

RMT would back any candidate prepared to support the union's stand on transport policy and trade union rights. So, in Scotland, Crow supports the SSP, while in Wales he has soft spot for Plaid Cymru. For the London Assembly elections next June the RMT executive has agreed to back the Labour candidate in the Barnet & Camden seat. Yet Galloway has announced that the coalition plans to "run a full slate of candidates" for the Assembly (*Guardian*, 30 October), which would inevitably bring them into conflict with the RMT.

Policy issues are likely to be no less divisive than electoral tactics. Respect candidates standing for the European parliament will obviously need to have a common position on the euro. Indeed, the Galloway-Rees 'Declaration for a Left Electoral Challenge to New Labour' commits the coalition to "vote 'no' in any referendum on this issue". It is difficult to see how their position can be reconciled with that of Monbiot, who has drawn an entirely contradictory conclusion from the campaign against US imperialism: "To defend our sovereignty – and that of the rest of the world – from the US, we must yield some of our sovereignty

to Europe. That we have a moral duty to contest the developing power of the United States is surely evident. That we can contest it by no other means is equally obvious. Those of us who are concerned about American power must abandon our opposition to the euro" (*Guardian*, 22 April).

Marxism is, of course, a science of perspective rather than a source of exact predictions (I find this argument comes in handy every time my predictions fail to pan out). However, I were to hazard a guess as to future developments, I would expect that the Respect coalition will soon fragment, shedding most of its more prominent supporters except for Galloway, and will be reduced to an SWP-dominated rump not much broader than the Socialist Alliance. It will fail to get any candidates elected next June, and will conduct its electoral campaign in such a sectarian manner as to permanently discredit it throughout the labour movement. One might hope that the Respect leaders will learn from the experience and reassess their political methods. But that would be to enter a world of political fantasy as remote from reality at the one the Respect leaders themselves inhabit. ■

Al Richardson (1941-2003)

AL RICHARDSON, editor of *Revolutionary History*, died in his sleep in London on 21 November 2003. Death had come like a thief by night and cut off a useful life. He was 62 and was a lecturer in a senior school. He joined the left movement in Britain as a young man.

Two decades ago, as stated in the preface to *The War and the International*, the book he co-authored with Sam Bornstein, he discovered the need for a history of Trotskyism in Britain, as there was a paucity of such material available. He also recalled that the Marxist pioneers themselves realised long before he did the difficulties of trying to influence socialists by writing books.

Beginning a decade ago, a history of Trotskyism in India was published by *Revolutionary History* detailing the role played by the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, of which the most important unit was the Lanka Sama Samaja Party. Since then numerous volumes have been published, covering the Trotskyist movement across the world, from Bolivia to Poland and Belgium, and from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to Vietnam.

Blows Against the Empire. Trotskyism in Ceylon: The LSSP 1935-1964 (Volume 6, No.4) appeared in 1998. A lengthy review with the caption "The Golden Afternoon of the LSSP" appeared in the *Sunday Observer* (Sri Lanka). The reviewer called it "a labour of revolutionary love". The book contained not only favourable accounts of the LSSP but also criticisms as well. One such criticism was

that the foray to India under the BLPI flag was an adventure.

Recently a documentary history of Vietnamese Trotskyism titled *The Revolution Defamed*, edited and annotated by Al Richardson, was published by Socialist Platform. In the foreword he stated: "The real history of Vietnam's revolutionary movement has always been surrounded by a fog of ignorance in English-speaking circles, some of it the fault of the Trotskyists themselves. In spite of the appearance of an entire issue of *Revolutionary History* devoted to it in 1990 (Volume 3, No.2) and Ngo Van's *Revolutionaries They Could not Break* in 1995, it could still be claimed as late as 1998 that 'a noteworthy Trotskyist movement' did not exist in Indo China." (He cites Y. Ranjith Amarasinghe's assertion in his study of Trotskyism in Sri Lanka, *Revolutionary Idealism and Parliamentary Politics*, p.240.)

The Revolution Defamed, Richardson continues, affirms the credentials of Vietnamese working-class revolutionaries as internationalists as well as showing the link between their activities in Vietnam and in the emigration, and establishes once and for all the responsibility of Ho Chi Minh for destroying this splendid movement.

There is no doubt that the editorial board of *Revolutionary History* will continue the good work begun and carried on with devotion by Al Richardson.

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