

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



Ukraine: Only the working class can prevent a descent into barbarism, argues Hillel Ticktin

- South African elections
- Egyptian elections
- SWP and Ukip
- LU's non-politics

No 1010 Thursday May 15 2014

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

www.cpgb.org.uk

£1/€1.10



Exploitation and illusions
about anti-imperialism

LETTERS



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

Right to arm

Jack Conrad reminds readers that in 1936 Trotsky called for democratic rights for rank-and-file soldiers and put forward a plan for workers' parties and trade unions to form militias ('Arms and our moderate speaker', May 8). Trotsky was aware that the ruling class prefers civil war to the possibility of losing power to a class-conscious proletariat.

Civil war is a lesser evil than a seizure of power by a working class mobilised around a socialist programme. It is an option successful as a means of defeating the working class in the past - especially when cooption of leaders and state repression have failed. There is no ruling class that has given up power without a serious fight. Perhaps an exhausted capitalist class will be the first to hand over rule peacefully to a subordinate class, but this seems unlikely. We can therefore expect that, if desperate sections of this class feel threatened by the collective might of organised workers, trade unions and workers' parties, they will resort to instructing the police, courts and the army to ignore or actively encourage physical attacks on workers. Moreover, the social base of chauvinist and fascist politics - small business people and the unemployed - will be mobilised for civil war.

Of course, the class struggle is itself a low-level civil war, as contemporary events in South Africa's mines have shown. The ruling class fear of the growth of proletarian power and its socialist potential has operated consciously or unconsciously in causing the civil wars of Russia, Ireland, Spain, Greece and Yugoslavia in the last century. All of these led to defeats for our class. I would argue that this fear also informs directly or indirectly the more recent moves to civil wars in the Ukraine, Venezuela and Thailand.

Comrade Conrad is therefore right to stress that the formation of democratic militias of class-conscious workers is a necessary condition to prevent civil war. These are justified on the principle of an injury to one is an injury to all, the rejection of illusions in state protection and an acceptance that there is a need for embryonic forms of proletarian state power in the present.

However, militias are far from sufficient. Readers will have noticed that in the Libyan and Syrian democratic revolutions sections of the state were prepared to kill civilians indiscriminately through the use of air strikes and other means. The question therefore arises of how to create conditions that will immobilise the armed forces the ruling class relies upon. Campaigning for the rights of rank-and-file members of the military and the police is crucial towards this end. These include the rights to withdraw labour, organise collectively and refuse orders to kill or harm civilians or target civilian areas.

I hope the Marxist parties of the future will do educational and political work with both veterans and their allies actively employed in the armed services. Marxists need to support actual and former rank-and-file members of the military and police on a class basis. They need to highlight their experience of the dehumanising and brutalising effects of being trained to kill on behalf of the interests of capitalists, imperialists, Stalinists and religious patriots. This preparatory work will be essential for creating the conditions for the

mutinies and political destabilisation of the military and police that precede a proletarian seizure of power.

Towards this end, Marxists need to continue to explain the connections between capitalism, imperialism, Stalinism and war, and develop persuasive propaganda that promotes the establishment of a democratically planned, classless society worldwide. This is the only means of bringing civil and international wars to an end.

Paul B Smith
email

Militia and LU

You people are certifiably insane.

Louis Proyect
email

Truth grain

Gerry Downing's letter (May 8) is pretty disorientated, but does contain some grains of truth. Disorientated indeed is the notion that the current nationalist conflict in the Ukraine is akin to the Spanish civil war, or that there is some kind of 'revolution' going on in eastern Ukraine. Painting up the Russian nationalist fight against being dominated by the foul, reactionary Ukrainian Maidan regime in Kyiv as a socialist revolution is just nonsense and completely ignores the issue of great Russian chauvinism that is among the chief driving forces of the popularity of Putin's regime.

It is a complete break with the internationalist tradition of the Bolsheviks to draw such comparisons and give them a 'communist' coloration. In reality, we are currently the political equivalent of light years away from the kind of revolutionary mass struggle that was carried out by the Spanish working class in the mid-1930s. The whole dynamic in Ukraine is in the direction of a nationalist conflict that reflects the enormous lack of socialist consciousness on both the Russian/Russophone side and the side of Ukraine. The use of red flags, images (icons, in effect) of Lenin and the like on the Russian side does not make this a socialist mobilisation, unless the likes of the national Bolsheviks and similar formations in the camp of the Stalinist remnants, who systematically mix up the banners of 'communism' and fascistic pan-Slavism and the like, are to be considered a socialist force. It should be obvious that this is not true. To paint such forces in socialist colours is almost as absurd and reactionary as those in the United Secretariat and the like who paint up Maidan, with its Nazi-Banderists and all, as a progressive movement.

I say 'almost', because there is one element of truth, not in comrade Downing's fanciful analysis, but in his factual narrative. The arson-massacre in Odessa on May 2 was indeed a brutal crime and part of a pattern of bloody actions by the Ukrainian government that are aimed at denying the democratic rights of the Russophone population in southern and eastern Ukraine, which must of necessity include the right to choose whether they are ruled by Russia, Ukraine or some kind of federal or confederal arrangement - the best solution being the latter.

This is a conflict in which we as communists and socialists should have a side - with those in the Russophone population who are resisting the attempt of the Ukrainian Maidan regime to forcibly retain them within a 'one and indivisible' Ukraine under US hegemony, irrespective of their own national aspirations. Socialists should support their right to resist, not in the name of forlorn 'socialist' illusions in Russian nationalism, but of democracy and national rights.

In the concrete world situation of today, Russia is a relatively minor

imperialist power, and we would not be in favour of its expansion, were that to be happening. But it is not - rather, what is happening is a drive to expand Nato and US power further into the territory of the former Soviet bloc and the USSR itself. Thus we see US troops in Poland and the Baltic states, and reportedly US troops have been sent covertly to fight alongside the Maidan regime against the Russophone 'terrorists' in Ukraine. The Russophone population have the right to resist with force of arms these oppressors being sent to suppress them, and deserve the solidarity of class conscious workers in the west.

Putin recently mused, in a widely publicised speech, as to how he simply did not understand why the early Bolshevik regime had drawn borders so that significant Russian-speaking populations were incorporated as a national minority into the Ukraine. Putin, as a pretty pure great Russian nationalist, was unable to comprehend that the reason was to dilute the overwhelming preponderance of Russia and great Russianism in a multinational, socialist entity that aspired to real equality of nations.

But that is long gone, and can only be reborn in a long struggle in which consistent democracy, which includes defending the rights of all peoples to be free of national coercion and oppression, is reasserted as a task that only the working class under the banner of genuine communism can make its own.

From reading the western media and that of much of the 'left', you would think that Putin was about to occupy the core territories of Ukraine proper, including Kyiv and Lviv, and re-enact the horrors of Stalin's Holodomor killer famine. If that were even remotely true, then communists should take a very different position - we are as much opposed to national oppression of Ukrainians as anyone else, and they would have the unconditional right to resist that in the same manner.

But this is very far from the truth: what is posed here is the oppression of the Russian-speaking population as part of a decades-long drive to further extend US/western power into the east. This must be resisted by all socialists, internationalists and class-conscious workers.

Ian Donovan
email

Misconduct

Russian conductor Valery Gergiev had his London concert disrupted on Sunday May 11 by 30 pro-Ukrainian demonstrators and human rights campaigners, protesting against Gergiev's support for the Putin regime and for Russia's interference in Ukraine.

Waving Ukrainian flags and holding a huge banner, "Gergiev supports war in Ukraine", they booed Gergiev as he walked on stage in Trafalgar Square to conduct Prokofiev with the London Symphony Orchestra. They then pointed at Gergiev and chanted "Shame on you". He looked surprised and slightly embarrassed.

Some of the protestors shouted, "Gergiev supports Putin. Freedom for Ukraine." They were angry that the LSO is willing to work with and fund Gergiev, given that he supported Russia's invasion of Crimea and backed Putin's anti-gay legislation.

The peaceful, symbolic protest took place shortly before 7pm on Sunday night and lasted about four minutes, before the protestors were manhandled out of Trafalgar Square by security staff. The disruption was jointly organised by the pro-Ukrainian London EuroMaidan campaign group and the Peter Tatchell Foundation. We wanted to send a message to Gergiev

and the Putin government that what Russia is doing in the Ukraine is unacceptable.

In March 2014, Valery Gergiev signed an open letter, declaring his support for president Putin's stance on Ukraine; implicitly endorsing Russia's aggression and its military annexation of Crimea. Gergiev endorsed Putin's 2012 election campaign, releasing a video explaining why he was voting for Putin. He continues to support the Russian leader, despite the intervention in Ukraine and anti-gay legislation. Gergiev is a great conductor, but he allies himself with the expansionist, homophobic Moscow regime. He doesn't respect Ukraine's national sovereignty or the human rights of gay Russians. He is not fit to conduct the LSO.

As Chrystyna Chymera, a Ukrainian participant from London EuroMaidan and a co-organiser of the protest, put it: "We were taking a stand against Gergiev's collusion with the Putin regime's aggression in Ukraine. He chose to take an odious political stand. We were exercising our democratic right to criticise him. Gergiev's pro-Putin position is an insult to the people of Ukraine."

Peter Tatchell

Peter Tatchell Foundation

Storming heaven

In their increasingly complex, esoteric and obscure debate attempting to define or even describe what the former Soviet Union was or was not, Mike Macnair ('Nothing but bathwater', May 8) and Ian Donovan ('Throwing babies out with bathwater', April 17) appear to have departed from any semblance of observation, common sense and the basic societal options posed by the Marxist theory of historical materialism.

The Soviet Union was no 'freak', no 'ectopic formation', no 'chimerical society', no 'negation of the negation'.

Sometimes the most straightforward, common sense and obvious explanations happen to be true - ie, the Soviet Union represented a reasonably successful attempt to construct a socialist society following the overthrow of the rule of the landowners and the capitalists. Whatever its faults and mistakes, the Soviet Union embodied the essence of socialism, as defined by Marx - a society which had overthrown bourgeois property, the 'free' market and the capitalist state, and had replaced them with collective property, central planning and a workers' state.

As a modern and economically advanced land without capitalists, the Soviet Union stood as a potent alternative form of society for all the exploited and aggrieved people in capitalist societies. As a social organisation in which private capital was non-existent, it showed that private capital is both a dispensable and a transient phenomenon.

The Soviet Union not only eliminated the former exploiting classes ('people of the past'), but also ended inflation, unemployment, racial and national discrimination, grinding poverty and glaring inequalities of wealth, income, education and opportunity. Free education, free, high-quality healthcare for all, rents constituting 2%-3% of family budgets, water and utilities only 4%-5%, paid maternity leave, inexpensive and comprehensive childcare, generous pensions, subsidies for food and other basics - all make it blindingly obvious this was a society run in the interests of working people.

We have just celebrated Victory Day (May 9), for goodness sake, where against atrocious and appalling odds, the Soviet people and armed forces managed to turn back and ultimately

destroy the German war machine. The strength, ferociousness and unity of the Soviet people's resistance to the *Wehrmacht* hardly accords with Trotskyist and imperialist assertions of a broken, terrorised and exploited people.

The victories of the Red Army drew attention to the phenomenal powers of survival and resistance shown by Soviet society in general. The truly epic efforts to build socialist industry and agriculture and to defend the existence of the country and the people during World War II could not have occurred without active popular participation in the governing and running of society and economy, without massive popular support for the regime and its leadership. So powerful and inherent was this support, it remains very much on display during such events as Victory Day and, encouragingly, appears to be enthusing and inspiring the newer and rising generations.

The internationalist role of the Soviet Union in the relatively modern era hardly accords with nonsensical notions of this being an 'ectopic formation' or an 'abortion of a society', or other gruesome phrases put forward by one of the *Weekly Worker's* waning and eccentric gurus. The use of such gynaecological language says more of their author than it does to describe the Soviet Union.

Communism is an ideology which expresses the aspirations of ordinary working people, whether they are wage-earners or peasants. The *Weekly Worker* claims to be the paper of a future Communist Party. Like it or not, the Soviet Union symbolised that ideology, and felt an identity with working class struggles, wherever they took place, across the globe. The Soviet Union was materially involved in all the major revolutionary movements since 1945, from China to Vietnam, to Palestine, to Nicaragua and to South Africa.

It would have been far easier in terms of 20th century geopolitics for the leadership of the Soviet Union to have coveted 'respectability' and 'approval' from the nuclear-armed and aggressive imperialist powers by desisting from any such international class and human solidarity. Indeed, it sought justifiable and deserved respect from the imperialists as an emerging superpower which had not only survived the war intended to exterminate it, but had played the major role in the destruction of Nazism, fascism and militarism. Its major foreign policy objective was to prevent it ever again being the subject of genocidal destruction and to defend the results of World War II through clear lines of demarcation between capitalist and communist spheres of interest.

Trotskyism, despite emerging from and representing the interests of classes, strata, sections and other detritus marginalised, defeated and crushed in the emerging Soviet Union of the 1920s and 30s (the '57 varieties' stem from this shattered and dispersed gene pool), did make some valid and pertinent analyses of some of the defects, shortcomings and limitations of certain aspects of Soviet society and economy, which can and should be examined as part of an overall assessment of how and why the Soviet Union was ultimately weakened, undermined and collapsed.

These include how formal public ownership through the state of the means of production and formal democratic control through the soviets by the Soviet people needed to be constantly nurtured, deepened, enriched and extended. This in the context of a new society essentially transitional in nature and content, and in a world dominated by capitalism and imperialism. Societies have to keep moving forward if they are not

to stagnate, atrophy and reverse.

In my view, the Soviet Union was caught in the contradiction of having to keep constantly moving forward towards communism in the development of both the forces and relations of production, but that forward progress was ultimately limited by the global realities and endurance of world capitalism and imperialism. Ultimately, progress to communism has to be on a global basis.

The Soviet Union represented a massive leap forward in the history of mankind, and provided a real glimpse of the potential and reality of a truly democratic, human and socialist society. It showed that working people can indeed 'storm heaven', overthrow the rule and power of the capitalists and landowners, and start to build an economy and a society run in the interests of working people.

Just as the 71 days of the Paris Commune in 1871 led inexorably to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and 74 years of a socialist superpower, the achievements and record of the Soviet Union will be followed just as surely by 21st century revolutionary transformations - this time inevitably regional, continental and global in scale and scope.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

National family

Eddie Ford is right about state anti-racism ('Beyond the pale', May 8): racism hasn't changed, but its position within British society has.

The British political class of late has gone for a much more American 'melting pot' ideal of nationhood, but that doesn't mean the consequences and mentalities of previous black-white relations have been eliminated. There is now a more prominent black middle class, while facetious racists like Jeremy Clarkson are chided and must apologise.

The UK though is nowhere near US levels of political participation (how many black mayors in Britain?) or media representation (*12 years a slave*, by a British director, concerns US slavery): state anti-racism is still rudimentary. Afro-Caribbeans as ever are more likely to be poor and their offspring harassed and imprisoned by the law. Generally, people of colour are officially accepted as part of the national family (like Mo - or is that Mohamed? - Farah), but they come under special suspicion, as Islamists, illegitimate immigrants, petty criminals, and are treated more harshly. Compare the handling of Constance Briscoe and Vicky Pryce, public servants who both perverted the course of justice in covering up for MP Chris Huhne. The white, middle class Pryce got half the prison time and may yet acquire her own chat show.

Of course, official anti-racism usually isolates the offence in individuals, like those concerned with football, rather than employers or public institutions, individuals who are, you know, uncouth (or Ukip).

Agreed then that what we lack is a strong working class movement that can present the alternative to the options of official anti-racism or racism, centre-right establishment or rightwing protest (from Ukip to Boko Haram), where, for example, the answer to the theme of immigrants undercutting local workers is not acceptance or rejection, but championing stronger unions against all low pay. Solidarity means countering pernicious ideologies both in the state and in the class.

Mike Belbin
email

Taking that

Three former members of Take That, including Gary Barlow and their manager, were reported to have "invested £26 million in a scheme designed to avoid the payment of tax"

(*The Guardian* June 20 2012). It was called the Icebreaker partnership and claimed to be helping new acts.

Although David Cameron had criticised anti-government Jimmy Carr (when on holiday) for investing in a similar scheme very shortly before, seeing Carr apologising and pulling out of the scheme, Cameron refused to criticise his pal, Barlow, who had campaigned for the Tories at the 2010 general election.

Nearly two years later, "a court ruling on May 9 2014 decided that the partnership was actually a tax avoidance scheme for the 'ultra-rich'" (*Huffington Post* May 10) and ordered the repayment of tens of millions of pounds. Cameron still refused to criticise Barlow and his band mates until the pressure got to him and he did so in Monday's edition of *The Times*.

However, Cameron is risking the lead the Tories have got over Labour in two recent opinion polls, for the first time for two years, by arguing that Barlow should be allowed to keep his OBE for "services to music and charity". So it's OK for multimillionaires to get an Order of the British Empire (sic) for charity work (ie, urging ordinary working and middle class people to donate to 'good causes', while boosting his own reputation) at the same time as avoiding paying the government millions of pounds that could be used to fund such causes directly (or prevent them from being cut as part of the government's austerity agenda) or indeed making large donations to charity himself!

Of course, revolutionary socialists recognise that charity is not the solution to society's problems. This was underlined by a *Panorama* investigation showing that "millions of pounds donated to Comic Relief have been invested in funds with shares in tobacco, alcohol and arms firms" (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25273024). Comic Relief was one of the charities Barlow raised money for.

Of course, the likes of Barlow are small fry compared to big business. Amazon has paid just £4.2 million to the UK treasury for UK sales of £4.3 billion, taking advantage of its headquarters being in Luxembourg. See *The Guardian* article, 'Amazon UK boycott urged after retailer pays just £4.2 million in tax' (May 9), which also reveals that they have only contributed just over £10 million in UK corporation tax over a whole decade.

The Labour MP, Margaret Hodge,

is calling for a boycott of Amazon, but, whereas she can easily afford to shop elsewhere, in these times of austerity many cannot. She should instead focus on proposing legislation to ban them from selling their goods to UK consumers unless they pay their fair share of tax, and argue for democratic socialism in the UK and across the world. While there are tax havens and capitalist countries with differing rates of (income and corporation) tax competing in a race to the bottom, it is difficult to see how tax avoidance (and evasion) can seriously be defeated. Socialism in one country cannot work, with or without a dictator like Stalin, but a socialist revolution taking place in a single western country could trigger a worldwide revolutionary movement capable of truly freeing the masses from the rule of big business and the politicians like Cameron who represent their interests.

We need to take (particularly big) businesses, including multinationals, into public ownership - only feasible by capping compensation, so rich shareholders lose most of their money (and it wouldn't really be socialism if the 'ultra-rich' are allowed to retain their ill-gotten gains). As it happens, I got an amendment for compensation to be "capped at a certain level, so that large shareholders lose most of their investments" when shares are converted to government bonds, accepted into the economics commission document presented at the March 29 Left Unity conference, so it is now LU policy.

So why did Cameron become so nervous about criticising the likes of Barlow? Perhaps because there is a skeleton in Cameron's closet - almost literally in his father, Ian, who indulged in tax avoidance himself by taking advantage of "a new climate of investment after all capital controls were abolished in 1979, making it legal to take any sum of money out of the country without it being taxed or controlled by the UK government" (*The Guardian* April 20). David Cameron inherited £300,000 from his will (but the article implies he may own further investments courtesy of his father).

The astute will note that 1979 was the year Thatcher came to power and abolished capital controls with the shift towards 'free market' neoliberalism. How appropriate that Cameron is carrying on where Thatcher left off!

Steve Wallis
Manchester

Fighting fund

Big day

Excitement is mounting here at the *Weekly Worker* in view of the imminent launch of our new website. This will boast many features enabling readers to quickly find themed articles and previous pieces - without having to wait for several seconds while the server thinks about opening the page you want.

I cannot stress enough how much all those donations to our fighting fund have helped the work on the new site - yes, it is not only the printed version that has benefited (through, for example, the supplements and extra pages we have carried).

Last week the achievements of the *Weekly Worker* must have inspired comrade TR. Not only did he come up with his usual £30 standing order, but he decided to double that amount in a separate contribution via PayPal. That's right - £90 in a couple of days from the one comrade. There

were two further SO donations, both for £20, from DV and DW, plus two cheques. The first was from GN, who added £30 to her resubscription, while KT sent us £50 after reading "Jack Conrad's brilliant article on the right to bear arms" last week. (That wasn't the universal view, of course, especially within certain 'moderate' Left Unity circles).

All that increased our May fund by £210, taking our total to £631. But we need £1,500 and half the month has gone. I hope a good number of readers will be so delighted with our new site that they will chip in something - surely we will see a big rise in online readers from last week's 11,894 when the big day comes in just a couple of weeks time! ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast commenting on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.org.uk/home/podcasts>.

London Communist Forum

Sunday May 18, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and *Capital* reading group. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. This meeting: Vol 1, appendix, 'Results of the immediate process of production'.

Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology: Cosmology, history and archaeology **Tuesday May 20, 6.30pm:** 'Kinship and sex among the Canela of Brazil.' Speaker: Chris Knight.

Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1. Five minutes walk from Euston station. Admission free, but donations appreciated.

Organised by Radical Anthropology Group:

www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Solidarity with Palestine

Thursday May 15, 6pm: Picket, Marks and Spencer, 381 Oxford Street, London W1. Music, speeches and open mic.

Organised by Revolutionary Communist Group:

www.revolutionarycommunist.org.

Left Unity Glasgow

Thursday May 15, 7pm: Meeting, Govanhill Baths, 99 Calder Street, Glasgow G42. Speaker: Iain MacInnes on housing and community politics in Govanhill.

Organised by Left Unity Glasgow South: content@leftunity.org.

Right to Remain

Friday May 16, 4pm: Launch of renamed organisation (formerly NCADC), Lesbian and Gay Foundation, 5 Richmond Street, Manchester M1.

Organised by Right to Remain: www.righttoremain.org.uk.

Stop the EDL

Saturday May 17, 12 noon: Counterdemonstration against English Defence League rally, City Hall, Northumberland Road, Newcastle NE1.

Organised by Newcastle Unites:

www.facebook.com/events/249994118520131.

Manchester Spring

Saturday May 17, 10.30am to 5.40pm: Conference on the future of the left, Islington Mill, Exhibition Centre for the Life and Use of Books, James Street, Manchester M3. £10 (£5 concessions). Speakers include: Yasmine Mather, Mark Fisher, Felicity Dowling.

Book tickets online: <http://manchesterspring.org.uk>.

No to fracking

Saturday May 17, 2pm: Meeting, 'Fracking the downs - failing our future'. City College, (main hall), Pelham Street, Brighton.

Organised by Sussex Labour Representation Committee:

www.sussexlrc.com.

Cultivating hope

Saturday May 17, 2pm to 7pm: Solidarity event, students union, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1. Films, speakers and cultural acts.

Organised by Colombia Solidarity Campaign:

www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk.

Socialist evening

Saturday May 17, 7.30pm: Socialist music with Roy Bailey and guests, Forbes Building, 309-321 Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough TS1. £8 waged, £6 unwaged.

Organised by Fahrenheit Books:

www.facebook.com/events/260528240781548.

Capitalism needs war

Sunday May 18, 11.30am to 5.30pm: Free school on World War I, 88 Fleet Street, London EC4. Sessions on: 'Why capitalism needs war'; 'Women's protests and revolutions'; 'Countering Cameron's commemorations'; 'Putin, Ukraine and war today'

Organised by The Real WWI: www.therealww1.wordpress.com.

Stop scapegoating immigrants

Monday May 19, 7pm: Public meeting, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London WC1. Nearest tube: Warren Street.

Organised by Movement Against Xenophobia: www.noxenophobia.org.

Justice for Ecuador

Wednesday May 21, 5.45pm: Protest against Chevron-Texaco polluters, Parliament Square, London SW1.

Organised by Friends of Ecuador: <http://friendsofecuador.co.uk>.

Marikana slaughter

Thursday May 22, 7pm: Film screening of *Miners shot down* (Rehad Desai, South Africa 2014), followed by discussion. Haringey Independent Cinema, Park View School, West Green Road, London N15 (next to Downhills Parks).

Organised by Haringey Solidarity Group: www.haringey.org.uk/hic.

How to fight austerity

Wednesday May 28, 7pm: Debate, St Mary's Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1.

Organised by Teesside People's Assembly:

www.facebook.com/events/471971299603169.

CPGB wills

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

SOUTH AFRICA

Fully in control

Neither right nor left has been able to challenge ANC hegemony, writes **Peter Manson**

As readers will know, the African National Congress won another overwhelming election victory in the May 7 South African general election. Its 11,436,921 votes represented 62.15% of those who cast a valid ballot, which translated into 249 MPs in the 400-seat parliament under the country's completely proportional party list system.

Admittedly this represents a small decrease, compared to the previous general election in 2009, when the ANC gained 65.9% and 264 MPs, but it was nowhere near the drop in support that some had predicted. This despite the well-publicised campaign of a number of prominent former ANC supporters - not least Ronnie Kasrils, for 20 years a member of both the ANC national executive and the South African Communist Party executive committee - who called for no vote for their ex-party.

The turnout was down (73.4%, as against 77.3% in 2009), but much more pronounced was the dramatic rise in the number of unregistered voters. The figure for people who were entitled to vote but did not bother registering shot up by almost three million to a massive 10.2 million and, when this is taken into account, the proportion of those voting slumps to 52.3%. In addition there was an increase in spoilt votes to over a quarter of a million.

It has to be said, however, that 11 million votes for the ANC is still pretty impressive in view of the general disillusionment amongst its mass base. For most of the last 20 years it has been driving forward its neoliberal policy of privatisations and attacks on the working class. But the two major organisations of that class - the Communist Party and SACP-led Congress of South African Trade Unions - still mobilise their members behind the ANC. These 'communists' claim that South Africa is undergoing its "national democratic revolution", which, they say, represents the "most direct route to socialism" - even though it is patently clear that under the ANC capitalism has become considerably more stable and secure.

Of course, over the last year deep divisions have surfaced in both those organisations over the policy of maintaining and strengthening the ANC-SACP-Cosatu triple alliance at all costs. Nine out of the 19 Cosatu affiliates, led by the 300,000-strong National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), have rebelled against the pro-ANC line and, since many of their leaders are Communist Party members, this split also reflects the widespread disaffection within the SACP.

But unfortunately, although a Numsa special congress voted unanimously at the beginning of the year to break from the ANC and to launch a Movement for Socialism, its idea was to carefully prepare the ground for a more leftwing version of the SACP - this time one that is *really* committed to implementing the ANC's social democratic Freedom Charter - in time for the 2019 general election. Not exactly a case of seizing the moment.

Opposition

So, with most working class forces seemingly paralysed, initiatives for a party capable of challenging the ANC's hegemony tend to originate within the established order. The problem for the bourgeoisie has been that the largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, is a direct



Vote stayed remarkably high

descendant of the apartheid-era National Party, with - obviously - no purchase whatsoever amongst the mass of the black population. But previous establishment attempts to create a safe alternative (one without the ANC's strong links to 'official communism') have collapsed almost as soon as they got off the ground.

Five years ago the split from the ANC calling itself the Congress of the People (Cope) picked up 1.3 million votes (7.42%) and 30 MPs. But, this time around, its vote was literally decimated - reduced to a 10th of its 2009 tally - and it now has just three MPs to show for its 0.67% support. Some hoped that a sturdier challenge would come from the new Agang (Build) party, founded by the former partner of 'black consciousness' activist Steve Biko, Mamphele Ramphele (who later went on to become managing director of the World Bank!). But Agang could only manage 52,350 votes (0.28%), although that was enough to give it two MPs (including Ramphele, of course).

With such entities as Cope and Agang obvious non-starters, there has been a great (and partially successful) effort over the last few years to 'Africanise' the DA. Many middle class blacks have now come over to it and in the Western Cape, with its large 'coloured' (or 'mixed race') population, even the shack-dwellers' movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo, voted overwhelmingly to recommend a vote for the DA - what the SACP calls the "party of white privilege". The result is that the DA has reinforced its position as the main opposition party, increasing its vote from 16.66% in 2009 to 22.23% last week. Its 4,091,581 votes gave it 89 MPs.

But the party that had looked best placed to win mass support among the poor, working class and shack-dwelling millions was Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters, formed just last year. Malema is the left-speaking, black-nationalist former president of the ANC Youth League, who was expelled from the ANC in 2011 for "sowing divisions" (ie, speaking out too forcefully against president Jacob Zuma, the SACP and the national leadership). Its members, wearing their red berets, have made a big impact in the townships. If anything, the EFF total of 1,169,259 votes (6.35%) was surprisingly low, but it is now the third largest parliamentary force with 25 MPs.

The EFF describes the ANC as a party "committed to a rightwing, neoliberal and capitalist agenda, which has kept [the] majority of our people on the margins of South Africa's economy". Its own "pillars

for economic emancipation" include: "expropriation of land without compensation"; the "nationalisation of mines, banks and other strategic sectors of the economy without compensation"; "free, quality education, healthcare, houses and sanitation"; and "massive, protected industrial development to create millions of sustainable jobs".¹

However, despite his pro-worker, pro-poor rhetoric, Malema is amongst many (known as 'tenderpreneurs') who have made themselves hugely rich, thanks to business contacts developed through political influence - not to mention the 'affirmative action' euphemistically known as 'black economic empowerment'. But that does not stop him appealing to the workers by attacking "white monopoly capital" and white privilege in general.

According to the pre-election issue of the SACP journal *Umsebenzi*,

Workers are not fooled by these loud-mouthed demagogues, these tenderpreneurs in red berets. They have never done an honest day's work, so where do they get their fancy cars, their Breitling watches? Where do they get their campaign funding? Africa and the world have seen this kind of clowning before. But it is a mistake to just laugh it off - the Hitlers and Mussolinis rose to prominence demagogically sprouting 'socialism', and then butchering the working class when in power.²

Unfortunately, well over a million workers *were* fooled - but what can you expect? The EFF has begun to fill the vacuum left by the SACP itself and is already occupying the ground to the left of the ANC that SACP and Cosatu oppositionists are thinking about going for in a few years time! Note, by the way, the SACP's implied characterisation of Malema's left populism as proto-fascist. It is certainly true that the EFF - along with many varied forces - *could* evolve in such a direction, but, as things stand, the accusation is no more than a desperate smear.

No sting

There was, of course, one working class force that did contest the election - and that is the Workers and Socialist Party (Wasp), set up originally on the initiative of comrades from the Democratic Socialist Movement. The DSM is the South African affiliate of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International.

I must admit that I had half-expected Wasp to win a seat or two - thanks to

mainly CWI funding, it had raised the R330,000 (£18,900) deposit needed to contest nationally, and in three provincial elections, which were held concurrently. After all, it needed only to pick up one-400th of the national vote - which translated into 46,000 votes across the country, as it turned out - to be guaranteed a seat (and retain its deposit). But it could only manage a demoralising 8,331 votes (0.05%), finishing 21st out of the 29 "parties" contesting (behind, for example, the Bushbuckridge Residents Association, with its 15,271 votes).

The comrades had actually gained some prominence back in 2012 as a result of their campaigning amongst miners (including around Marikana, scene of the police murder of 34 strikers in that year) - and also as a result of becoming another target of SACP witch hunting as a consequence. But that was before the formation of Wasp - it was the DSM that had made the national news for those few weeks in 2012.

"We are, of course, disappointed in the low vote, which was below our expectations," write the comrades on the Wasp website. They go on to explain:

Unfortunately, Wasp has not been able to consolidate our position amongst the mineworkers. Despite the crucial role of the founders of Wasp - the Democratic Socialist Movement - in the move of the majority of mineworkers from the treacherous, ANC-aligned National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to the previously marginal Association of Mining and Construction Workers (Amcu), the Amcu leadership has done everything to remove our influence among the mineworkers. DSM and Wasp members and supporters have been victimised and expelled from the union, frequently leading to the loss of their jobs.

The new Workers Association Union (WAU) has attempted to take advantage of demoralisation among sections of the mineworkers in what is now a three-month-long wage strike in the platinum sector. The lie has been spread by the Amcu leadership, disgracefully encouraged by tiny, jealous forces on 'the left', that Wasp is behind this scab union. Thus, combined with the hostility from the Amcu leadership, and the understandable 'closing of ranks' by the mineworkers in the midst of a life-and-death strike, Wasp found it very hard to even campaign on the platinum belt, with some comrades even facing death threats.³

No doubt such intimidation played its part in Wasp's disappointing result. However, the failure of Numsa and other Cosatu dissidents to even respond to Wasp overtures for a joint electoral challenge, let alone come on board or simply recommend support, was also highly significant, if not unsurprising.

But Wasp had also approached another party to try to establish some kind of electoral cooperation. The comrades report:

Last August there were discussions between Wasp and the EFF, where we proposed forming an electoral bloc and standing joint lists of candidates in order to unite the anti-ANC vote, a key strategic objective. However, as important as that was,

the important differences between Wasp and EFF on nationalisation, socialism and other issues required that we maintain the right to debate these questions in front of the working class and poor. In the wake of Marikana, assisting the working class in achieving political clarity on the tasks necessary for the socialist transformation of society was fundamental.

Unfortunately, the EFF rejected our proposal of an electoral bloc/alliance and demanded the effective liquidation of Wasp and closing down of discussion on programmatic and political questions ... If Wasp and EFF had been able to come to a principled agreement, such an electoral bloc could have acted as a bridge to the working class to unite with the EFF's forces, at least for the sake of giving the ANC a bloody nose in the 2014 elections.⁴

I have strong doubts about all this. The EFF leaders may not be the crypto-fascists of the SACP's absurd claims, but they are hardly principled partisans of the working class. While it is perfectly acceptable to form alliances, including temporary electoral pacts, with non-working class forces, Malema's unsavoury crew are hardly the prime material for a working class party. (And in what way is the need to "unite the anti-ANC vote" - in all its various forms - a "key strategic objective"?). Mind you, since Wasp had persuaded Moses Mayekiso - former union militant, turned ANC MP, turned 'tenderpreneur' - to head its national list, perhaps we should not be too surprised by its approach to Malema.

It has to be said, however, that, whatever our misgivings about the likes of Mayekiso, Wasp's manifesto was far to the left of anything that the DSM's comrades of the Socialist Party in England and Wales would contemplate putting before voters. Wasp stood on a programme of full (national) socialism.⁵

One positive aspect of the South African elections was the further marginalisation of, on the one side, the Afrikaner reactionaries of the Vryheidsfront Plus (Freedom Front Plus) and, on the other, the Zulu-tribalist Inkatha Freedom Party. The VP, once the recipients of substantial support from amongst embittered apartheid nostalgics, gained only 123,364 votes (0.86%), compared to over 400,000 back in 1994. As for the IFP, its vote fell yet again - this time its support was halved to 441,854 (2.40%). Even in what used to be called Zululand - KwaZulu-Natal - its vote stood at only around 10%.

Zulus make up South Africa's largest ethnic/language group and, although for the time being the IFP is still the fourth largest party, with 10 MPs, it is certainly a progressive development that Zulus mostly now regard themselves first and foremost as South Africans like any other ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. <http://efffighters.org.za/documents/economic-freedom-fighters-founding-manifesto>.
2. *Umsebenzi* May 2014.
3. <http://workersocialistparty.co.za/elections-2014-wasps-analysis>.
4. *Ibid.*
5. See 'SACP plumbs the depths' *Weekly Worker* April 17.

EGYPT

'Road map to democracy' sham

The coup may have been aimed at the Muslim Brotherhood, writes **Yassamine Mather**, but now the working class is under attack too

Two presidential elections - at the end of May in Egypt and in early June in Syria - aim at consolidating the authoritarian rule of those already in power. In Egypt the presidential poll will be followed by parliamentary elections as part of the so-called 'road map to democracy' - a process started by the army, which it hopes will legitimise its control after the coup of July 2013. In Syria, an increasingly confident Bashar al-Assad will confront two junior allies in an election where the results are already clear to everyone.

Both elections mark the defeat of the courageous struggles of the peoples of the region, who despite all the odds rose up against dictatorship, economic hardship and political interference by the west and the oil-rich Gulf states. I will return to Syria in another article, but this one will focus on Egypt.

Former general Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi, the mastermind of last year's coup, will have one challenger in the May 26-27 presidential election, Nasserite Hamdeen Sabbahi. One of the main opposition groups, the Muslim Brotherhood, is not only barred from standing, but in the last few weeks 1,019 members and supporters have been sentenced to death, while most of its leadership are in prison or in exile. Other potential candidates have declared the process a sham and are calling for a boycott.

Repression

Unlike most senior Egyptian military commanders, Al-Sissi is not a war veteran. However, he has spent time in the US, where he attended military schools. He also served as military attaché in Saudi Arabia and enjoyed good relations with the Saudis. This has helped his administration, which since the ousting of MB president Mohamed Mursi has relied on Saudi financial support, as well as \$16 billion in loans from the Gulf states.

Sissi was a member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which controlled Egypt from president Hosni Mubarak's resignation in January 2011 until the Muslim Brotherhood's victory in presidential elections in June 2012. When Mursi came to power he appointed Sissi - a devout Muslim, who was considered to be an ally of the Brotherhood - commander-in-chief and minister of defence.

Eleven months later, following demonstrations against Mursi in major cities across Egypt, it was Sissi's ultimatum of July 3 2013 that began the downfall of the Islamic party. Sissi warned that the army would intervene if the government did not respond to "the will of the people" and end the crisis within 48 hours. The same day, army helicopters flew over Tahrir Square showering anti-Mursi protesters with thousands of Egyptian flags. The crowds cheered and some responded with the slogan, "The people and the army are one hand". Little did they know that this was the beginning of a return to military rule.

Immediately after the military coup, Sissi announced he had no intention of taking office. However, in March he declared he would be standing as a 'civilian' candidate. Just a day earlier, the interim government had rearranged the 'roadmap to democracy', bringing forward the date of the presidential poll so that it would be held before parliamentary elections. This was seen by most as an attempt to use a projected Sissi landslide victory to get better results in the more contested



Easy to predict who will win

parliamentary elections.

Sissi has presided over months of repression. In the true tradition of Middle Eastern dictators he labels anyone who disagrees with him a terrorist. In April 2014, for example, the Egyptian interim government banned the April 6 movement - a move which puts in danger the lives of its members and supporters. A court accused the organisation that played a crucial part in the 2011 uprising of "defaming the country and colluding with foreign parties". The movement had opposed Mursi, but had also spoken out against the repression imposed by the interim authorities.

Last week in a televised interview Sissi promised to "finish the Muslim Brotherhood", claiming that all Egyptians reject reconciliation with it. But the MB has not gone away. True, it is now categorised as a terrorist organisation and is facing the worst repression in its 86-year history. However, this is an organisation used to a semi-clandestine existence. Its main problem is regaining the confidence of other opponents of military rule. MB in power was as repressive as Mubarak and never managed to deliver on its promises of social and economic equality. As a result it is unlikely to win back the kind of support that paved the way for the election of Mursi. In fact by the time of the coup Mursi's support had shrunk considerably - down to the hard-core, loyalist Islamists.

His opponents are right to point out that one of the reasons Sissi is standing for elections is the need to protect the huge economic investments made by the military in every aspect of the Egyptian economy - from the energy sector to bottled water companies, from real estate and telecommunications to shopping compounds and holiday resorts. He is campaigning for the addition of a new clause to the constitution, which would stop "inappropriate" interference in the army budget.

However, Sissi remains popular as the man who has brought some stability after years of conflict.

Nasserite

His only opponent will be the Nasserite, Hamdeen Sabbahi. According to his supporters, Sabbahi has been a long-time advocate of Arab unity and an independent foreign policy. He has promised to revoke a controversial law passed in autumn of 2013 which puts severe restrictions on any protest in Egypt.

Sabbahi's political activities started

in the student movement and in 1973 he was elected president of the Cairo University student union. During the demonstrations against food price rises proposed by Anwar Sadat in 1977, Sabbahi, who was a journalist at the time, publicly confronted the Egyptian president. He was subsequently banned from reporting or appearing in the state media and he was forced to look for another career. Between the late 1970s and 2011 Sabbahi worked as a publisher, and during Mubarak's presidency he was elected twice to the Egyptian parliament. He participated in the 2011 uprising that ousted Mubarak, and was a candidate in the presidential elections of 2012, coming third with 4.8 million votes. His allies say Mursi offered him the role of vice-president and he refused.

Opposition figures criticise Sabbahi's participation in the 2014 election, accusing him of legitimising a sham process. However, Sabbahi is no revolutionary - since July 3 he has supported the country's new military-backed government together with its transitional 'road map' and ban on all Muslim Brotherhood activities. He presents himself as the man most capable of protecting the new regime in Egypt.

The difference between the two contenders is more pronounced when it comes to international issues, where Sabbahi is critical of Egypt's relations with the United States and Israel. He has spoken in support of the Palestinian resistance and the Palestinians' "legitimate rights against occupation". However, Sabbahi and Al-Sissi share an admiration of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia for helping Egypt in its hour of need.

When the election campaign started, Sabbahi was supposed to be the token opposition candidate, Robert Fisk predicting an 80% victory for Sissi. While the gap might be narrowing, most Egyptians expect Sissi to win by a large margin. The man who calls himself "a new-era Nasserite" is unlikely to emerge victorious, but even if he did he would soon realise that in a world where the US remains the hegemon power, where survival of the Egyptian economy will depend on loans from the International Monetary Fund and the Gulf states, pursuing an independent foreign policy is an illusion. On Arab unity, on Palestine and on social justice he would be as ineffective as Mursi.

Economy

For the last few months Egypt's economy has survived courtesy

of loans and grants from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - in particular Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait who between them pledged \$12 billion in economic assistance. Many Egyptians are concerned at the loss of autonomy and the political costs associated with it. The aid appears to be conditional on further repression of the Brotherhood - a rather bizarre demand, as the Brotherhood's own finances were allegedly linked to Saudi and Gulf support.

There is no doubt that the Egyptian economy has been more stable than in the previous two years. The Egyptian pound remains weak, but it has not depreciated further. Although unemployment remains high, the official rate of inflation has not risen above 11%, which is considered manageable.

According to the Lebanon *Daily Star*, "From the standpoint of investors and financial markets, all of this has instilled confidence in Egypt. Stocks rallied by over 40% in the second half of 2013 and the country's foreign reserves reached \$17.4 billion by the end of last month. This approached an all-time high level of foreign reserves in the three years since the uprisings of 2011, nearing the \$18.9 billion reached in August 2013" (May 12).

No doubt GCC support for Egypt will not last for ever - the price of oil is not rising and some of the Arab emirates are concerned about their own future. Saudi Arabia's main worry has been to avoid the spreading of the Arab spring to the Gulf region. If the fiscal position of GCC countries is further reduced, aid to Egypt will be the first casualty.

But in the meantime, in exchange for funds from Saudi Arabia, Egypt is expected to fall in line with its regional policy. Cairo's changing position on Syria gives a good indication of what is in store. Mursi and the MB supported the Syrian opposition, including the Jihadists. However, immediately after his overthrow, Egypt took a more neutral position regarding Syria, in line with Saudi and western concerns about sections of the Syrian opposition.

The interim government hopes that after the election Egypt will be in a good position to re-engage with other international creditors - including the IMF, which is not concerned about 'human rights' abuses, of course. The delay in approaching the IMF was mainly caused by the interim government's fears that the austerity

conditions it would impose would make its presidential hopeful unpopular.

Sissi has come up with some gems about the economy during the election campaign: "Has anyone considered giving a month's salary to help the poor survive? Has anyone thought about going to the university on foot every day to save money for the country?" On the other hand, he has encouraged expectations of an imminent rise in living standards through his own exaggerated comments: "Egypt will be as important as the world." In fact he is preparing the country for an austerity policy that would involve higher taxation ("giving a month's salary?") and less spending on public services.

If elected Sissi has plans to roll out a \$143.3 million stimulus package over 18 months to subsidise a restructuring of the telecommunications, manufacturing and tourism industries. There seem to be no plans to cut subsidies to the industrial sector - officials are keen to encourage exile capital to return.

The question is, how long can the new president survive the inevitable explosion that will follow after expectations of better living standards fail to materialise and Egyptians face further economic hardship?

Workers' struggles

The strikes of spring 2013 played an important role in weakening the Mursi government and in recent months workers' actions seem to signal further confrontation with the newly elected president. Strikes and sit-ins have been held in the postal services, in public hospitals and in the textile industries. According to Ahmed Mahmoud, president of the Cairo branch of the Independent Union for Public Transport Workers, "Businessmen in this country have sucked the blood of the people - and the one who is responsible is Abdel Fatah al-Sissi." Workers have been demanding better pay, more job security and, in the case of the public sector, implementation of the agreed national minimum wage.

More than 25% of Egyptians live below the official poverty line of \$570 per year, according to government statistics. Average salaries are around \$100 a month. Over the past three years of political turmoil, the price of basic goods has skyrocketed because of inflation, a sinking Egyptian currency and the depletion of the country's foreign currency reserves.

In response to the protests the interim administration has arrested many labour activists, forcing others to go underground. Soon after the coup, police attacked workers who had occupied a private steel company in protest at low pay and dangerous conditions. And on March 3, major-general Mohamed Shams summoned 23 union activists to the regional military headquarters and threatened them with possible investigation by the country's secret police regarding their alleged "collaboration with terrorism". One activist said: "The arrests scare the workers, but they also make them more defiant."

All over the country, workers are being told that unless they sign agreements accepting current pay and conditions they will be accused of "cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood" - and, of course, such an association could now mean arrest and imprisonment ●

UKRAINE

Failed transition and crisis

The international working class must reassert itself to prevent a descent into barbarism, writes **Hillel Ticktin**

The situation in Ukraine can be seen as part of the global crisis in terms of both the current depression and the failure of the so-called transition from Stalinism, which affects the countries of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, even if in different ways. For the countries involved the two political and economic changes are merging into one. In so doing, they have become part of a global crisis of capitalism.

Neil Buckley and Roman Olearchuk, in their article on Ukraine in the *Financial Times* in February, refer to a mishandled and stalled transition, which means that there is a need to start from scratch.¹ If anything, they understate the reality and the problems. As implied in their statement, attempts have been made to bring Ukraine into a capitalist reality and failed. The problem is not that the leaders, presidents Kravchuk, Kuchma, Yushchenko and Yanukovich, were either stupid or corrupt, as may be alleged. Indeed the charge of corruption is now commonly thrown at many regimes in the world in order to explain their problems or crises.

After Stalinism

In this respect, I take issue with Mike Macnair, in that he has declared in a *Weekly Worker* article that the USSR was not a system.²

True, it was not a mode of production. Its laws were conflictual rather than contradictory - or, if you prefer, the forces governing it were conflicted - and consequently it could not last. However, forces or laws *did* govern it. There were reproducible social relations, including those of social control, which constituted a system of its own kind. They were exploitative and not accepted by the population. It was these forms that have to be removed. (Mike Macnair said that I used the word 'totalitarian', but I have never used it. Atomisation is another matter.) Unfortunately, it was the very fact Stalinism was a system that made it so overwhelmingly oppressive.

Corruption is a result, not a cause, of the present malaise, even if it contributes to discontent. The fundamental cause of the failure lies in the inability to change the nature of the political economy away from the old Stalinist forms of control to modern, capitalist ones.

The industry or institution under Stalinism was based on atomised workers, who were effectively allowed to work at their own rate in their own way, in so far as that was possible, as a trade-off for their lack of control and low wages. The need to switch to what is regarded as efficient working amounts to working at a more pressurised pace with more attention to detail. The result has to be one in which the product is not defective and is reliable, not liable to break down in a short time. Work, whether white-collar or blue-collar, is generally mind-bogglingly boring, unless highly skilled. Even then much highly skilled work, such as research, can be stressful and boring. The compensation can lie in the comradeship of the workplace, the control from below through the collectivity of a functioning union, in promotion, and in the rewards.

But the problem is that these are not present in the transition. Pay remains very low, and control is entirely from above. The compensation in ceding a limited control to the individual worker cannot be allowed in a market-based system, which is part of a global marketplace. Workers in



Sparked from below, hijacked by right

the third world are not contented with their lot, but the very high level of unemployment and the need to earn an albeit low subsistence wage force them to work. The situation is not stable in third world countries and indeed in the first world either, but the market still rules for the time being.

The problem for the former Stalinist countries is how to get to the situation of developed countries, where discontent can be controlled through unemployment, promotion, compliant unions and political parties. Thus far the shift to the market has made things worse economically, even though direct political repression of the Stalinist kind has been removed. For those parts of the former Soviet Union where there are supplies of raw materials, such as oil, gas, metals, particularly precious metals such as gold and platinum, furs, timber, etc, the situation is less pressing. In Russia the collapse in the standard of living following the end of the Soviet Union was brought to an end with the rise in commodity prices and the use of the economic surplus so generated for the public purse. The same, however, was not true of Ukraine, although it did benefit from the export of steel.

Unfortunately, the result of the process described is disastrous. Ukraine has the lowest growth in GDP of the former Stalinist countries over the period since the end of the USSR. Labour productivity in those countries is generally low, making their industrial products globally uncompetitive. Eastern Ukraine is industrially linked to Russia, making parts for its industries - the latter are not globally competitive either. Although Putin has talked of investing in industry at various times, including the present, Russian industry of the earlier Soviet vintage (outside of military production) remains a rust belt, while the rest is limited (see below). Even in the case of the military sector, in both Russia and Ukraine it has been drastically scaled back from Soviet times.

One has also to note that the events in Ukraine were sparked from below, because of the general discontent which exists in the society (as, of course, in

Russia). It was hijacked by the existing organisations, but that does not alter the fact that the population wants a higher standard of living and better opportunities in life. As everywhere else, they demand a measure of equality - rather than an end to what is called corruption, but is, in fact, part of the failure of the transition.

Politically, this takeover of the movement from below was expressed in the way that the rightwing political parties - who had been holding their meetings/demonstrations at European Square, as opposed to the ordinary population, who met at the Maidan - themselves moved over to the Maidan, where they assumed control. It has also been pointed out that those taking part there were not, by and large, ordinary blue-collar workers. Since there is a concentration of industry in the east, this is significant.

The failure of the Russian and Ukrainian economies does not just rest on their lack of competitiveness, but the fact that, in an age of monopoly firms, global monopoly capitalist industry will not let them in. Generally, the enterprises established by western firms are of the consumer-goods type like Ikea, financial companies or assembly industries. Even if one takes the shining example of Skoda in the Czech Republic, it is 70% owned by Volkswagen, with whom it shares its parts. Indeed, the example of the assembly industry is that of automobile companies like General Motors and Volkswagen that have set up plants in Russia and Ukraine. If they had wanted to invest in heavy or engineering industries, they had the opportunity over two decades to do so. Obviously, Boeing or Airbus are not going to set up another plant in the former Stalinist countries, nor is General Electric. Given the dominance of finance capital, the western firms would want to make quick profits, and not invest over the long term in order to rebuild Russian or Ukrainian industry.

IMF conditions

The conditions that the International Monetary Fund has applied, in general, to its loans to the former Stalinist countries amount to an

attempt to establish capitalist-type incentives within the economy and society. In the Soviet Union, rents, utilities, transport, education and health were either free or very cheap, and official taxes very low (implicit taxes are something else). In a sense, the IMF officials are only doing their job. The IMF wants to fully establish money as the universal equivalent and so an effective reward system and the basis for capital in order to establish what they see as a fully functioning capitalist system. That requires a substantial reserve army of labour, inequality of incomes among workers and high salaries for managers, with goods and services sold at cost, plus profits. However, it says a lot that former Soviet countries have not got there till now. The Ukrainians did not rejoice at the IMF terms - they made it clear that they did not like them, but felt they had no choice.³

The upshot of this discussion is that the Ukrainian population is being set up to endure 10 to 20 years of misery in order to establish a capitalist form, which, even in the best case, cannot compete on the world market. This situation has been clear for some time. Attempts by successive governments in Ukraine to implement IMF-type reforms, which would inevitably lead to a declining standard of living, have been jettisoned after protests. As a result Ukraine has a chequered history with the IMF.⁴ Given the need to win electoral support, governing parties have refused to implement IMF conditions.⁵ IMF demands include a reduced deficit, higher energy prices and a declining exchange rate.⁶ Assuming that the Ukrainian ruling group manages to pull together through the current crisis, it will need to find a way of persuading the population to accept the punishment they will suffer. They already have far-right ministers in critical departments - security, army, communications - and it does not take much imagination to see that a dictatorial form, however cloaked, is on the cards. This is not to say that the Ukrainian government is itself fascist.

However, it is not possible to disregard the role of Pravyi Sektor and Svoboda, as if anti-Semitism and

support for a nationalist grouping which dealt with the Nazis is of no importance. President Vladimir Putin did score a point when he referred to the silence of Israel in regard to these manifestations of anti-Semitism. It is clear that there is no anti-Semitic pogrom in sight, but none of the groups victimised by the Nazis can sleep easy in Ukraine today. The west as a whole is tarnished by its self-evident need to accept the help of the far right in order to establish control over the population of Ukraine.

On the one hand, the population itself is very worried by what has happened and what might happen and, on the other, the current governing group is being forced to admit to a very problematic future. The big advantage of the far right is its internal discipline and willingness to use force and fear as modes of action. Its nationalist appeal, combined with the use of centuries-old anti-Semitism, provides a convenient mask for what is being imposed. At the same time, the dominant party of the right, that of Tymoshenko, can appear as the sensible and moderate nationalists, who have vetoed the downgrading of the Russian language and opposed anti-Semitism.

The Ukrainians have no monopoly on anti-Semitism. The revived Cossacks have not been backward in that sphere, starting immediately after the end of the USSR.⁷ The issue in Russia has been more general, in that the Stalinist system was itself anti-Semitic from its inception, so that both the present regimes, in Ukraine and Russia, have to be judged in that context, not simply in terms of Ukrainian nationalism.

Russian situation

No-one on the left can support Putin and the ruling group in Russia. Working class activists are victimised, beaten up or even killed. The imprisonment of Pussy Riot for their protests was only one of the forms of state repression now current. Various people have pointed to the changing economic situation in Russia as the reason for the political shift to still greater repression. Matters are not made easier by the way opposition

demonstrations have been controlled by the right, which on one occasion at least refused to allow the left to join in.

It is precisely the failure of the transition in Russia, and not just the Ukraine, that forces Putin to adopt both increased repression and more intense levels of nationalism. Putin himself is identified more with the protectionist sector of the Russian elite, which wants to revive and develop industry behind the necessary tariff barriers and with the required subsidies. Historically, such political stances have been associated with a nationalist programme.

While the Putin regime has been explicit about its selection of strategic industries required to be held in Russian hands, and something like 62% of GDP comes from government-controlled entities, there has been no clarity as to which way it will go from here. It is clear that the elite is divided between those who want privatisation and those who want to use the state, and it is also clear that the division has existed throughout the last two decades. The descendants of the old Stalinist apparatus continue to play a crucial role both in the economy and in politics.

The problem here is that Russian industry remains uncompetitive, while Anglo-American capital remains globally dominant. As a result, attempts to complete the transition are doomed, unless the elite wants to subordinate itself to US finance capital. Logically, a section clearly does want to do so, but that leaves little scope for the remainder of the elite, most particularly that associated with the bureaucracy. Putin, himself, has played to both sections of the elite, with a clear bias towards the apparatus. The issue is not resolved and western capital is keen to force the question. This is not something where the left can take sides, since we are talking of two sections of a ruling - exploiting - group. There is always a possibility that the regime will tilt further towards state control in order to stabilise its political economy.

IMF reports demand more privatisation and the question is whether such pressure will not ultimately be successful. Capital has been leaving Russia, on and off, ever since the end of the USSR, as the rich takes its money out of the country. Some of it has been re-imported under the guise of loans or using other forms which ensure an easy return for the west. Much emphasis has been placed on the loss of money from Russia in the present period. Some \$64 billion left the country in the first quarter of 2014 alone,⁸ and there are predictions of the outflow reaching \$100-150 billion in 2015 - made by Yevgeny Yasin, a former economy minister under Boris Yeltsin. He said that this was the result when investors and business do not trust the political system.⁹ He then went on to say that this has to change.¹⁰

There is a clear possibility, given the view just quoted of the liberal wing of the regime, that it will prefer to do a deal with the west and go for further privatisation and full incorporation into the world market, and so full subordination to US finance capital. However, if that does not happen and capital flight combined with sanctions continues, it will drive Putin or his successor to introduce strict exchange control and the use of various forms of economic and political coercion to retrieve as much as possible from the various havens in the west.

Russian nationalism is the ideology for the implementation of this policy. In principle, it would be popular, in that it would control the oligarchs and possibly even redistribute income, while driving towards genuine full employment. This would be similar to the Chinese model and, as with the Chinese economy, it would retain a subordinated market. It would have the advantage of avoiding the worst of the problems outlined for the future

of Ukraine.

The point of showing the possible evolution of the Russian regime is to indicate that it remains undetermined and historically unstable, but with a drive towards nationalism as a mode of control. The liberal alternative, while theoretically possible, has already been tried and failed. That is why Putin is in power. It is a wonder that these liberal economists have learned nothing from their earlier failure, which will be repeated if they come to power under the influence of the west and internal failure.

Behind the conflict

The above argument has an implicit corollary, in that western policy continues to be one in which it pressurises all regimes towards private enterprise and the contemporary form of finance capital. Ruling class ideologists in the west portray all regimes which have not taken this road in a negative light. However much the left itself might excoriate these same regimes, the reasons are very different.

As far as one can see, US policy towards Russia and China is one in which it is trying to be both formally friendly, but also highly critical, to the point where it finances and assists oppositions, both legal and illegal. Historically, the USA has supported authoritarian regimes of the worst kind - most particularly in South America but also elsewhere. The authoritarian nature of Russia and China is not in question, but the antagonism towards Russia remains constant. At first sight this is not consistent. After all, Putin is a Christian with his own personal chapel and he rejects Marxism and the Soviet Union. He supports the market. Russia does not support the left. It persecutes militant socialists internally and is critical of anything on the left internationally. What then is the issue?

We have implied above that it is the question of the role of the state or central administration. It is also the relative independence of Russia and China from the imperial power, both politically and economically. Colonialism may have been phased out, but imperialism remains in its modern, more complex form, and that is the ultimate answer.

Since the negative attitude of the imperial hegemon is shown in a thousand ways, the Russian regime is placed in a position where it must defend itself. This is all the more the case because the USA has shown itself untrustworthy in relation to its allies. Saddam Hussein was supported by the USA in the 1980s, but then attacked in the 90s and overthrown in the Iraq war. Muammar Gaddafi gave up nuclear weapons and showed he was willing to cooperate with the west, but was overthrown and killed. Both China and Russia worry that they could also be put on the list of regimes which are expendable. Inevitably, they have reached the conclusion that they cannot support the further undermining of the formal independence of countries, however limited that might be.

Effectively, the Blair-Bush doctrine threw out the rights of nations to self-determination, as propounded originally by US president Woodrow Wilson during World War I. By so doing, they destabilised the situation of national ruling classes and elites throughout the world. Inevitably those national ruling classes and elites sought to shore up their defences through a variety of devices and forms.

The possession of an atomic bomb then became the ultimate defence, even if it could not be delivered with any accuracy, or at all. Russia, of course, has an arsenal of nuclear weapons, while Ukraine gave them up. The latter decision showed a degree of naivety which is hard to credit. However, the essential point is that the ruling class/elite in Russia, not just Putin, is not eager to be placed in a position where

it is subordinate to the control of the imperial power of the United States, the finance-capitalist hegemon. The shift in Ukraine from being in the shadow of Russia, even if not under direct control, to becoming part of the alliances connected or controlled by the United States does threaten that position.

When we consider the case of the annexation of the Crimea by Russia, it has to be seen in this context. It is great power politics, even if Russia may not be such a great power itself. Looked at from the point of view of the left, or of the working class, it is not something over which to fight. Abstractly considered, the annexation of territory of another country has to be opposed. The referendum in the Crimea was not held under reasonable circumstances, so cannot be taken seriously. The reason for the Russian action is a rational form of self-defence for the ruling class - but socialists cannot support the defensive actions of the ruling class, especially when it is at the expense of another country.

Relations between national sections of the ruling class have taken warlike forms over centuries, but the aim of the working class is to abolish the ruling class, and with it all wars and annexations. It is equally rational for the Ukrainian ruling class or a section of it to seek succour in the arms of the west. It is a paradox that formerly Stalinist countries should become the global defenders of the right of nations to self-determination in this skewed way.

Tragedy

Ukraine and so the Ukrainian population is in a tragic situation for which the only solution is socialism. The tragedy arises out of its history, in which its people were effectively colonised, subordinated and exploited by the Russian tsarist system for centuries.

Their liberation began with the Russian Revolution of 1917, where they were effectively conquered in the course of the civil war. The Bolsheviks, who had little support in Ukraine in October 1917, took power and changed their policy under Rakovski, when they realised after some time that they had to adopt a policy of Ukrainianisation: ie, undo the subordination to Russia both in culture and in the economy.

The question of political independence was another issue, but the matter was resolved by the Stalinist counterrevolution, which led to a policy of Russianisation of the constituent parts of the USSR as a whole. The debates on the nature of the initial Bolshevik attempts have been irrelevant as a result. The disastrous famine of the early 30s, which led to millions dying, particularly in Ukraine, remains a major issue, especially for Ukrainian nationalists. The appalling Stalinist policy, in place until the end of the USSR, is enough reason to understand those who take a strong line on the independence of Ukraine itself. One should note, however, that the deaths from the famine in Kazakhstan accounted for a higher proportion of the population than in Ukraine, and that the suffering of the peasants and workers of Ukraine was not unique in the USSR.

There is also an unfortunate, centuries-old history of anti-Semitism. However, in regard to the latter the nationalist movement which emerged on the fall of the Soviet Union did condemn it. The present revival of anti-Semitism is part of the continuing tragedy, reflecting the inability of the working class to put forward its own internationalist and humanitarian programme as part of its overall demands.

Unfortunately, the tragedy has the potential to become a disaster in the not too distant future. Already, we have had the killing and injury of dozens of people in Odessa in and around the trade union building at the hands of the far right. The latter involved most particularly an organisation called

Borotba, which had split off from the youth league of the Communist Party. (It retains a Stalinist mindset and many Ukrainian leftwing organisations came out with a combined statement critical of it. Obviously they are confused, but that does not justify the horrifying torching and the killing of those who jumped out of the building.)

The mass murder of the demonstrators and others who had joined in indicates the current development of the governing group in Ukraine. It seems that the people involved in the attack related not just to the far right, but had been sent out by the authorities. Now that it is clear that the USA has supplied advisors and mercenaries who are trying to suppress the uprising in the east by force, the way is open for open warfare. It is unfortunate there is no influential leftwing organisation (although the miners took a more proletarian stance) and grievances have expressed themselves in the form of nationalism.

The west has placed all stress on the idea that Putin will invade the east of the Ukraine. That is not at all clear, although it is always possible. It has been pointed out that the Russian oligarchs who own many of the factories in the east of Ukraine do not want Russia to take control, so as to avoid the problems that would then ensue. Indeed, any invasion would have to deal with the majority in the east who do not want to be part of the Russian republic. Looked at from a *Realpolitik* point of view, it would be stupid of Putin to invade. He can get far more by not invading and watching the failure of Ukraine. The money projected so far from the IMF and the European Union, which could get up to \$30 billion, remains below the figure projected as necessary by the previous regime in Ukraine.

Reassertion

History knows of voids in the progress of humanity. When society went from feudalism to capitalism, there were parts of the world where the old system ceased to exist without the new coming into being, plunging the population into a political and economic void. We have already seen the utter confusion and mess which resulted after the Soviet Union ceased to exist. In effect, the people of the former Soviet Union are still living in that period. What makes everything more complicated is that the global power, the United States, is itself in decline and unable to manage a transition away from its direct domination without leaving disorder, confusion and a muddle, as is evident in the Middle East.

If we then look at the probable

result of an independent Ukraine, helped by the west, it is hard to be optimistic. The world is in transition from capitalism, the old order is in decline and so its leading power heads that decline. The attempt to restore the market in the former Soviet Union countries has not succeeded until now and we might ask whether it can ever succeed. Unfortunately, the working class in both Russia and Ukraine has not been able to act as a class in the classical sense. Effectively, however, it has acted, albeit unconsciously, as a class, in helping to stall the transition, by refusing to accept the worsening conditions demanded of it.

Unfortunately, this leaves the unresolved set of social relations we see today, which in its worsening threatens to dissolve into ethnic war, as it did in former Yugoslavia, or into demands for independence of entities too limited to sustain a viable economy without being supported externally.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism involved wide-ranging wars, vicious anti-Semitism, the spread of plague and other fatal diseases, not to speak of famine. We need the reassertion of the common humanity expressed in the international working class to prevent a repeat of that past catastrophe or a descent into the barbarism we saw during the inter-war period, and which is now beginning to show itself in Ukraine ●

Notes

1. The reference to the Ukraine transition is on February 27, by Neil Buckley and Roman Olearchyk: 'Ukraine: on the edge' (www.ft.com/cms/s/0/897c3cac-9fb4-11e3-94f3-00144feab7de.html#axzz2ZFZH5l5n): "Its situation is not as dire as in central Europe in 1989. Ukraine has not had communism since the Soviet Union collapsed 23 years ago. A market economy, although flawed, is in place. Ukrainians are freer and wealthier. But a mishandled and stalled transition means it must in some ways start from scratch."
2. 'Nothing but bathwater', May 8.
3. Heather Saul: "PM-designate Arseniy Yatsenyuk has warned 'extremely unpopular steps' would need to be taken to stabilise Ukraine's economy and politics" (*The Independent* February 27).
4. "The IMF loaned newly independent Ukraine about \$3.5 billion in the mid-1990s, several years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and another \$2.2 billion in 1998, an amount it later increased. Another one-year \$600 million loan followed in 2004, and a two-year \$16.4 billion loan was provided in 2008. The IMF last agreed to loan Ukraine \$15 billion in 2010, but froze the deal in 2011 after Kiev failed to implement the required reforms, including removing gas price subsidies. After reviewing why the last bailout went off track, the IMF's board in December said Kiev should get less money in any future bailout, and should be required to implement more economic reforms before it gets any IMF money." Reuters, Factbox: 'Ukraine's history with IMF bailouts', February 25: www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/25/us-ukraine-crisis-imf-idUSBREA101DT20140225.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Tony Barber *The Independent* October 20 1992.
8. Jack Farchy *Financial Times* April 26.
9. John Lloyd *Financial Times* April 26.
10. *Ibid.*

Communist University 2014
Saturday August 16 to Saturday August 23 inclusive

Goldsmiths University
Surrey House, 80 Lewisham Way,
New Cross, London, SE14 6PB

Full week, with accommodation: £200 (£250 solidarity, £110 concessions)
 Full week, no accommodation: £60 (£30 concessions)
 First weekend (one night's accommodation): £40 (£25)
 One day: £10 (£5). One session: £5 (£2.50)

POLEMIC

Exploitation and illusions about 'anti-imperialism'

Mike Macnair completes his reply to Ian Donovan

This is the second part of my reply to comrade Ian Donovan's April 17 article, 'Throwing babies out with the bathwater'. While the first part was on the 'Soviet question', this part will focus on issues of imperialism, 'anti-imperialism' and the 'anti-imperialist united front'.

I invite readers to look back at my first article in this exchange, 'Anti-imperialist illusions' (March 20), since much of what Ian has written on this issue simply has no purchase on my arguments there. In particular, Ian makes an amalgam between my position and the very different, so-called 'third camp' positions of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty or the Iranian and Iraqi Hekmatists, who do promote illusions in imperialist 'democracy' (in this respect, in fact, the Hekmatists' positions have got worse since 2004).

In spite of this dreadful confusion, however, the Hekmatists - among a number of other groups - were attempting to build workers' class organisations in Iraq. And the workers' class organisations which existed or were attempted to be built were targeted by the mosque-based militias in preference to targeting US and British forces (the Saudi-backed Sunni Islamists also targeted the Shia population, and the Shia Islamists the Sunni population), in contrast to the remnant-Ba'athist guerrillas, who did target the armed forces of the occupiers. To deny these facts or to attempt to prettify them, as Ian does, is to lie to the working class. More than anything else, "we must face the facts and call things by their right names; we must tell the workers the truth" (Lenin).¹

I argue against promoting illusions in imperialist 'democracy', and that imperialist domination and imperialist military operations are to be unequivocally opposed - but that it weakens this opposition to imperialism for the working class movement, either in the colonised countries or the imperialist countries, to hitch its wagon to the initiatives of the 'anti-imperialist' petty bourgeoisie (or of pre-capitalist strata like landlords, priests, Buddhist monks or imams).

Ian, moreover, simply fails to engage with the absolute core of my argument both in relation to the 'anti-imperialist front' and in relation to Respect. That is, that attaining the class-political independence of the proletariat as a class - which has been lost over the 20th century through the nationalist class-collaborationism of social democracy, 'official communism' and its left variants - is a precondition for the ability of the workers' movement to engage effective tactics towards the movements of the other subordinate classes.

As I said in the first part of this reply, I also invite readers to look at the articles making up the debate in this paper in 2004 and those I wrote on Iraq in 2004-08. It seems to me that Ian's analysis of events (in the middle part of his April 17 article) is obviously characterised by rose-tinted self-deception as to the actual political dynamics of Iraq under imperialist occupation and of the 'resistance' groupings. I will add only one point. Ian alleges that Fallujah and Najaf/Karbala in spring 2004 were coordinated actions, rather than (as seems to me more likely) independent responses to the dreadful

'Bremer regime'. But, even if they were coordinated, the problem would remain that the leaderships of these movements, by virtue of the sectarian banners under which they mobilised, could not create broader unity.

'Divide and rule' is both a proverbial maxim of government and proverbially ancient: traditionally attributed, among others, to Philip of Macedon (382-336 BCE). It was particularly practised by the 19th and 20th century European colonial empires, and came to the centre of US geopolitical operations after the defeat of the 'modernising', 'developmental', semi-colonial orientation in Indochina. Sectionalist ideologies of revolt play into the hands of this imperial policy.

The various militias in occupied Iraq were particularly transparent examples of this problem, and at the end of the day the US was able to defeat them in detail. The resulting regime is sectarian and close to Iran. It does not correspond to the 'neocon' (always utopian) ideology of creating a liberal regime in Iraq by invasion, demolishing the Ba'athist state and economic 'shock therapy'. But none of this is the same thing as a defeat for the US state's imperial project, which was never really about this ideology, but always a continuation of existing US policy. Since the failure in Vietnam, this policy has been mainly about inflicting destruction on its targets, and thereby re-demonstrating the US's top-dog status to those who were tempted to defy US orders (in the periphery countries) or to manoeuvre for long-term potential rivalry with the US (in Europe and China).

Anti-imperialism

Ian says (of the Irish civil war): "The fact that one side was then fighting imperialism while the other was killing them on imperialism's behalf is a difference that compels Marxists to take sides"; and later, on (hypothetical) uprisings led by the South African ANC: "... a refusal to take such a public side in such uprisings would be rightly seen as shameful."² This is not an argument, but a mere reassertion of his position that it is necessary to 'take a public side'.

It should be clear, then, that for Ian it is not sufficient to publicly advocate the defeat of UK military operations overseas (CPGB did so in the Iraq war) nor to argue practically for the creation of the most effective possible anti-war movement as the only way possible to contribute to such a defeat (again our policy throughout the war). 'Taking a public side' is for Ian the essential dividing line.

He makes four substantive arguments on the issue. In the order in which they appear in his article, they are, first,

The early Comintern's 'anti-imperialist united front' (AIUF) is a complete red herring in this debate. That was about some level of political bloc between the Soviet government and various leaderships of colonial liberation movements, some of whom had achieved governmental power. It is perfectly possible to reject such blocs, and still advocate taking sides with uprisings led by such forces.

Second,

Mike asks whether various



Exploited by fathers and husbands

bourgeois and petty bourgeois trends which lead oppressed masses in struggles - for instance, in underdeveloped countries subject to imperialist aggression - should be regarded as part of the camp of the proletariat. Obviously with regard to the leaders themselves, the answer is usually no. But that does not exhaust the question. What of the masses that participate in such struggles? Even when they are not directly part of the working class, as in oppressed sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, etc, they are still part of our constituency, insofar as there is a democratic content to their struggles.

Third,

... whatever similarities may have existed between the colonial adventures, slavery and the like of early capitalism, and the imperialism that emerged in the late 19th century, the distinction between a social system in its period of ascent, despite its brutalities, playing a progressive role and qualitatively increasing the productive power of humanity, and the imperialism of the 20th century onwards, which threatens to destroy all these advances and more, plunging humanity into barbarism, is fundamental.

And fourth,

any of the things he seeks to throw overboard - support for the struggles of peoples in underdeveloped countries against imperialist aggression - are not post-1917 deformations, but basic components of the socialist programme, going back to 1885, when the British Marxist pioneer, William Morris,

gave courageous public support to the resistance in Sudan led by Mohammad Ahmad 'al-Mahdi' against the British general Gordon (which resulted in Gordon's death).

Ian's argument on Respect merely follows from his argument on imperialism and 'taking public sides'. That is, first, he claims (I would guess falsely, though I do not have time to look them up) that none of the old 'official' CPGB's 'unpopular fronts' ever supported resistance to the British in the colonies; and, second, he says that Respect

actually bore real resemblance to an electoral version of the early Comintern's 'anti-imperialist united front', which Mike was misanalogueing in his article. Far from being the kind of counterrevolutionary instrument that the Stalinist popular fronts were, this was a flawed tactic aimed at promoting real struggle against imperialism and hopefully (in the eyes of its revolutionary component) a bridge to revolution.

In other words, for Ian, Respect's anti-imperialist character overrode the fact that George Galloway's position was explicitly the old 'official communist' project of a cross-class front or a 'rainbow coalition' along the lines of the campaign of left Democrat Jesse Jackson in the US; that the project correspondingly involved local careerists capable of moving from Labour to Respect and back, or to the Lib Dems or the Tories (documented in the *Weekly Worker* in the period); and that the Socialist Workers Party leadership round John Rees and Lindsey German was so determined to have a project consisting of the SWP and forces to its right that it actually

functioned itself as the right, deferring to a shadow of the petty bourgeoisie in the same way that (for Trotsky) the old mass communist parties, dealing (unlike the SWP) with real mass movements, deferred to what was no more than a shadow of the bourgeoisie.⁴

There is nothing, therefore, to be said about Respect which is independent of the question of imperialism.

The order in which the four arguments appear in Ian's article is not a logical order. I will respond to them in something more like a logical order: first, the issue of imperialism and capitalist decline; second, Ian's argument that "oppressed sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, etc ... are still part of our constituency ..."; third, Ian's appeal to William Morris's public statements in 1885; and fourth, his point on the Comintern's 'anti-imperialist united front' line, which is a trivial historical error, but by being an error evades the basic problem.

In all of what follows, as on the Soviet question in the first part of this reply, I defend mainly my own positions, rather than the CPGB's.

Decline and imperialism

There is a small step forward in Ian's argument, in that he admits that there are "similarities ... between the colonial adventures, slavery and the like of early capitalism, and the imperialism that emerged in the late 19th century". The essential point he fails to admit, which I have argued clearly in my introduction to *Karl Kautsky on colonialism*,⁵ is that there is no historical discontinuity between these phenomena: what changed in the later 19th century was merely that British imperialism, which was continuous throughout the period, encountered new and more serious competitors (France, USA, Germany), leading to an increase in formal colonialism; and that the Tories, facing the increased political significance of the working class after the Reform Act 1867, revived the 18th century ideology⁶ of British imperialism. The first of these points, that the growth of formal colonialism resulted from British responses to relative decline, was already clear to some of the Second International theorists.⁷

Ian argues that "the distinction between a social system in its period of ascent, despite its brutalities, playing a progressive role and qualitatively increasing the productive power of humanity, and the imperialism of the 20th century onwards, which threatens to destroy all these advances and more, plunging humanity into barbarism, is fundamental." But, first, this in effect underestimates the barbarism of the "progressive" phase of capitalism - the genocide of the native inhabitants of the Americas, the devastating effects on Africa of the Atlantic slave trade, and so on. And, second, it implicitly denies what is completely obvious: that 20th century capitalism has continued to 'qualitatively increase the productive power of humanity'. It is a grim paradox, but completely characteristic of capitalism, that one of the key symptoms of this increase should be 202 million people unemployed worldwide in 2013⁸ - but without those 202 million immediately starving.

Capitalism is in decline at its core,

and has been since the mid-19th century, as the capitalist class began to be more concerned about the problem of managing the proletariat than about developing and extending free markets. This turn was displayed *not* by continental European capitalist 'timidity' in 1848-49, which was merely normal capitalist behaviour in revolutionary crises (a more rapid movement from revolution to restoration than occurred in 1641-60 and in 1789-99, but still the same dynamic).⁹ Rather, in England the Ten Hour Act (1847) and other Factories Acts, on the one side, and the Limited Liability Act 1855, on the other, were concessions to the working class and the middle classes respectively, which *undermined* capitalist market incentives. This dynamic towards stultified regulated capitalism - *real* stultified capitalism, as opposed to *Stamokap* or the illusion of Soviet 'state' or 'statified' capitalism - has continued down to the present day, even if neoliberalism has been accompanied by fake privatisations and a shift of subsidies increasingly towards the middle rather than the working classes.

But, while capitalism has been in decline at its core, it has continued to expand at the periphery, at the expense of pre-capitalist forms of production and social relations, and of peasant and artisan production. And it has continued to expand in the sense of revolutionising the forces of production. It is increasingly unable to *control and regulate* them and they increasingly tend to turn into forces of destruction - both in the danger of wars with increasingly destructive weapons and in environmental destruction (on the largest scale in human-induced climate change). These developments indicate that a fundamental reorientation - away from the random 'growth' capitalism produces, and towards maximising *human* development, the aim of communism - is increasingly urgent.

It is clear, however, that the belief shared by the majority of the Second International theorists of imperialism and the Comintern theorists from Lenin on, and most spectacularly asserted in Trotsky's *Transitional programme* - that imperialism was a *new* result of the tendency of 'national' capitalism to overproduction and towards *Zusammenbruch* (general economic breakdown) - was false. The great world crisis of 1914-45 was a crisis of *British world hegemony* and *British financial tribute* and, once this had been got rid of and a new hegemon state - the USA - emerged, a new period of development could and did occur. As I have argued before,¹⁰ the 2008 crisis, its dreadful results in periphery countries and its dragging-on aftermath result, in the end, from the relative decline of the USA and its regime of tribute-extraction.

Capitalism generally develops faster than previous modes of production. We can therefore expect capitalist decline to proceed faster than the decline of the slave-owner urbanism of classical antiquity (roughly 1st century AD to 5th century in the west) or of feudalism (roughly 12th to 18th century). What we cannot and should not do is to infer that capitalism is immediately at a dead end, with the result that the *only* option for the subordinated classes other than the proletariat is socialism, hence that a *strategic* alliance between the proletariat and these classes is possible and necessary or that the rising of the other subordinated classes or groups *in itself* promotes the proletarian cause.

'Our constituency'

In my original March 20 reply to Ian, I posed the question whether "any political group or movement ... is part of the class camp of the proletariat, or of the capitalist camp", and argued

that neither conflict with the currently dominant capitals nor social oppression makes any group part of the class camp of the proletariat. In the absence of a strong proletarian pole, I argued, movements based in the middle classes will *not* gravitate to the class camp of the proletariat, but merely form contradictions within the class camp of capital. Hence the task facing us is *first* to develop proletarian class-political independence, before an effective proletarian party can pursue tactics towards this or that part of the middle strata. Ian counters that "the masses that participate in such struggles ... [e]ven when they are not directly part of the working class, as in oppressed sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, etc, ... are still part of our constituency, insofar as there is a democratic content to their struggles".

Here Ian slips from "class camp" to "constituency". It is an important slippage, because his argument in his March 20 article, retained in his 'third camp' discussion in his April 17 reply, was about *class camps*, whereas 'constituency' means something quite different.

It is necessary to go back to ABCs here. Marxists are not in the first place anti-imperialists; or democrats; or tribunes of the oppressed; though we need in immediate politics to be all of these things. We are advocates of a fundamental transformation of society - communism - which can eliminate the basic *drivers* of all forms of oppression. We are, in particular, advocates of the view that this transformation can only come about through the emancipation of the *proletariat*, the class of wage-workers who lack productive property, and the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, working class rule over the society.

Why? The point is very basic. Communism has been *desirable* for humans - or at least for the subordinate classes - since the fall of the 'primitive communism' of the hunter-gatherer society, in which our basic human nature evolved. Hence the repeated appearance of utopian ideas of communism from antiquity onwards. But it has not been *possible* until the development of capitalism.

This impossibility is in part a matter of the state of development of the forces of production: once the conditions of hunter-gatherer existence had ceased to be *generally* available, the burden of feeding human societies drove the formation of social hierarchies. In classical antiquity, low levels of productive technology produced domestic slavery; in the feudal middle ages, the development of water-mills and other technology allowed a loosening of the bonds of unfreedom to villeinage; in capitalism, further development allowed wage-labour to become the dominant form; as capitalism has further revolutionised the forces of production, it has created the conditions for *rotational employment* and the overcoming of the 'division between mental and manual labour' (ie, between those who spend their lives making decisions and those who do as they are told).

In part, however, it is because in all pre-capitalist societies the predominant form of organisation of basic reproduction and production is petty production based on the labour of the family household. Though this is *in fact* part of a wider technical and social division of labour, the conditions of existence of peasant petty proprietors tend to lead them to imagine that they could withdraw from the wider division of labour into autarkic family production, and hence that the surplus product drawn from them by other elements of the society is merely exploitative. The peasant petty proprietors are hence *on the whole* incapable of seeing themselves as merely an element in a broader social division of labour or transcending the basic idea of private property.

Urban petty proprietors cannot escape

seeing themselves as members of an extended division of labour, which is why they have formed in the past the episodic social basis of utopian communism. But they share with peasants two features which make it impossible for them to introduce communism. The first is that they own their means of petty production; the second that they exploit the labour of their children (and very commonly of their wives) *and through this exploitation can accumulate and improve their social position*. For both reasons, society always contains classes below the petty proprietors: slaves, unskilled wage labourers and the beggar/criminal 'lumpenproletariat'. These characteristics mean that the adult, male, urban petty proprietors cannot *consistently* fight for a world without private property or a world of real human equality, freedom and self-realisation.

The logic of these phenomena is that the small proprietor classes - peasants and artisans, and their equivalents under capitalism - *require a 'man on horseback'* (either a ruling class or an absolutist state) to rule over them. Absolute monarchy, the 'mandate of heaven', Bonapartism - and in the modern world Stalinism and Stalinoid nationalisms like Ba'athism - are the *natural political expression* of the petty proprietor class, and the idea that this class is really 'democratic' in character is an illusion.

Capitalism, by making the propertyless wage-workers into the main productive class, creates the conditions to overcome these problems. Even if the male wage-worker benefits in some sense from female domestic labour, he cannot *accumulate* through it. And the workers in general cannot permanently have the illusion of a rural or small-town solution to their persistent problems - in work, of employer pressure on wages and hours; and in and out of work, of unstable employment.

This returns me to my original point. If the proletariat develops a strong, politically independent movement for its own interests, sections of the middle classes can be won over. But if socialists counterpose the need to win 'constituencies' of the non-proletarian oppressed to proletarian class-political independence, they make the proletariat into a *tail* of the non-proletarian movement. Ian's insistence on 'taking public sides' has exactly this effect.

From Morris to ...

Ian cites William Morris in 1885 as the precursor to "support for the struggles of peoples in underdeveloped countries against imperialist aggression" - meaning, in Ian's terms, publicly taking sides. It is worth noting two facts about this antecedent. First, in the following year Engels repeatedly described Morris as a "sentimental socialist".¹¹ While the common view is that Engels' criticism of Morris was primarily addressed to his anti-parliamentarism and friendliness to the anarchists, at this period, his verbal 'public taking sides' with the Mahdi movement in Sudan could also be seen as "sentimental socialism".

Secondly, the theoretical basis of Morris's position is quite clearly given by his co-thinker at the time, Ernest Belfort Bax (*inter alia* socialist campaigner against the emancipation of women), in an article in *Commonweal*. For Morris and Bax, to support the victory of pre-capitalist classes against capital was both ethically superior and - for Bax - would hasten the *Zusammenbruch*, because imperialism was a response to capitalist 'overdevelopment' within national borders.¹²

Bax's theory of imperialism then passed into the German Social Democratic Party and the Second International through the Bernstein-Bax debate of 1896-97.¹³ In this debate the broad lines of analysis, ultimately derived from Bax, became the dominant orthodoxy, and this

orthodoxy is reproduced in Lenin's *Imperialism, the highest stage*.

The result of this is that I feel not the slightest embarrassment at being accused by Ian of departing from a "basic component of the socialist programme" on the basis of a quotation, not from the *Communist manifesto* or any other programmatic text, but from William Morris. Bax's theory of imperialism was false in its foundations (the ideas of a past national capitalism and an imminent *Zusammenbruch*) and, in my opinion, while it was substantially *improved* by the discussions in the Second International and Comintern, one of the main lessons of the 20th century is the falsity of the basic ideas in question.

To say this is not in the least to endorse Bernstein's arguments in 1896 or his and other revisionists' claim that imperialism spread European 'civilisation', still less his Fabian gradualism. It is merely to say that the victory of 'national bourgeoisies' and other 'anti-imperialists' is not necessarily a victory for the proletariat at all. Witness - for example - Iran or South Africa.

Anti-imperialist united front

Ian claims that the idea of the anti-imperialist united front (AIUF) "was about some level of political bloc between the Soviet government and various leaderships of colonial liberation movements". This is rubbish, and to see that it is rubbish it is only necessary to look at the documents available on the Marxists Internet Archive, particularly the section on the AIUF in the 1922 Fourth Congress *Theses on the eastern question*. It was a policy for the *communist parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries*.¹⁴

Once we go back to the documents, two things become clear. The first is that the Comintern demanded of the communists in the imperialist countries *not* gestures, but agitation against colonialism and colonial wars, including in the armed forces, and practical aid, primarily to the colonial communist parties. The policy of the US Socialist Workers Party in the Vietnam war - of building the strongest possible movement for withdrawal of troops, as opposed to a weaker movement for 'Victory to the NLF' - implemented the *Comintern policy* in this respect, as opposed to its ultra-left opponents, whom Ian follows.

The second is that the Comintern leaders were fully aware of the tension in the AIUF policy between common action with non-proletarian opponents of imperialism and the development of proletarian class-political independence.¹⁵ It is partly for this reason that I say above that the Comintern "improved" Bax's theory. I do *not* charge the early Comintern with abandoning class-political independence for the sake of alliances with anti-imperialist forces, but of *underestimating* the difficulties of this alliance policy because of a foreshortened concept of the decline of capitalism.

What has happened to 'anti-imperialist' politics since, which Ian defends, is a *caricature* of the policy of the early Comintern. The roots of this caricature are two. The first is what became the people's front policy. The second is the attempts of small groups of Trotskyists, who *formally* rejected the people's front policy, to go *round* the existing workers' parties - notably the 'official communist' parties - by appealing directly to the masses with a simplified version of Comintern policy.

Without a serious communist party the question of the *workers'* united front is posed only in the form of communist participation in trade unions and in mass actions called by the existing mass workers' parties.¹⁶ All the more, the absence of communist

parties organising significant forces and capable of independent action effectively renders any AIUF nothing but a tailing of non-proletarian forces. The Fourth Congress *Theses* make the point explicitly: "The workers' movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must first of all establish itself as an independent revolutionary factor in the common anti-imperialist front. Only when its importance as an independent factor is recognised and its complete political autonomy secured can temporary agreements with bourgeois democracy be considered permissible or necessary."

In other words, my 'revisionism' on the AIUF - which is real - leads, paradoxical as this may seem, to practical conclusions *closer* to the actual policy of the early Comintern than Ian's far-left 'orthodoxy' does ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. 'The Collapse of the Second International' (1915): www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/csi/i.htm. Trotsky made the same point on numerous occasions, though he qualified it in discussions with American Socialist Workers Party leaders on the *Transitional programme* by commenting: "We do not have the right to lie to them, but we must present to them the truth in such form, at such time, in such place, that they can accept it" (New York 1977, p232). Even this qualification still does not legitimate prettifying the nationalist or religious opponents of imperialism.
2. Actually, it is not at all clear that taking the anti-treaty side in a civil war *after the international revolutionary wave had ebbed* was strategically beneficial to the new-born Communist Party of Ireland (for the history, see E O'Connor, 'Communists, Russia and the IRA, 1920-23' *The Historical Journal* No46 (2003), pp115-131). As to the ANC, though communists were certainly right to defend the *militants* of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, when they were arrested, etc, it is perfectly clear from the course of events that the armed struggle was delusive and *mass movements* in South Africa - black consciousness movement, Cosatu unions - initially outside the ANC orbit, were more important than the ANC's strategy, though the ANC was eventually able to hegemonise the trade union movement because it offered a *political perspective*.
3. I should also say that I do not think Respect as such ever adopted the position of 'Victory to the Iraqi resistance', as opposed to individual leaders like Galloway and Rees making pro-'Iraqi resistance' statements on public platforms.
4. L. Trotsky, 'Lessons of Spain' (1937), sub-headed 'Alliance with the bourgeoisie's shadow': www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/xx/spain01.htm.
5. London 2013.
6. On its 18th century presence see, for example, K Wilson *The sense of the people: politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* Cambridge 1998.
7. Particularly Max Beer, Heinrich Cunow and others. See RB Day and D Gaido *Discovering imperialism* Leiden 2012.
8. www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233953/lang-en/index.htm.
9. M Mollath *Bourgeois liberty and the politics of fear* (Oxford 2012) is helpful on the issue.
10. 'World politics, long waves and the decline of capitalism' *Weekly Worker* January 7 2010.
11. Engels to Sorge, April 29 1886 *MECW* Vol 47, pp439-44; Engels to Bebel, August 18 1886 *MECW* Vol 47, pp468-71; Engels to Laura Lafargue, September 13 1886 *MECW* Vol 47 pp482-85. The tag was originally applied to Morris by Kautsky in 1884 (reported by Bax in *Justice* March 1884: www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1884/03/germanpress.htm); Engels' response to Kautsky was: "... the Morris affair is of no significance; they are a middle-headed lot" (March 24 1884 *MECW* Vol 47, pp120-21). Kautsky's letter to Engels, which attributes the tag to Eleanor Marx (not improbable, given Engels' later use of it), is translated by Bruce Robinson for Paul Hampton's article at www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/12/04/william-morris-romantic-or-revolutionary.
12. 'Imperialism and socialism' *Commonweal* February 1885, pp2-3: www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1885/02/imperialism.htm.
13. H Tudor and JM Tudor *Marxism and social democracy* Cambridge 1988, chapter 2; RB Day and D Gaido *Discovering imperialism* Leiden 2012.
14. www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/eastern-question.htm. It is true that the 1920 Second Congress *Theses on the national and colonial question* (Lenin's draft at www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jun/05.htm) place more emphasis on the question of alliances between the Soviet state and the national-revolutionary movements. But the Fourth Congress *theses* are the immediate source of the AIUF policy.
15. See the documents referred to in note 14, the Second Congress discussions collected at www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/index.htm, and the Fourth Congress discussions in J Riddell (ed) *Toward the united front* Leiden 2012, pp649-736 (notably Radek's reply to the debate).
16. L. Trotsky, 'On the united front' (March 1922), point 3: www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/ffyci-2/08.htm.

SWP

Outriders for the establishment

Wagging your finger at people for voting for the 'racist' Ukip is the wrong approach, says Eddie Ford

Opinion polls continue to make cheerful reading for Nigel Farage. A survey conducted on May 9 by the *Mail on Sunday* with regard to next week's European elections has the UK Independence Party four points ahead of Labour on 32%, with the Tories on 21% and the Liberal Democrats languishing at 9%. Other polls have come out with similar findings, and, at the very least, Ukip will come a very good second. That will be humiliation enough for the Tories - beaten by a party that not so long ago they dismissed as a bunch of "fruit cakes, loonies and closet racists". As for the Lib Dems, they appear to be facing wipe-out, regardless of who comes first or second. Serves them right.

No wonder then that all the mainstream parties, including the Scottish National Party, are turning their guns on the 'fringe' Ukip - the main charge being that it is "racist". Obviously spending quite considerable sums of money, and linking up with allies in the media, the party machines are forensically examining every (or so it seems) blog post, Tweet, Facebook update, past interview, etc ever made by Ukip candidates in a rather desperate search for embarrassing 'dirt' - and lo and behold, they find it. Hence the headlines about gays being an "abomination", Ed Miliband "not a real Brit", all Nigerians "bad people", and how Lenny Henry should return to a "black country", etc.

Yet operation 'Get Ukip' is transparently disingenuous, if not an actively deceitful smear job. Ukip is standing a record 2,150 candidates in the local elections, not to mention running a full slate for the European elections. It would be a near miracle if you did not find some with highly eccentric or madly reactionary opinions. On a rough calculation based upon the number of 'nutters' uncovered so far by the media, they must account for 0.1%-0.2% of the total number of candidates fielded by Ukip - though no doubt that number could well rise, as the election gets closer. As we have seen, Farage deals ruthlessly with such individuals when they are put under the spotlight - they are immediately suspended or expelled (or jump first).

Just imagine if the same spotlight was turned on all the Tory candidates, as Farage himself has pointed out. Are we really supposed to believe that every one of them has a 'politically correct' line on gay marriage, for instance? That would be stretching credibility to breaking point. Indeed, though the Tory Party itself is officially anti-racist like every other mainstream party and institution in Britain, you can guarantee that in some local Conservative Party constituencies all manner of racist and other prejudices are muttered in dark corners over a pint. After all, only last year a "close ally" of David Cameron described Tory activists as "mad, swivel-eyed loons" - and, of course, a few of them have crossed over to Ukip. This does not prove as such that Ukip is full to the brim of such people, but rather that the basic outlook of a large section of its membership is barely distinguishable from that of the Tories.

Problematic

Meanwhile, following the Delta debacle, the Socialist Workers Party is engaged in a desperate bid for popularity - it is facing extreme hostility not just from parts of the organised left (for sectarian and other reasons), but also from students on campus, traditional recruitment fodder for the organisation.

Therefore we see the SWP



Racists?

prioritising its pathetic new front campaign, Stand up to Ukip, which is based on the notion that Ukip is a racist party. After all, everyone opposes racism, don't they? So surely that will make the SWP popular again. The front page of last week's *Socialist Worker* featured a gagged Nigel Farage and the headline, "Shut it, Ukip!" (May 6). The accompanying article by comrade Judith Orr, apart from telling us that, since Ukip is not a fascist party, it is "not a matter of trying to deny it a platform to speak", complains that the mainstream parties "may denounce" Ukip as "racist", but they do not challenge its "anti-immigration position". And the latest issue carries on the same theme, lamenting the fact that the migrant-bashing of mainstream politicians "feeds" Ukip and makes them unable to challenge Nigel Farage (May 13).

For communists the stance adopted by the SWP is highly problematic. Firstly, whether theoretically or historically, we are not aware of any precedent or absolute principle that automatically commits us to 'no-platforming' fascists: that is a purely tactical question. Sometimes we may try to crack their skulls in and other times we might debate with them, depending on the concrete circumstances.

Secondly, we strongly question the idea that Ukip is "racist". Why do our SWP comrades think so? The reason appears to be, as the internal *Party Notes* argues (May 5), because Farage wants a points-based immigration system like the one in Australia. If you are a skilled Pole, African, Chinese person, European or whoever, white or black, then you are welcome. But if not, then bugger off, as Farage does not want you. To use the words attributed to him in *Party Notes*, such unskilled Poles, Africans, etc have come to "take our resources" - which is "not a race question", but instead a matter of "our country's needs".

According to the SWP, Farage's apparent non-racism - even anti-racism, you might say - is actually a form of disguised or "sophisticated" racism, to be contrasted to the crude master-race stuff you used to get from British National Party and National

Front. In fact, we read in *Party Notes*, racism is "central" to the growing appeal of Ukip.

The flaw in the argument is obvious. What Farage is articulating above is the totally mainstream view that migrants are a problem if there are too many of them, taking jobs that should go to British workers - as Gordon Brown once said - or acting as a drain on the NHS, gobbling up precious housing stock, and so on. In other words, Farage fully signs up to the 'common sense' national chauvinist consensus. Thus communists can think of no rational reason to disbelieve him when he says that Ukip is a "non-racist" party - is he part of a conspiracy or something? Farage genuinely seems to want previous immigrants - whatever their ethnicity - and their descendants to integrate into British society and wave the union jack outside Buckingham Palace alongside Mr and Mrs Smith.

Outsiders

Yes, of course, the SWP comrades are quite right to say that one of the problems with the mainstream parties is that they are playing the Ukip game - ie, they all subscribe to one degree or another to the idea that migrants, or 'outsiders', are a problem and hence we need some form of immigration controls. For instance, the Tories have stupidly committed themselves to reducing immigration down to "tens of thousands" - which is a total fantasy, since it just cannot be done while Britain remains in the European Union. As soon as the UK economy starts to grow, more people will start heading for London and other British cities.

Naturally, Farage agrees with the Tories and says he shares the same goal, but with one important difference - he actually has some sort of viable way of doing it: that is, by getting out of the EU and thus no longer being bound by the obligation to allow the free movement of labour. At the very least, Ukip has a clear and easily understood position - unlike the other parties. Labour just equivocates and squirms, blabbing about how they got it a bit wrong over Poland, understand the "concerns" of ordinary people - and other such bullshit. As

for the permanently embarrassed - and compromised - Lib Dems, they waffle on about how they are "committed" to Europe, but unfortunately they are hitched to the Tory wagon due to the realities of the coalition.

But what is the response from the SWP? "Immigrants are welcome here." However, given that Ukip is "racist", as it wants a points-based immigration policy, then we can only presume that any party which wants to impose some sort of border controls must too be racist - logic does not permit any other conclusion. In which case, what about the No2EU lash-up between the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain and the Socialist Party in England and Wales? Like Ukip, it too wants to exit the EU and stop the free movement of labour - but on the 'socialist' basis that it hands bosses the "ability to dictate the terms of employment through exploiting a reserve army of labour" and also because the right to free movement for workers is shaped by EU courts and directives "outside the scope of democratically accountable bodies such as national parliaments".¹

Does that make No2EU racist then? If we are to stick to the criteria outlined by the SWP, then there can only be one answer - yes. Leaving aside the left verbiage, in terms of general principle No2EU has in reality exactly the same approach as the other parties - *British* jobs, and rights, must be defended against outsiders. But, just like Ukip, No2EU advocates a *real* measure that would enable the drawbridge to be pulled up - withdrawal from the EU.

Or perhaps moving closer to home for the SWP, what about George Galloway? In the pages of the *Morning Star* he notoriously denounced the idea of open borders and advocated a points-based immigration system on the grounds that "every country must have control of its own borders", as "no-one serious is advocating the scrapping of immigration controls" - and put forward the distinctly Farageian notion that Respect should publish an "economic-social-demographic plan for population growth", based on a points system and "our own needs" (February 12 2005). Once again, if we are to accept the SWP's definition of racism, then Galloway and Respect were racist at the very time the SWP was trying to build that organisation.

Thanks a lot

There is another big problem with the SWP's overall approach. In the May 6 *Socialist Worker* we discover that the comrades want to build an "anti-racist core" in the working class.² In reality though, that does not amount to much more than standing outside Ukip meetings idiotically shouting 'Racist!' at those going inside. But it is pretty clear that there is already an "anti-racist core" in the working class - as well as in society as a whole. Yet, if we were to believe the SWP, we would have to draw precisely the opposite conclusion: not only the 30% or so who vote for Ukip in the EU elections will be supporting a "racist" party, but so too will about 99% of the others - Tories, Lib Dems, Labour, No2EU ... A racist landslide, it seems.

Bluntly, the SWP is being tactically, strategically, politically and theoretically stupid. It is placing itself in a position where the mainstream parties, especially the Tories - appreciate the irony if you can - are able to turn around to the SWP and say, 'Thanks for the good job you are doing for us' - as *outriders for the Westminster establishment*. The implication of Stand up to Ukip

is that you can vote for any of the 'respectable' parties - that is entirely unproblematic. As Stand up to Ukip innocently declares on its website, "people of goodwill" must come together to oppose Ukip "regardless of our differing views on Europe or other political issues" - not much ambiguity there: vote Tory if you have to.³

To put it very mildly, the SWP central committee has made a poor calculation about how to save the organisation, given the terrible stink over Delta - give the cadre something to do that will lift their spirits and is more fun than defending Martin Smith or the disputes committee. Yes, mindlessly chase the tail of Ukip in pretty much the same manner as they chase after the English Defence League - a bit of hyper-activism never does any harm, at least if you are a bureaucratic leadership.

The end result though, pitifully, is that the SWP central committee is engaged in a hopelessly ineffective, popular frontist campaign - one doomed to ignoble failure - and is not even prepared to do battle with the chauvinism of the mainstream parties. Even worse, through its Stand up to Ukip campaign, it is in reality lining up with those mainstream parties against a 'fringe' party that is making inroads into the Tory vote in particular.

Although Ukip is evolving ideologically, it clearly has elements of Poujadism - a virulent populism that is essentially a more rightwing version of Thatcherism. About the only thing that makes it different from 'old Thatcher' is that Farage is more blunt about Europe - he wants out. Other than that, when it comes to neoliberalism, austerity, trade unions, workers' rights - you name it - Ukip more or less acts as the mirror-image of Thatcher and the Tory Party right. It is not a unique threat, let alone a racist one. Ruling class ideology, as obviously we have to keep telling our myopic SWP comrades, is today *national chauvinism*, not racism.

In terms of the whole SWP discourse there is another troubling feature. From the way it discusses this question, you might think that anti-immigrant sentiment (what it dubs "racism") comes entirely from above. But in reality it is also found below as a seemingly logical reaction to a bad situation. A worker whose pay has been cut or who has just lost their job does not have to be crazy or racist to conclude that if there were fewer migrants the pressure on jobs and wages would be eased. The same goes for housing: you cannot find anywhere to live, yet London is being bought up by wealthy foreigners. Once again, this is not an irrational response - politically and economically naive, yes, but not a form of madness.

In other words, some of the responses to mass immigration - including voting Ukip - are a *deflected form* of the class struggle. We need to understand that what we are dealing with here to a large extent is an instinctive sectionalism that treats the entire UK as a giant pre-entry closed shop - like the trade unionism of the 1970s dockers, printworkers, etc, writ large. Under such circumstances, the role of communists and revolutionary socialists is to advance tactics and strategies that will unite the working class, regardless of nationality or ethnicity ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. www.no2eu.com/?page_id=335.
2. http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/38053/The+threat+of+Ukip+grows+-+but+so+does+opposition+to+it.
3. http://standuptoukip.org/2011/09/about-us.

LEFT UNITY

What 'safe spaces' lead to

I approach this short report with a certain amount of trepidation. Not because of concerns about 'exposing' Left Unity's right wing here in Manchester, but because the levels of dishonesty and sheer lack of vision on show are simply embarrassing. Nevertheless it is important, as a service to the movement - and in the hope of rescuing the branch - that recent goings-on, culminating in the shutting down of the branch's email discussion list and attempted censure of one member for comments thereon, are documented.

When I joined the branch earlier this year, Bev Keenan and Ian Parker, who are members of the International Socialist Network and Socialist Resistance respectively, were acting secretaries for Manchester Central and Manchester South - though the latter had ceased to function. Initially though, the Manchester branch seemed welcoming and open enough to ideas. I myself have given two political introductions - on 'Europe and the left' and 'What is LU for?' - though in retrospect it was telling that no-one else volunteered to do either of them.

Pretty soon, though, odd things started to happen. Despite the usual banter about a broad, mass party and reaching out to new layers, there existed a marked reluctance to actually build Left Unity in any serious way. Pretty inoffensive, or so one would think, suggestions of holding a public meeting from myself and Steve Wallis, another member of the branch, were constantly rejected. There was "other stuff going on" (when isn't there?) and an LU meeting could not possibly gain any traction right now. This was quickly disproved at the following meeting, shortly after the LU conference in Manchester, when several new comrades turned up, making it by far the biggest meeting I had attended, with about 15 people.

And indeed at this meeting acting branch secretary comrade Keenan appeared to have had a change of heart: "I'm not interested in the people in this room," she declared, but in "the people out there". Once again, however, suggestions of a public meeting were shot down. We were informed that the publicity around the LU conference (including the appearance of Salman Shaheen on the *Daily politics*) had resulted in a surge in membership applications, and there were now 72 paid-up members in the Greater Manchester area. I suggested that we divvy up the contact details of members who were not attending meetings, so comrades could make a personal approach to them about how they could get involved. The look of horror on Bev Keenan's face had to be seen to be comprehended adequately. We might "put our own views forward"!

The irony that comrade Keenan is a member of the ISN - born of a factional struggle in the Socialist Workers Party, which included the expulsion of the 'Facebook Four' for the crime of horizontal communication between members - and an organisation ostensibly committed to 'bottom-up' organisational methods, was entirely lost on the comrade. In the absence of a hard-edged analysis of SWP 'bureaucratic centralism', old methods come to the surface. Given that practically the first thing one would be asked to do upon joining the Labour Party, Greens - or the SWP, for that matter - would be to help draw closer new recruits, this proprietorial attitude to members' contact details is truly laughable. I pointed out that I was hardly going to send them the CPGB's *Draft programme*: I would merely encourage them to attend a meeting.

But it was clear that the fear of ideas - and of the branch's left - would make even basic branch-building initiatives an actual battle.

It was at the next meeting that the reasons underlying this reluctance to promote LU really crystallised in my mind. Numbers had dropped back to the usual, but in light of the previous meeting the two of us who had been pushing for a public event were confident that any doubts about our ability to build one would have been thoroughly quashed. *Au contraire* - we met with a bizarrely hostile response. Bev, you see, was simply too busy - she was organising a strike, don't you know - and LU would do better to push the local trades council's meeting on Europe (a debate between a pro-EU Labour Party bod and a No2EU speaker). In this way, any suggestion that LU actually *do something* could be construed as a personal attack on comrade Keenan. Hardly a healthy way to conduct branch business.

Leaving aside the fact that the branch secretary is not the branch, it was now obvious that the LU right, of which Bev Keenan and Ian Parker are the core here, were actually mortally afraid of Left Unity going anywhere. I can only surmise that they fear that, as soon as this fragile lash-up begins to move, the wheels will fall off. Given the furore over contacting members, and the refusal to countenance debate lasting more than 10 minutes, there is probably also a fear that, should any 'ordinary people' turn up, they might be exposed to leftwing ideas, which would, naturally, make them run a mile; or simply to the fact that political differences exist within LU (those ordinary people, of course, get awfully confused when presented with conflicting analyses). With myself present, it was going to be impossible to put forward the 'broad party somewhere just to the left of Labour' line without it being subject to critique and - horror of horrors - debate.

Another incident worth mentioning in regard of the fear of politics: in the pub after one meeting, Bev found herself in a minority on the question of no-platforming fascists. Rather than have a debate, the comrade seemed personally *offended* that anyone could differ on this question - she reminded us that she had been part of Rock Against Racism and walked out!

Unfortunately, tensions from the last meeting boiled over on the email list. The other comrade with whom I had allied on the question of a meeting sent a post which accused Bev Keenan and Ian Parker of holding back the branch. Quickly the comrade came under attack, and I joined the fray, outlining the situation in a frank, albeit frustrated, way. To anyone who had been attending meetings, the reason for this frustration would be obvious; but to have it put so bluntly on the discussion list was more than the comrades of the right could take. Before long we were accused of 'bullying' behaviour and told to shut the hell up, if not in so many words. However, comrade Keenan did announce her resignation as acting branch secretary, and promised to bring members' contact details to the next meeting.

Things really came to a head, though, when the topic of Steve Hedley came up. A leading member of the RMT union and a candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the upcoming elections, Hedley had been accused of domestic violence by a former partner, but was found to have no case to answer by an RMT inquiry. Nor is he under investigation by the police. This did not stop the women's caucus of the ISN from launching a

petition calling on Tusc to withdraw his candidacy.

Rather than identifying the Martin Smith scandal as a symptom of the SWP's bureaucratic centralism - under which an egoistically inflated leadership feels it can get away with whatever it likes, the problem for these people is sexism, pure and simple. Desperately trying to show that they have 'learned the lessons' of the crisis, the various fragments which have broken from the SWP, and others like Socialist Resistance, are now engaged in a game of one-upmanship over who can most thoroughly prostrate themselves before the altar of 'intersectionality'. This petty bourgeois theory is being used as a shield to give left cover to those who are already moving away from Marxism, and to deny the centrality of class.

It is in this context that the petition was launched, and posted on the Manchester LU discussion list with an encouragement for comrades to sign. Dawud Islam - a long-time working class activist and previously deputy leader of Respect - said that he would not sign and that, even if Hedley was guilty as charged, he would still vote for him, because the politics of the candidate and the party contesting the election was the most important thing. Granted, the comrade took a rather idiosyncratic view when he said it would not matter if the candidate was "the world's worst sex offender or a mass murderer", but the thrust of the argument - that it is politics, not personality, which is the most important thing - is valid.

Predictably though, this kicked off a huge shitstorm on the list, with Felicity Dowling - not a member of this branch, incidentally - making a particularly lengthy and outraged contribution. Comrade Islam was also contacted by SR's Ian Parker, off list, in an attempt to make him withdraw his candidacy for the elections to Left Unity's national council, as his comments were against the "ethos" of LU. At least one of the comrades who had nominated him also came under pressure to withdraw their support. The Hedley petition became the litmus test

of comrades' commitment to women's liberation.

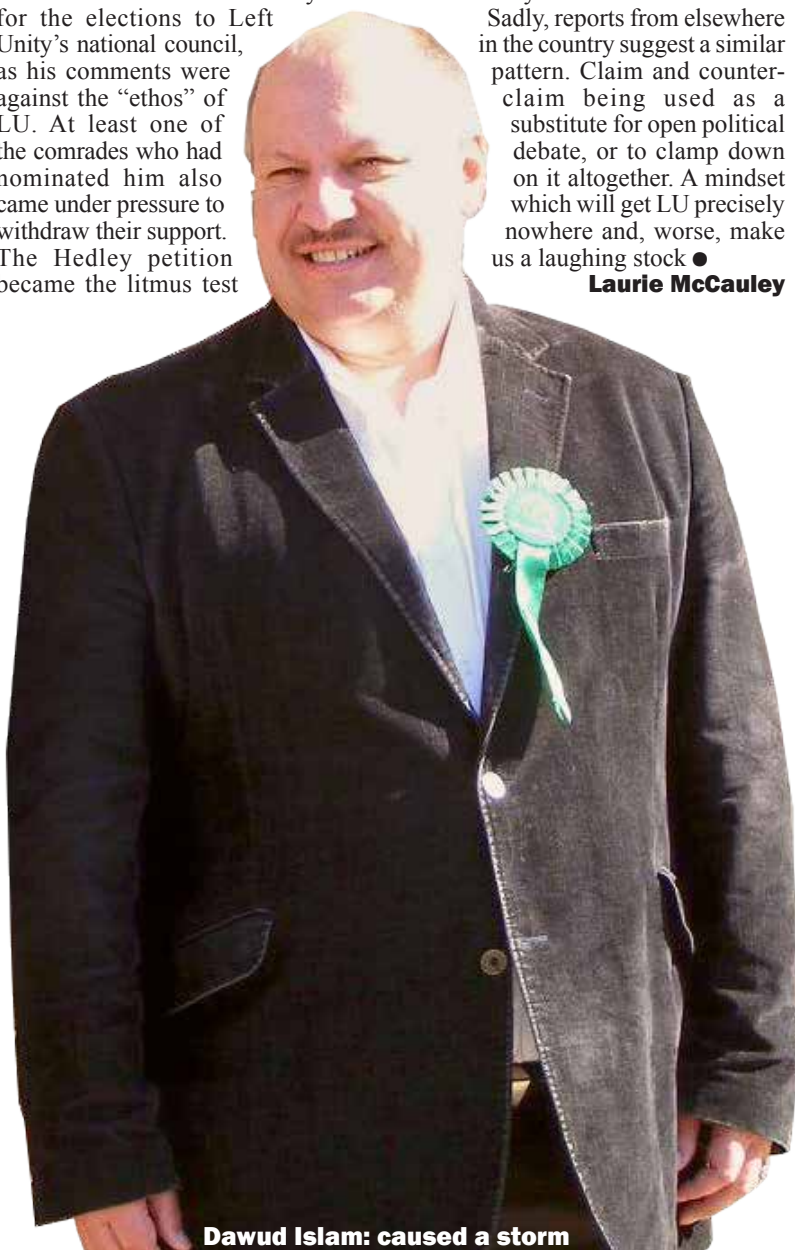
I waded into this morass with a two-line email, pointing out that 'innocent until proven guilty' was kind of a progressive thing. Literally five minutes later, comrade Parker replied; apparently, the topic was no longer "suitable for discussion on this list". Shortly afterward, we were informed that the list was now being moderated; *anything* political, or "comments which imply any form of blame or criticism to any members of the list", would be blocked. This action was taken by an 'ad-hoc committee' formed behind the backs of the membership.

At the following meeting, hastily arranged for a Saturday afternoon and with a very small turnout, the majority of comrades present actually approved this action, and a veteran Manchester activist (a born conciliator with all the backbone of a jellyfish) was approved as interim branch secretary. This farcical meeting saw several comrades, including the 'accused', read out statements and make quite pathetic and unbelievable claims about feeling "bullied" and "intimidated".

Comrade Parker had the bit between his teeth, and was ready to put forward a motion of censure against the dissenting comrade, dissociating the branch from his remarks on the list. The lowest point came when, in a truly Kafkaesque moment, he suggested that this could all be settled if only the accused would sign the motion of censure against himself. In the end, however, the SR comrade dropped this attempt at censure after a pseudo-apology from comrade Islam, and comrade Parker also made noises to the effect that he might drop the complaint he had made to the NC. But Dawud did not help his case by invoking 'safe spaces' politics himself - the very concept others were using to try and marginalise and hound him out of Left Unity.

Sadly, reports from elsewhere in the country suggest a similar pattern. Claim and counter-claim being used as a substitute for open political debate, or to clamp down on it altogether. A mindset which will get LU precisely nowhere and, worse, make us a laughing stock ●

Laurie McCauley



Dawud Islam: caused a storm

What we fight for

- Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.
- There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.
- Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.
- Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.
- Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.
- The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.
- Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.
- Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.
- The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.
- We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.
- Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.
- Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.
- Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

weekly worker

Women can be conscious political agents

Keeping disagreements hidden

Left Unity's press release about Gerry Adams illustrates the fragility of its political method, argues

Paul Demarty

We confess we are not sure what to make of Left Unity's new-found habit of issuing short, banal press releases. For the most part, they seem to be rather shallow attempts to piggyback on the ephemeral outrages that grip liberal opinion now and then.

"Sack Jeremy Clarkson!" squeaks Salman Shaheen - drowned out, of course, by the din of more or less *everyone else* calling for the same thing. Perhaps comrade Salman has a distinctive and subtle argument to add to the discussion? "This is not about free speech. Clarkson has brought his employer, the BBC, into disrepute and it should sack him immediately."¹ As another big-mouthed, filthy-rich, rightwing buffoon might put it - crickey. LU calls for Clarkson to be sacked on the same basis that the NHS persecutes whistleblowers!

Of course, it is depressingly easy to see how our 'moderate' spokesman collapses into such finger-wagging banality - it is the complaint of least resistance. It is exactly the sort of thing you would see on the lips of *Daily Mirror* leader writers, or (alas) Labour front-benchers who want to see Clarkson's good friend and neighbour, David Cameron, squirm. Perhaps this is designed to slip, unnoticed, down the gullet of some overworked journalist in the modern 'news factory'. Perhaps it is an exercise in internal cohesion - in LU, we disagree on all manner of matters, great and small - but *surely* we are united on the matter of whether, on balance, it is better for Jeremy Clarkson to be on TV?

The trouble with avoiding controversy, however, is that people have different ideas about what is motherhood and apple pie. See, for example, a rather official looking statement, expressing concern at the arrest of Gerry Adams, signed by a good handful of leading LU members. He "has been one of the key figures in driving forward the peace process" and "resolving the conflict in the north"; moreover, "Sinn Féin [is] a party which is opposing austerity and inequality across Ireland". The arrest is therefore "politically motivated" and "we call upon the British and Irish governments and all political parties to positively engage in the peace process".²

The statement is obviously dreadful. It is of a piece, above all, with the LU right's desire to reach out to all political forces that can be painted as fighting austerity - like the Greens, for instance - regardless of what they actually *do* when in power (ask the Brighton binmen about the Greens' anti-austerity credentials), never mind anything as dull as their *class character*.

Sinn Féin is not the Green Party, however. Its history is a rather stubborn spectre to exorcise; the supposed glories of the 'peace process' cannot be separated from the whole history of the Provisional IRA's military struggle. So, inevitably, there was a comment thread shitstorm; with endless arguments about the innocence or otherwise of Jean McConville, and the bitter legacy of 'the troubles'.

Complaints vary. Bringing up the more 'traditional' left perspective was Liam Mac Uaid, who excoriated a text which reads like a "Sinn Féin press release" (which, indeed, it does). Somebody by the name of 'Mozzer' immediately withdrew their support from Left Unity without explanation.

Demeaning

The fun really begins with our old friend, Felicity Dowling, chief architect and evangelist of LU's amoeba-like, ever expanding, draft safe spaces document, for whom the key issue here is ... violence against women (and children).

Comrade Dowling's intervention, of course, is wrong-headed on many levels. "It is more dangerous to be a woman in conflict than a soldier," she writes, which you would think would depend on the war, but who knows? In any case - is this why we prefer peaceful means? Would war be just ducky if one could guarantee that only men of combat age would die?

"The death of a woman should never be regarded as collateral damage," she pompously intones. But this is truly laughable. Bad things happen in wars - including just wars. Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that Irish republicans were morally justified in launching an armed campaign against the British state. If we accept that, then it would be hypocritical to pontificate about the inevitable bloodshed of a guerrilla war.

From here on, everything depends on whether McConville was an informer or not. If she was, as the Provos claimed, then she was not - indeed - collateral damage, but a *combat casualty*. If she was not an informer, then she was ... collateral damage. In wars, especially when one belligerent is unable in practice to allow due legal process, people are sometimes forced to shoot first and ask questions later.

Leon Trotsky, writing about military discipline, makes the 'elastic' ethics of armed conflict characteristically clear:



Not just victims

"So long as those malicious, tailless apes that are so proud of their technical achievements - the animals that we call men - will build armies and wage wars, the command will always be obliged to place the soldiers between the possible death in the front and the inevitable one in the rear."³ The notion that McConville's fate, a pure function of military expediency, had anything to do with her sex is laughable - she is merely the most famous of 16 people alleged to have been 'disappeared' by the IRA on suspicion of grassing. All the others were men.

What is more, in order to turn this affair into a story about violence against women, Dowling necessarily demeans women. The random violence of war can only be specifically male if *women are incapable of voluntarily participating in war* - that is, if we accept in classically sexist fashion that women abhor conflict and violence as a factor of their womanhood. Women (and children) are thus victims to be protected; but 'protecting' them in this way entails *denying their agency*, just as neglected children are coerced into the care of the state.

Responses to Dowling's tirade vary from the supportive to the foam-flecked. It turns out - who knew? - that Left Unity contains many people with residual Provo sympathies. The arguments back and forth are, to a point, about fighting old battles. Paeans to the 'peace process'

are fatuous, given that the current set-up in the Six Counties, while comparatively peaceful, has merely frozen in sectarian aspic the underlying antagonisms; nevertheless, Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party are now in government together. Their respective dissident fragments may blow up a cafe every once in a while, but they are - in the grand scale - unserious.

What is notable is that these comment-thread blow-outs still *happen*; in spite of the uneasy but lasting peace in Northern Ireland, the politics of the Irish war remain a topic of violent, passionate disagreement on the left. It is not, moreover, just the *far left* that has the baggage of historical argument to deal with. Our moderate leaders are at pains to argue that LU is a party for "disaffected Labour voters". But *what* disaffected Labour voters are these? Those who admired Ken Livingstone's support for the hunger strikers, or good British patriots who despise Irish republicans as terrorists?

The trouble is that - as well as being an excuse to water down the politics of LU - the quest for the "disaffected Labour voter" also legitimises the reduction of those politics to *soft focus*. We are supposed to be finding things on which we agree with this phantom rightwing: that means we have to ignore and skip over matters of controversy *between ourselves*.

That this blow-up should happen

over the legacy of the Irish war is quite poetic. After all, as noted, the outcome of the peace process has been of this character. The population of the Six Counties remains divided; except now those divisions are conceived as a matter of coexisting 'communities' rather than in a political fashion. The division is rendered permanent - repressed rather than resolved - and administered by a coalition composed of the two formerly most violently opposed political forces.

This is, however, peace, as in 'the absence of war' - as periodic explosions like the flag riots remind us. And likewise, the 'agree to disagree' political method dominant in LU bumbles along just fine until a matter of controversy rumbles up. Heaven forefend our good spokespeople should try to say something about Ukraine, or some other matter of live political import to which no nice, pat pseudo-answer is easily available. The organisation would halve in size overnight.

LU's officers, it seems, would be best served by sticking to matters of *absolutely no controversy at all* in future. It is surely only a matter of time until Clarkson opens his mouth again. Alas, even *that* statement seems to annoy people. "Hyperbole without substantial content or citations," chides 'gkw' in the comments. "Down with this sort of thing! Is this where we're at on the left? Is this what it's degenerated to? Jesus wept," wails 'MickyD'. "Honestly Left Unity is digging its own grave with this sort of nonsense. Clarkson is a twat, everybody knows he's a twat, so what is the point of this statement?" wonders Mark Reeves.

Perhaps there is hope for us after all ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. <http://leftunity.org/clarkson-must-be-sacked-says-left-unity>.
2. <http://leftunity.org/statement-on-gerry-adams-arrest>.
3. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/mylife/ch34.htm.

Subscribe here

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £12 a year. Minimum £12 every 3 months... but please pay more if you can. Your paper needs you!

Standing order

	6m	1yr	Inst.
UK	£30/€35	£60/€70	£200/€220
Europe	£43/€50	£86/€100	£240/€264
Rest of world	£65/€75	£130/€150	£480/€528

New UK subscribers offer:
3 months for £10

I enclose payment:

Sub £/€ _____

Donation £/€ _____

Total £/€ _____

Date _____

To _____ Bank plc _____

Branch Address _____

Post code _____

Re Account Name _____

Sort code _____ Account No _____

Please pay to **Weekly Worker**, Lloyds TSB A/C No 00744310

sort code 30-99-64, the sum of £ _____ every month*/3 months*

until further notice, commencing on _____

This replaces any previous order from this account. (*delete)

Signed _____ Name (PRINT) _____

Date _____ Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Email _____ Tel _____

Send a cheque or postal order payable to 'Weekly Worker' to:
Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, UK.