of high state policy and its purely verbal opposition on secondary issues, by its acceptance of the

Papal encyclicals and by its failure to lead the class struggle of the Southern workers, plays into the hands of the partitionists and sectarians. Its anti-partition campaign is conducted on abstract historical grounds unrelated to the class needs of the workers of either side. Its activities are conducted outside the consciousness of the Northern Protestant workers.

The small group within the ranks of the Northern Ireland Labour Party adhering to the "Back to Westminster" slogan objectively belong to the same camp as Commonwealth. The "Back to Westminster" faction starts from the correct conception that Stormont is a regime of exceptionalism; but apparently works on the theory that under the benevolent sway of the British Labour government, sectarian animosity would die away.

However, the existence of a reformist Labour government, whose position is bound to become precarious and whose leaders in any case willingly collaborate with Tory Unionism, is no guarantee against a return to the pre-Stormont Carsonite era. The capitalist Unionists derive their strength not merely from the existence of the Stormont Parliament but from their social position and from partition and the special powers maintained by successive British governments, including the present Labour regime. "Back to Westminster" would perpetuate Irish disunity and prevent active partnership between the workers of both sides around the programme of the workers' republic, which alone can exorcise the spectre of further sectarian strife.

The official Labour leadership in the North likewise adheres to a pro-partition standpoint. Posing as Labour purists they dismiss the border question as a "capitalist bogey"! To evade the problem of the border means, however, to accept the constitutional status quo.

## LABOUR

**The Labourites rest their hopes on the worker profiting from the British example by returning Labour majorities on both sides of the border. An enlightened Labour Ireland would then, presumably, settle the question of partition amicably, in accordance with the expressed wishes of the constituents.**

Unquestionably the swing to Labour in Britain led to a strengthening of the Labour Party's prestige in Northern Ireland; but this can easily be exaggerated. The British leftward swing took places largely outside the consciousness of the workers here. The Labour government was not their creation and, as County Down demonstrated, large masses of Protestants remain hostile to it.

Nonetheless, the opportunities of the Irish Labour parties depend largely upon the fate of the present British government, which is now entering heavy weather. The "tragedy" of Fabian socialism, which grew out of the theory of a peaceful partnership between the classes founded on mutual prosperity, is that its advent to power occurred not in the lush days of imperialism but in the period of capitalism's death agony.

Today, however, Britain has been cast out of the privileged circle of nations. United States competitive supremacy, Russia's challenge on the Continent, the Indian debacle, the fuel crisis, the burden of militarism, her outdated equipment and her new status as a debtor nation are scales wherein to weigh the dwindling strength of imperial England.

However, the exposure of the bankruptcy of the present leadership would not necessarily terminate the Labour Party's governmental career; and in any event certainly would not mean the end of the party as a mass working-class organisation.

The emergence from within the movement of left-wing opposition tendencies, revolutionary or pseudo-revolutionary, is inevitable. Thus it remains a likely perspective that the Labour parties, basing themselves on the left of the British movement, will win a majority of the workers in the decisive urban centres, though the rural vote renders the prospect of gaining majorities in the Parliaments remote.

Arising out of the cataclysmic conditions of crisis, such a shift to Labour would signify a revolutionary state of mind among the workers. However, to consummate the revolution would require a labour rank and file trained in the programme of Marxism and in the spirit of Connolly's tradition and a leadership altogether different in quality from the present dozing leaders.

**The crying need of the hour is for the development of a tendency within the Labour parties basing itself on the programme of the Workers' Republic.**



## The Falklands and the war of 1982

**The Falkland Islands, small specks in the South Atlantic, were annexed by Britain and settled by British people in the 1830s. There had been no previous indigenous population.**

A century and a half later, in the 1970s and 80s, the islands were an odd little relic of empire. They had no huge economic or strategic importance. Their 1,800 or so inhabitants, many of whom would move on to more clement climates after their time in the Falklands, had no desire to separate from Britain.

Argentina had long laid claim to the islands — calling them the Malvinas — on the grounds that it was the nearest landmass. It was not very near — 400 miles to the islands from the closest point on Argentina's coast, 2,000 miles from Argentina's main population centres. The British population on the islands was longer-settled than the core of the Argentine nation, also European settlers, mostly from Spain and Italy.

The British government found the islands more a nuisance than an asset, and talked with the Argentine government about schemes to link them with Argentina while keeping some special rights.

In early 1982, however, Argentina's military dictators faced mounting popular revolt. They wanted a diversion to regain the initiative. They sent troops to seize the islands on 1-2 April. They hoped that Britain, which had long since abandoned any attempt to be a world military power, would lack motivation and resources to resist.

The British government of Margaret Thatcher did, however, counter-attack; re-took the islands after a short war (25 April to 14 June); and made itself a nice little political coup from the affair. Argentina's military dictator Leopoldo Galtieri resigned three days after the end of the war. His military successor, Reynaldo Bignone, organised elections which brought back civilian government from October 1983. The civilian government brought Galtieri to court for his crimes.

*Socialist Organiser*, forerunner of *Solidarity*, opposed Britain's war, but denounced the Argentine military's side of the war too. The Falkland islanders had the right to self-determination.

Oddly, in view of its stances today, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) had much the same line as the AWL. Later, other leftists also came to scorn Galtieri's anti-imperialist pretensions — see films such as *Iluminados Por El Fuego* and *Los Chicos De La Guerra*, and the book *Argentina: the Malvinas and the End of Military Rule* by the Argentine Marxists Alejandro Debat and Luis Lorenzano.

Most would-be revolutionary socialists, however, thought differently. They saw the conflict as one between "imperialism" (Britain) and "anti-imperialism" or at any rate "non-imperialism" (Argentina), and felt duty-bound to take the "anti-imperialist" side.

Inside our organisation at the time, the "back Argentina" view was put by a section led by Alan Thornett, who now supports Socialist Resistance.

We print extracts from a resolution which summarised the views of our wing of the organisation. The "tendency" referred to in it was a subsection of the Thornett wing which provided that wing with its theoretical justifications.

The framework of our position was still the "Leninist defeatism" whose historical provenance is an artefact of the Stalinisers of the mid-1920s Communist International, and whose malign work Hal Draper analysed (see *Workers' Liberty* 2/1). The merit of the resolution, which marked a crossroads in the development of the Workers' Liberty tendency, is that it tried to be concrete in its analysis and did not "read off" conclusions from the "epochal position".

Freakish in its origins, at the time the Falklands war appeared to be an episode unlikely to have sequels. Hindsight tells a different story. It posed issues which would be posed again in a number of other wars.

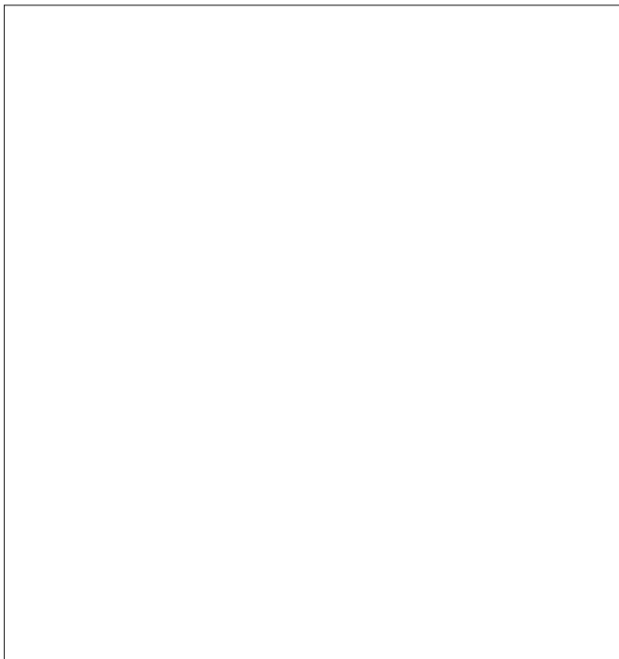
Over Kuwait (1991), Kosova (1999), Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), wars would be waged by the Western big powers — the "main enemies at home", to use Karl Liebknecht's phrase from World War One, for European and North American socialists — but also ostensibly, and in part really, for aims we supported.

As we supported the Falkland Islanders' freedom, but opposed the British state fighting for that in its own way and with its own concerns in mind, so also we would support the expulsion of conquerors from Kuwait, the preservation of the Kosovars' national existence, the ejection of the Taliban, and the ousting of Saddam Hussein, but remain politically hostile to the US-led forces fighting those wars.

**The 1982 debate thus has an importance beyond its immediate circumstances.**

*Martin Thomas*

**Britain's war over the Falklands/Malvinas was designed only to preserve a relic of empire and shore up the prestige of British imperialism. A defeatist stand towards**



**Argentinian soldiers, sacrificed in a reactionary cause.**

**Britain's war was therefore the no. 1 campaigning priority for Marxists in Britain.**

Instead of assisting the Tories in their crisis by "patriotic" support for the government, the British labour movement should have used the crisis to hasten Thatcher's overthrow in the interests of the working class, and given all material and political support to the Argentine workers in the struggle for democratic and trade union rights and for the establishment of a genuine anti-imperialist workers' government in Argentina.

We repudiate any legitimacy of British territorial claims in the Falklands or any legitimacy in related British claims to resources in Antarctica.

But the pretext on which the Argentine junta embarked upon the invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas was equally contrived. In taking its action, the junta acted not against imperialism, but in a populist ploy designed to divert and unite the Argentine masses behind the Generals' own repressive rule.

### Dictators

**In doing so the Argentine dictators trampled upon the rights of the Falkland inhabitants, who in themselves oppress and threaten no-one and should have the right to decide their own future.**

Such action did nothing to build anti-imperialist consciousness in the Argentine working class, but rather sought to generate chauvinism and "national unity". We did not support this action, and called for the withdrawal of Argentine troops.

In its seizure of the Falklands/Malvinas, designed to boost its position at home and in the region, the Argentine regime miscalculated about the British reaction, and the US response to the British reaction.

This miscalculation could not however make the seizure, or the war to maintain the seizure, progressive.

Galtieri's invasion did not liberate anyone from colonialism or imperialism. It did not lessen the burden of imperialist exploitation, or improve the conditions for the fight against it, for a single Argentine worker.

It embroiled the Argentine people in a war in which they could hope to win nothing of significance, a disastrous war in a false and reactionary cause.

On both sides therefore the war was reactionary. The job of Marxists in both Britain and Argentina was to oppose the war, to counterpose international working-class unity, to continue the class struggle for the overthrow of both the Tories and the military regime.

Support for the right of the Falkland Islanders — a distinct historical, ethnic, linguistic, economic and geographic community 400 miles from Argentina — to determine their own future is axiomatic for Leninists in the given conditions, where that community exploited no other community, threatened no other community, and was not used as, or likely to be used as, a base for imperialist control of another community.

The Falklanders' right to self-determination cannot be invalidated by their desire to adhere to the now-imperialist state that spawned the Falklands community. That desire to adhere to Britain would invalidate their right to self-determination only if adherence had direct imperialist/colonialist consequences for Argentina or some other country, whose right to resist those consequences would (because of their size, etc.) outweigh the rights of the islanders.

Argentina is far more developed than most non-imperial-

ist countries; it is a fully bourgeois state; and it possesses political independence. It also occupies a subordinate rank within the imperialist world economy. This subordination, however, in no way gives any progressive character to the Argentine bourgeoisie.

The Argentine bourgeoisie is not a progressive force, but the major agency for imperialist domination of the Argentine working class and an assistant for imperialist domination throughout Latin America. It has moreover its own predatory ambitions. For the Argentine working class it is "the main enemy at home". Quite apart from its foreign connections, it is the class that directly exploits them.

We reject as un-Marxist assessments of Argentina's situation such as this:

"Argentina is economically, militarily and politically dominated by imperialism — not by its own national bourgeoisie — but in particular by US interests. The whole basis of its economy is subject to the international market over which Argentina has no influence, let alone control and dominance" (second tendency document, page 2).

We reject the counterposition of the Argentine bourgeoisie to imperialism, and the measuring of Argentina's situation by comparison with a situation where the country would escape the international market (which in a capitalist world it can never do).

Every country is more or less dominated by the world economy. No country has control over it — now not even the US colossus which was supreme after World War Two. This situation cannot be changed by war between the weaker bourgeoisies and the stronger. Not such wars, but the international workers' revolution, can change it.

The communist answer to colonial, semi-colonial and military domination is national liberation struggle; to the domination of the weaker by the strong in the world market (as to the domination of the weak by the strong, and the pauperisation of particular regions, within capitalist nations) our answer is the proletarian revolution.

### Camps

**We emphatically reject the notion that the socialist working class can orientate in world politics, and particularly in relation to conflicts among politically independent capitalist states like Britain and Argentina, by constructing a view of the world in terms of two camps.**

"We have to determine our position according to the basic class camps, not on conjunctural events... the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism..." (second tendency document, p.4).

The bourgeois foreign policy of the rulers of Argentina, even when it is expressed in acts of war, can in no sense change their class camp.

We reject the notion that military dictatorships in the Third World are simply the creatures of imperialism: that they are strengthened when imperialism is strengthened, weakened when imperialism is weakened.

Military dictatorships are as common in Third World countries which are relatively alienated from the big capitalist powers — Libya, Algeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Syria, etc. — as in those closely linked to the big capitalist powers (Chile, El Salvador, Nigeria, etc.).

The political regime is fundamentally a product of internal class relations. Frequently, of course, imperialist powers do intervene to prop up or install dictatorships when that suits their purpose. But dictatorial regimes in the Third World are quite capable of pursuing policies hostile to the big capitalist powers without thereby becoming progressive or unleashing a progressive "process". Iran is a clear example.

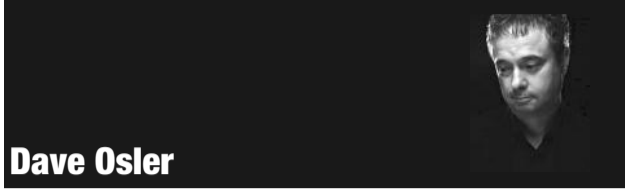
Argentine workers had no interest in the armed occupation of the Falklands against the wishes of the population; they should have pursued the class struggle regardless of the effects of such struggle on their rulers' ability to maintain the occupation; and it was none of their concern to protect the Argentine bourgeois state against the humiliation it would suffer from being unable to maintain the occupation. These points should have been the basis of Marxist policy in Argentina.

The tactical ways of expressing this principled position could of course be very flexible (following the method according to which Trotskyists developed the "proletarian military policy" as a tactical expression of the defeatist policy in World War Two).

It would be the job of Marxists in Argentina to seek to develop the genuine anti-imperialist elements in the confused nationalist reaction of Argentine workers, with demands such as arming of the workers, expropriation of imperialist property and seizure of the factories.

**While making their own views on the war clear, they should have sought to develop common class actions with workers who confusedly saw Argentina's war as "anti-imperialist" but wanted to go further in anti-imperialism.**

## The “second coming” of George Galloway



Dave Osler

Some parts of the left have greeted Respect's success in Bradford West with what can properly be described as religious enthusiasm. Writing over the Easter weekend on Britain's most widely read socialist blog, one long-time activist even described the spectacular by-election overturn as “the second coming”.

What George Galloway — a politician who frequently plays on his Catholic devotion — makes of such implicit comparisons between him and Christ, I cannot guess. But while his victory may not be quite the equivalent of walking on water, the sheer scale of what was achieved is beyond dispute.

Many have been quick to make hard and fast pronouncements about the implications for the future of leftwing politics in this country. In particular, leading lights in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition insist that Galloway's triumph augurs well for their London assembly campaign.

### THRESHOLD

**Good luck, guys. The 5% threshold needed to gain a seat is not beyond reach, at least in principle.**

In fact, were TUSC to ditch its incomprehensible acronym and stand under a simple designation that gave the voters some hint of what it stands for, its chances of surmounting the hurdle would probably be improved.

But there are a number of ways this one could go, and in the longer term, some comrades are discussing the possibilities of wider left regroupment around Respect. The most obvious response from those sceptical on this score is to note that this has been tried in the past, with results of which we are well aware. Why should anything be any different this time round?

Back in 2004, the Socialist Workers' Party effectively smashed up a framework within which the bulk of the far



George Galloway back in the days of Respect Mark 1

left was able to co-operate, in order to throw itself wholeheartedly into Respect mark one.

The liaison was brief. Just three years later, the first incarnation of that party fell to pieces, with Galloway famously branding the SWP as Leninist “Russian dolls”, in the process famously telling his erstwhile allies to “fuck off, fuck off the lot of you”.

None of this has been deemed worthy of mention in the gushing assessments of Bradford West published by the SWP. Galloway is even speaking its Marxism 2012 event, so bygones are presumably bygones. One leading SWPer has chided me as a sectarian for even mentioning the earlier episode.

But there is a lasting record of the SWP's position at the time on the split, written by the late Chris Harman and published in the quarterly *International Socialism Journal*. It is still available online, at least for now, at [bit.ly/harmanr](http://bit.ly/harmanr).

Much of the article is palpably self-serving obfuscation. Particularly laughable is the insistence that the SWP and a handful of its supporters in the project constituted “the main body of Respect”, in contrast to “the breakaway of the Galloway group”, which briefly traded as Respect Renewal.

Renewal is even accused of lying about the attendance at one of its rallies, an underhand ploy of which the SWP

would surely never dream.

But underneath Harman's manifold stupidities is a critique of some weight. Most importantly, there is an acknowledgement of Galloway's ties to rightwing Islamists implicated in the attempted bloody suppression of Bengali independence.

Yet although this observation is relegated to a mere footnote, this is probably the only time they saw daylight in the SWP press, even though they were widely known at the time Respect was established.

### WARNING

**Harman also has words of warning for those revolutionaries who signed up with Respect Renewal: “They will face a choice between having to avoid speaking on a whole range of issues or saying things that upset one or other of its component parts.”**

“They will be faced on a daily basis by Galloway, with his disdain for what ordinary supporters think about his media performance and his opinions of issues such as crime, by those Tower Hamlets councillors whose main concern is their own careers, by those who mistakenly believe the only way to win the votes of Muslim workers is to keep quiet in the face of male chauvinist attitudes, and by those who despite their denials have tried to play the communal card in the past and will do so again in future.”

In those matters, Harman was not wrong. The same issues will face revolutionaries who sign up for the second coming, too.

It's worth adding the footnote here that among the minority of councillors who demonstrated their imperviousness to careerism by siding with the Russian dolls was an SWP member who not long afterwards went over to the Conservatives, in what must be the only straight Trot to Tory defection in British local government history.

Perhaps the present leadership of the SWP now believes that Harman's arguments are incorrect? An honest political organisation would at least publish some sort of clarification, spelling out where they now think they went wrong.

**The exercise would undoubtedly be instructive, not least for SWP cadre forced to adopt any new tactical turn in the months ahead. But don't hold your breath.**

## Sympathy for the devil



Eric Lee

**Mass murderers, and especially those who execute children at point-blank range, are not normally objects of one's sympathy. It is possible, I imagine, for Nazis to “understand” the motives of a mass murderer, especially one who targets Jews. But one hardly expects the same sort of understanding or sympathy on the left.**

And yet this is precisely what we find in the latest issue of *Socialist Worker*.

In a full-page article following up on the Toulouse killings, Jim Wolfreys mentions in the second paragraph that Mohamed Merah's first attacks took place on the very same day as an American soldier, Robert Bales, went on the rampage in Afghanistan.

One's first reaction is to think — that's a quick response by Merah to an attack on his fellow Muslims. But it wasn't, and that's not Wolfreys' point at all.

His point is that “the media tried to comprehend what Bales did by reference to a breakdown brought on by injuries and trauma.”

### COMPREHEND

**Now that's not strictly speaking true. What most of us saw in the media was shock and horror at what Robert Bales did. The only attempt to “comprehend” his actions in this way came from his lawyer.**

Everyone else, including his Commander in Chief, condemned what Bales did without hesitation.

“Few have tried to do the same in the case of Mohamed Merah,” writes *Socialist Worker*.

In other words, according to the SWP, Merah needs an advocate.

He needs someone to explain what motivated him to brutally murder unarmed civilians, to deliberately target Jewish children, as well as to execute French soldiers.

Jim Wolfreys complains that “virtually no coverage has been given to claims by Merah's lawyer that racism” was to blame for his actions.

That may be because of Merah's own statement explain-

ing what he did — claiming that it was perfectly alright to murder Jewish children because Palestinian children had been killed.

Wolfreys and the SWP want to play the role of devil's advocate (almost literally in this case) and consider Merah's own words irrelevant.

He murdered Jewish children not because he was an anti-semitic fascist, trained in the Al Qaeda camps in Pakistan precisely for this mission. No, say *Socialist Worker*: Merah is a victim of French racism.

This is extraordinary article on a number of levels.

First of all, since when do we as socialists care about whether the convoluted defences concocted by lawyers get their fair share of media coverage?

### RAMPAGE

**And how can you compare the insane rampage by Bales which was condemned by everyone, with the actions of a self-described Al Qaeda fighter — whose actions fit right into line with the organisation's strategy?**

Robert Bales was whisked off by the US military and taken to a federal maximum security prison in Kansas, and he will most likely stand trial for his crimes.

But Mohamed Merah was not repudiated by Al Qaeda, and had he been whisked away to its camps in Pakistan he would likely have been hailed as a hero.

But why even make the comparison?

It reminds me of Max Shachtman's famous quote that whenever Stalinists were challenged about this or that horrible crime in the Soviet Union, they would reply, “But what about your Negroes in the South?”

The core of Wolfreys' argument is that France is a racist society. And so what? Does anti-Muslim racism justify going on a rampage and butchering children at a Jewish school?

Here is what socialists should be saying — and presumably are saying — in France today:

In the war between Islamo-fascism and bourgeois democracy, the victory of the first would be a tragedy of historic proportions.

That doesn't justify trampling on civil liberties or spouting Islamophobic messages, as the French Right will do.

**But it does mean taking sides against Islamist terrorism, and not seeking to justify it or defend it as the SWP does.**

## Anti-semitism explained away

By Dan Katz

**The slippery, urbane face of Islamism, Tariq Ramadan, has excelled himself explaining away the actions of Islamist murderer Mohamed Merah ([www.tariqramadan.com](http://www.tariqramadan.com)).**

Ramadan, proving Merah was no Islamic militant, writes that, “Two weeks before the shooting... he spent an evening in a nightclub in a very festive mood.”

Hardly unique. The BBC reported that “Many [of the 2004 Madrid train bombers] appeared westernised and integrated into the Spanish community, with a liking for football, fashion, drinking and Spanish girlfriends.”

Ramadan assures us: “Religion was not Mohamed Merah's problem; nor is politics.” Merah was not motivated by the “values of Islam, or driven by racism and anti-Semitism.” No, Merah was a “French citizen frustrated at being unable to find his place, to give his life dignity and meaning.” He just happened upon “two political causes through which he could articulate his distress: Afghanistan and Palestine.”

And, “[y]oung, disoriented, he shoots at targets whose prominence and meaning seem to have been chosen based on little more than their visibility... He attacks symbols: the army, and kills Jews, Christians and Muslims without distinction.”

Sorry, many young people are frustrated. Some take drugs, some become leftists, some fight in the streets after the pubs close, some get jobs and work hard, some go to college, some get girl or boyfriends... But all make choices. Good and bad, they all make choices.

Not many make the choice to go into a Jewish school, armed to the teeth, and murder Jewish children and teachers. For that matter not many analysts make such a conscious, deliberate, cynical choice to try to “explain it away”.

The murderer's older brother, the Islamist Abdelkader Merah, apparently told investigators that he was “very proud” of what Mohammed had done. “I regret nothing for him and approve of what he did.”

**Around Toulouse graffiti appeared: “Viva Merah” and “Fuck the kippa.” Clearly the brother and the youth with aerosol cans don't feel the need to prettify the actions of the anti-semitic, Islamist bigot.**

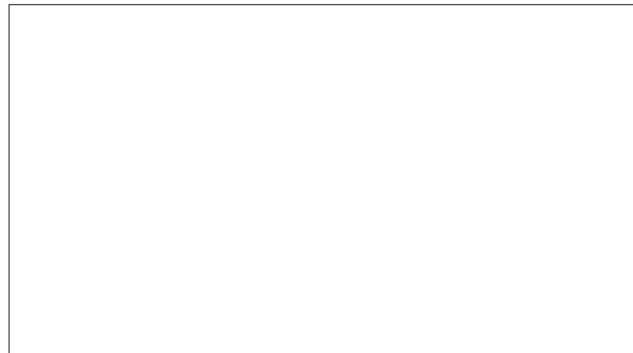
## Teachers plan grassroots fightback on pensions

By an NUT activist

Divisions and associations in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) that want to continue the battle over pensions came together at NUT conference (6-10 April) to form the "Local Associations for Action on Pensions" network.

Associations from all over the country organised a fringe meeting on Friday 6 April on the eve of the pension debate to agree an amendment that included a clear strategy for ongoing action and fighting to win. This was followed on Monday 9 April with a meeting to discuss how to organise to win the union to this strategy.

This was a spectacular meeting with over 150 people, from a wide range of associations. The discussion covered not only on



AWL member and Nottingham NUT activist Tom Unterrainer speaks at NUT conference

what had gone wrong on conference floor, but also debated what viable strategies there are for the coming weeks and months. This debate is a healthy breath of fresh air in the union, and whilst there was some disagreement on strategy those who attended were united on the need for further days of national action.

Members of Workers' Liberty argued for the

need to combine national strike action with a series of fast-moving, rolling local strikes. This strategy is about making sure action is maintained, rather than de-escalated, in between national strikes. Not a week should pass between national strike days without some form of continual disruption in some part of the country.

This is a major positive development within a

union where the organised left groupings — the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union and the Socialist Teachers Alliance — have become very cosy, and therefore very complacent, within the official structures.

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) failed to back the amendment agreed by the Associations for Action meeting, preferring to stick with their own, softer, motion on similar lines. Since the conference, SWP teachers have admitted that they "missed a trick" by failing to get behind the self-organised, rank-and-file initiative and have indicated that they will be getting involved.

The initiative taken by Associations for Action could open up opportunities for building an extensive network of union activists and representatives, as well as divisions

and associations, that can push for and coordinate action on pensions and other issues. It could well be the beginning of an effort to build and mobilise the rank-and-file of the union into a living, breathing force.

Local Associations for Action on Pensions has called a follow-up conference on Saturday 16 June in Liverpool to discuss furthering the pensions campaign. Workers' Liberty will be arguing for the conference to also take up the issues of workload and pay.

**We encourage divisions and associations to support the conference, ensure representative delegations from your area and encourage rank-and-file union members to attend the conference as observers.**

**"The response has been overwhelming"**

We were expecting a manoeuvre to prevent a serious amendment being passed, but the way it was applied was disgraceful.

In fact I take it as a compliment that they reacted the way they did; they must have been scared. The response from delegates, particularly women delegates, has been overwhelming.

They said I was giving them a voice.

Julie Lyon Taylor,  
Liverpool NUT and NUT  
Executive (pc)

**"I became involved in the Local Associations for National Action on Pensions initiative because I couldn't go back to my association and say that we're not going for national action."**

"I am here to represent members, and members mandated me to vote yes for national action. Over 50% of our members are the worst effect by the pensions changes.

**"This has got to come from the grass roots, and the fantastic fringe meeting on Friday night is a good start."**

Sue McMahon,  
Calderdale NUT (pc)

## NUT: fight for national action!

By a conference delegate

**Many delegates will leave this year's National Union of Teachers conference angry at the way the debate on pensions was handled, dismayed at its outcome, and confused as to what they should now be telling members in their workplace.**

They are right to be all of these things. But all hope is not lost.

Conference passed a motion on pensions amended to instruct the Executive to organise regional strikes and to "aim" towards a national

strike by the end of June.

Regional meetings of division secretaries were held after close of conference on Monday 9 April, and were largely tightly controlled by regional secretaries. In almost all regions, division secretaries were informed that they would be surveyed, and asked to provide data on membership density and the number of schools they think will close given further strikes.

One division secretary at the Yorkshire/Midlands meeting raised serious questions about how quickly a decision based on this data will be made if we are to have a regional strike in the week

beginning 7 May. Many union activists will need convincing that regional or local action, without a clearly defined follow-up of national action, is even desirable.

AWL teachers want to see the NUT Executive name a whole calendar of joined-up actions, including both regional and national strikes.

**Along with others in the newly-formed Associations for Action network (see box), we want to see the NUT participate in any strike on 10 May — now a real possibility following the decision of Unite's health sector to aim for action on that day.**

## MMP lock out battle needs industrial action

By Sally Gallagher

**Bosses at the Mayr Melnhof Packaging (MMP) plant in Deeside locked up the facility in advance of a community picket organised by workers locked out of MMP's Bootle plant and their supporters.**

The picket was part of an attempt by the locked-out Bootle workers to build solidarity for their dispute by reaching out to Deeside workers.

On Sunday 1 April, Unite held a meeting to discuss its strategy for the campaign. This focuses on legal action in court and

through Employment Tribunals (including claims for unfair dismissal and claims under TUPE regulations) and a "leverage" campaign targeting major MMP clients such as Kellogg's, Unilever and Nestle.

These leverage campaigns aim to embarrass the companies and damage their reputations; fine, as far as they go, but useless unless the employer knows that they will be backed up by industrial action. The recent electricians' victory was successful because strike ballots had been held and the rank-and-file had shown they were prepared to take unofficial strike ac-

tion. Employers can deal with negative publicity; they have a harder time dealing with industrial direct action.

The campaign to stop the closure of the Bootle plant and defend jobs can still be won, but it will take a strategy based on creative industrial action. Unite will have to mobilise members in other MMP facilities and in its clients' plants to put industrial pressure on MMP bosses.

**This will mean finding creative ways to ballot workers legally, or helping them (surreptitiously, if necessary) take unofficial action.**

## Unite "aims for" strike on 10 May

By Clarke Benitez

**A recent decision by the leadership of the Unite union's health section to "aim for" another strike over pensions on 10 May offers a glimmer of hope in the battle to revive a national industrial campaign on the issue.**

NHS workers in Unite voted by 94% to reject the government's pensions deal, but Unite officials mobilised against left-wingers on its National Industrial Sector Committees (NISCs) to prevent the union giving a lead on, or participating in, strike action since 30 November. According to Gill George, a Socialist Workers' Party member on the health NISC, there has been a "change of emphasis" from the union officialdom, which is now taking a more positive stance towards the possibility of further action.

However, the exact details of the health NISC's decision have not been made public. *Socialist Worker* reports it as "calling for" (rather than straightforwardly "calling") another strike, and Gill George's report to the United Left grouping within Unite says that the decision was to "aim for" another strike on 10 May.

At various points throughout the pensions dispute, various unions have talked about such "aims", and it has amounted to nothing. Unite activists must fight to make the general "aim" for a strike on 10 May a reality, and activists in other unions should fight to push their unions into involvement on 10 May too.

Meanwhile, the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), the only union in Britain led by people who consider themselves revolutionary socialists, has announced that "the next stage in [its] national campaign" on pensions will be... "co-ordinated lobbying of MPs". The union is issuing guidance to members on how to lobby their MP.

**We will leave it to Solidarity readers to decide whether this is likely to frighten the government into a last-minute reversal, and indeed whether this strategy matches up with the PCS and its Socialist Party leaders' much-vaunted self-description as a "fighting union".**

## Tube: co-ordinate battles

By a Tubeworker supporter

**Transport union RMT is fighting disputes against several employers in London Transport, and activists are trying to maximise their effect through co-ordination.**

The disputes include battles over pensions and passes involving maintenance workers at Tube Lines, London Underground service controllers' and signallers' fight against threats to jobs, pay and union recognition on maintenance contractor companies, and cleaners' battles over pay and the right to the same travel passes other Tube workers have.

All the battles take place against the backdrop of the

ongoing campaign to secure a decent financial reward for working during the Olympics for all grades of transport workers, against some employers' attempts to refuse annual leave this summer, for example to Travel Information Centre staff, and to protect existing collective agreements against management attempts to suspend or break them for the duration of the Games.

AWL members working on the Tube will be arguing for an effective strategy for each of these disputes, while promoting coordination where possible, to allow workers to fight together to apply maximum industrial pressure to management in order to win their demands.

For more, see [workersliberty.org/twblog](http://workersliberty.org/twblog)

Spanish general strike, 29 March

## Spain pushes “pay for health care” plan

By Rhodri Evans

**Spain's new conservative government is planning to change Spain's health service so that the sick will have to pay a fee for medical examinations, doctors' visits and prescriptions.**

Health care in Spain is currently free at the point of need, as in Britain's NHS.

Already (on 14 March) Catalonia has legislated a one-euro fee for prescriptions, on top of a means-tested requirement to pay up to 40% of the cost of medications. Britain's Health and Social Care Act (passed on 20 March) points in the same direction. By thoroughly “marketising” health provision, it makes the introduction of fees for health care a logical and all-too-easy next step.

Spain's Economy Minister Luis de Guindos, in an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 7 April, promised austerity

measures in “all public services, but above all in health and education”.

To soften the blow, the Spanish government talks of pushing Spain's autonomous regions, such as Catalonia, to impose the medical fees, rather than the fees being decreed across Spain, and of the fees being at first “nominal”. Once the principle of paying for health care is established, though, it will be easy to lever up the fees.

The Spanish government's plans are part of a drive to reduce its budget deficit to 5.3% of output (a target set after haggling with the EU, which at first wanted 4.4%). Whether they can succeed even in that is doubtful. As well as cutting public spending, the government's measures will cut output and employment, and thus tax revenues.

Unemployment in Spain is rising, and now near five million overall, and 50% among young people.

On Thursday 29 March, Spain's two big union confederations, CCOO and UGT, struck against government plans to weaken workers' protection against unfair dismissal. The unions say that 10.4 million workers, 77% of the country's workforce, struck.

There were big demonstrations in Madrid (nearly one million people, according to CCOO; 170,000, according to the daily *El Pais*) and Barcelona (275,000, according to *El Pais*).

For a few months, the business pages of the press have been relatively smug. They suggested that the LTRO, the scheme under which the European Central Bank (ECB) has lent over a trillion euros, at very low interest and for three years, to European banks, had fixed things. By using some of the ECB euros to buy Italian and Spanish government bonds, the banks brought the “yields” on those

bonds down below panic levels.

It is now becoming clear the LTRO was only buying time. Before Easter, yields on Italy's (10-year) bonds went up again to 5.5%, and on Spain's to 5.8 per cent. Portuguese bonds are still scarcely saleable.

**On 30 March the European Union announced future terms for its bailout fund, but economists calculate that the fund will be far too small to cope if Italy and Spain run into new crises.**

### Italy

**Despite mass action, union leaders prepare to cave in on attacks on workers' rights.**

• More: [workersliberty.org/node/18650](http://workersliberty.org/node/18650)

## Syria: slaughter and duplicity

By Gerry Bates

**Syrian regime leader, Bashar Assad, fighting to smash the year-long uprising against his dictatorship, agreed to a UN-Arab League plan with a 10 April deadline for a ceasefire.**

But the deal, which Assad felt forced to formally accept, is now almost certain to fall apart as the state steps up the violence against its own citizens.

Several towns, including Homs, Deraa and the Douma suburb of Damascus, are being shelled. 100 killings were reported in the two days leading up to the deadline.

On Monday 9 April Syrian forces fired across the Turkish border into a camp for Syrian refugees near the town of Kilis. Syrian troops also fired about 40 rounds across the border into northern Lebanon, killing a Lebanese cameraman.

Amnesty International said it had counted 232 deaths in the week since Syria accepted the peace plan.

### COMPLY

**The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, never expected Assad to comply with the peace plan:**

“He shoots people but pretends he is withdrawing troops. He is not withdrawing troops but he is duping the international community.”

In fact the UN initiative, brokered by Kofi Annan, is a poor plan. It treats Assad and his opponents even-handedly when there is no equivalence between his brutal one-party state and those attempting to defend their rights. Probably all Annan has done is to buy Assad a little time. Annan's efforts symbolise the weakness of western efforts to end the killing in Syria.

New waves of refugees are fleeing the country. Over 2000 arrived in Turkey on 4 April alone.

The humanitarian crisis inside Syria is also worsening. Valerie Amos, head

of the UN's humanitarian affairs office stated: “We estimate around a million people need help with healthcare and access to food.” A quarter of a million are now displaced inside the country.

Although Assad's state has won some military battles recently, there is no likelihood that opposition, including armed opposition will end. The Sunni Arab critics of Syria, led by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have offered to pay wages to the fighters of the Free Syrian Army via the political front, the Syrian National Council. The SNC is now, following internal fights, an Islamist organisation, albeit one fronted by liberals.

### CONTROL

**The Saudi rulers — who run a theocratic dictatorship — are not benign.**

Their offer of money is about buying control and strengthen Islamist-Sunni sectarians amongst the opposition. The Saudis are calibrating their response carefully. They aim to show sympathy for the oppressed Sunni majority in Syria. However they don't want to see Saudi youth fighting in Syria in the same way they fought in Iraq; and they are wary of the implications of further chaos in Syria.

The US and Turkey have offered non-lethal aid to the opposition, including communications equipment.

However the US has also invested a lot of diplomatic time in lobbying against Arab states sending weapons to the opposition inside Syria. The Saudi and Qataris have offered to send weapons, although do not seem to have taken many practical steps to deliver them.

**The US is concerned that no one outside the country has much direct control over the militias fighting Assad's forces on the ground. The US sees the armed opposition moving towards Iraqi-style Islamist resistance.**

## Health protesters take on the vultures

**On Thursday 5 April Health Alarm demonstrated at the London headquarters of Circle Healthcare, in posh Welbeck Street, W1.**

**Circle is a private healthcare firm which runs the recently-privatised Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. It is run by bankers, and pays Tory MP Mark Simmonds, a former Tory health spokesperson, £50,000 a year for 10 hours' “consulting” each month.**

• More — [healthalarm1159.wordpress.com](http://healthalarm1159.wordpress.com)