

Workers

ACTION

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Hands off Afghanistan

- Take the anti-war campaign into the labour movement
- Israel: a problem for the coalition
- The football riots in Iran
- Imperialist war and revolutionary defeatism
- Reviews, archive and more

Workers **ACTION**

No.14 December 2001

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Hands off Afghanistan!

As we go to press, the future of Afghanistan – and indeed of the Middle East – hangs in the balance. A month of bombing has reduced most of what is left of the country's infrastructure to rubble. An unknown number, probably running into thousands, have been killed as a result of the bombing, hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee their homes, and millions face famine as winter arrives. Such is the civilised world's 'crusade' against terrorism.

For all the talk of an international coalition of dozens of nations, this is essentially the United States' war, with Britain as its chief poodle. The initial war aim of rooting out Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network has mutated into a full scale war against Afghanistan as the only readily identifiable target, on the flimsy grounds that it failed to bow to the US ultimatum to hand over bin Laden without being shown any evidence. It won't stop al-Qaida, it probably won't catch bin Laden, but it will recruit thousands to his cause.

The coalition is potentially very brittle. Within the US administration there is a struggle, not so much between doves and hawks as between hawks and eagles, over whether to extend the war aims to include an assault upon Iraq. Ominously, *The Observer* of November 11 reported that US sources are claiming to have more evidence of an Iraqi link to the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11.

But an attack upon Iraq would put an impossible strain upon the Coalition's Arab allies, in particular Saudi Arabia, as well as bringing to a head differences between the US and the EU states. Even Blair, who has acted throughout as Bush's loyal bagman, knows such a move would accelerate the shift in public opinion against the war. There might even be widespread rebellion in the Parliamentary Labour Party. This is the context, then, in which both Bush and Blair have spoken the previously unthinkable words 'Palestinian state'. It is a blatant and cynical move to massage Arab and Muslim public opinion, just as the US and Britain suddenly developed a conscience about the plight of Palestinians at the time of the Gulf War in 1991. Sharon's government has shown what it thinks of such pledges by carrying on assassinating Palestinian militants, shooting children, building settlements and imposing collective punishments.

With the collapse of Taliban control in northern Afghanistan, the outcome of the war is difficult to gauge. With the US and its Northern Alliance allies in control of Kabul and most of the other shattered urban centres, it remains to be seen whether the Taliban crumbles or whether they retreat to their mountain fastnesses to wage guerrilla warfare as winter takes

hold. In the latter scenario, the war could last for months or even years.

The Coalition's game plan involves using the Northern Alliance as a proxy to fight the Taliban, but at the same time keeping it reined in and encouraging high level defections from the Taliban, so as not to upset the Pakistan military. As an ally the Northern Alliance is a public relations disaster, with a notorious reputation for atrocities and a lucrative sideline in poppy cultivation. (Not surprisingly, the 'war on drugs' seems to have been suspended for the duration of the 'war against terrorism'.) That being said, the US and Britain seem to have overcome the doubts expressed about the Alliance in October and have obligingly switched from targeted bombs aimed at the Taliban leadership to cluster bombing, carpet bombing and daisy cutters to clear Taliban forward positions and directly assist the Alliance.

The determination of the US and Britain to control the future make up of Afghanistan adds a further explosive factor to the political situation in the region. Should the Coalition consolidate its military control over the country, it is far from clear how a future regime would take shape. Talk of a UN protectorate skates over the thorny problem of how and when the Coalition, having attacked Afghanistan without UN backing, would hand over to the UN. Blair's frequently repeated call for a government that reflects the 'rich ethnic diversity' of the country is a cover for imposing an alternative team of US-friendly warlords upon the country.

Afghanistan, while it is a historic geopolitical entity, is not a nation in the usual meaning of the word, so much as loose knit association of historically antagonistic tribal peoples. For this reason if no other, those on the left who have hoped for a united 'national' anti-imperialist war of resistance are likely to be disappointed. The Taliban base themselves exclusively upon the Pashtuns – approximately half of the population – while their only significant military opponent, the Northern Alliance, is composed of rival Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen and Hazara warlords. Far from uniting the 'nation' in anti-imperialist war, the bombing seems only to have strengthened the hand of Pashtun nationalism either side of the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Of course, it cannot be excluded that a protracted guerrilla war would intensify the political crisis in the Arab and Islamic countries, and transform passive sympathy for the Taliban to active engagement. If that happened – and at present it looks unlikely – then the present character of the war would have fundamentally changed. But political perspectives have

to be based in the first instance on probabilities, not on the left's enduring tendency to overestimate the possibility of a pan-Arab/pan-Muslim uprising.

Faced with the likelihood of the West attempting to impose a Western-friendly regime upon Afghanistan, the main demands must be for the withdrawal of all Western forces from the region and for the right of the people of Afghanistan to decide their own future, free from foreign intervention. In such a situation the call for a Constituent Assembly, and within that, the struggle for a democratic secular state could acquire real resonance.

Since September 11, in the West there has been a non-stop interrogation of the Islamic psyche. What is it within Islam, asks the press, that makes people prepared to carry out suicide attacks? Where do Muslims' real loyalties lie? Conversely, in the Muslim world it is the actions of the United States, Britain and Israel which are seen almost universally as terrorism, and the differential attitude adopted by the West between, say, the events of September 11 and the massacre of 7,500 Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica arouses only intense hatred and anger.

Should socialists see the Taliban and al-Qaida as anti-imperialist movements? Since most on the left think in terms of analogies, it is first of all necessary to point out that they bear no resemblance to the bourgeois nationalist, anti-colonial movements which communists discussed in the 1920s. Such movements mobilised large numbers of peasants and smaller numbers of workers behind bourgeois nationalist slogans, under the leadership of intellectuals and bourgeois forces. Their project was tied up with modernising to catch up the 'advanced' west.

Pan-Islamic 'fundamentalist' (for want of a better term) movements represent something very different – the struggle *against* every aspect of modernity, damning 'capitalism' and 'communism' alike. While they feed off the humiliation and resentment felt throughout the Arab and Muslim world and raise popular grievances, their demands are neither democratic nor 'national'. If 'fundamentalism' can be said to have a programme, it is for theocratic dictatorship, against any vestiges of secular life and culture, including any distinct class organisations for workers, and for the systematic subjection of women.

This is by no means identical with the pervasive plebeian pan-Islamic feeling that exists in many Middle-Eastern countries. Looking at the massacres carried out under the noses of the UN in Bosnia; at the appalling statistics of child mortality in Iraq, courtesy of UN sanctions; and at the murder of hundreds of Palestinians at the hands of the West's favourite client state, Israel, it is not surprising that millions of Muslims have come to the conclusion that the West in general, and the United States in particular, is conducting a war against Islam. While some celebrated the events of September 11 and cheered for the Taliban, many others saw the attacks as a tragic conse-

quence of US policy in the Middle East, but condemned the bombing of Afghanistan nonetheless.

These two trends undoubtedly overlap each other, but socialists must try to disentangle the progressive and anti-imperialist elements of this plebeian pan-Islamism from reactionary 'fundamentalism'. It is not the job of socialists to decide who really represents Islam, but rather to remember that ideas cannot be isolated from the material and social conditions that sustain them. In the West, socialists should be in the forefront of the struggle against Islamophobia. Behind the grotesque daily questioning of Muslims' loyalty to the British state – Tebbit's 'cricket test' writ large – there is a reactionary and racist agenda at work, aiming to stir up a backlash which can join forces with the attack upon asylum seekers.

Blair's government, while insisting it is not at war with Islam, is creating many of the conditions for such a backlash through its attacks upon civil liberties and its appalling asylum policies. The latest moves to bring in internment without trial for terrorist suspects – following on from its moves to restrict jury trial – are measures even the Tories would have balked at a few years ago. Raising taxation to fund the war at the expense of public spending will throw more fuel on the fire.

Yet despite the cross-party agreement in parliament, the vivid real time horror of the events of September 11, and the very limited access to the media of those opposed to the war, this is the most unpopular war fought by Britain since Suez, forty five years ago. Where the active opposition to the Falklands War in 1982 and the Gulf War in 1991 numbered a few thousand, this time it includes tens of thousands. Such a broad movement spans a range of opinion, from motives of self-

preservation to detailed criticisms of US policy. Criticisms voiced by charities, NGOs and UN Commissioner Mary Robinson have strengthened the humanitarian argument that the chief victims of the war are the people of Afghanistan. There is questioning of the motives and aims of the Coalition across British intellectual life, in marked contrast to the silence of 1991. The forty thousand-strong demonstration in London on October 13 was the largest political demonstration in Britain since the Poll Tax in 1990, and it was notable for the large numbers of young people outside the immediate periphery of the far left. The next mobilisation on November 18 promises to be even bigger.

'Stop the War' is a perfectly adequate basis on which to build the anti-war movement, since the prerequisite is to build a movement big enough to make a mass impact. But the most important terrain to fight on is the labour movement – to fight for an anti-war position at every level of the trade unions and the Labour Party, and to put pressure on the union leaders and wavering MPs to take a real stand.

'And now, without a blush or a swallow of embarrassment, we're about to sign up the so-called 'Northern Alliance' in Afghanistan. America's newspapers are saying – without a hint of irony – that they, too, will be our 'foot-soldiers' in our war to hunt down/bring to justice/smoke out/eradicate/liquidate Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. US officials – who know full well the whole bloody, rapacious track record of the killers in the 'Alliance' – are suggesting in good faith that these are the men who will help us bring democracy to Afghanistan and drive the Taliban and the terrorists out of the country. In fact, we're ready to hire one gang of terrorists – our terrorists – to rid ourselves of another gang of terrorists. What, I wonder, would the dead of New York and Washington think of this?'

Robert Fisk in *The Independent*, October 3, 2001

Stop the War

Take the campaign into the labour movement

By Pete Firmin

The organised working class has to be the central to an anti-war movement if it is to move beyond demonstrations and other protests (important as they are to building the movement) to the kind of action which might bring an end to the war – industrial action. A general strike against the war has been called by the unions in Namibia, and although such action may seem a long way off in Britain, it has to be our aim if we are to go beyond protest.

Much taken by the level of support by youth and among the Muslim community for opposition to the war, the anti-war movement has tended to neglect this aspect. Thus, although the demonstration of October 13 was massive by recent British standards, trade union presence was not that great and Labour Parties were invisible. Nor was it seen as a priority by the Stop the War coalition to ensure significant numbers of active trade unionists were present on the elected steering committee. Of course, many of those involved, including many Muslims, are trade unionists, but they have not been encouraged to see it as a priority to win support in their unions and workplaces.

The tone for the attitude of the labour movement was set when Trades Union Congress was cancelled, not just – understandably (not least because delegates attention would not be on the business to hand) – for the afternoon of September 11, but for the rest of the week too. Blair had been due to speak at the TUC when the news of the attack on New York and the Pentagon came through. Interestingly, at least one US union was in the middle of its congress when the attacks happened, and it continued to meet for the rest of the week.

Ever since the general election we had been told that there would be confrontation with the government over public services at the TUC and Labour Party conferences, but in the event the events of September 11 and the ‘war against terrorism’ became the excuse to call that off. Of

course, this neatly dovetailed with the instincts of most trade union leaders to avoid such a clash with ‘their’ government, but it provided them with the kind of excuse they felt they could get away with. Far from challenging the government’s response to September 11, most unions argued that ‘now was not the time’ to attack it for its approach to the private sector.

Thus at Labour Party conference (curtailed by a day because of ‘the crisis’, something the leadership would gladly do every year) the big unions, who essentially determine what resolutions will be discussed, toned down or remitted any resolutions unacceptable to the government. While tabling and getting NEC support for a resolution which criticised those firms which had ‘taken advantage of’ September 11 to make redundancies, all unions except ASLEF supported the NEC state-

ment on the response to September 11, which while by no means giving explicit support to the action taken since, did not rule it out either. The Unison delegation were told, for instance, that though Unison didn’t agree with the NEC statement it was going to vote for it because it would be wrong to show disunity.

Several CLPs and unions did submit emergency resolutions opposed to military action, but these were ruled out of order – in New-Labour-speak, referred to the policy commissions. Only after much lobbying did the Fire Brigades Union manage to get their emergency resolution discussed. Unfortunately this resolution was ambivalent, and the NEC decided that the best way to avoid differences really emerging was to support and ignore any sections that might cast a doubt over the government’s future actions.

Trotsky on Afghanistan

‘There is yet another nation in the East which deserves special mention today in connection with the holiday of international brotherhood. This is Afghanistan. Dramatic events are taking place there and the hand of British imperialism is embroiled in these events. Afghanistan is a backward country. Afghanistan is making its first step to Europeanise itself and guarantee its independence on a more cultured basis. The progressive nationalist elements of Afghanistan are in power and so British diplomacy mobilises and arms everything which is in any way reactionary both in that country and along its borders with India and throws all this against the progressive elements in Kabul. Starting from the decrees by which not only the bourgeois but also the social-democratic authorities in Germany banned May Day demonstrations, passing through events in China and Afghanistan, we can see everywhere the parties of the Second International behind the work of suppression and oppression. For, you know, the onslaught against Kabul organised with British resources takes place under the government of the pacifist MacDonald.’

From ‘May Day in the West and the East’ (Speech at the commemorative plenum of the Moscow Soviet, April 15, 1924)

‘Taking place at present in Afghanistan are truly dramatic events: MacDonald’s Britain is toppling the left national-bourgeois wing which is striving to Europeanise independent Afghanistan and is attempting there to restore to power the darkest and most reactionary elements imbued with the worst prejudices of pan-Islamism, the Caliphate and so forth.’

From ‘Perspectives and Tasks in the East’ (Speech on the third anniversary of the Communist University for Toilers of the East, April 21, 1924)

Several of the smaller, left unions (ASLEF, RMT, FBU) have passed policy against the war, and ASLEF has thrown its support behind both the Stop the War Coalition and Labour Against the War. The CWU, whose leadership are proud of the fact that they proposed the cancellation of the TUC, did support the call by aid agencies for a halt to the bombing to allow for the delivery of aid, but has not been willing to go further. The Unison NEC rejected opposition to the war. The PCS executive has muzzled their General Secretary, Mark Serwotka, from speaking out against the war, even in a personal capacity. Clearly much work needs to be done on the issue in the unions – while many branches will be supporting the anti-war movement, they need to take that fight into their union structures as well.

Within the Labour Party, while explicit opposition to military action was successfully kept off the conference agenda, it was certainly not kept off the fringe. The likes of Jeremy Corbyn, George Galloway and Mick Rix (ASLEF General Secretary), along with others, were making stirring speeches outlining why socialists needed to oppose such action.

Attention since conference has shifted to parliament itself, not least because under the arcane and medieval way Britain is ruled no consent is needed from parliament to go to war. Blair initially recalled parliament a couple of times for a few hours at a time merely to make a statement of what he was doing; he certainly had no inten-

tion of submitting this to a vote - even though he clearly would have won overwhelming support.

It was this that led to a row that brought to prominence an MP who most had never heard of before, Paul Marsden (Shrewsbury). He spoke at the October 13 demonstration and, along with the usual suspects, was calling for a vote in parliament. Dragged into the whips office for a dressing down, he successfully faced this down by making a verbatim report of the episode public. The most common response to which was that it read like an episode from *Yes, Minister*.

Of course, despite the demand that Labour MPs and the Party as a whole should support government policy, this policy has been agreed by nobody but the government – that is, at best by the Cabinet. There has certainly been no endorsement of it by the Labour Party at large or even the Parliamentary Labour Party - which hardly ever votes on anything.

Meanwhile, the 5 Muslim Labour 'parliamentarians' (2 MPS and 3 Lords), some of whom (especially Mohammed Sarwar, Glasgow MP) had been making speeches opposing the war, were pulled in and 'persuaded' to put their names to a statement supporting the government's actions. Some are said to have retracted this since.

It was the absence of a noticeable Labour Party presence at the demonstration on October 13 which gave the impetus to activists to launch 'Labour Against the War' on October 24. Some MPs, such as

Lynne Jones, wanted it to be called 'Labour against the bombing', implying support for ground forces, but this was headed off in advance and not raised at the meeting itself. Attended by about a dozen MPs (several of whom addressed the meeting) and about 60 activists, a statement of aims was agreed as was the intention to build as much support as possible, through affiliation, from CLPs and trade union bodies. The aims include support for the Stop the War coalition, and Labour Party activists clearly need to both win support for opposition to the war from their CLPs and get them involved in public activity against the war as part of local campaigns.

The first real opportunity Labour MPs had to collectively show their opposition to the war was when several of them forced an adjournment debate on November 1. Having tabled a motion calling for a halt to the bombing, 14 of them (along with Plaid Cymru and SNP MPs) defied the whip (on what was meant to be a 'free vote') to vote against the government.

Labour movement activists need to use the growing strength of the anti-war movement to pressure more MPs, together with members of the Scottish parliament and Welsh Assembly and local Councillors to speak out against the war, and to win significant sections of both the Labour Party and unions to mobilizing opposition. **WA**

Motion tabled by the Labour Group and carried at the Liberal Democrat-run Islington Council meeting on November 1, 2001.

1. This Council condemns the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th and sends condolence and sympathies to all those affected and their families.
2. This Council expresses deep concern for the innocent people of Afghanistan who face starvation unless over 50,000 tonnes of food aid reaches them in the next few weeks. We hope that the United Nations appeal for a halt to the bombing will be heeded before the onset of winter so that international aid agencies can distribute the necessary relief.
3. This Council condemns all racially motivated violence and expresses its support for Islington's Muslim communities at this difficult time, when we have seen an attack on the Caledonian Road mosque and the Muslim Welfare House.
4. Council commits itself to working with all sectors of the community to ensure that terrorist violence and hate crimes do not affect Islington's proud tradition of tolerance and diversity.

Motion carried at Labour Left Briefing Annual General Meeting 2001

1. LLB unequivocally condemns the terrorist outrages in the US on September 11th as a violation of human rights, an attack on working people of many races and an assault on the socialist principle of rational humanitarianism.
2. We further condemn the state terrorist attacks on the people of Afghanistan by the US-led coalition, causing the deaths of innocent civilians and further suffering. We reject the coalition's war aims to capture or kill Osama Bin Laden and install a client government in Afghanistan as contrary to the principles of international law and designed solely to secure the US's political and economic interests in the region.
3. We specifically condemn Tony Blair and the British government for its leading role in organising the pro-war coalition and providing a cynically motivated ideological justification for these acts of international criminality.
4. We further condemn the Blair government for using the current situation as a pretext for a further clampdown on civil liberties, asylum seekers and dissent.
5. We believe justice is best served by establishing an international criminal court and arraigning the alleged perpetrators of terrorist attacks according to the principles of the rule of law, on the basis of a proper trial with admissible evidence and a clear standard of proof beyond reasonable doubt.
6. We will work within the Stop the war coalition to build the broadest possible support for an end to the US-led acts of state terrorism, on the lines of Justice not Vengeance, with particular emphasis on mobilising the organised labour movement, and the Labour Party in particular, in opposition to the Blair government's policy.

Stop the War

Building an anti-war campaign

by Pete Firmin

At the start of the 'war against terrorism', the auguries for building an all-encompassing, democratic anti-war campaign were not good. The last such campaign, that against NATO's assault on ex-Yugoslavia, was a closed shop, not exposing itself to any kind of democracy, and barely, if at all, tolerating those within the anti-war movement who did not share the pro-Serbia agenda of its core. Those, such as *Workers' Action*, which, while opposing NATO intervention, also supported the right of the Kosovars to self-determination, were excluded from any role. Many would argue that this refusal to recognise the very real plight of the Kosovars was an important factor in restricting the growth of the campaign.

This war has been different. There has been much less confusion about the war itself. Some on the left could delude themselves that NATO's action in the Balkans was in some way 'humanitarian', riding to the defence of the Kosovars. But in Afghanistan all can see that the US / Coalition action is creating a much bigger humanitarian crisis than existed before and is as much about American revenge for the horror of September 11 as anything else. The pro-war and anti-war division in society is between those who are willing to ignore that humanitarian crisis, however reluctantly, in favour of the military action, and those for whom that crisis is at least one important factor in opposing it.

The initiative for the anti-war movement was taken by the SWP. They called a rally in central London on September 21 to which about 3,000 people turned up – and several overflow meetings had rapidly to be arranged. A few days later an 'organising meeting' was called. Clearly both these steps were welcome, the latter going beyond what many campaigns are prepared to do, and the SWP, with its many activists on the ground, was in a better position to kick-start the anti-war movement than most.

However, it was then that the problems started. That first organising meeting on September was attended by well over 400

people, and the SWP conducted it as if they owned the movement. Chaired by SWP leading light Lindsey German, after opening speeches by Tony Benn, Tariq Ali and Jeremy Corbyn, and a few (mainly SWPers) from the floor, the meeting was presented with a 'take it or leave' approach to the name, platform and steering committee of the 'Stop the War Coalition', with no right to put amendments or alternatives. At this stage the SWP was also pushing the line that there was no need to condemn the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, only to 'not condone' them. This they also imposed on the anti-war movement.

That meeting created a lot of disquiet among the movement and the SWP retreated somewhat a week later. Lindsey German had been replaced by a non-SWP in the chair and votes were allowed on the alternative proposals from ARROW (although not amendments or 'pick and mix'). It was also agreed that the committee be only 'interim' until such a time as a national meeting of the anti-war movement would be called, which would elect a representative national committee. However, only about 150 people attended this second organising meeting, quite

likely largely due to bad feeling over the conduct of the first.

The national meeting was not made widely known; for instance, it was not even on the Stop the War coalition's website a few days before it was scheduled. Several essential things needed to happen to ensure the meeting was successful in putting together a real coalition, representing the different forces, politically and geographically, which go to make up the anti-war movement. The meeting needed to be advertised widely for what it was, a national conference that would determine the platform and structure of the anti-war movement, rather than just another anti-war meeting. Anti-war groups around the country needed to be encouraged to send delegations. Fences needed to be built or mended with anti-war forces such as CND and ARROW (a direct action peace group) who had had their scepticism towards the left confirmed by the earlier antics. Little of this seems to have been done, and instead the meeting took place on a Sunday (making travel difficult for out-of-London people) in a hall that held far less than the earlier 'organising meetings'.

A couple of hundred did turn up to the

Aims and Objectives of the Stop the War Coalition adopted on 28 October

1. The aim of the coalition should be very simple: to stop the war currently declared by the United States and its allies against 'terrorism'. We condemn the attacks on New York and we feel the greatest compassion for those who lost their life on 11th September. But any war will simply add to the numbers of innocent dead, cause untold suffering, political and economic instability on a global scale, increase racism and result in attacks on civil liberties. The aims of the campaign would be best expressed in the name Stop the War Coalition.
2. Supporters of the Coalition, whether organisations or individuals, will of course be free to develop their own analyses and organise their own actions. But there will be many important occasions when united initiatives around broad stop the war slogans can mobilise the greatest numbers.
3. The coalition shall elect a steering committee, which reflects the breadth of those involved to carry forward the aims and objectives. Local groups should have regular, open and inclusive meetings.
4. We call on all peace activists and organisations, trade unionists, campaigners and labour movement organisations to join with us in building a mass movement that can stop the drive to war.
5. We are committed to opposing any racist backlash generated by this war. We will fight to stop the erosion of civil rights.

national meeting on October 28, although the vast majority were from London and dominated by the far left. A first session, addressed by George Galloway, Jeremy Corbyn and Lindsey German, followed by questions and contributions, went smoothly, but the interim committee had clearly given little thought to the procedure for the rest of the day. Alternative proposals for the platform of the coalition were again presented without the right to amend, and each was in turn moved and argued against before voting, rather than have them all discussed together.

While there was a comradely debate, conducted without much of the animosity present in what passes for discussion on the left, there were clearly big differences of approach. While the interim committee presented a slightly amended version of the original 'aims and objectives', others presented very different alternatives. The proposals from the committee are the essentials for the anti-war movement (see box), with the crucial change from the original proposals that the attack on New York on September 11 was now condemned (the exclusion of the Pentagon was questioned, to which the response came that it was meant to mean all the attacks on September 11).

Alternative platforms were presented jointly by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and CPGB (Weekly Worker) and the Federation of Iranian Refugees. The Federation of Iranian refugees clearly wanted Stop the War to adopt a much wider programme, including for the creation of a Palestinian state, explicit political arrangements for Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Taliban regime and an end to sanctions against Iraq. Such proposals would clearly narrow the anti-war movement down to a small layer of socialists and were overwhelmingly rejected.

While the alternative put forward by the AWL and CPGB was more measured, it still went beyond what is essential in building an anti-war movement to spell out that the movement stood 'for secularism', for freedom of religion and spelling out the 'no support for the Taliban or imperialism' position. While Workers' Action agrees with this position, it cuts across the need to build an inclusive anti-war movement, presenting problems both for those who have a 'with the Taliban against imperialism' position and for those who see it as unnecessary to take a position on such issues at all. The AWL / CPGB claim that this is the minimum necessary to build the anti-war movement is rather undermined by its success to date.

Where the national meeting got really silly and nasty was in the last session, electing a committee. Clearly little thought had been given by the interim committee either as to how this could best be conducted, nor what

the priorities were for constructing a balanced committee. Thus the interim committee proposed a list of 27 names, and invited further nominations, of which there were about 18. Their proposals included only 2 active trade unionists, although this was partially rectified by later nominations. The interim committee proposed that the additional nominations be dealt with one by one, with a speech for and against each before voting on them, thus blocking any discussion of the overall balance, rejecting the alternative proposal that all those nominated be accepted. The proposal from the Socialist Party that the committee be made up of representatives of affiliated organisations according to size was rejected as unwieldy, although it became more attractive to some of us as the afternoon progressed. The committee also proposed that all the additional nominations be accepted with the exception of those put forward by the AWL and CPGB. Lindsey German made clear that this was as punishment for the fact that those organisations had voted against the adoption of the 'aims and objectives' after their alternatives were defeated. This was said before the AWL said they intended to continue the argument if elected to the committee ('though the CPGB made clear that they would build the campaign on the agreed basis – not that it did them any good).

The meeting proceeded to do the outgoing committee's bidding, electing all additional nominees bar the CPGB and AWL on to the new committee. A further sour note was added by the Federation of Iranian Refugees withdrawing their additional nominations on the grounds that the campaign 'was not serious about fighting the Taliban'. Their representative put forward by the outgoing committee also withdrew. While unfortunate, this was a product of their own leftism and the political situation in their home country and could not have been avoided without making unacceptable political concessions.

The exclusion of the CPGB and AWL was wrong, but a much bigger, largely unrecognised problem is that the committee does not include large swathes of the anti-war movement. The only CND representative is on in a 'personal capacity' and there are no representatives of ARROW, the Green Party or that vast majority of Liberal Democrats who oppose the war despite their leadership's support for it. None of these appeared to even attend the conference, certainly not putting forward platforms (as ARROW had done at the earliest meetings) or nominees.

While many in the anti-war movement would not see themselves as aligned with any organisation, the need to involve as wide a range as possible of those organisations as possible has to be recognised. This is not about being 'liberal', but about making the

movement as effective and its leadership as authoritative as possible. The mistake of much of the left is to believe that they can impose their leadership on campaigns rather than earn respect and authority by providing political and tactical answers as the campaign proceeds.

Thus of the 27 names put forward by the interim committee at least 9 were known Socialist Alliance supporters, many of the additional nominees also support the SA, and to trump this it was agreed by the meeting that there should also be a representative 'to be nominated by the Socialist Alliance'. Objections along the lines that the committee was already stacked with SA supporters were met with the objection that the SA needed to have an 'official representative', although why this should mean they also needed quite as many others went unanswered. So while the SWP and other components of the SA were engaged in excluding some supporters (AWL and CPGB), they simultaneously made sure that, if not an absolute majority, they are far and away the largest single political force on the committee.

This reflects the SWP's approach to the Socialist Alliance since the general election. Fervently believing it to be an electoral front and nothing more, they have established campaigns such as the Stop the War Coalition without any consultation with the rest of the SA, seeing them merely as footsoldiers who can come in to give it support (and, has now been shown, not when they don't).

Little thought is given to the question of the wider forces which should be involved, like CND etc in this case, merely how to maintain control over the movement.

None of this is to distract from the strength of the anti-war movement to date, much of the credit for which goes to the coalition. Although not called by the Coalition (but rather CND and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign), the demonstration on October 13 was a massive success. Local anti-war campaigns around the country have had considerable success in holding large meetings and drawing in large amounts of support from the Muslim community in particular. Many initiatives (for instance among school students and the mosques) have also taken place without any involvement of either the local or national campaign.

However it is precisely this level of success that shows the shortcomings of the coalition and the lead given to it by the SWP. The October 13 demonstration showed the breadth of the movement, with large numbers of youth and Muslims in particular, who will not feel themselves represented by this committee.

Stop the War

The left and the anti-war movement

by Matthew Willgress, Labour Left Briefing EB member

As British and UK forces continue their bombardment of the poorest country in the world in pursuit of social, economic and political aims which are far broader than a war on the terrorism that they themselves created, a special onus falls on the Left in both these countries to build up the maximum opposition to it throughout the working class and society as a whole. Whatever views one holds on what would be the best military outcome to this conflict in anti-imperialist terms; it should be obvious that the most effective form of anti-imperialism in a time like this is to build the anti-war movement against the war of British and US capitalism. Such an anti-war movement can both weaken Blair's position at home and abroad.

In Britain most of the Left has rallied behind the Stop the War Coalition (STWC) called in anticipation of the attacks following Bush's response to September 11. Other organisations (most notably the traditional peace movement such as CND) have campaigned against the war separately. STWC itself made a number of tactical blunders in this early period, perhaps in part resulting from the politics of the main activist organisation behind it – the SWP. First was the argument that the anti-war movement should 'not condone' rather than 'condemn' September 11. This automatically alienated pacifist opinion (CND had already condemned the attacks) and the Green Party, which promptly walked out of any further involvement. Taking into account the public mood in Britain it was also a tactical blunder. Forces such as CND and the Greens are important in Britain at this time, when the Left represents very little in genuine terms. Secondly, the SWP tried to foist on the STWC in its early stages slogans such as 'Fight US/UK Imperialism!' While of course we are in favour of fighting US/UK imperialism (!), this slogan (which was luckily rejected) shows a tendency for the Left to wish to

foist its level of political understanding on the anti-war movement. In reality what is necessary at this time is to organise as part of that movement around clear anti-imperialist lines and then build the movement on the broadest lines possible. (This approach has the advantage of being both principled politically and non-sectarian – unlike the 'revolutionary' *Weekly Worker* for example which with putting 'reactionary anti-capitalism' on a par with imperialism and carrying slogans such as 'Pacifism Kills' on a CND march manage to be neither!)

The massive demonstration of October 13th against the war showed much of this to be true in practice. It was a CND-called demo with a platform representing a wide range of views opposed to the war such as Green Party GLA member Darren Johnson, Labour NEC member Mark Seddon, Palestinian representatives and pacifists/CND speakers. The unexpected success was most notable by the fact that the march was not dominated by the far left at all. It is doubtful that a demo called with an STWC platform at this stage (inevitably Left and in terms of the committee Socialist Alliance dominated and complete with harsher slogans) would have been able to attract this level of support.

But whilst October 13th may have shown a number of ways in which a successful anti-war movement (defined in my opinion by being able to attract wide levels of publicity and as broad public support for the anti-war cause as possible) can be built; there was one key point missing. This was the lack of organised and visible labour movement involvement. It should be noted that this was not due to a lack of opposition to the war within the movement – even at Labour Party Conference Tony Benn received a standing ovation for his intervention which was clearly anti-war. Rather it showed a certain backwardness of forces within the Labour Party in coming forward to do concrete organisational work on a national basis.

Labour movement involvement is crucial in campaigns such as this because it

provides the best guarantee that a campaign can have a politically viable core which can be linked to wider questions of class struggle. In addition to this, trade union and Labour Party backing also brings with it the opportunity to get the case across to more people. It is for these reasons that the launch of Labour Against the War (LATW) in Parliament a few weeks later was so crucial. LATW was launched on a statement condemning September 11 but rightly concentrating its attacks on the US/UK attacks. It has both trade union and Labour Party involvement and made the decision to affiliate to the STWC but also work with other forces opposing the war. This positive development was reflected at the subsequent conference of the STWC itself. The committee had a larger Labour involvement with MPs such as George Galloway joined by Christine Shawcroft for LATW. LATW supporters also helped get the conference to declare its opposition to September 11, tactically crucial if approaches and links are to be made with pacifist forces again. It is clear from this that there is no contradiction between building LATW and the broader anti-war movement; in fact the two are linked and provide a clear opportunity for the Labour/ trade union Left.

So where do we go now? As there appears to be no ebb in anti-war feeling, the Left must take this opportunity with both hands to get the basic 'Stop the War' message across to as many people as possible. From this starting point, we are able to make a case involving more developed and complex political questions to a broader audience. A crucial part in this must be played by LATW, especially if it can rekindle the traditional link between CND and the Labour Left whilst remaining part of the STWC. This will be needed all the more as Bush's term continues and we are faced with campaigning against NMD (over which CND has taken the lead, organising regional and student conferences) and other challenges.

New York labor against the war

The following anti-war statement is being circulated by trade unionists in New York City. In the first three weeks of circulation it received endorsement by two union branches, twelve union branch officers, and 262 other trade unionists, all in the New York area, and a further 6 union presidents in the US.

September 11 has brought indescribable suffering to New York City's working people. We have lost friends, family members and coworkers of all colors, nationalities and religions – a thousand of them union members. An estimated one hundred thousand New Yorkers will lose their jobs.

We condemn this crime against humanity and mourn those who perished. We are proud of the rescuers and the outpouring of labor support for victims' families. We want justice for the dead and safety for the living.

And we believe that George Bush's war is not the answer.

No one should suffer what we experienced on September 11. Yet war will inevitably harm countless innocent civilians, strengthen American alliances with brutal dictatorships and deepen global poverty – just as the United States and its allies have already inflicted widespread suffering on innocent people in such places as Iraq, Sudan, Israel and the Occupied Territories, the former Yugoslavia and Latin America.

War will also take a heavy toll on us. For Americans in uniform – the overwhelming number of whom are workers and people of color – it will be another Vietnam. It will generate further terror in this country against Arabs, Muslims, South Asians, people of color and immigrants, and erode our civil liberties.

It will redirect billions to the military and corporate executives, while draining such essential domestic programs as education, health care and the social security trust. In New York City and elsewhere, it will be a pretext for imposing 'austerity' on labor and poor people under the guise of 'national unity.'

War will play into the hands of religious fanatics – from Osama bin Laden to Jerry Falwell - and provoke further terrorism in major urban centers like New York.

Therefore, the undersigned New York City metro-area trade unionists believe a just and effective response to September 11 demands:

- No War. It is wrong to punish any nation or people for the crimes of individuals—peace requires global social and economic justice.
- Justice, not vengeance. An independent international tribunal to impartially investigate, apprehend and try those responsible for the September 11 attack.
- Opposition to racism – defense of civil liberties. Stop terror, racial profiling and legal restrictions against people of color and immigrants, and defend democratic rights.
- Aid for the needy, not the greedy. Government aid for the victims' families and displaced workers – not the wealthy. Rebuild New York City with union labor, union pay, and with special concern for new threats to worker health and safety.
- No labor 'austerity.' The cost of September 11 must not be borne by working and poor New Yorkers. No surrender of workers' living standards, programs or other rights.

Contact LaborAgainstWar@yahoo.com to add yourself to the list, giving your name, union and position, city and e-mail address. Outside the US you should give your country and the full name of your union.

US provoked Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

This interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, US President Carter's national security advisor, first appeared in Le Nouvel Observateur, January 15, 1998, p.76. It was absent from the US edition. The translation is by Bill Blum.

Question: The former director of the CIA, Robert Gates, stated in his memoirs ['From the Shadows'], that American intelligence services began to aid the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan 6 months before the Soviet intervention. In this period you were the national security adviser to President Carter. You therefore played a role in this affair. Is that correct?

Brzezinski: Yes. According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the Mujahadeen began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, 24 Dec 1979. But the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely otherwise. Indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.

Q: Despite this risk, you were an advocate of this covert action. But perhaps you yourself desired this Soviet entry into war and looked to provoke it?

B: It isn't quite that. We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.

Q: When the Soviets justified their intervention by asserting that they intended to fight against a secret involvement of the United States in Afghanistan, people didn't believe them. However, there was a basis of truth. You don't regret anything today?

B: Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war. Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war unsupported by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralisation and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.

Q: And neither do you regret having supported the Islamic fundamentalism, having given arms and advice to future terrorists?

B: What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?

Q: Some stirred-up Muslims? But it has been said and repeated: Islamic fundamentalism represents a world menace today.

B: Nonsense! It is said that the West had a global policy in regard to Islam. That is stupid. There isn't a global Islam. Look at Islam in a rational manner and without demagoguery or emotion. It is the leading religion of the world with 1.5 billion followers. But what is there in common among Saudi Arabian fundamentalism, moderate Morocco, Pakistan militarism, Egyptian pro-Western or Central Asian secularism? Nothing more than what unites the Christian countries.

Israel: a thorn in the side of the 'coalition against terrorism'

by Simon Deville

The US and UK have found building a coalition of client regimes ready and willing to support their war against Afghanistan fraught with difficulties throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Whilst most Arab leaders have been unwilling to condemn the war publicly as President Assad of Syria did, the vast majority of the population of the whole region clearly opposes the war. Middle East leaders have on the whole grudgingly given their support, knowing that this will anger their own populations. Even the propaganda of Blair and Bush acknowledges this when they heap praise upon the 'brave stand' made by the Pakistani military dictatorship despite the 'difficulties' they face.

One major obstacle to convincing anyone in the Middle East that the US and UK

are committed to fighting terrorism is the uncritical support to Israeli state terrorism that the US and to a lesser extent the UK has shown in the past half century. The September 11 attacks on the US offered Ariel Sharon an ideal opportunity to escalate his war against the Palestinian people, launching a ferocious attack on Bethlehem, Ramallah, Tulkerem, Qalqilya and Nablus. The Israeli assassinations of Palestinians have posed further problems for the US/UK since it is difficult to criticise illegal, extra-judicial killings having just called for Bin Laden to be delivered 'dead or alive' and without even the pretence of a trial.

At a time when the US and UK have been trying to convince people that their war is against terrorism, not against Muslims or Arabs, Sharon has placed Israel squarely off-message. As a consequence, Blair and Bush have been forced, publicly at least, to distance themselves from him. Both have discovered that they now support the creation of a Palestinian state, albeit on condition that Israel's 'security' is recognised as sacrosanct.

The problem with such statements, even if they were more than just empty promises, is that they are all based on the starting point that an apartheid state is legitimate. From the US and UK governments' public point of view, the solution is to be found within the Oslo agreement and the subsequent 'peace process'. The difficulty in their eyes is that Ariel Sharon has torn up the agreement and put the drive towards peace back.

Whilst it is undoubtedly true that Sharon has disregarded the few commitments that were made under Oslo, this line of argument is flawed because it does not recognise that the Al-Asqua Intifada was directed as much against the Palestinian Authority and the peace process itself as it was against the Israeli Government. The Intifada was sparked off when Sharon, backed up by 5,000 troops supplied by the then Labour Government visited the Al-Asqua mosque a year ago. This may have been the spark, but the underlying cause lies both in the occupation and in the way

that the peace process had made life even more intolerable for Palestinians.

Despite the settlements within the West Bank and Gaza being illegal under international law, the population of illegal settlers doubled under the peace process, with new settlements being established alongside a network of roads connecting them to one another and to the Israeli state (though it is difficult to talk about what is or isn't part of the Israeli state since Israel is the only country on earth that refuses to define its borders). Whilst the UN continues to define the West Bank and Gaza as illegally occupied territories, under the peace process they became 'disputed territories' which were divided up into areas A, B and C. Areas A were supposedly autonomous Palestinian areas, B under joint control and C controlled by Israeli security forces.

The Palestinian negotiating team agreed to Israeli control of water, the choice agricultural land and pretty much anything else they demanded. Once the Israelis had imposed one compromise upon the Palestinian leadership they would then come back and demand further concessions from what they had already agreed (to compromise the compromise as it has been referred to).

Between 1967 and 1987 Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza had relative freedom of movement within the 1967 occupied territories and within Israel 'proper', under a 'General Exit Permit'. This was revoked, ostensibly as a temporary measure, in 1991 during the Gulf War, at the same time as curfews were imposed. By the beginning of the peace process the closure of the West Bank and Gaza became a frequently used tool in the repression of Palestinians.

Closure has had a crucial impact upon the economy within the occupied territories in terms of both trade and employment. Since Israel controls the borders with Syria and Egypt, trade with both is very limited and accounts for only a very small portion of the economy. The economy within the occupied territories depends largely upon Palestinians travelling into Israel to work,

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Affiliation/sponsorship of LATW is £10 for organisations, £5 for individuals

with some local farming and crafts etc, though this too depends upon being able to travel to Israel and across the occupied territories to sell produce.

As the 'peace process' has progressed, autonomous Palestinian areas became increasingly surrounded by Israeli security, allowing the Israeli state to shut down Palestinian towns and villages at will. This has effectively given Israel the power to close large sections of the Palestinian economy as a collective punishment whenever it sees fit – creating a massive drop in GDP and a corresponding rise in unemployment. The more the occupied territories have been divided up into isolated bantustans, the more dramatic the effect has been when Israel has imposed a closure.

Sharon has temporarily bowed to international pressure and withdrawn the tanks from some 'Palestinian' towns, however it is unlikely that the intention was ever to have a permanent military presence of such a size in these areas in the first place. The main purpose of the recent military aggression is yet another collective punishment, this time the excuse was the assassination of far right Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

The purpose of these incursions is the same as the closures and indeed of Sharon's visit to the Al-Asqua Mosque: to assert the Israeli 'right' to do whatever it wants anywhere within Israel and the occupied territories.

Returning to Bush's and Blair's commitment to work towards a settlement in the Middle East then, it is clear that there is next to no prospect of that in the short term, certainly not within the framework set either by the US and UK or by Israel. Sharon is known historically not just for his personal role in the massacre of civilians at Sabra and Chatila refugee camps but also for his unstinting support for the illegal settlements in the occupied territories. Most recently he has talked of bringing a million more Jews into Israel (for Sharon the occupied territories are part of Israel), though it is not clear exactly where he is going to find a million Jews willing to migrate. Clearly this will only serve to exacerbate the situation.

For Bush and Blair however the solution lies in getting the peace process back on track. If one gives them the benefit of the doubt that this isn't just lip service to assist their war propaganda, and one also leaves aside the fact that the Israeli government has no interest in their proposals, a future settlement on their terms still looks bleak.

Arafat has already signed agreements that amount to negating UN resolutions that

Israel withdraw from the 1967 occupied territories, that handed over vast tracts of the best agricultural land and water, that allows Israel to control security, that overturn UN resolutions and conventions on the right of refugees to return, and on the illegal settlements. In return for Arafat signing away the Palestinian people's rights, the Palestinian Authority will be left in charge of a number of isolated Bantustans that Israel can shut down at will, so long as they are prepared to police the Palestinian population on behalf of Israel and recognise the 'right' of Israel to maintain an apartheid state unopposed.

The current Intifada is not orchestrated by Arafat as the Israelis claim, nor is it likely that the Palestinian Authority has the power to end it. Palestinian militants involved in the rebellion obviously do involve the rank and file of Arafat's Fatah organisation alongside Hamas and many other organisations. Many of the Palestinian Authority leaders are PLO activists who were exiled in Tunisia, whereas the leadership of the Intifada on the ground are more 'indigenous' and are often activists who were involved in the first Intifada. The more Arafat tries to repress these layers, the more precarious his position within Palestinian society as a whole will be. As the rebellion has continued, he has been forced to accept and try to incorporate these militants.

Between Arafat and the religious mili-

tants of Hamas and Islamic Jihad there is little prospect of taking the struggle in any progressive direction. There are a number of key activists and intellectuals who are discussing strategies that recognise the inter-dependence of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews and that their futures lie together. However a unity can only be forged on a struggle for equality, a common struggle cannot be based upon rights for Palestinians on condition that they accept the privileged position of Israeli Jews. The Israeli 'peace movement' collapsed precisely because there was a common view that the Palestinians had rejected Barak's 'generous peace offer' of subervient bantustans. A new peace movement must be forged that appeals to Israeli Jews to reject Zionism and that appeals to world opinion in the struggle for basic democratic rights.

The current impasse has dramatically set back the left in Palestine and in Israel, but it may force those small forces that are looking for a genuinely progressive solution to develop a much sharper strategy around which a new movement can be built. It is absolutely clear however, that any solution must be based on a rejection of the 'generous offer' already made.

WA

Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Annual General Meeting

The Network of SCGs AGM is on Saturday 1st December at the Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Square, Leeds. There will be keynote speakers on the war and on the campaigns against privatisation in education, council housing and local government. Resolutions can be submitted by local SCGs or by individual Network supporters; each resolution must be in the name of at least three people. The deadline for resolutions is 10 November.

It is not a delegate conference and all individual Network supporters are welcome to attend as well as representatives from local SCGs. Registration, which includes subscription fees for 2002, is £15 waged, £10 low waged and £2 unwaged. If you register in advance you will be sent the resolutions and the Network statement of aims; the deadline for amendments is 24 November.

All Network supporters are welcome and you can register on the day, so come along and help decide the Network's priorities for the next year.

There will be a cafeteria and creche on site; creche places must be booked by 24 November. Contact the Network at 7 Malam Gardens London E14 0TR, telephone 0207 515 3868 or email c.shawcroft@cs.com

Football riots reflect Iran's 'society' problem

by Nick Davies

'It's not a football problem, it's a society problem' is the stock response of TV football pundits to any outbreak of football related violence. It seems that in Iran also, football violence is a 'society problem'. For several years, the successes, and failures, of the national team have been an opportunity for opponents of the Islamic Republic to take to the streets. There was violence following the win over Iraq in a World Cup qualifier. When Iran subsequently lost 3-1 to Bahrain, there was widespread rioting in the belief that the Government had fixed the result, hoping to avoid the unrest that usually greets a victory. When Iran beat the United Arab Emirates to qualify for play-off against Ireland there was more rioting, in Tehran and in Shiraz, with demonstrators chanting anti-regime slogans, prompting the conservative media, anxious not to alienate itself from a national sporting success, to accuse 'extremists' of 'exploiting the joy of the people'. The police weighed in, assisted by religious vigilantes, using tear gas and making hundreds of arrests. So, with rioting after a win, rioting after a defeat, and, no doubt, rioting after a draw as well, it doesn't need a rocket scientist to work out that the rioters have an agenda wider than whether Iran should have played a sweeper or stuck with a flat back four.

The football riots are short, intense escapes of tension, hinting at a deeper and wider conflict to come. Iran is split down the middle between reformers and conservatives. The conservatives have the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini who heads the Revolutionary Council, the Guardian Council that oversees legislation, and a number of key ministries. The reformers have their own ministries, the parliament and the Presidency. First elected in 1997, Mohammed Khatemi was re-elected in June this year by a landslide. The war between these two factions is being fought on several fronts: newspapers have been closed down by one conservative-dominated ministry, having been tolerated,

or even encouraged, by one dominated by reformers, and over the past two years or so there have been a number of high-profile political trials, (most notably of Iranian Jews alleged to have been spying for Israel), orchestrated by the hard-liners as a show of their strength and to please their supporters. Cultural life is also a struggle: Iranian filmmakers have been scooping up awards, but getting up the noses of the hardliners. The director Tahmineh Milani was arrested in August and has been charged with 'supporting factions who wage war against God'. However, her most recent film, *The Hidden Half*, was cleared for release by the Ministry of Culture, and no less than President Khatemi spoke out in her support of her application for bail.

September 11 gave the situation a new twist. Partly because of theological and political differences with the Taliban, even the hardliners condemned the attacks, and within hours there was an apparently spontaneous women's peace vigil in Tehran. Jack Straw, who has to be seen as a de facto US envoy, appeared by his September visit to Tehran to have secured Iranian neutrality in the so-called 'War against Terrorism'. While the Iranian government condemns the bombing of Afghanistan and 'Death to America' is still chanted at Friday prayers, Iran is supporting the Northern Alliance and has told the US government that if any American military personnel find themselves marooned in Iran they will be given medical treatment and assisted back home. Surely the irony to end all ironies is the attempt by the US government to slow down the legal action brought against Iran by the embassy staff held as hostages in 1979-1980!

As we argued in *Workers Action* No.4 ('Moderates Chase US Investment'), the project of Khatemi and his supporters is to preserve the fundamentals of the Islamic Republic by way of cautious, measured reform, allowing a degree of political and cultural freedom, and integrating Iran more fully into the imperialist order. Foreign investment is needed to revitalise the oil and gas sector, and to diversify the

economy. The British, French and US oil companies have their eyes on the huge oil reserves known to lie beneath the Caspian Sea. However, like all politicians trying cautiously to reform an authoritarian state, Khatemi is finding that he is too liberal for the hardliners and too timid for those who want real change. Whichever side wins, those such as Khatemi invariably become casualties. Which faction will prevail is impossible to say, but it is difficult to see the hardliners abandoning the essentials, as they see them, of the Islamic Republic, without a bloody struggle. Moreover, in the context of the post-Cold War New World Order, those impatient of Khatemi, particularly young people, are far more likely to be influenced by liberal democracy and the free market than by socialism. Nevertheless, the battles for artistic freedom, freedom of speech and the inch-at-a-time struggle by women against the *hijab* and *chador* are of tremendous importance, not only in themselves, but because it is in the space created by such struggles that the working class, in the forefront of opposition to the Shah but shattered by clerical reaction, can continue its gradual regroupment, finding its voice and rediscovering its strength.

WA

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Imperialist war and 'revolutionary defeatism'

In the first of two articles, Richard Price examines the track record of Lenin's famous slogan

IN MUCH Marxist thinking, war has traditionally been understood as the 'locomotive of history'. Since the time of Marx and Engels, revolutionaries have seen war, for better or worse, as the accelerator of many of the latent contradictions within capitalism. At the same time, however, it has also been one of the chief sources of disarray and dispute among those espousing the cause of international socialism.

The twentieth century has seen the publication of vast mountains of literature on the subject of war. The position occupied by serious works of Marxist theory within this output, particularly in the second half of the century, is a modest one. The tendency has been either to repeat formulae learnt by rote and apply them mechanically to new and often very different circumstances, or to hastily improvise new theories in order to justify semi-pacifist 'third camp' positions.

The task of revolutionaries today in relation to war cannot be merely to unearth and dust off old texts – even though, with the present low theoretical level of the left, this alone would represent something. They must develop Marxist theory in line with the challenges of today's world. That being said, however, they cannot turn over a fresh page as if nothing went before.

Many avowed Leninists have assumed that what became known as 'revolutionary defeatism' was a constant feature of Lenin's politics. As Joubert notes, Lenin used the term much less than many of his would-be followers believe.¹ It has nonetheless occupied a central position in debates among Marxists down to today, and is widely believed by many on the left to be the last word in wartime revolutionary strategy.

Kissin correctly points out, however, that: 'As a political slogan in the First World War, revolutionary defeatism was strictly limited in time and space. It was a purely Russian phenomenon, confined to Lenin and the bulk of the Bolshevik leadership, and was official party policy for only two and a half years, between September 1914 and March 1917.'² Even during this period the slogan seems to have

played little role on the ground. According to a scholarly study of the St Petersburg working class: 'A textual analysis of 47 leaflets and appeals published illegally by Bolshevik militants between January 1915 and 22 February 1917 is most illuminating. Not a single leaflet mentioned the essential Leninist slogan of the defeat of Russia being the lesser evil . . .'³ The memoirs of Piatnitsky and Shlyapnikov – two very different old Bolsheviks – have very little to say on the subject, while Zinoviev's semi-official *History of the Bolshevik Party* only deals with defeatism in relation to the Russo-Japanese war. Shlyapnikov mentions in passing that 'the question of "defeatism" did cause perplexity. Comrades did not want to link their tactics to the army's strategic situation . . .'. Piatnitsky claims to have arrived independently at the conclusion that 'the defeat of Tsarist Russia would be of far greater use to the Russian revolution than if it were victorious', without referring to any disagreements among the Bolsheviks.⁴

Lenin's 'defeatism' first appears during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Not only Russian revolutionaries but even sections of bourgeois liberal opinion were defeatist towards Russia. Lenin openly welcomed a Japanese victory. He attributed to the Japanese bourgeoisie a 'progressive' and even 'revolutionary' role, and believed that a Japanese victory had 'ensured her independent national development'.⁵ He may also have calculated that whereas the Russian workers' movement was well placed to take advantage of a Tsarist defeat, there was little prospect of the Japanese workers doing the same in the event of their ruling class being defeated. His former mentor, Plekhanov, also saw defeat as the ally of revolution. In April 1904 Plekhanov foresaw that: 'If the Sevastopol defeat pulled up by the root the system of Nicholas I, then the Port Arthur crash promises to shatter to its foundations the regime of Nicholas II.'⁶ At the Amsterdam Congress of the Second International in August that year, he famously shook hands with the Japanese delegate Katayama Sen to enthusiastic applause,

and declared that 'by breaking one leg of the colossus, Japan is avenging the oppressed'. (Ten years later, Plekhanov, now on the extreme right of Russian social democracy, told Angelica Balabanoff 'if I were not old and sick I would join the army. To bayonet your German comrades would give me great pleasure.'⁸) Other Mensheviks, who supported neither side, accused the Bolsheviks of 'Japanophilia'. Martov, in his *History of Russian Social-Democracy*, wrote:

'As soon as typically "defeatist" moods developed in liberal society and revolutionary circles following on the setbacks of the Russian army, and the hope grew that Tsarism would meet a subsequent military disaster almost without fresh efforts on the part of the people; as soon as a certain "Japanophilia" appeared in connection with this together with an idealisation of the role that Japanese imperialism would play in this war, *Iskra* [i.e., the Mensheviks who controlled the paper at this time] came out against "defeatism" and upheld the interest of the people and the revolution to see that the war would not end with the infliction of heavy sacrifices upon Russia and that freedom would not be brought to the Russian people on Japanese bayonets.'⁹

At any rate, Lenin's support for Japan, while compatible with the line taken by Marx and Engels in numerous conflicts during their lifetime, was at odds with the line he developed in relation to inter-imperialist war a decade later, since Japan was arguably already an emerging imperialist power itself.¹⁰ Japanese designs on Korea and China were certainly imperialist, and the defeat of Russia greatly assisted the development of Japanese militarism.

After the February Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks continued to sharply attack those socialist 'defencists' who supported the war and fought for Russia to remain in the field, allied to Britain and France. But the Bolsheviks also had to take into account both the 'honest defencism' of the soldiers, who sincerely wanted to defend the gains of the revolution, and the counter-revolu-

tionary 'defeatism' of growing sections of the bourgeoisie and the General Staff, who would rather have handed revolutionary Petrograd over to the German army than contemplate a proletarian seizure of power. John Reed recorded that:

'A large section of the propertied classes preferred the Germans to the Revolution – even to the Provisional Government – and didn't hesitate to say so. In the Russian household where I lived, the subject of conversation at the dinner table was almost invariably the coming of the Germans, bringing "law and order" . . . One evening I spent at the house of a Moscow merchant; during tea we asked the eleven people at the table whether they preferred "Wilhelm or the Bolsheviks". The vote was ten to one for Wilhelm.'¹¹

Revolutionary defeatism played no role in Bolshevik agitation after February, and instead slogans such as 'Peace, Bread and Land!' and 'All Power to the Soviets!' occupied the front rank.¹²

In one of the most detailed studies of Lenin's wartime politics¹³, Roman Rosdolsky paid tribute to the clarity of the analysis contained in Trotsky's September 1914 pamphlet *The War and the International*.¹⁴ Rosdolsky, however, gives the impression that Trotsky's differences with Lenin exclusively concerned relations with the Kautskyite 'centre' of international social democracy.¹⁵ But Trotsky also had differences over the slogan of revolutionary defeatism. Although he clearly supported the general principle of the working class in every belligerent country waging the class struggle without allowing the military fortunes of its own ruling class to halt it at any stage, Trotsky never accepted the 'defeatist' part of the equation. Writing in *Nashe Slovo*, the Russian language daily he edited in Paris with Martov, Trotsky described Lenin's formulation as 'an un-called-for and absolutely unjustifiable concession to the political methodology of social patriotism',¹⁶ as 'defencism turned inside out' and as 'social patriotism standing on its head'.¹⁷

Lenin, to whom polemical exaggerations were not unknown, described Trotsky as a 'helpless satellite of the social chauvinists'.¹⁸ 'Wartime revolutionary action against one's own government,' he insisted, 'means not only desiring its defeat, but really facilitating such a defeat.'¹⁹ But what did this 'really facilitating' consist of? Here, Lenin is harder to pin down. It *didn't* consist of inciting mutiny, "blowing up bridges", organising unsuccessful strikes in the war industries, and in general helping the government defeat the revolutionaries.²⁰ Lenin also believed that: 'It would

be mistaken to call for individual acts of resistance, to shoot officers, etc.'²¹ (except presumably in a revolutionary situation). In a number of writings, Lenin applauded the development of fraternisation at the front; advocated the formation of illegal cells in the army; and called for the carrying out of systematic anti-war propaganda wherever possible. But these demands weren't unique to Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and what this *added* in practical terms to Trotsky's slogan of 'revolutionary struggle against the war' isn't clear. It's not hard to arrive at the conclusion that the sharp distinction Lenin drew between his 'defeatist' position and the positions of other left internationalists was polemical rather than practical.

Lenin accused Trotsky of willfully misunderstanding the defeatist slogan: 'It seems to him that to desire Russia's defeat means desiring the victory of Germany.'²² But that was precisely the pedagogical problem the slogan carried! Outside of the unlikely event of all the imperialist governments being simultaneously overthrown, defeat for one's 'own' country necessarily meant the victory of another imperialist power, with the prospect of a foreign army of occupation – hardly an attractive prospect to war weary workers and peasants. For Trotsky, internationalism could not consist of the Russian working class working for the defeat of Russia at the hands of Germany, while the German workers worked for the defeat of Germany at the hands of Russia. The defeatist part of the equation, in his view, added nothing positive to the revolutionary part.

However Lenin might thunder against his opponents, his writ did not run very far within the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky notes: 'Not one of the Russian organisations or groups of the party took the openly defeatist position which Lenin came out for abroad.'²³ Bolshevik activists found that Lenin's strategic conception did not translate readily into agitation. At the trial of the Duma deputies in February 1915, Kamenev openly distanced himself from Lenin's position, while another defendant declared that Lenin's theses were at odds with the joint declaration of the Bolshevik and Menshevik deputies of July 27, 1914, which had promised 'to defend the cultural wealth of the people against all attacks wheresoever originating'.²⁴

Nor was opposition among the Bolsheviks restricted to waverers and opportunists. The Baugy group – Bukharin, Krylenko and Rozmirovich – who generally occupied leftist positions, also opposed the defeatist slogan, and included in its resolution on party tasks to the Bern Conference of Bolsheviks Abroad, held in

early 1915, the following:

' . . . our group categorically rejects advancing for Russia the so-called defeat of Russia slogan, particularly in the way it was explained in [*Sotsial-Demokrat*] No.38 . . . The editorial in issue No.38 says that every revolutionary ought to *wish for* this defeat. Our group believes that this way of posing the question lacks any practical meaning, and introduces quite an undesirable confusion . . . Even more unsatisfactory, in our opinion, is the way this question is posed in the third and final section of the article. It argues that defeat is desirable because it may lead to a revolutionary uprising. It is absolutely impossible to carry out this line of argument in life, and we must therefore reject *à limite* [completely] this kind of agitation for defeat.'²⁵

Trotsky, too, doubted that revolution would necessarily spring from defeat. While not at all averse to taking advantage of revolutionary opportunities flowing from a defeat, he believed that:

' . . . war is too contradictory, too double-edged a factor of historical development for a revolutionary party which feels firm class ground beneath its feet and is sure of its future, to see in the road of defeat the road of political success. Defeat disorganises and demoralises the ruling reaction, but at the same time war disorganises the whole of social life, and above all the working class.

'War is, furthermore, not an "auxiliary" factor over which the revolutionary class can exert control: it cannot be eliminated at will after it has given the revolutionary impetus expected of it, like some historical "Moor" who "has done his work".'

'Finally, a revolution that grows out of a defeat inherits an economy disordered to the utmost by war, exhausted state finances, and extremely strained international relations.

'And if adventurist speculation on war remained quite foreign to Russian Social-Democrats even in the darkest years of the unlimited triumph of counter-revolution, this was because, while war may give an impetus to revolution, it may at the same time create a situation such as will make extremely difficult the social and political utilisation of a victorious revolution.'²⁶

Prophetic words indeed!

It is surely significant that the Draft Resolution and the Draft Manifesto of the Zimmerwald Left²⁷ submitted by Lenin and Radek to the Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915, while arguing in general

terms for socialist revolution to end the war, contains nothing explicit on the issue of defeatism.

Rosdolsky refers to Rosa Luxemburg's policy as one of 'qualified revolutionary defeatism'²⁸. This looks puzzling at first sight. Surely she was a revolutionary internationalist with only minor differences with Lenin and Trotsky? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that, whereas the Stalinists always sought to magnify Lenin's differences with Luxemburg, and to an even greater degree his differences with Trotsky, writers from the Trotskyist tradition have tended to bend the stick in the opposite direction. Luxemburg disagreed with the defeatist slogan. 'For the European proletariat as a class,' she wrote, 'victory or defeat of either of the two war groups would be equally disastrous.'²⁹ (Lenin had previously stigmatised the 'neither victory nor defeat' slogan as 'justifying the chauvinism of all the imperialist nations'.)³⁰ 'Qualified revolutionary defeatism' almost certainly refers to the passage in *The Junius Pamphlet* (1915) where Luxemburg attempts to sketch a national programme similar to those advanced by Marx and Engels in the mid-nineteenth century, and which had been proposed as recently as 1892 by Engels in relation to the prospect of war between Germany and Russia:

'In view of all these considerations, what shall be the practical attitude of the social democracy in the present war? Shall it declare: since this is an imperialist war, since we do not enjoy in our country any socialist self-determination its existence or non-existence is of no consequence to us, and we will surrender it to the enemy? Passive fatalism can never be the role of a revolutionary party like the social democracy. It must neither place itself at the disposal of the existing class state, under the command of the ruling classes, nor can it stand silently by to wait until the storm is past. It must adopt a policy of active class politics, a policy that will whip the ruling classes forward in every great social crisis and that will drive the crisis itself far beyond its original extent. That is the role that the social democracy must play as the leader of the fighting proletariat. Instead of covering this imperialist war with a lying mantle of national self-defence, the social democracy should have demanded the right of national self-determination seriously, should have used it as a lever against the imperialist war.

'The most elementary demand of national defence is that the nation takes its defence into its own hands. The first

step in this direction is the militia; not only the immediate armament of the entire adult male populace, but above all, popular decision in all questions of peace and war. It must demand, furthermore, the immediate removal of every form of political oppression, since the greatest political freedom is the best basis for national defence. To proclaim these fundamental measures of national defence, to demand their realisation, that was the first duty of the social democracy.

'... It was their duty to speak loudly and clearly, to proclaim to the people of Germany that in this war victory and defeat would be equally fatal, to oppose the gagging of the fatherland by a state of siege, to demand that the people alone decide on war and peace, to demand a permanent session of parliament for the period of the war, to assume a watchful control over the government by parliament, and over parliament by the people, to demand the immediate removal of all political inequalities, since only a free people can adequately govern its country, and finally, to oppose to the imperialist war, based as it was upon the most reactionary forces in Europe, the programme of Marx, of Engels, and Lassalle.'³¹

This must be placed within the context of Luxemburg's penetrating analysis of the imperialist causes of the war, her clear opposition to the voting of war credits, her support for the continuation of the class struggle in wartime by all available means, and her statement that: 'In the present imperialist milieu there can be no wars of national self-defence.'³² It represents an attempt by Luxemburg to develop what would later become known as a 'transitional' approach towards the problems faced by millions of workers caught up in the imperialist slaughter. Nevertheless, the distinction she draws between national self-defence and national self-determination was – in the context of the First World War – at best ambiguous and open to misinterpretation.

The victory of the October Revolution appeared to have consigned the wartime disputes between Lenin and Trotsky over revolutionary defeatism to the archive:

'During the six years which followed the Russian Revolution, the term "defeatism" was hardly ever used in any of the major documents of Lenin or of the Communist International... However, the term "revolutionary defeatism" reappears. It is in the writings of Zinoviev in the course of the struggle of the "troika", Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, against Trotsky and "Trotskyism"

and for the so-called "Bolshevisation" of the Communist parties... Thereafter, "revolutionary defeatism" was systematically advanced as a principle of "Leninism" as against "Trotskyism".'³³

In word as well as deed, however, Stalinism rapidly threw its Leninist baggage overboard. During the rightist turn of 1924-7, the 'defence of the Soviet Union' was to be guaranteed by dubious blocs with such friends of the Soviet Union as the Anglo-Russian Committee. The 'Third Period' from 1928-33 combined ultra-left posturing with a turn to peace conferences. The Popular Front turn from 1934-39 saw Stalinism finally sign up to the national defence of imperialist powers, while the Nazi-Soviet pact saw pseudo-Leninist propaganda against imperialist war revived as a cover for the unsavoury alliance with Hitler. The invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 heralded a descent into fervent social patriotism.

Trotsky and his comrades in the International Left Opposition, as the legitimate heirs to the Leninist tradition, revisited the problems of revolutionary policy in wartime several times. Their most detailed programmatic document, *War and the Fourth International* from 1934, struck an orthodox Leninist note in many respects, particularly where it called for the working class in an imperialist country allied to the Soviet Union to 'retain fully and completely its irreconcilable hostility to the imperialist government of its own country'³⁴. But it is surely significant that in an earlier draft of the document, Trotsky had written: 'The defeat of one's own national army can be an aim only in a single case, that is when we have a capitalist army fighting against a workers' state or marching against a developing revolution. But in the case of a war between two capitalist powers, the proletariat of neither can set itself the defeat of its own national army as a task.'³⁵ When German and Italian comrades criticised this formulation, Trotsky replied: 'I cannot accept the amendment on defeatism a) because it says we must desire the defeat, without saying whether we must do anything and, if so, precisely what in order to bring it about.'³⁶ This suggests Trotsky retained the same reservations about the defeatist slogan as he had twenty years before.

While testifying to the Dewey Commission in 1937, Trotsky was questioned about his attitude to revolutionary policy in the event of a war between the Soviet Union and France on the one hand and Germany on the other. 'In France', he replied, 'I would remain in opposition to the government and would develop systematically

this opposition. In Germany I would do anything I could to sabotage the war machinery ... In Germany and in Japan, I would apply military methods ... to fight, oppose, and injure ... the military machinery'³⁷. This distinction Trotsky drew between the tactics and tasks in democratic imperialist countries compared to fascist countries was criticised by Georges Vereeken and by the followers of Hugo Oehler, who saw it as a renunciation of 'defeatism'.

The problem Trotsky wrestled with over the next three years was how to avoid making principled concessions to the democratic imperialist camp, while not being indifferent to the space democratic rights gave to the possibilities for revolutionary agitation. In March 1939, Trotsky again sides with orthodoxy in making a sharp criticism of the Palestinian section of the Fourth International, which questioned whether 'defeatism' was appropriate in democratic countries fighting fascist ones. 'All the fundamental rules of proletarian "defeatist" policy in relation to imperialist war retain their full force today', he argued. 'The idea of defeatism signifies in reality the following: conducting an irreconcilable revolutionary struggle against one's own bourgeoisie as the main enemy, without being deterred by the fact that this struggle may result in the defeat of one's own government; *given a revolutionary movement* the defeat of one's own government is a *lesser evil*. Lenin did not say, nor did he wish to say, anything else.'³⁸ You sense Trotsky is somewhat bending the stick to make the point. Lenin in several places *doesn't* make the existence of a revolutionary movement among the masses a precondition for defeatism.

To summarise: Trotsky certainly retained some of his reservations about the defeatist slogan from the First World War. The position of the Soviet Union in the conflict and the 'anti-fascist' illusions of workers in the Allied camp added an entirely new dimension. On top of this, to a far greater degree than the First World War, the Second introduced the mass militarisation of entire populations, and the war raged over most of continental Europe. The manifesto of the May 1940 Emergency Conference of the Fourth International noticeably does not use defeatist slogans. It declared: 'All the great questions will be decided in the next epoch arms in hand.'³⁹ Therefore, revolutionaries could not stand apart from the millions who were already, or would be shortly, in uniform. The task was not to oppose conscription but to demand that workers learn the military arts under the control of the trade unions, without for a moment renouncing the

class struggle, or seeking to hold it back.

The ignominious fall of France – a debacle in which much of its ruling class and generals were 'defeatists' – served to concretise these thoughts into what became known as the Proletarian (or American) Military Policy, adopted by the Socialist Workers Party in the United States in September 1940, one month after the assassination of Trotsky, and shortly afterwards by the Workers International League in Britain. Sam Levy, a participant in the WIL, summarises the policy as follows:

'Basically the PMP was the application of the transitional programme to a period of universal war and militarism as the concept applied to the struggle for the hearts and minds, as well as the actions, of the millions of people who were drafted, or were going to be drafted, into the military machine. It centred around the demand for compulsory military training for the working class under the supervision of elected officers at special training schools funded by the state but under the control of labour movement institutions ... Using the collapse of French imperialism as a propaganda weapon to show the rottenness of imperialism, it was a weapon for raising the class struggle in and through the armed forces ... The struggle for the breakdown of capitalist control of the armed forces is, therefore, the essence of the struggle for power in wartime. Raising democratic and revolutionary demands side by side with a fundamental exposure of the nature of the war made the Proletarian Military Policy a major part of the transitional programme.'⁴⁰

The PMP represented an attempt to intersect the 'anti-fascist' consciousness of the masses through raising demands that raised the issue of power within the armed forces. Those, like the RSL in Britain, who clung to 'pure' defeatist propaganda in such circumstances were doomed to sectarian irrelevance. To concentrate in Britain in the summer of 1940 on propaganda which argued that the main enemy was at home ran the risk not only of appearing indifferent to the victory of fascism, but to have lost one's political bearings. Rosdolsky, following Deutscher, is wrong to describe the thoughts sketched in a handful of articles drafted just before Trotsky's death as turning towards 'qualified revolutionary defencism'⁴¹, not least because nowhere did he suggest that workers renounce their struggle against their own ruling class in the Allied camp. But that they did represent a turn is undeniable, and the efforts of some of Trotsky's would-be orthodox followers to prove otherwise do not stand

up.⁴² Rosdolsky is also wrong to claim that the policy of revolutionary defeatism was 'blindly pursued by his followers throughout the war'⁴³. There was a range of views within the Fourth International, not only on the Proletarian Military Policy, but also on a number of other questions, including the attitude to take towards the resistance movements. The main error of the Trotskyists, particularly after 1943, lay not so much in mindlessly repeating defeatist formulae, but in their tendency to substitute maximalist revolutionary propaganda for a transitional approach to the close of the war.

A detailed discussion of the controversy surrounding the Proletarian Military Policy lies outside the scope of this article. Suffice it to say, that the PMP's opponents, both contemporary and latter-day, have produced no positive action programme to counterpose to it – only a sterile and sectarian repetition of propagandist 'principles' derived from the very different conditions of the First World War, and devoid of any practical content. Whatever the tactical problems of implementing it, the PMP offered a potential way out of the isolation that the revolutionaries found themselves in, without giving principled ground to either pacifism or defencism. Trotsky's article 'Bonapartism, Fascism and War', which lay unfinished at the time of his death, captures the direction of his thought:

'The present war, as we have stated on more than one occasion, is a continuation of the last war. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. As a general rule, a continuation signifies a development, a deepening, a sharpening. Our policy, the policy of the revolutionary proletariat towards the second imperialist world war, is a continuation of the policy elaborated during the last imperialist war, primarily under Lenin's leadership. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. In this case, too, a continuation signifies a development, a deepening and a sharpening.

'... In 1915 Lenin referred in his writings to revolutionary wars which the victorious proletariat would have to wage. But it was a question of an indefinite historical perspective and not of tomorrow's task. The attention of the revolutionary wing was centred on the question of the defence of the capitalist fatherland. The revolutionists naturally replied to this question in the negative. This was entirely correct. But while this purely negative answer served as the basis for propaganda and for training the cadres, it could not win the masses, who did not want a foreign conqueror.

'In Russia prior to the war the Bolsheviks constituted four-fifths of the proletarian vanguard, that is, of the workers participating in political life (newspapers, elections, etc). Following the February revolution the unlimited rule passed into the hands of defencists, the Mensheviks and the SRs. True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was played not by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!". And only by this revolutionary slogan! The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defence of bourgeois democracy and so on could have never conquered the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks ...'⁴⁴

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● This article is adapted and extended from the introduction to Roman Rosdolsky's **Lenin and the First World War** (Prinkipo Press). A further article in the next issue of *Workers Action* will look at the Marxist position on wars between imperialist and colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Notes

¹ J-P. Joubert, 'Revolutionary Defeatism', *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 1, No.3, Autumn 1988.

² S.F. Kissin, *War and the Marxists: Socialist Theory and Practice in Capitalist War*, Vol. 1, 1848-1918, Andre Deutsch, 1988, p.244.

³ Quoted in B. Pearce, review of R.B. McKean, *St Petersburg Between the Revolutions: Workers and Revolutionaries, June 1907-February 1917*, in *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 3, No.4, Autumn 1991.

⁴ O. Piatnitsky, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, Martin Lawrence, undated, p.207; A. Shlyapnikov, *On the Eve of 1917*, Allison and Busby, 1982, p.26; G. Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party*, New Park, 1973, pp.98-106.

⁵ See B. Pearce, 'Lenin and Trotsky on Pacifism and Defeatism', *Labour Review*, Vol. 6, No.1, Spring 1961; and Kissin, op. cit., pp.125-130.

⁶ S.H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism*, Routledge, 1963, p.262

⁷ M. Liebman, *The Russian Revolution*,

Jonathan Cape, 1970, p.95

⁸ A. Balabanoff, *My Life as a Rebel*, Indiana, 1973, p.120

⁹ Quoted in G. Zinoviev, op. cit., p.104

¹⁰ For a brief Marxist overview of Japanese industrialization, see T. Kemp, *Historical Patterns of Industrialization*, Longman, 1978, Chapter 11, and *Industrialization in the Non-Western World*, Longman, 1983, Chapter 2. A major Comintern study of Japan came to the conclusion that 'approximately beginning with the period of the Russo-Japanese war, the progress made by Japanese national economy was so great and was of such importance that it is permissible to speak of the entry of Japanese capitalism into the phase of finance capital'. (C. Tanin and E. Yohan, *Militarism and Fascism in Japan*, Martin Lawrence, 1934, pp.39-40.)

¹¹ J. Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, Penguin, 1986, p.35.

¹² See B. Pearce, 'Lenin and Trotsky on Pacifism and Defeatism'.

¹³ R. Rosdolsky, *Lenin and the First World War*, Prinkipo, 1999

¹⁴ L.D. Trotsky, *The War and the International*, Colombo, 1971.

¹⁵ Rosdolsky, op. Cit., p.32

¹⁶ Quoted in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, Moscow, 1964, p.275.

¹⁷ Quoted in B. Pearce, 'Lenin and Trotsky on Pacifism and Defeatism'.

¹⁸ Lenin, op. cit., p.275.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.275.

²⁰ Ibid, p.275

²¹ M. Liebman, *The Russian Revolution*, Jonathan Cape, 1970, p.95

²² Lenin, op. Cit., p.275

²³ L.D. Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Gollancz, 1936, p.59.

²⁴ Trotsky, ibid, p.59; T. Cliff, 'Introduction' to A.Y. Badayev, *Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma*, Bookmarks, 1987, p.14.

²⁵ 'Baugy Resolution on Party Tasks', in J. Riddell (ed), *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, Monad, 1986, pp.250-251; see also S.F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, Oxford, 1980, pp.22-3.

²⁶ L.D. Trotsky, 'The Military Catastrophe and the Political Prospects', *Labour Review*, Vol. IV, No.4, September 1980.

²⁷ *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, pp.298-301

²⁸ Rosdolsky, op. cit., p.25

²⁹ M-A. Waters (ed), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, Pathfinder, 1975, p.323.

³⁰ Lenin, op. cit., p.278.

³¹ *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, pp.311-14.

³² Ibid., p.305

³³ Joubert, op. cit.

³⁴ L. Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-34)*, Pathfinder, 1972, p.315

³⁵ Quoted in Joubert, op. cit.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, Merit, 1969, pp.289-290

³⁸ L. Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39)*, Pathfinder, 1974, pp.207-209

³⁹ W. Reisner (ed), *Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years (1933-40)*, Pathfinder, 1973, p.349.

⁴⁰ S. Levy, 'The Proletarian Military Policy Revisited', *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 1, No.3, Autumn 1988.

⁴¹ Rosdolsky, op. cit., pp.24-5

⁴² See for example Informations Ouvrières, 'Revolutionary Policy and Falsification', *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 3, No.4, Autumn 1991.

⁴³ Rosdolsky, op. cit., p.24

⁴⁴ L.D. Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, Pathfinder, 1973, p.411-12.

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Workers Action

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Don't ignore the existing labour movement!

In Workers' Action 13 we printed responses from Adam Hartman and Daniel Morrissey to Neil Murray's article (WA 12) 'Beware siren voices – vote Labour'. Here Neil Murray replies.

Adam's arguments boil down to two key elements. Firstly, that I 'counterpose building [an organisationally distinct political] alternative [to Labour] to the task of building the fightback within the labour movement. But there is no need to counterpose the two . . . The temptation to bypass the labour movement is only a temptation – it is not an inevitable result of the Socialist Alliance's existence'. Secondly, 'following Neil's advice [in the election campaign] would have meant either saying nothing at all or saying something [a critical vote for Labour] which did not make sense to most people. Furthermore it would have meant restricting our message to the left's existing audience, whereas the Socialist Alliance campaign enabled us to reach a much wider audience'.

Adam seems to equate an 'organisationally distinct political alternative' with *having* to stand candidates in the election. Did those left organisations which supported Labour in 1997, but the Socialist Alliance in 2001, not pose such an alternative? The SWP, for instance, has been calling itself the 'left alternative' for an awfully long time. When in the Labour Party did the Militant Tendency not pose such an alternative? The case is far from proven that in order to pose such an alternative, standing candidates is necessary.

Adam is of course right to say that bypassing the labour movement is not an inevitable result of the Socialist Alliance's existence. There is nothing to say that such an organisation – even one standing candidates against Labour – cannot take the fight in the labour movement seriously. However, we have to look at the reality, not theoretical possibilities. A case in point would be the demonstration at Labour Party conference on September 30. It was called at a time when there was a certain amount of uproar in the unions over Blair's privatisation plans, with the leaders of the big unions (Unison, TGWU, GMB) threatening to make a fight over the issue, not least at TUC and Labour Party conference – the ideal opportunity for an organisation committed to a fight in the labour movement to push the unions into lobbying the

conference. It might not have been possible to get any of the big unions nationally to call such a demonstration (though that is no argument against trying), but it would almost certainly have been possible to get some of the smaller ones (FBU, RMT, etc) to do so, and regional bodies of bigger ones. At least in previous years the SWP had the nous to get a union branch to initiate the call for such lobbies. So what happened this year? The call for the lobby against privatisation was issued in the names of the Socialist Alliance, Globalise Resistance (to all intents and purposes a department of the SWP) and the Green Party. Later lists of supporting trades unionists were largely of Socialist Alliance supporters. This hardly indicates an organisation serious about taking the fight into the labour movement. Indeed, the remit of the lobby was later widened to, effectively, 'everything you don't like about government policies', compounding rather than improving the situation. In the event (and I accept the appalling weather may have had something to do with this), there were very few trade union banners on the demonstration.

It could be argued that the fight by the union leaders never happened and therefore that the idea of a lobby focussed around that fight was doomed. But if some or all of them had initially committed themselves to the lobby it would have been more difficult for them to withdraw, and if they had, it would have shown up their timidity to a much greater number of trade unionists than was possible by ignoring them in the first place.

This particular example could be repeated several times over with reference to the many campaigns, locally and nationally, treated as Socialist Alliance 'property', where either no serious attempt is made to draw in wider labour movement forces, or it is done on an ultimatum basis of joining a Socialist Alliance campaign. Rather than talking of theoretical possibilities, Adam would do better to address this real problem.

Adam must be aware that the history of the British far left is littered with exam-

ples of standing candidates but not engaging in a serious united front approach – the ILP after its split from the Labour Party, the CP and the WRP being the obvious ones. In fact, Adam would be hard pushed to give an example of an organisation which has consistently carried out this theoretical possibility.

Adam's second point, that a call for a critical vote for Labour would not have been understood by most people, is rather undermined by the fact that several of the component organisations of the Socialist Alliance did precisely that in constituencies where the Socialist Alliance wasn't standing! Adam doesn't explain why it is impossible to conduct a public campaign calling for a Labour vote at the same time as urging people to fight for particular demands (for example, those which made up the Socialist Alliance election platform). Significantly, Socialist Alliance election literature did not call for such a fight, beyond calling on people to vote for and join the Alliance. Again, organisations that make up the Socialist Alliance have done this in the past; there is no real explanation as to why they couldn't have done so this time around.

In fact, I would contend that such a campaign would have engaged more directly with the present consciousness of many working class people than did the Socialist Alliance campaign. It is not just that the Socialist Alliance campaign got less than two per cent of the vote where it stood, but that post-election surveys show that most of those who abstained felt closest to Labour but unwilling to vote for it. A campaign that offered a strategy to those 'critical Labour supporters' would appear to have a better chance than that which the Socialist Alliance engaged in.

Daniel Morrissey's argument is very different. While seeing the article as 'a welcome corrective to uncritical flagwaving for the Socialist Alliance', he argues that I bend the stick too far the other way, failing to recognise differences between the Labour government and Party now and pre-Blair.

To an extent, Daniel is right – I'll con-

cede that I probably 'bent the stick' too far in terms of the denial of change in the Labour Party, in the sense that the leadership has adopted much of the ideology of the 'free marketeers'. However, what I was attempting to rebut is the stuff coming from most of the left which argues that it is the 'most right-wing Labour government ever'. To 'prove' this they reel off a list of policies, not ideological commitment. I have attempted to show that in terms of the concrete policies it has carried out this government has not been significantly different to previous Labour governments. The problem with addressing the ideology of the leadership is that it overemphasises its importance – the same trap that was fallen into by those (especially Scargill) who saw the scrapping of Clause 4 as changing the very nature of the Labour Party. Clause 4 never played any great part in determining Party/government policy. If we address the question primarily in terms of the formal commitment to a particular ideology, then the Labour Party plus Clause 4 was some kind of socialist party.

I think we have to be careful when Daniel says things like 'the party has renounced collectivism, redistribution . . .'. The government certainly has, but has the Party? Apart from the fact the Party has rarely had a say, even when it did vote for these kinds of policies, it has often been on the basis that it believed that such policies would win elections, and therefore must be right. There was little real commitment to it, as we are now beginning to see. Fickle and unprincipled it may be, but Daniel overstates the case.

In some ways Daniel answers his own question about how this government has got away with the things it has when he writes that previous Labour governments have really only carried out pro-working class reforms under pressure from the movement. The problem during the first term was that such pressure hardly existed, due to previous defeats and the ability of Kinnock, Smith and Blair to build on the basis of the defeats of the movement by Thatcher. We may (and I emphasise may) see the pendulum swing back the other way during the second term.

Daniel says (rightly) that it is difficult to get class conscious workers to join or vote Labour. But then we come back to the point that registering a vote for the Socialist Alliance, Scottish Socialist Party, Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru or the Greens 'is at least one way of expressing disaffection'. Yes, but does that mean it is a protest vote or an expression of a strategy? Expressing disaffection may make one feel good, but it doesn't take the struggle forward. Surely we have to argue with those

class-conscious workers about why the struggle in the Labour Party is a key element of any strategy which goes beyond protest. In one sense I don't really care how people vote, more important is what they see as a way forward. I would have preferred that, rather than simply call on people to vote Labour (although I think we spelt out a bit more than that), we should have been able to develop some kind of 'Socialists for Labour' campaign. The problem is that many of those who should have been key elements of such a campaign deserted sensible politics for the Socialist Alliance.

Daniel writes that it is difficult or even undesirable to recruit or retain socialist activists as Labour Party members in CLPs where no fight is taking place or is even a realistic possibility. Again, yes, *but*. Firstly, the people who often tell us nothing is happening in their local CLP haven't actually been near it for years, so how would they know. Secondly, even where it has been true up to now, with the present 'turn' by the unions against increased privatisation, Hattersley's statements about a 'coup d'etat', the 'war against terrorism', etc, things may be changing. In asking someone to attend their GC and ward you are asking them to give up two evenings a month – it could even be less if they kept a 'watching brief'. The problem with saying their time is better spent in an active Socialist Alliance than a moribund (if it were so) CLP is that the active Socialist Alliance will not seriously relate to the Labour Party. Daniel says we can argue within the Socialist Alliance for a healthy, non-sectarian approach to Labour Party members (I would say to the Labour Party, not just individual members) and non-aligned activists in the unions and single-issue campaigns. Maybe, but all pointers are in the opposite direction, as I have argued above.

Argument alone will not convince these people there is another way; we have to attempt to show in practice that it can be done. I am not (and never have been, even at the height of internal Labour Party strife) in favour of socialists devoting themselves entirely to the fight within the Labour Party. Trade union politics always has a higher importance, and we should attempt to build single-issue campaigns. But these do not have to be separated by Chinese walls. On the contrary, we need to argue for the fight in the Labour Party, the unions and campaigns to be seen as different components of a single strategy.

Daniel writes that I need to 'take more seriously the national differences between England, Scotland and Wales'. I plead guilty, at least in the article Daniel criti-

cises. The problem I have with what he says about Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party is several fold. Yes, politics in Wales and Scotland have a different dynamic to England, but how different? I don't think the SNP and Plaid are working class parties. That isn't primarily about who votes for them (on that basis the Tories and Liberal Democrats would also be working class parties, since on the only coherent understanding of class – Marx's – the majority of those who vote for them are working class), but about the class character of the party. While Blair is trying to change this in the case of the Labour Party, at present it remains a workers' party (albeit a bourgeois one). This cannot be said of any of the others.

In conclusion, the article may have come over as too conservative. That's because it was a reaction, a 'bending of the stick' against the Socialist Alliance supporters who think we can create a new labour movement by ignoring the existing one and all its problems. Bending the stick is probably never a good idea over a sustained period (they tend to break), but in this case it was necessary to counter this idiocy.

WA

Book Bargains

A few copies of the following books are available at bargain prices:

Year One of the Russian revolution, Victor Serge, 456pp, Pluto Press £6.50

Britain, World War 2 and the Samasamajists: The Secret Files Ed. W Muthiah and S Wanasinghe, 259pp, Young Socialist Pub, £6.00

The early homosexual rights movement (1864-1935) J Lauritsen & D Thorstad, 121pp, Times Change Press, £5.95

Prices include post and packing to mainland UK destinations
Workers Action, PO Box 7268,
London E10 6TX

Striking back against Empire

Empire by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Harvard University Press, 2000, pp478

Reviewed by Nick Davies

'These two Marx and Engels of the Internet age' as one reviewer describes the authors, is less high praise than a millstone, and the long-winded Hardt and Negri cannot begin to compete with the brilliant economy of *The Communist Manifesto*. A more ruthless editor might have taken a blue pencil to the circumlocution, deliberate obscurantism and downright pretentiousness which can make *Empire* an exasperating read. But, (and this is a big 'but'), *Empire* is worth ploughing through because it is a genuine and at times original attempt at a critique of the post-Cold War New World Order.

The 'Empire' in the title rules by military might, by the power of money, and by its control over communications. But it is post-colonial and post-imperialist, in the sense that it supersedes the control by the wealthy and powerful states of the world's resources, but also the formal democracy of the United Nations. Instead, *Empire* involves 'a politics of deterritorialised flows across a smooth world, free of the rigid striation of state boundaries'. In a discussion on the Gulf War, but in fact anticipating the Bush-Blair 'War against Terror', Hardt and Negri argue that the New World Order 'involves the banalisation of war [just look at CNN! ND] and the celebration of it as an ethical instrument... on the one hand war is reduced to the status of a police action, but on the other, the new power that can legitimately exercise ethical functions through war is sacralised'. In fact, by a circular argument, 'just wars' are justified by *Empire* as a series of exceptional measures to guarantee its own survival. To try to get across their concept of *Empire*, the authors return repeatedly to an analogy with the Roman *Empire*, a unitary power that presents its order as permanent, eternal and necessary, conducting 'just wars' against the barbarians outside and the rebellious inside.

Integral to the authors' concept of *Empire* is a post-modernist critique of the modernist (sic) notions of sovereignty. They adopt the 'hyper-globalising' standpoint of the death of the nation-state, saying that the new situation transcends the 'binary opposites'

of the European nation-state and the colonial world and, in rendering obsolete the imperial-colonial dialectic, is therefore 'post-dialectic' (!). Through the decentralisation of production and the consolidation of the world market, the authors argue, 'the international divisions and flows of labour and capital have fractured and multiplied so that it is no longer possible to demarcate large geographical zones as centre and periphery, North and South'. In both the metropolises and regions such as South East Asia, 'all levels of production can exist simultaneously and side by side, from the highest to the lowest', with the First and Third Worlds infusing one another 'distributing inequalities and barriers along multiple and fractured lines'. The USA and Brazil and India therefore differ not in nature, only in degree.

In some ways this is not a particularly new development, and in so far as it is new it is arguably only a strengthening of the tendency identified by Marxists for many years as the phenomenon of combined and uneven development. What is more, the authors overstate their case on the death of sovereignty at both ends of the Imperial power structure. At one point there is an attempt to deny the centrality of US power in *Empire*, and yet elsewhere, they identify the US at the 'narrow pinnacle of the pyramid', while on the second tier 'a group of nation states control the primary global monetary instruments'. That is more like it! As we argued in *Workers Action* No.12, ('Flaws in Globalisation Thesis') the international organisations are dominated by the most powerful states, particularly the USA, and the agenda they pursue is that of the powerful, and principally US-based corporations. 'Globalisation' is therefore, to a large extent, the internationalisation of the pro-business, deregulatory agenda pursued in the 1980s by Thatcher and Reagan. What is more, politics is still fought out in a national context even if that politics is engaging with the might of the WTO. Capitalist accumulation has to take place *somewhere*, and for this to happen, the labour process has to be organised *somewhere*. This brings us to one of the more controversial arguments in *Empire*, which is that far from trying to resist the destruction of the sovereignty of the state, or use arguments around state sovereignty as a way of resisting globalisation, we should accept or even welcome the destruction of state sovereignty, not as a sub-

mission to the power of *Empire*, but in order to fight it on its own terms, on its terrain, globally. Somewhat pretentiously, the authors use an analogy with the project of Augustine of Hippo for a universalist project ('The City of God') to contest the decadent Roman *Empire*. Superficially, this argument sounds attractive, and in many ways it is attractive. After all, socialists should not carry a torch for the nation-state and since the political collapse of the Second International in 1914 it has been received wisdom that the working class has to organise internationally if it is to have any hope of defeating capital. But in the context of real struggles against globalisation this approach can be terribly abstract. Look at the way the WTO organises. The USA's interests are represented there by hundreds of highly paid corporate lawyers. Some poor countries cannot afford to have any permanent presence at all. If one or more African, Asian or Latin American countries refuse to participate in this grim charade in order to protect their agricultural or textiles sectors, to protect their right to dish out cheap, generic drugs and to protect their already battered health, education, or transport sectors from privatisation, it won't do anyone any good if socialists, especially those in rich countries tell them that globalisation is basically good for them. For example, the Sri Lankan government did not accept 'hyper-globalisation' as an accomplished fact, but introduced a ban on GM crops in Sri Lanka. Similarly, privatisation of the water industry in, for example, Peru or Chile, would not invalidate the recent, successful struggle against water privatisation in Bolivia.

So who, or what, is to struggle to replace *Empire* with a new world? The authors mourn the apparent lack of solidarity between struggles around the world, without, it seems, drawing any connection between this state of affairs and the appalling defeats of the past 20 years and the crises of social-democracy and Stalinism. They say goodbye to the industrial working class, organised in discrete, local units of production, but expand the definition to anyone who labours. Replacing traditional 'Fordism' is something they call 'immaterial labour'. This is the production of an immaterial good, such as a service, or the creation of an 'intangible' product: health, information or entertainment, for example. Crucial in this development is the computer. Advanced technology has therefore made possible a

deterritorialisation of production, with the production line being replaced by the network, in which location and distance are of limited importance. The authors recognise that this tendency has weakened the bargaining position of workers, but also recognise the democratic and egalitarian potential in it. Again, the authors overstate their case. Certainly the number of workers employed in call centres or servicing web sites, alongside the destruction of many large centres of industrial production in Europe and North America, represents a profound change in the working class which socialists must address. But, at least for now, there are millions of workers making cars, planes and TVs all over the world, who work on a production line and meet for a grumble in the washrooms and the canteen, join unions and go on strike.

In so far as Hardt and Negri try to map out a way forward, the results vary from the frankly bizarre allegation that due to its low membership of trade unions and political parties, the US working class is somehow in a strong position, to the whimsical notion of workers 'escaping' from work, by running away (the authors cite the defection of workers from the German Democratic Republic in 1989). Could nomadism be socialism's challenge to Empire, just as nomadic peoples challenged the Greeks and Romans' conceptions of what it meant to be (literally), 'civilised'? Again, a difficult one to sell to workers who need to work to live, have family responsibilities and lack the resources for large scale, long distance migration. The authors seek inspiration from the Industrial Workers of the World (The 'Wobblies') which organised among the huge, mobile immigrant populations of the USA, building strikes but 'without establishing fixed or stable structures of rule'. But what happened to the Wobblies? Just as the inclusion of the Toronto Blue Jays results in a 'World Series', the 'International Workers of the World' only made it as far as Mexico. There is in fact very little here in terms of how workers can organise to defend themselves, let alone defeat Empire, and those proposals which do appear, the not particularly original demands for the Right to a Social Wage and the Right to 'Re-appropriation' (of the means of production), are couched in the most abstractly propagandist terms. No doubt the authors will defend themselves by saying that they are concerned only with the broad sweep of history, and it is for others to develop that which they have sketched out, and that having drawn on references as diverse as Saint Augustine, Machiavelli and Rosa Luxemburg, it is asking a bit much of them to consider trade union tactics as well.

Half truths and evasions

The Spanish Civil War: Dreams and Nightmares

Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, until April 28, 2002

Al Richardson finds that a major new exhibition on the Spanish Civil War recycles old myths

This exhibition was preceded by a fanfare in the liberal press (*Guardian*, October 18), and will no doubt be followed by repeated plugs afterwards. It highlights the predictable image of the Spanish Civil War as Freedom's Last Great Cause, patronised by the cream of the intelligentsia, with all its deep social and political embarrassments carefully smoothed over.

The message of the exhibition can be hardly in doubt. A book near the entrance entitled *The Spanish Civil War: Events and Memories*, contains one quotation each from Orwell and Borkenau, but all the others cited in it are by strange coincidence connected with the International Brigades. An introductory display of six enlarged photographs showing the start of the fighting manages to contain only one of an FAI militiaman. 'No Pasaran' appears in massive letters, without reminding us that it was a chauvinistic borrowing from the French during the siege of Verdun during the First World War. Extracts from Ibaruri's speeches dot the walls. A huge wall display on the way out contains a roll of honour of the British International Brigaders killed during the fighting. If Professor Paul Preston, who selected these items, has read the recently published reports of Russian agents to head office, that the Brigaders were scruffy and demoralised, with some of them deserting to join the CNT's militias, we find no hint of it here.

The second introductory label tells us of the 'social reforms' of the Spanish Republic, and a poster strategically placed near the exit calls upon the peasant to 'defend with your arms the government that gave you land'. Nowhere is there a hint that this was a strangled revolution, and that it was the Second Republic's intention to take well over a century to give the peasants the land that ensured its defeat. The closest the exhibition gets to admitting that there was a counter-revolution launched by the Stalinists behind the republican lines is the remark that 'Russia's support kept the Republic going but intensified its internal divi-

sions'. In view of the latest revelations, it can well be doubted whether Russia used the Spanish gold reserve it purloined – the sixth largest in the world at the time – to 'keep the Republic going', even if it is undeniable that reversing revolutions generally does 'intensify divisions'.

Of course, the social and political implications of the struggle cannot be completely covered up. An extract from Durruti's immortal interview with Van Paassen is there to show the true aspirations of the Spanish workers. There are posters from the POUM, the FAI, the CNT and the UGT, even if one of them does exhort the workers to work harder.

The memorabilia section has been carefully sanitised. There are materials from Laurie Lee displayed without comment that give the lie to Bill Alexander's claims that he was barely involved. A disingenuous label attached to a customs declaration of items Orwell sent to Georges Kopp describes Kopp as a 'prisoner of war in Spain'. This is true enough, but Kopp was not a prisoner of Franco as a result of the war at the front, but a prisoner of the Republic, a victim of the class war behind the lines. And occupying the left corner of a long case are some remnants of the parallel imprisonment of Maurin by Franco, describing him as having been 'spared by the intervention of a high ranking relative in Franco's command'. Here again, this is being a bit economical with the truth, leading the unsuspecting visitor to assume that there might be something behind the Stalinists' description of the POUM as 'Trotsky-fascists'. In reality, Maurin owed his life to family connections high up in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

None of this will come as a surprise to those who were shocked by Paul Preston's attack upon the authenticity of Ken Loach's film, *Land and Freedom*. Recalling that the first casualty of war is truth, we might add that, unlike the human casualties, it can continue to suffer violence for over sixty years afterwards.

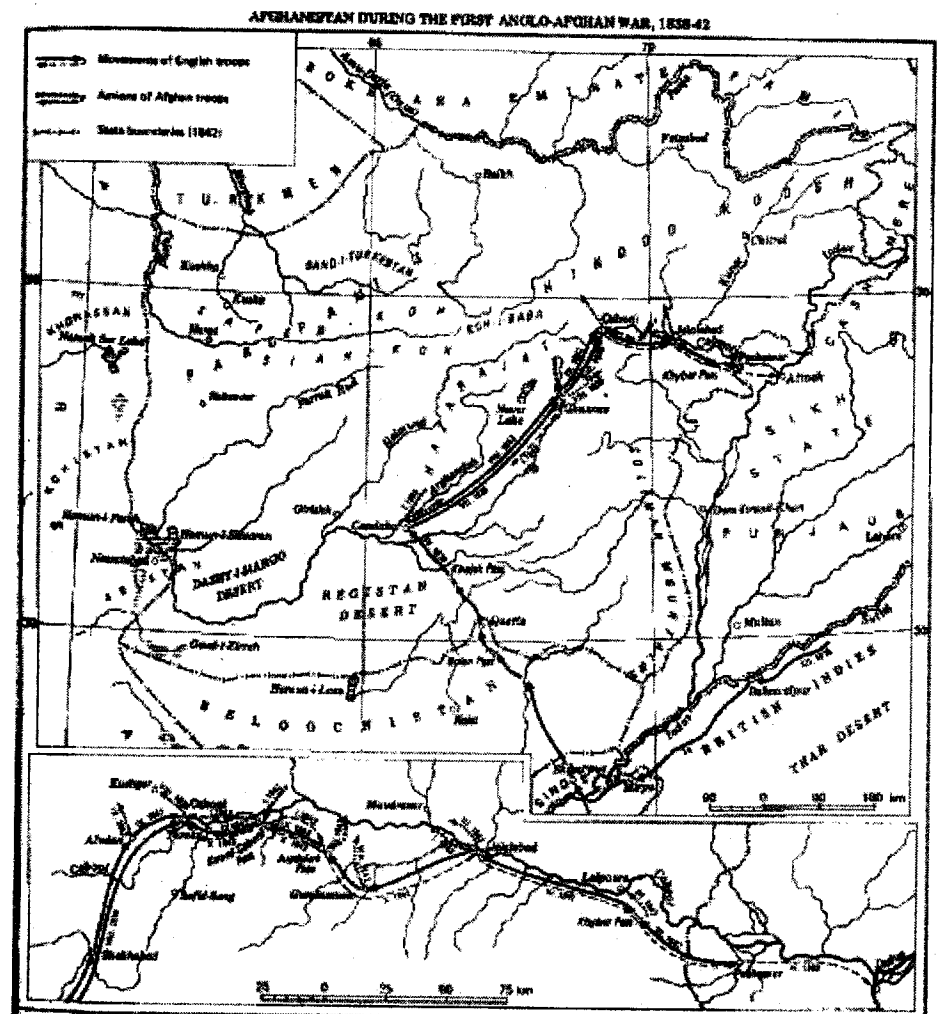
Afghanistan¹ by Frederick Engels

The following article was written by Engels in July/August 1857 and published in *The New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, 1858. The present text is taken from Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982. The latter half of the article deals in some detail with the war waged by Britain in 1838-42 to establish control over Afghanistan and contain the expansion of the Russian empire. Failing to install a puppet ruler, the British army was driven out of the country with the loss of almost 20,000 soldiers.

Afghanistan, an extensive country of Asia, north-west of India. It lies between Persia and the Indies, and in the other direction between the Hindu Kush and the Indian Ocean. It formerly included the Persian provinces of Khorassan and Kohistan, together with Herat, Beluchistan, Cashmere, and Sinde, and a considerable part of the Punjab. In its present limits there are probably not more than 4,000,000 inhabitants. The surface of Afghanistan is very irregular – lofty table lands, vast mountains, deep valleys, and ravines. Like all mountainous tropical countries it presents every variety of climate. In the Hindu Kush, the snow lies all the year on the lofty summits, while in the valleys the thermometer ranges up to 130°. The heat is greater in the eastern than in the western parts, but the climate is generally cooler than that of India; and although the alternations of temperature between summer and winter, or day and night, are very great, the country is generally healthy. The principal diseases are fevers, catarrhs, and ophthalmia. Occasionally the smallpox is destructive. The soil is of exuberant fertility. Date palms flourish in the oases of the sandy wastes; the sugar cane and cotton in the warm valleys; and European fruits and vegetables grow luxuriantly on the hill-side terraces up to a level of 6,000 or 7,000 feet. The mountains are clothed with noble forests, which are frequented by bears, wolves, and foxes, while the lion, the leopard, and the tiger, are found in districts congenial to their habits. The animals useful to mankind are not wanting. There is a fine variety of sheep of the Persian or large-tailed breed. The horses are of good size and blood. The camel and ass are used as beasts of burden, and goats, dogs, and cats, are to be found in great numbers. Beside the Hindu Kush, which is a continuation of the Himalayas, there is a mountain chain called the Solyman mountain, on the south-west; and between Afghanistan and Balkh, there is a chain known as the Paropamisian range, very little information concerning which has, however, reached Europe. The rivers are few in number; the Helmund and the Kabul are the most important. These take their rise in the Hindu Kush, the Kabul flowing east and falling into the

Indus near Attock; the Helmund flowing west through the district of Seistan and falling into the lake of Zurrah. The Helmund has the peculiarity of overflowing its banks annually like the Nile, bringing fertility to the soil, which, beyond the limit of the inundation, is sandy desert. The principal cities of Afghanistan are Kabul, the capital, Ghuznee, Peshawer, and Kandahar. Kabul is a fine town, lat. 34° 10' N. long. 60° 43' E., on the river of the same name. The buildings are of wood, neat and commodious, and the town being surrounded with fine gardens, has a very pleasing aspect. It is environed with villages, and is in the midst of a large plain encircled with low hills. The tomb of

the emperor Baber is its chief monument. Peshawer is a large city, with a population estimated at 100,000. Ghuznee, a city of ancient renown, once the capital of the great sultan Mahmoud, has fallen from its great estate and is now a poor place. Near it is Mahmoud's tomb. Kandahar was founded as recently as 1754. It is on the site of an ancient city. It was for a few years the capital; but in 1774 the seat of government was removed to Kabul. It is believed to contain 100,000 inhabitants. Near the city is the tomb of Shah Ahmed, the founder of the city, an asylum so sacred that even the king may not remove a criminal who has taken refuge within its walls.



The geographical position of Afghanistan, and the peculiar character of the people, invest the country with a political importance that can scarcely be over-estimated in the affairs of Central Asia. The government is a monarchy, but the king's authority over his high-spirited and turbulent subjects, is personal and very uncertain. The kingdom is divided into provinces, each superintended by a representative of the sovereign, who collects the revenue and remits it to the capital.

The Afghans are a brave, hardy, and independent race; they follow pastoral or agricultural occupations only, eschewing trade and commerce, which they contemptuously resign to Hindus, and to other inhabitants of towns. With them, war is an excitement and relief from the monotonous occupation of industrial pursuits.

The Afghans are divided into clans,² over which the various chiefs exercise a sort of feudal supremacy. Their indomitable hatred of rule, and their love of individual independence, alone prevents their becoming a powerful nation; but this very irregularity and uncertainty of action makes them dangerous neighbours, liable to be blown about by the wind of caprice, or to be stirred up by political intriguers, who artfully excite their passions. The two principal tribes are the Dooranees and Ghilgies, who are always at feud with each other. The Dooranee is the more powerful; and in virtue of their supremacy their ameer or khan made himself king of Afghanistan. He has a revenue of about \$10,000,000. His authority is supreme only in his tribe. The military contingents are chiefly furnished by the Dooranees; the rest of the army is supplied either by the other clans, or by military adventurers who enlist into the service in hopes of pay or plunder. Justice in the towns is administered by cadis, but the Afghans rarely resort to law. Their khans have the right of punishment even to the extent of life or death. Avenging of blood is a family duty; nevertheless, they are said to be a liberal and generous people when unprovoked, and the rights of hospitality are so sacred that a deadly enemy who eats bread and salt, obtained even by stratagem, is sacred from revenge, and may even claim the protection of his host against all other danger. In religion they are Mohammedans, and of the Soonee sect; but they are not bigoted, and alliances between Sheeahs and Soonees³ are by no means uncommon.

Afghanistan has been subjected alternately to Mogul⁴ and Persian dominion. Previous to the advent of the British on the shores of India the foreign invasions which swept the plains of Hindostan always proceeded from Afghanistan. Sultan Mahmoud the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, and Nadir Shah, all took this road. In 1747 after the death of

Nadir, Shah Ahmed, who had learned the art of war under that military adventurer, determined to shake off the Persian yoke. Under him Afghanistan reached its highest point of greatness and prosperity in modern times. He belonged to the family of the Suddosis, and his first act was to seize upon the booty which his late chief had gathered in India. In 1748 he succeeded in expelling the Mogul governor from Kabul and Peshawer, and crossing the Indus he rapidly overran the Punjab. His kingdom extended from Khorassan to Delhi, and he even measured swords with the Mahratta powers.⁵ These great enterprises did not, however, prevent him from cultivating some of the arts of peace, and he was favourably known as a poet and historian. He died in 1772, and left his crown to his son Timour, who, however, was unequal to the weighty charge. He abandoned the city of Kandahar, which had been founded by his father, and had, in a few years, become a wealthy and populous town, and removed the seat of government back to Kabul. During his reign the internal dissensions of the tribes, which had been repressed by the firm hand of Shah Ahmed, were revived. In 1793 Timour died, and Siman succeeded him. This prince conceived the idea of consolidating the Mohammedan power of India, and this plan, which might have seriously endangered the British possessions, was thought so important that Sir John Malcolm was sent to the frontier to keep the Afghans in check, in case of their making any movement, and at the same time negotiations were opened with Persia, by whose assistance the Afghans might be placed between two fires. These precautions were, however, unnecessary; Siman Shah was more than sufficiently occupied by conspiracies, and disturbances at home, and his great plans were nipped in the bud. The king's brother, Mahmud, threw himself into Herat with the design of erecting an independent principality, but failing in his attempt he fled into Persia. Siman Shah had been assisted in attaining the throne by the Bairukshee family, at the head of which was Sheir Afras Khan. Siman's appointment of an unpopular vizier excited the hatred of his old supporters, who organised a conspiracy which was discovered, and Sheir Afras was put to death. Mahmud was now recalled by the conspirators, Siman was taken prisoner and his eyes put out. In opposition to Mahmud, who was supported by the Dooranees, Shah Soojah was put forward by the Ghilgies, and held the throne for some time; but he was at last defeated, chiefly through the treachery of his own supporters, and was forced to take refuge amongst the Sikhs.⁶

In 1809 Napoleon had sent Gen. Gardane to Persia in the hope of inducing the shah [Fath Ali] to invade India, and the Indian

government sent a representative [Mountstuart Elphinstone] to the court of Shah Soojah to create an opposition to Persia. At this epoch, Runjeet Singh rose into power and fame. He was a Sikh chieftain, and by his genius made his country independent of the Afghans, and erected a kingdom in the Punjab, earning for himself the title of Maharajah (chief rajah), and the respect of the Anglo-Indian government. The usurper Mahmud was, however, not destined to enjoy his triumph long. Futteh Khan, his vizier, who had alternately fluctuated between Mahmud and Shah Soojah, as ambition or temporary interest prompted, was seized by the king's son Kamran, his eyes put out, and afterward cruelly put to death. The powerful family of the murdered vizier swore to avenge his death. The puppet Shah Soojah was again brought forward and Mahmud expelled. Shah Soojah having given offence, however, was presently deposed, and another brother crowned in his stead. Mahmud fled to Herat, of which he continued in possession, and in 1829 on his death his son Kamran succeeded him in the government of that district. The Bairukshee family, having now attained chief power, divided the territory among themselves, but following the national usage quarrelled, and were only united in presence of a common enemy. One of the brothers, Mohammed Khan, held the city of Peshawer, for which he paid tribute to Runjeet Singh; another held Ghuznee; a third Kandahar; while in Kabul, Dost Mohammed, the most powerful of the family, held sway.

To this prince, Capt. Alexander Burnes was sent as ambassador in 1835, when Russia and England were intriguing against each other in Persia and Central Asia. He offered an alliance which the Dost was but too eager to accept; but the Anglo-Indian government demanded every thing from him, while it offered absolutely nothing in return. In the mean time, in 1838, the Persians, with Russian aid and advice, laid siege to Herat, the key of Afghanistan and India;⁷ a Persian and a Russian agent arrived at Kabul, and the Dost, by the constant refusal of any positive engagement on the part of the British, was, at last, actually compelled to receive overtures from the other parties. Burnes left, and Lord Auckland, then governor-general of India, influenced by his secretary W. McNaghten, determined to punish Dost Mohammed, for what he himself had compelled him to do. He resolved to dethrone him, and to set up Shah Soojah, now a pensioner of the Indian government. A treaty was concluded with Shah Soojah, and with the Sikhs; the shah began collecting an army, paid and officered by the British, and an Anglo-Indian force was concentrated on the Sutlej. McNaghten, seconded by Burnes,

was to accompany the expedition in the quality of envoy in Afghanistan. In the mean time the Persians had raised the siege of Herat, and thus the only valid reason for interference in Afghanistan was removed, but, nevertheless, in December 1838, the army marched toward Sinde, which country was coerced into submission, and the payment of a contribution for the benefit of the Sikhs and Shah Soojah.⁸ Feb. 20, 1839, the British army passed the Indus. It consisted of about 12,000 men, with above 40,000 camp-followers, beside the new levies of the shah. The Bolan Pass was traversed in March; want of provisions and forage began to be felt; the camels dropped by hundreds, and a great part of the baggage was lost. April 7, the army entered the Khojak Pass, traversed it without resistance, and on April 25 entered Kandahar, which the Afghan princes, brothers of Dost Mohammed, had abandoned. After a rest of two months, Sir John Keane, the commander, advanced with the main body of the army toward the north, leaving a brigade, under Nott, in Kandahar. Ghuznee, the impregnable stronghold of Afghanistan, was taken, July 22, a deserter having brought information that the Kabul gate was the only one which had not been walled up; it was accordingly blown down, and the place was then stormed. After this disaster, the army which Dost Mohammed had collected, at once disbanded, and Kabul too opened its gates, Aug. 6. Shah Soojah was installed in due form, but the real direction of government remained in the hands of McNaghten, who also paid all Shah Soojah's expenses out of the Indian treasury.

The conquest of Afghanistan seemed accomplished, and a considerable portion of the troops was sent back. But the Afghans were noways content to be ruled by the Feringhee Kaffirs (European infidels), and during the whole of 1840 and '41, insurrection followed on insurrection in every part of the country. The Anglo-Indian troops had to be constantly on the move. Yet, McNaghten declared this to be the normal state of Afghan society, and wrote home that every thing went on well, and Shah Soojah's power was taking root. In vain were the warnings of the military officers and the other political agents. Dost Mohammed had surrendered to the British in October, 1840, and was sent to India; every insurrection during the summer of '41 was successfully repressed, and toward October, McNaghten, nominated governor of Bombay, intended leaving with another body of troops for India. But then the storm broke out. The occupation of Afghanistan cost the Indian treasury £1,250,000 per annum: 16,000 troops, Anglo-Indian, and Shah Soojah's, had to be paid in Afghanistan; 3,000 more lay in Sinde,

and the Bolan Pass; Shah Soojah's regal splendours, the salaries of his functionaries, and all expenses of his court and government, were paid by the Indian treasury, and finally, the Afghan chiefs were subsidized, or rather bribed, from the same source, in order to keep them out of mischief. McNaghten was informed of the impossibility of going on at this rate of spending money. He attempted retrenchment, but the only possible way to enforce it was to cut down the allowances of the chiefs. The very day he attempted this, the chiefs formed a conspiracy for the extermination of the British, and thus McNaghten himself was the means of bringing about the concentration of those insurrectionary forces, which hitherto had struggled against the invaders singly, and without unity or concert; though it is certain, too, that by this time the hatred of British dominion among the Afghans had reached the highest point.

The English in Kabul were commanded by Gen. Elphinstone, a gouty, irresolute, completely helpless old man, whose orders constantly contradicted each other. The troops occupied a sort of fortified camp, which was so extensive that the garrison was scarcely sufficient to man the ramparts, much less to detach bodies to act in the field. The works were so imperfect that ditch and parapet could be ridden over on horseback. As if this was not enough, the camp was commanded almost within musket range by the neighbouring heights, and to crown the absurdity of the arrangements, all provisions, and medical stores, were in two detached forts at some distance from camp, separated from it, moreover, by walled gardens and another small fort not occupied by the English. The citadel or Bala Hissar of Kabul would have offered strong and splendid winter quarters for the whole army, but to please Shah Soojah, it was not occupied. Nov. 2, 1841, the insurrection broke out. The house of Alexander Burnes, in the city, was attacked and he himself murdered. The British general did nothing, and the insurrection grew strong by impunity. Elphinstone, utterly helpless, at the mercy of all sorts of contradictory advice, very soon got every thing into that confusion which Napoleon described by the three words, *ordre, contre-ordre, disordre* [Bonaparte]. The Bala Hissar was, even now, not occupied. A few companies were sent against the thousands of insurgents, and of course were beaten. This still more emboldened the Afghans. Nov. 3, the forts close to the camp were occupied. On the 9th, the commissariat fort (garrisoned by only 80 men) was taken by the Afghans, and the British were thus reduced to starvation. On the 5th, Elphinstone already talked of buying a free passage out of the country. In fact, by the middle of November, his ir-

resolution and incapacity had so demoralised the troops that neither Europeans nor Sepoys⁹ were any longer fit to meet the Afghans in the open field. Then the negotiations began. During these, McNaghten was murdered in a conference with Afghan chiefs. Snow began to cover the ground, provisions were scarce. At last, Jan. 1, a capitulation was concluded. All the money, £190,000, was to be handed over to the Afghans, and bills signed for £140,000 more. All the artillery and ammunition, except 6 six-pounders and 3 mountain guns, were to remain. All Afghanistan was to be evacuated. The chiefs, on the other hand, promised a safe conduct, provisions, and baggage cattle.

Jan. 5, the British marched out, 4,500 combatants and 12,000 camp-followers. One march sufficed to dissolve the last remnant of order, and to mix up soldiers and camp-followers in one hopeless confusion, rendering all resistance impossible. The cold and snow and the want of provisions acted as in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow [in 1812]. But instead of Cossacks keeping a respectful distance, the British were harassed by infuriated Afghan marksmen, armed with long-range matchlocks, occupying every height. The chiefs who signed the capitulation neither could nor would restrain the mountain tribes. The Koord-Kabul Pass became the grave of nearly all the army, and the small remnant, less than 200 Europeans, fell at the entrance of the Jugduluk Pass. Only one man, Dr. Brydon, reached Jelalabad to tell the tale. Many officers, however, had been seized by the Afghans, and kept in captivity. Jelalabad was held by Sale's brigade. Capitulation was demanded of him, but he refused to evacuate the town, so did Nott at Kandahar. Ghuznee had fallen; there was not a single man in the place that understood any thing about artillery, and the Sepoys of the garrison had succumbed to the climate.

In the mean time, the British authorities on the frontier at the first news of the disaster of Kabul, had concentrated at Peshawer the troops destined for the relief of the regiments in Afghanistan. But transportation was wanting and the Sepoys fell sick in great numbers. Gen. Pollock, in February, took the command, and by the end of March, 1842, received further reinforcements. He then forced the Khyber Pass, and advanced to the relief of Sale at Jelalabad; here Sale had a few days before [he] completely defeated the investing Afghan army. Lord Ellenborough, now governor-general of India, ordered the troops to fall back; but both Nott and Pollock found a welcome excuse in the want of transportation. At last, by the beginning of July, public opinion in India forced Lord Ellenborough to do something for the recovery of the national honour and

the prestige of the British army; accordingly, he authorised an advance on Kabul, both from Kandahar and Jelalabad. By the middle of August, Pollock and Nott had come to an understanding respecting their movements, and Aug. 20, Pollock moved towards Kabul, reached Gundamuck, and beat a body of Afghans on the 23rd, carried the Jugduluk Pass Sept. 8, defeated the assembled strength of the enemy on the 13th at Tezeen, and encamped on the 15th under the walls of Kabul. Nott, in the mean time, had, Aug. 7, evacuated Kandahar, and marched with all his forces toward Ghuznee. After some minor engagements, he defeated a large body of Afghans, Aug. 30, took possession of Ghuznee, which had been abandoned by the enemy, Sept. 6, destroyed the works and town, again defeated the Afghans in the strong position of Alydan, and, Sept. 17, arrived near Kabul, where Pollock at once established his communication with him. Shah Soojah had, long before, been murdered by some of the chiefs, and since then no regular government had existed in Afghanistan; nominally, Futteh Jung, his son, was king. Pollock despatched a body of cavalry after the Kabul prisoners, but these had succeeded in bribing their guard, and met him on the road. As a mark of vengeance, the bazaar of Kabul was destroyed, on which occasion the soldiers plundered part of the town and massacred many inhabitants. Oct. 12, the British left Kabul and marched by Jelalabad and Peshawar to India. Futteh Jung, despairing of his position, followed them. Dost Mohammed was now dismissed from captivity, and returned to his kingdom. Thus ended the attempt of the British to set up a prince of their own making in Afghanistan.

Notes

¹ That Engels wanted to write an article on Afghanistan (with emphasis on the Anglo-Afghan war of 1838-42) is evident from the fact that he included this topic in the provisional list of articles for *The New American Cyclopaedia* in his letter to Marx of May 28, 1857. On July 11, 1857, however, Engels informed Marx that the article would not be ready by July 14, as agreed. The work on it apparently took longer than expected. Marx had received it by August 11 and, as can be seen from the entry in his notebook for this date, sent it off to New York. In a letter to Marx of September 2, 1857 Charles Dana acknowledged receipt of 'Invasion of Afghanistan'. When working on this article Engels used J. W. Kaye's *History of the War in Afghanistan* Vols. I-II, London, 1851 (see MECW Volume 18, pp. 379-90).

² Engels uses the term 'clan', widespread in Western Europe, to designate *heli* (tribal groups) into which Afghan tribes were divided.

³ *Soonees* (Sunnites) and *Sheeahs* (Shiites) – members of the two main Mohammedan sects which appeared in the seventh century as the result of conflicts between the successors of Mohammed, founder of Islam.

⁴ The Moguls – invaders of Turkish descent, who came to India from the east of Central Asia in the early sixteenth century and in 1526 founded the Empire of the Great Moguls (named after the ruling dynasty of the Empire) in Northern India. Contemporaries regarded them as the direct descendants of the Mongol warriors of Genghis Khan, hence the name 'Moguls'. In the mid-seventeenth century the Mogul Empire included most of India and part of Afghanistan. Later on, however, the Empire began to decline due to peasant rebellions, the growing resistance of the Indian people to the Mohammedan conquerors, and increasing separatist tendencies. In the early half of the eighteenth century the Empire of the Great Moguls virtually ceased to exist.

⁵ The Mahrattas (Marathas) – an ethnic group who lived in Northwestern Deccan. In the mid-seventeenth century they began an armed struggle against the Empire of the Great Moguls, thus contributing to its decline. In the course of the struggle the Mahrattas formed an independent state of their own, whose rulers soon embarked on wars of conquest. At the close of the seventeenth century their state was weakened by internal feudal strife, but early in the eighteenth century a powerful confederation of Mahratta principalities was formed under a supreme governor, the Peshwa. In 1761 they suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Afghans in the struggle for supremacy in India. Weakened by this struggle and internal feudal strife, the Mahratta principalities fell a prey to the East India Company and were subjugated by it as a result of the Anglo-Mahratta war of 1803-05.

⁶ The Sikhs – a religious sect which appeared in the Punjab (Northwestern India) in the sixteenth century. Their belief in equality became the ideology of the peasants and lower urban strata in their struggle against the Empire of the Great Moguls and the Afghan invaders at the end of the seventeenth century. Subsequently a local aristocracy emerged among the Sikhs and its representatives headed the Sikh principalities. In the

early nineteenth century these principalities united under Ranjit Singh whose Sikh state included the Punjab and some neighbouring regions. The British authorities in India provoked an armed conflict with the Sikhs in 1845 and in 1846 succeeded in turning the Sikh state into a vassal. The Sikhs revolted in 1848, but were subjugated in 1849.

⁷ The *siege of Herat* by the Persians lasted from November 1837 to August 1838. Intent on increasing Britain's influence in Afghanistan and weakening Russia's in Persia, the British Government declared the Shah's actions to be hostile to Britain and demanded that he should lift the siege. Threatening him with war, it sent a squadron into the Persian Gulf in 1838. The Shah was forced to submit and to agree to a one-sided trade treaty with Britain. Marx described the siege of Herat in his article 'The War against Persia' (see MECW, Vol. 15).

⁸ During the Anglo-Afghan war the East India Company resorted to threats and violence to obtain the consent of the feudal rulers of Sind, a region in the north-west of India (now in Pakistan) bordering on Afghanistan, to the passage of British troops across their territory. Taking advantage of this, the British demanded in 1843 that the local feudal princes proclaim themselves vassals of the Company. After crushing the rebel Baluchi tribes (natives of Sind), they declared the annexation of the entire region to British India.

⁹ Sepoys – mercenary troops in the British-Indian army recruited from the Indian population and serving under British officers. They were used by the British to subjugate India and to fight the wars of conquest against Afghanistan, Burma and other neighbouring states. However, the Sepoys shared the general discontent of the Indian people with the colonial regime and took part in the national liberation insurrection in India in 1857-59.

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