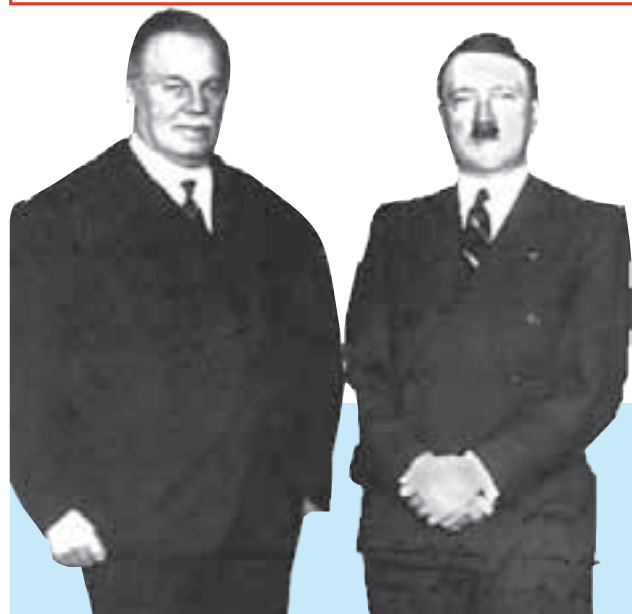


A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly worker

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SWP: Leatherites thirsting for a purge



LETTERS



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

Don't blame coal

I could not disagree more with Simon Wells ('The problem is capitalism', October 3). Not on capitalism being the problem, but on the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report. First of all, Simon sexes up the document by claiming: "The scientists tell us they are 95% confident that global warming is caused by human-made pollution." They didn't say that at all; they said they were 95% confident that 50% of global warming is human-made.

Other claims made either by Simon or the IPCC (I haven't read the entire 2,000-word document; I don't know if he has) are also just wrong. For instance, "warming of the climate system since the 1950s [is] unprecedented". No, it isn't. Humans have been on this planet scarcely one million years out of the four billion of Earth's existence and changes in climate have been huge and dramatic - from molten lava to a total snowball of the globe.

Even during man's existence, the climate has fluctuated massively, from tropics to ice ages. There are long and short waves of hotter and colder climates. As Simon admits, it was hotter in the 1850s. But the predicted rise of global temperatures, even if you rig where you do the counting from - since the 1950s to today - hasn't happened. The truth is that the IPCC has form on manipulating - *inventing* might be better word - 'evidence'.

In November 2010 the leaking of emails from the climatic research unit of the University of East Anglia showed that many of the world's top climate scientists were conspiring to sack sceptics, hide data and cover up errors.

Just as damning was the admission by IPCC lead author Kevin Trenberth that the world isn't warming, as the IPCC said: "We cannot account for the lack of warming at the moment and it is a travesty that we can't." In July 2013 the UN's World Weather Organisation informed us that the "first 10 years of this century" recorded the hottest weather temperature since records began and that is the way the media reported it in screaming headlines. Further investigation of this report actually went on to explain, firstly, that records have only been kept for 170-odd years - in terms of the earth not a drop in the ocean. Secondly, and more importantly, this wasn't an overall temperature rise, but a rise recorded in two of the hottest climatic areas of desert on earth. *The earth's overall global temperature remained unchanged and the cause of the higher recorded spot temperature could not be identified.*

The world climate conference in Africa cobbled out some emission limits to be implemented within the next 20 years, but the desperate need for development in the third world and the desperate search for profit in the west means that only time will tell whether they stick to the limits. The effects of these limits on climate change are in any case entirely speculative.

Quoting the IPCC as an authority on global warming, claiming it's a group of 'guys in white coats' who 'just measure things' is naive. The IPCC also just makes things up. They claim in a 2007 report: "Glaciers in the Himalayas are receding faster than in any other part of the world and, if the present rate continues, the likelihood of them disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high if the Earth keeps warming at the current rate."

In fact, we now know this bizarre claim was first made by a little-known Indian scientist in an interview for an online magazine, and then copied into a

report by a green group. From there, the IPCC lifted it almost word for word for its own 2007 report, without checking if it was true. It wasn't, of course, as the IPCC conceded.

But why did the IPCC run this mad claim in the first place? The IPCC's Dr Murari Lal, the coordinating lead author responsible, says he knew all along there was no peer-reviewed research to back it up. But "we thought that if we can highlight it, it will impact on policy-makers and politicians ..."

Syed Hasnain, the scientist who first made the false claim, turned out to be employed by the Energy Research Institute. The ERI has won up to \$500,000 from the Carnegie Corporation to investigate such bogus claims. It has created a global business network and its recent donors include Deutsche Bank, Toyota, Yale University. Meanwhile, green socialists try to convince us this climate anti-industry campaign is somehow anti-capitalist.

The IPCC's 2007 report also cites a non-scientific, non-peer-reviewed paper from another activist body, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, as its sole proof that global warming could devastate African agriculture.

The IPCC 2007 report claimed the world had "suffered rapidly rising costs due to extreme weather-related events since the 1970s", thanks to global warming. In fact, the claim was picked out of an unpublished report by a London risk consultant, who later changed his mind and said "the idea that catastrophes are rising in cost because of climate change is completely misleading".

At least four new papers by top scientists cast doubt on the IPCC claim that our carbon dioxide emissions are strongly linked to global warming. One, published in *Nature*, shows the world had ice age activity even when atmospheric CO₂ was four times the level of pre-industrial times. In other words, during the time of mass human population but *before* the industrial revolution, emissions were four times *lower* than during the ice age - there was *global freezing*, not global warming. This poses the question of where *that* CO₂ came from - it clearly wasn't the miners.

In fact the world hasn't warmed since 2001, even though we pump out more emissions than ever. Even professional alarmist Tim Flannery, author of *The weather makers*, admits that "we haven't seen a continuation of that [warming] trend" and "the computer modelling and the real world data disagree". Yet the hysteria regarding 'climate deniers' verges on accusations of blasphemy, so passionately and fundamentally do the believers believe. It causes normally staid and conservative scientists to start tarring up and falsifying evidence to silence the body of data which contradicts them.

The well trailed tale is that global warming is causing the Arctic ice sheet to melt. But the evidence shows the opposite! Global temperatures have been cooling for the past 10 years and, although Arctic sea ice has been shrinking, mainly because the ice age is actually over and we are in a cycle taking us closer to the sun, in Antarctica (which holds 90% of all the world's ice) the opposite is happening and it is holding its own and spreading!

In September 2013 the long awaited second UN report on global warming was released by the IPCC. The problem is that it can find no evidence of global warming over the last 17 years. None of the predictions of where we would be by now have in fact happened. They had actually predicted in 2007 that by the end of 2013 the Arctic ice would have completely melted. In fact the summer of 2013 saw the smallest ice melt for nine years and the global extent of polar sea ice is equal to the average of the

past 34 years.

So to explain this we have the entirely speculative theory that the world's oceans have absorbed the extra heat they were anticipating. But why should the ocean suddenly learn to do that now, and not when the first rises since the 50s were noted? In other words, why when the ocean was *colder* didn't it absorb the rise in temperature, but now it's warmer it absorbs the entire added rise in temperature? But why is there *more* Antarctic ice now than any time in the last nine years? And this when the global emissions of CO₂ have doubled, along with coal consumption.

What has happened is that a worldwide scare has been let loose, based on the word of 'experts', which has wrecked incomes, energy policy, closed down industry, driven many working people into fuel poverty and wrecked environments into the bargain. But we are still waiting to see evidence of ongoing global warming, as against 20-year cycles of rises and falls. The last 65 years have demonstrated a longer overall rise against middling periods of stable temperatures. What isn't happening is a relentless rise in global temperatures, as is demonstrated by the last 17 years of stability. Another five or 10 years of this stability, or even a decline, will kill the whole theory of man-made global warming dead.

I am not, of course, saying human beings contribute nothing to climate and environmental change - how could that ever be so with billions of us occupying every corner of the planet and the mark of our existence everywhere to be seen? What I am saying is that our tiny contribution to the wealth of factors impacting on climate and weather is minimal compared to long-term, natural, cyclical trends.

The fact is, global warming, CO₂, coal mining, etc are rapidly becoming acts of faith, which no reasonable person is allowed to challenge. This has opened up new areas of profit-making and capitalist expansion - the 'green agenda', despite its progressive advocates and passionate hippy followers, is firmly in the hands of big corporate business.

Neither am I saying that it is fine just to burn coal in a cavalier fashion, as we currently do, with emissions going up the chimney destroying the health of populations, vegetation and the atmosphere. I and the National Union of Mineworkers have argued for decades that coal is a rich resource which should be valued and used in the most efficient, environmentally responsible way, through the utility of carbon capture and storage and other modern, clean, coal-burn technologies, which have so far been spiked because of the rush to non-carbon fuel sources. I am also convinced that the war against coal is a war against the miners' unions worldwide and part of a class strategy as much as a new scheme for making money from new energy systems and world paranoia.

The above letter is based upon my observations in *Clean coal technology, climate change and the miners*, available from my good self (£5 post paid).

David Douglass

djdouglass@hotmail.co.uk

Nonsense

Unfortunately it is Mike Macnair, not Lenin, who is talking nonsense about imperialism, though Lenin's dating of the phenomenon - at the turn of the 20th century - was probably 20 years later than it should have been ('Rethinking imperialism', October 3). There was still a consolidation of imperialist capitalism somewhat analogous to what Marx said about capitalism as a developed mode of production having its real starting point with large-scale industry and factory production - the era of

manufacturing being merely a pre-history and a preparation.

But Lenin, unfortunately, never had time to write an elaboration of his position - other things got in the way. I do think there is a contradiction between Mike's attempt to ascribe Lenin's position in some way to Kautsky's influence, and yet his noting that Kautsky was the originator of 'ultra-imperialism', which was 180 degrees the opposite of the early Third International's basically correct (at the time) view of imperialism. Mike seems to want to have it both ways here.

In no sense is the class-collaboration of the Stalinised Comintern - the 'anti-monopoly alliance', etc - a product of Lenin's theory of imperialism. To argue this is another form of the argument that Bolshevism led to Stalinism. It does not explain that, as Stalin's regime consolidated its final destruction of the workers' state in the great purges of the 1930s, it had to exterminate virtually the entire old Bolshevik generation. If such a political continuity had existed, this would not have been necessary or rational. Yet in counterrevolutionary terms, Stalin's terror was indeed rational, if barbaric - as rational as the massacre that followed the fall of the Commune in Paris in 1871.

Incidentally, for Trotsky, the early Comintern's 'anti-imperialist united front', which was a political alliance, not merely a military matter, was superseded by the generalisation of permanent revolution in the light of the experience of the failed Chinese revolution of 1926-27. But concrete defence of the right to self-determination of, say, China - under Chiang or Mao, for that matter - was still a principled question for the Trotskyists. In this regard, they were right, and this position represented a firm barrier against centrism. Neutrality over such matters is a centrist position.

This might seem like a digression but it's not really. Mike's views are linked to third-campism, which I think is a centrist error, even though it is not synonymous with a rejection of the supposedly proletarian nature of the consolidated, Stalinised USSR, which is correct (but a complex thing to explain in a few sentences).

Ian Donovan
email

Unrepentant

Paul Demarty accuses me of an "obsequious" essay on Stuart Hall's and Alan O'Shea's recent piece on progressive common sense ('Politics for dummies', October 3). It is only "obsequious" in so far that I agree with Hall and O'Shea on the need for a progressive common sense; Paul doesn't. And less of the "former" Eurocommunist, if you don't mind. I remain one, unrepentantly.

Paul really does have a habit of mixing up facts and fiction. The issue with the poll tax protests of some 23 years ago is precisely how central they were to the defeat of the poll tax. They were certainly important, but the Tories were suffering a drubbing in by-election after by-election. This and staring at electoral wipe-out were what forced Thatcher out and the poll tax's demise.

As for Blairism, if you read almost anything I have written since 1997, and a bit before that too, you will find line after line of critique, and opposition to both Blairite New Labour and the Brownite aftermath. Yes, there was and remains a need to understand Blairism's project of conservative modernisation; hence I edited two books: the best-selling *The Blair agenda* and *The moderniser's dilemma*. But support Blairism? You'll not find a single instance of that on my part.

What Paul and the fake CPGB seem incapable of recognising is that, after some 30 years of spirited activism, first

inside the real CPGB, then outside, they have never once mustered much more than 50 members, not one base in a single community, zero influence outside their own ranks. Explaining that spectacular failure would be an article worth reading.

Lies and distortion masquerading as half-baked polemic is instead what Paul treats us to. What's new?

Mark Perryman
email

Spendthrift

In response to Pete McLaren's letter about Tory divide-and-rule tactics (October 3), I'd point out that the working class have always been divided between the better-off members of our class who aspire to join the middle/upper classes and who look down at the 'chavvier' members. That has always been the case and needs no encouragement from the Tories.

But a question to those that think the Tories are happy with high levels of unemployment or are somehow responsible for the large numbers of unemployed. Why would the Tories, the party of capitalism, want high unemployment? People on the dole/benefits are costing the capitalist class, as it's their taxes that are paying for the benefits. The more people in work, the more exploitation takes place and the more money the capitalists make! It's win-win for the capitalists when unemployment is low. Does anyone believe they (the capitalists) are too stupid to see this?

As for the myth that you can spend your way out of depression and that, by raising taxes, the government can create jobs, that idea died years ago! Where does Pete think the money is going to come from for the reverse of the cuts? By raising taxes you don't increase the amount of money in the economy - only the share the government gets increases. The total amount of money in the economy remains the same. Does he think the government should borrow it from the city or merchant bankers?

If governments really were in control of the economy, what went wrong in 2008? Why didn't they see the global financial crisis? Why, after years of high government spending between the years 1964 and 1970, was the rate of unemployment higher in 1970 than it was in 1964, despite the Labour government doing exactly what the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition are calling for now? Higher spending and a massive house-building programme didn't work then and it won't work now.

Steven Johnston
email

Nazi workfare

On October 18 1933, the *Daily Mail* published an interview with "His Excellency, the Reich chancellor, Adolf Hitler". For the most part, the journalist was concerned with Germany leaving the League of Nations, asking the chancellor to address concerns that he was in the process of preparing Germany for war. The Nazi leader skilfully refuted these silly misgivings.

However, I am particularly impressed with the bit where he elaborated on some of his immediate economic measures, seeing as they shine a light on how governments might cut red tape and more efficiently stimulate an economy in crisis:

"For one, we will relieve the economy from the strain of unbearable taxes, restore trust and eradicate a vast amount of more or less Marxist-inspired laws that inhibit the economy. Besides, we are running a very big work provision campaign ...

"In order to help the youth in particular, we will bring them together in our work camps and deploy them

in exchange for very small salaries but sufficient food provisions. They do not have families yet and can therefore be easily housed in barracks and similar accommodation close to their workplace.”

Seeing as Hitler held such responsible and commonsensical economic views, it is perhaps no surprise that the paper remained supportive of the charismatic leader for years after.

Alex Relch
email

Smash the fash

Most readers will be familiar with the notorious Hitler quote that is regularly presented by antifa types to ‘prove’ that their frozen ‘principle’ of physically smashing the fascists is correct: “Only one thing could have stopped our movement - if our adversaries had understood its principle and from the first day smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement.”

The first time I personally heard these words was in ‘Bash the fash’, a 1994 song by the anarcho-punk band, Oi Polloi. The last time I was confronted with them was at an International Bolshevik Tendency fringe meeting at Marxism 2013, where the CPGB was criticised for its alleged quietism *vis-à-vis* the fascist threat. On that day, I responded that Hitler may have been a crafty politician, but he was certainly no great historian.

Anyway, the fact that the quote only ever appears in anti-fascist agitprop, and that no exact source is ever provided, made me wonder. Some websites claim that Hitler “wrote” these words in 1934, but they do not specify where. Others attribute them to a speech given at the August 1939 party rally in Nuremberg, yet no available documents of that event - which was largely dedicated to revving up the armed forces for the imminent war - contain them.

For some time, the earliest instance I could find where the quote appeared was David Edgar’s 1976 play about the National Front, *Destiny*. At the end of the play, a voice meant to be Hitler’s is heard delivering it in English language. After a slight pause, the same voice states: “Hitler, Nuremberg, September 3 1933.”

Finally, I found a scan of *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933*, a 1934 Nazi book that contains complete transcriptions of all the speeches Hitler made at Nuremberg the year before. It turned out he had employed a variation of the infamous phrase.

Find below my rough translation and marvel at the *Führer*’s social-Darwinist wisdom:

“And so I established in 1919 a programme and a tendency which was a conscious slap in the face to the democratic-pacifist world ... [We knew] it might take five or 10 or 20 years, yet gradually a state of authority arose within the democratic state, and a nucleus of fanatical devotion and audacious determination formed in a wretched world that lacked basic convictions.

“Only one danger could have jeopardised this development - if our adversaries had understood its principle, established a clear understanding of our ideas and not offered any resistance. Or, alternatively, if they had from the first day annihilated with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement.

“Neither was done. The times were such that our adversaries were no longer capable of resolving or accomplishing our annihilation, nor did they have the nerve - and, arguably, they lacked the understanding to assume a wholly appropriate and adequate attitude. Instead, they began to tyrannise our young movement by bourgeois means, and, by doing so,

they assisted the process of natural selection in a very fortunate manner. It was then only a question of time until the leadership of the nation would fall to this hardened human material ...

“The more our adversaries believe they can obstruct our development by employing terror to a degree that is characteristic of their nature, the more they encourage it. Nietzsche said that a blow which does not kill a strong man only makes him stronger, and his words are confirmed a thousand times. Every blow strengthens our defiance, every persecution reinforces our single-minded determination ...”

I’m not aware what source David Edgar used for his play, but it’s interesting that his variation did not contain the first part of Hitler’s statement: ie, the view that the Nazi movement would have stayed marginal and weak had it been completely ignored by its opponents. I say ‘interesting’ because that is the very tactic adopted, for instance, by Austrian Social Democracy in the face of early fascist assemblies and disturbances in 1919. Evidently, it did not work then.

For obvious reasons, militant anti-fascists like to quote Hitler’s second point, which is why the first has been selectively dropped somewhere along the way. But the two have to be read together and in context. Hitler’s ‘advice’ merely reflects his convictions that the fittest warriors are inspired to great deeds through battle, that the weak must fall by the wayside, and that the biggest thugs inevitably emerge on top. It does not offer any profound strategic or historical insight.

The ‘original’ quote found on countless German leftwing websites appears to be a translation of David Edgar’s version into German. It even contains the verb *stoppen* - an Anglicism that Hitler would have scarcely used in a formal speech.

Whatever the case, I would argue that anti-fascists ought to base tactics on a materialist analysis of history, and a concrete assessment of the situation at hand - not advocate a static ‘principle’ based on an incomplete Hitler quote.

Hitler’s was not the only militant *völkisch* movement in Germany at the time. Even if a group of militant anti-fascists had succeeded in smashing the nucleus of the Nazi Party, they would have still been up against the massive cesspit that had been forming on the back of a failed revolution. For all his self-assurance, the *Führer* had no idea how lucky he was to emerge from that cesspit as the main contender.

Maciej Zurowski
London

Islamophobia

I am saddened (though not surprised) to hear from our correspondent in Germany, A Holberg, that the Socialist Workers Party have sided with the most reactionary current of Islam to support the wearing of the full-face niqab in NHS hospitals (Letters, October 3). The SWP can now be relied upon to support medievalist jihadism against pluralism and secularism in Egypt, Libya, Syria and here. In Turkey and Egypt they would find themselves in opposition to the mainly youthful resistance who are determined to maintain a secular society and not be forced under the veil and off the streets. People who are by tradition themselves Muslim, though pluralist inhabitants of the 21st century and not seekers of an archaic, repressive theocracy.

While I would be the first to defend the right of anyone to wear any daft get-up they feel like, from a Mickey Mouse head to those ridiculous Guy Fawkes masks some anarchists wear, to the niqab, these are not appropriate to many situations. Neither would I endorse the wearer’s absurdity

by engaging in conversation with someone so attired - talking is more than mumbled words from behind a plastic mask or cloth screen. I don’t want my infant in nursery or child in school to have a so-called carer dressed up in a black gown which covers her from head to toe, including her face. I don’t want my sick mother in hospital to be cared for by someone all covered up like a ghoul. When you’re vulnerable and in need of emotional support, a smile, face-to-face contact and a personal conversation, you can’t possibly get that from behind a body shroud and face veil.

I suppose if this blind-in-one-eye state ever starts to crack down on the widespread barbaric practice of female genital mutilation, the SWP will be on the street defending this ‘culture’ from Islamophobia. No wonder they have not the slightest resonance with the working class at large and simply inhabit a small knitting circle of a political sect which is entirely internally referenced. No wonder they are useless in supporting progressive pluralist and socialist trends among people of Muslim traditions.

Willie Hunter
Berwick Upon Tweed

Weird

Last Friday was a weird one for me. In the morning, I had a phone call from my brother. He seemed agitated. The previous night he had watched BBC’s *Question time* where it was mentioned that Ed Miliband’s dad was a Marxist. My brother demanded to know what a Marxist was. All my brother knew about Marx was from Wikipedia, which explained that Marx was a German guy who spent much of his life in the reading room of the British Library.

I mentioned something about Marx believing in democracy and human liberation, but my brother was unimpressed. All I could mutter was that, just as there are Christians and Christians, there are Marxists and Marxists.

In the evening, I attended my first public meeting in many years. The Communication Workers Union had organised a meeting at a community centre in Wisbech specialising in teaching migrant workers English, to discuss the franchising out and closure of the crown post office. There were about 12 members of the public present, including the three UK Independence Party county councillors for Wisbech, one of whom being the husband of Victoria Gillick, the ‘pro-life’ campaigner. There were no Conservatives present - Steve Barclay, the local Tory MP, had been invited, but didn’t turn up. The only Labour Party member present was a Unite full-timer.

Before the meeting, I chatted with the three Ukip councillors. They seemed like enthusiastic amateurs who just happened to have stumbled into the corridors of power at county hall. They were definitely not bomber command types. However, they were a bit intense, SWP-style. They were at the meeting to save the post office, not as official Ukip representatives.

Afterwards, I had a discussion with the Unite full-timer. As a community member of Unite, I discussed the problems associated with recruiting the 6,000 migrant workers who now live in Wisbech to the union - some work on the land, but most are in the food-processing factories. We also discussed how to recruit the 750 workers employed by the four big supermarkets in Wisbech, many of whom are employed on zero-hours contracts. We discussed the qualitative change in British politics that has occurred following Ed Miliband’s speech to Labour’s conference and the ensuing attacks on Ed by the *Daily Mail*.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

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 October 13, 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, chapter 24: ‘Conversion of surplus value into capital’.

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

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology: the human revolution

Tuesday October 15, 6.15pm: ‘Darwinism and genetics: the science of solidarity’. Speaker: Chris Knight.

St Martin’s Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (Camden Town tube). £10 waged, £5 low waged, £3 unwaged. Discounts for whole term.

Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.radicalanthropologygroup.org.

Stop LGBT oppression in Gambia

Thursday October 10, 5pm: Protest, Gambian high commission, 92 Ledbury Road, London W11.

Organised by African LGBTI Out and Proud Diamond Group: www.facebook.com/pages/Out-Proud-Diamond-Group/1393598677521689.

Teesside Solidarity Movement

Thursday October 10, 7pm: General assembly, Saint Mary’s Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough.

Organised by Teesside Solidarity Movement: www.facebook.com/TeessideSolidarityMovement.

Student fightback 2013

Saturday October 12, 10am to 5.30pm: Conference against education cuts and war, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1. Register online: www.studentfightback2013.eventbrite.co.uk.

Organised by Student Fightback: <http://studentfightback2013.eventbrite.co.uk>.

Unite against EDL

Saturday October 12, 11am: Anti-fascist demonstration, Centenary Square, Bradford BD1.

Organised by Unite Against Fascism: www.uaf.org.uk.

Celebrating, not dividing

Saturday October 12, 12 noon: March against fascism. Assemble William Brown Street, Liverpool L3.

Organised by Unite and other unions: www.unitetheunion.org.

Miscarriage of Justice Day

Saturday October 12, 10am: Public meeting, Friends Meeting Hall, Mount Street, Manchester M2.

Organised by United Against Injustice: www.unitedagainstinjustice.org.uk.

Socialist films

Sunday October 13, 11am: Screening, Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way, London W1. Justin Chadwick’s *The first grader* (Ireland, 103 minutes); and Mark Saunders’ *Shaker Aamer: a decade of injustice* (UK, 22 minutes). Followed by discussion. £10 (concessions £8, members £4).

Organised by London Socialist Film Co-op: www.socialistfilm.blogspot.com.

Unite the Resistance

Saturday October 19, 12 noon to 5pm: Conference, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2.

Organised by UTR: www.uniteresist.org.

Safe spaces for women

Saturday October 19, 2pm: Discussion, room 2c, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1. Women only, please. Speakers include Michelle Stanistreet (NUJ) and Maria Exall (CWU and TUC general council). For crèche info: marshajanethompson@yahoo.co.uk.

Organised by Women in the Labour Movement: <http://womeninthelabourmovement.wordpress.com>.

Dublin lockout anniversary

Saturday October 19, 2pm: Public meeting, Red Shed (Wakefield Labour Club), Vicarage Street, Wakefield.

Organised by West Yorkshire Socialist Historians: www.westyorkshiresocialisthistoriansgroup.wordpress.com.

Zero hours and workfare

Thursday October 24, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1.

Organised by Brighton Benefits Campaign and Brighton & Hove Trades Union Council: www.facebook.com/events/401129549988566

Migrants welcome

Thursday October 24, 10.30am: Protest against UKBA ‘Go home’ campaign, Eaton House, 581 Staines Road, Hounslow, Middlesex.

Organised by Southall Black Sisters: www.southallblack sisters.org.uk.

Birmingham People’s Assembly

Thursday October 24, 7pm: Launch rally, Second City Suite, 100 Sherlock Street, Birmingham B5.

Organised by Birmingham People’s Assembly: www.birminghampeoplesassembly.wordpress.com.

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.

SWP

Leatherites thirsting for a purge

Faced with criticism from two directions, the central committee is desperately trying to limit the damage. Peter Manson reports

With just over two months to go before the Socialist Workers Party's annual conference, the factional battle is hotting up.

The leadership, particularly national secretary Charlie Kimber, will find itself under fire from two directions at the December 13-15 conference. For it is not just the new Rebuilding the Party (RP) faction - which has taken over from where In Defence of Our Party left off at the special conference in March - that is critical of the central committee. There are also the ultra-loyalists grouped around CC member Amy Leather, who fired their first salvo in the shape of a document entitled 'For Our Revolutionary Party' (FORP) in last month's first of three *Pre-conference Bulletins*.¹

The Leatherites effectively constitute an 'anti-faction faction', whose members believe that comrades Kimber and Alex Callinicos have been far too lax in their tolerance of the opposition. Sparked by the uproar over the CC's handling of the Martin Smith case, in which the former national secretary was accused of serious sexual crimes, criticism spilled over into questioning of the whole internal regime. The CC correctly states that the opposition has been operating as a permanent faction, even though factions are only permitted in the three-month pre-conference period.

However, the CC, despite many threats, has so far not taken disciplinary action against the opposition and the FORP response was: "Comrades who continue to belong to a permanent faction should be expelled, to ensure they do not damage and undermine our party." This is ironic, of course, because the Leatherites themselves have been organising and meeting: ie, operating as a "permanent faction" outside the pre-conference period. But they could only muster 100 signatories - well under half the number who signed up to the RP statement published in the bulletin. This despite their haranguing of anyone previously considered to be a CC loyalist.

Amy Leather's faction - jokingly referred to by oppositionists as IDOM (In Defence of Our Martin) - is particularly strong in Manchester, her home base, where leading comrades such as Mark Krantz, together with 22 others, have signed the FORP statement. Other supporters include SWP veterans such as Paul Holborow, Paul Blackledge and Maxine Bowler, together with prominent members of the SWP's NUT and PCS union fractions, plus many who have been active in Unite Against Fascism - comrade Smith's main area of work for several years. Also on board are Tony Cliff's son, Donny Gluckstein; Laura Miles, the SWP's favoured specialist on LGBT oppression following the marginalisation of Hannah Dee; and Roger Huddle, the comrade responsible for the closure of Leytonstone branch because of its domination by oppositionists.

While, however, FORP cannot boast huge support among the rank and file, it is certainly well placed to consolidate its influence on the central committee. Among those proposed by the outgoing leadership to join the new, expanded CC is none other than comrade Smith's current partner, "Jo C". She and "Sue C" are set to join the likes of comrade Leather and Mark Thomas as the most vocal supporters



The way to deal with oppositionists

of the ex-national secretary.

Opposition

In the meantime, the RP oppositionists have been urging the CC to play fair when it comes to the district aggregates that are about to elect delegates to conference. According to a bulletin sent to its supporters on October 5, "A delegation from the Rebuilding the Party committee went to meet the CC to discuss our rights in the pre-conference period."

In the run-up to the March special conference, CC speakers addressed the aggregates at length, while representatives from the opposition were only allowed three minutes. Wherever CC supporters won a majority, however slight (including comrades who had, literally, not previously been seen for years), they took 100% of conference delegates.

But Pat Stack's report of the faction's meeting with the CC is relatively upbeat: "The tone of the discussion was generally friendly. The CC's starting point was that, while they had done nothing wrong last conference, they were willing to review procedures. We pointed out that any repeat of last time would be a disaster, and what they had done had seriously contributed to the loss of members." Hundreds have abandoned the SWP, of course, including the 120 or so who left to form the International Socialist Network.

The RP comrades have called for conference delegates to be elected in proportion to their local support, but comrade Stack reports that even the demand for equity in terms of speaking time was rejected - "on the grounds that they [the CC] have to cover wider questions than those the faction is raising". However, RP will be permitted a "further four national mailings to all party members" in the pre-conference period - although its request for access to membership lists was rejected out of hand.

So, while comrade Kimber continues to play the role of the

reasonable, "friendly" face of the CC, it is likely that the December conference will be every bit as rigged as the last two. The CC will use every trick in the book, thanks to its small army of full-timers, to reduce opposition delegates to the absolute minimum and will surely start expelling people if they do not go quietly after conference.

This is made clear in the latest *International Socialism* (October), which features an article written by the SWP's two main leaders, comrade Kimber and Alex Callinicos, entitled 'The politics of the SWP crisis'. They write: "... the central committee has abstained from taking the disciplinary measures against the faction to which it would be fully entitled under the party constitution. It has preferred to rely on political argument to resolve the differences." But, they conclude, "this position cannot be sustained indefinitely". In other words, there will be expulsions if you continue to campaign against us after conference.

The article admits: "The party has suffered serious damage to its reputation, it has lost members and it is still hampered by deep divisions." But not to worry: "It has not stopped us acting as a revolutionary organisation. We have ... recruited hundreds of new members ... responded very effectively to the death of Margaret Thatcher ... played a crucial role in blocking the revival of the English Defence League after the killing of Lee Rigby in Woolwich." What is most worrying about this is the fact that comrades Kimber and Callinicos actually seem to believe in these "successes".

Modestly, the comrades concede: "Of course, world history does not hinge on the fate of a small revolutionary party in one small part of the globe." But they seriously want us to accept that the current SWP, complete with its bureaucratic-centralist regime - as opposed to a party armed with a Marxist programme that practises genuine democratic centralism and facilitates the active participation of different Marxist trends - has the potential to become

the "revolutionary party".

As you might expect, comrades Kimber and Callinicos exonerate the CC for any wrongdoing in relation to the Martin Smith case. It was perfectly normal for members of the CC to be represented on the disputes committee (DC) that heard and dismissed the allegations against comrade Smith, even though oppositionists have referred to the DC as a "jury of his mates". They claim: "By the close of [the January 2013 annual] conference most delegates, including many who voted against the DC report, felt that the matter was now resolved. But this soon unravelled in a barrage of attacks on the internet and articles in the mainstream press that were triggered by the publication of a transcript of the conference session on the DC on a sectarian left website and of a highly tendentious article by an ex-Socialist Worker journalist on another."

Comrades Callinicos and Kimber cannot bring themselves to utter the words *Socialist Unity*, let alone *Weekly Worker* (we were pleased to publish Tom Walker's article, even though we disagreed with many of his conclusions²).

They accurately note that "One criticism aimed at us, mainly by those outside the party, was that we were not competent to handle an allegation of this kind". However, they do not attempt to dispute this, arguing instead that no other course was possible or acceptable.

Responding to this article, SWP member Dave Renton hotly disputes his leaders' version of events. According to him, "Alex Callinicos and the other members of the CC encouraged Smith and the woman to 'negotiate': ie, if the woman could be persuaded to keep the detail of the complaint out of the public eye, Smith would in turn agree to his voluntary demotion. During the course of the negotiations, he was able to bargain his proposed sanction down, from the original punishment (that he would stand down from all paid work for the SWP) to the end result that he would remain not just on the party's payroll, but even on our central committee."

Comrade Renton also takes the duo to task for failing to mention the deliberate rallying of support for comrade Smith at the 2011 SWP conference. He outlines how the session dealing with Smith's decision to stand down as national secretary was successfully choreographed to generate a show of support for him: "In response to every signal from the people who had planned the session that the misconduct was of the mildest character possible, the delegates chanted, 'The workers, united, will never be defeated'" and gave Smith a standing ovation.³

Dishonest

Comrades Kimber and Callinicos resort to the usual dishonest accusations against the opposition - the low level of strikes and organised working class action has caused demoralisation, and this has found a reflection in the SWP too. By decrying the entire opposition in this way, they hope they can avoid responding to its criticisms - on SWP democracy as well as SWP policy.

A loss of faith in the working class has led to "a desperate search for some other agency of change", which has affected SWP oppositionists too, they claim. However, "we are not going to abandon our insistence on the special role of the working class and on the struggle at the point of production as

the most powerful weapon available to workers". It is here that the two descend into economism: strikes and so on, not *political* action of any kind, are workers' "most powerful weapon".

Their talk of the "united front" is just as pathetic. It is, of course, perfectly desirable to enter into alliances with all sorts of non-working class forces - although we should not label such alliances 'united fronts' - a term which Marxists use to describe campaigns alongside the reformists in our movement, with the aim of exposing their misleadership and winning the masses to break from them.

But the SWP takes the misuse of the term even further. Following the mass anti-war upsurge of 2002-03, it helped form a *political party* not just with reformists, but with non-working class, petty bourgeois forces. Respect, claim Kimber and Callinicos, "was a huge step forward from the Socialist Alliance" because it was 'broader' and thus enabled the left to pick up greater electoral support.

At least - and at last - there is some criticism of the SWP's behaviour within Respect: "Instead of revolutionaries arguing for their politics among a much wider group of radical non-revolutionaries, we were deciding how much to hold ourselves back in order to seek wider alliances. That was problematic." You can say that again.

Apart from that, they concede that "attempting to apply the united front to electoral work is particularly fraught, because it doesn't involve unity around a particular action or struggle, but prolonged unity around a whole programme to fight elections - a terrain on which reformists tend to prove their superiority in practice". In fact that "whole programme" can only be one for government. What is more, it was put forward in Respect alongside not only reformists, but small (and not so small) businessmen who just happened to be Muslims.

The two also attempt to detract from the opposition's criticisms that their handling of the Martin Smith affair was behind the loss of hundreds of members, particularly students. To do this they are prepared to admit to past mistakes in the SWP's student work too:

"The SWP was quite right to throw itself into and enthusiastically to build the student movement of 2010 ... As a result, we won many students to our ranks. The problem was that they were integrated into the SWP on a movementist basis that encouraged them to see themselves as separate from and superior to the rest of the party - part of a student vanguard that could lead the working class as a whole into struggle against austerity. This helps to explain why so many student members of the SWP abandoned the party in reaction to the DC controversy."

So that was why they left. It was nothing to do with their disgust at the CC's handling of the case, nor with the fact that they were beginning to recognise the SWP regime for what it is - undemocratic, unaccountable and opportunistic •

peter.manson@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. Available on the CPGB website at www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker/online-only/swp-september-internal-bulletin.
2. 'Why I am resigning', January 10 2013.
3. livesrunning.wordpress.com/2013/10/06/alex-callinicos-charlie-kimber-and-the-rape-investigation.

ITALY

Houdini's last escape

Surely last week's volte face signals the end of the road for Silvio Berlusconi. Toby Abse reports

Following his humiliating climbdown on October 2, Silvio Berlusconi has now lost the unquestioning support of his own party, the Popolo della Libertà (Pdl). Since the Pdl, like its predecessor, Forza Italia, was entirely created around the personality of Berlusconi, this is a much more severe blow than any challenge to the leadership or line of a more conventional western European party of the centre-right would be - it is, for example, far more serious than John Major's undermining by the group of rightwing Europhobes that he dubbed "the bastards".

Berlusconi's 180-degree about-turn occurred towards the end of a confidence debate precipitated by Berlusconi's own decision on September 25 to obtain undated resignation letters from all Pdl parliamentarians. He had ordered all five Pdl ministers to resign from Enrico Letta's 'grand coalition' on September 28. But at the very last minute on October 2, faced with a rebellion in the Pdl, he suddenly announced that he was, after all, advocating a vote of confidence in a government whose taxation policies he had been denouncing the day before.

He may in this way have avoided an open split in the Pdl - at least in the short term, although tensions between ministerial 'doves' and more oppositional 'hawks' remain - but he is now gravely weakened. He not only bowed to pressure from rebellious members of his own party led by the Pdl party secretary, deputy prime minister and interior minister, Angelino Alfano, but was seen to do so on live television, so that his public humiliation is visually recorded in his favourite medium and can never be denied.

Within two days of this farcical end to a very serious bid to bring down the coalition of the centre-left Partito Democratico (PD), the centrist Scelta Civica and the Pdl itself, so as to precipitate an early general election, Berlusconi had to endure a further humiliation. This took the form of the predictable vote (by a 15 to eight majority¹) of a senate committee to recommend his expulsion from the house. Whilst this committee recommendation made on October 4 may not be put to the vote of the full senate for two or three weeks, it marks a further stage in Berlusconi's decline.

His supporters on the committee had tried to engage in what was in reality a prolonged filibuster.² Under the Severino anti-corruption law Berlusconi should have automatically and, to use the words of the statute, "immediately" lost his senate seat, but the initial reporter on the case, a Pdl senator, had concentrated on possible appeals against this law to the Consulta (constitutional court), the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the European Union Court in Luxembourg. This led to his report being rejected on September 18 and the appointment of a new reporter, a member of the soft-left Sinistra Ecologia Libertà.

By October 15, Berlusconi has to choose whether to face house arrest or ask to be allowed to do community service - the two real options that are in all likelihood going to be offered to him in place of the nominal four-year prison sentence imposed upon him for tax fraud by the Cassazione (supreme court) on August 1, a sentence automatically reduced to one year by a pardon law (*indulto*) passed by a previous legislature. On October 6 Berlusconi's most eminent lawyer, Franco Coppi, announced that, unless



Silvio Berlusconi: going at last

he got instructions to the contrary within a few days, his client would be applying to do community service before the deadline.

Such a request, assuming it is officially made and that the criminal tycoon does not abruptly change his mind yet again, has some advantages, both because it will not be considered immediately, as the relevant magistrates have a backlog of other cases to consider, and because somebody carrying out community service has rather more freedom to meet people outside his immediate family - and thus to engage in some form of political activity - than somebody under house arrest, even if they would be subjected to far more restrictions than Berlusconi is used to.³ However, any application to do community service is a *de facto* acknowledgement of guilt; house arrest would be the default penalty, regardless of any acceptance of the verdict, and would therefore be more compatible with Berlusconi's claim, made in his 16-minute video broadcast shown in full on his own channels⁴ on September 18, in which he pleaded, "I am innocent, I am totally innocent", accompanying this ludicrous claim with much melodramatic banging of the desk in front of him.

Therefore, some believe, Berlusconi was rather annoyed by the speed with which Coppi announced their intention to embark on this course of action, which may not have been the one favoured by his longstanding in-house lawyer and Pdl parliamentarian, Niccolò Ghedini. However, with the October 15 deadline fast approaching, Berlusconi is now playing for time in any way he can and the strong prospect of remaining a free man until the spring of 2014 presumably outweighs the humiliation of pleading for the lesser penalty.⁵

No martyr

After his performance on October 2, Berlusconi cannot really seek political martyrdom with any conviction, despite his earlier talk of a willingness to go to jail and absurd comparisons he drew between himself and Nelson Mandela.

A more consistent figure would have forced the Pdl 'rebels' to show their hand in a confidence vote which took the form of an individual public roll call, not a secret ballot or a procedure based

on pressing voting buttons of the kind so often used in the Italian parliament, which has become notorious for the scope it offers to friends and colleagues to vote on behalf of absentees. It is impossible to judge what the outcome would have been if these previously subservient and obsequious courtiers, who owed their entire political careers to their political patron, had been put to the test, since those earlier in the alphabet would have had no certainty that the remaining conspirators would not have broken ranks. Even had the 'traitors' been sufficient in number to preserve the Letta government, he could have reaped political dividends as leader of the opposition and might well have been able to topple an unstable and heterogeneous majority and precipitate an early general election within months.

In reality Berlusconi at bay proved a far less heroic figure than 'Il Caimano' of Nanni Moretti's famous anti-Berlusconi film, who in the finale organises a violent uprising against the magistrates who have sentenced him.

It should be stressed that Berlusconi will be playing for time not just in relation to the request to undertake community service, but also in relation to the ban on public office. The verdict of the Milan appeal court on the length of the ban on his holding of public office is due on October 19. The Cassazione, when on August 1 it overturned the original five-year ban imposed by the lower court as disproportionate in relation to the offence, told the Milanese judges to apply a penalty in the range of one to three years. This is considerably lower than the potential six-year ban on parliamentary office that would automatically be imposed on Berlusconi under the Severino law - passed in December 2012 with the full support of the Pdl parliamentarians in both houses.

If the Milanese court imposes a penalty at the lower end of the spectrum recommended to it, Berlusconi may not even choose to appeal against it to the Cassazione (which in other circumstances would be an obvious delaying tactic), since if he has already been expelled from the senate by the judges, the procedure under the Severino law would have been overtaken by events - the senate could not expel somebody who was no

longer a senator. A ban of a year or two would probably give him some hope of continuing his political career, whilst for the 77-year-old fraudster, a six-year ban would signal the end of the road.

Silvio Berlusconi may have one last card to play - a far from heroic one, reminiscent of a card sharp's underhand trick rather than the last, reckless throw of the gambler's dice that he ultimately drew back from on October 2. Despite demands for a public vote from the right-populist Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S) and some individual PD parliamentarians, such as the former magistrate Felice Casson, there is every likelihood that the vote of the full senate on Berlusconi's expulsion - if it occurs and is not overtaken by the courts' verdict on the matter - will be by secret ballot.

The disgraceful episode in April, when 101 PD grand electors failed to vote for Romano Prodi, the PD's presidential candidate in a secret ballot, has given rise to widespread concern as to what might happen if the senate votes on Berlusconi's fate. M5S claims that about 40 PD senators will vote to save Berlusconi in any secret ballot, whilst some in the PD are saying that M5S leader Beppe Grillo will cynically instruct some of his senators to vote for Berlusconi in order to put the blame for this on the PD. M5S declares that the PD and the Pdl are once again in cahoots and that the entire corrupt system which saved Berlusconi can only be swept away by a new election leading to an M5S majority government.

The PD's claims about M5S's nefarious plan seem, in part at any rate, to rest on an analogy with the alleged behaviour in 1992 of the racist-regionalist Lega Nord and the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano parliamentarians in voting to save former Socialist Party prime minister Bettino Craxi in a secret ballot in order to put the blame on the establishment parties and sweep away the First Republic - it is not clear what, if any, evidence exists to support this version of the events of 1992. On the other hand, there is little doubt that Berlusconi has been quite prepared to bribe parliamentarians to change sides in the past - Naples magistrates are currently conducting a

criminal investigation into a €3-million bribe that a former Italia dei Valori senator claims to have received from Berlusconi to change party during the second Prodi government and there is no other plausible explanation for Berlusconi's surprise victory in the confidence vote of December 14 2010 as a result of sufficient defectors from the centre left coming forward to outweigh Gianfranco Fini's belated rebellion against the Pdl.

Whilst it would be premature to announce the political demise of somebody who has proved to be a veritable Houdini, escaping from one tight corner after another over the last 20 years, after the volte-face of October 2 Berlusconi is no longer as serious a threat to the survival of Letta's grand coalition and it is harder to envisage him making the electoral comeback that would enable him to mount an all-out challenge to the judiciary ●

Notes

1. His only support on the committee came from the Pdl and a closely allied list, the GAL.
2. Movimento Cinque Stelle members of the committee had called for longer and more frequent sessions in a bid to speed the process up - something to which the PD gave little or no support, even if some PD members complained quite vigorously about Pdl manoeuvres to slow the process down. It is difficult to gauge whether the M5S proposals were practicable, given greater political will to put an end to Berlusconi's antics, since the committee normally meets relatively rarely and for short sessions.
3. He would in effect be subjected to a curfew, as he could not leave home after 11pm or before 6am, as well as being unable to travel abroad, or at night, or to leave the region where he is officially resident (see *Corriere della Sera* October 6). Significantly, Berlusconi officially changed his place of residence from Arcore in Lombardy, where his famous country house is located, to Rome, where his Palazzo Grazioli is situated near both parliament and his new party headquarters, a few weeks ago. He had already decided that, whether he opted for house arrest or community service, he could not risk being exiled from the centre of Italy's political life, even if his business interests are largely concentrated in Milan.
4. RAI Uno, the equivalent of BBC1, only showed some highlights; the failure of the state channels to broadcast the message in full is a symptom of Berlusconi's decline, although showing such a message from a convicted man without heavy editorial comment on state television shows that he is still a force to be reckoned with and is not yet treated as a common criminal.
5. This obviously marks a change from his earlier refusals to ask for a presidential pardon or even agree to his children sending off a request for one on his behalf - refusals he motivated by his adamant assertion that, as an innocent man, he could not possibly ask for a pardon when he had committed no crime.

LUXEMBURG

Rosa and the republic

Last weekend, **Ben Lewis** spoke at an international conference in Paris on ‘Rosa Luxemburg’s concepts of democracy and revolution’. This is an expanded version of his paper



Rosa Luxemburg: many things right, many things wrong

This presentation forms part of ongoing research into the origins and evolution of the political programmes of the German workers’ movement, in which I am attempting to grapple with some particularly controversial topics and concepts within Marxism, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, republican democracy, the fate of the minimum-maximum programme, soviets, parliament and much more besides.

What I intend to do here is to analyse Rosa Luxemburg’s understanding of democracy by taking a closer look at the programme of the young Communist Party of Germany (KPD), otherwise known as ‘What does the Spartacus League want?’,¹ as well as her final speech before she was murdered, ‘Our programme and the political situation’,² which she presented to the founding congress of the KPD on New Year’s Eve 1918. According to her comrade, Paul Frölich, the speech was “convincing, gripping, stirring and inspiring. It was an unforgettable experience for all who were present”.³

My criticisms notwithstanding, I wish to make the argument that Luxemburg’s strategic point of departure in her final days represented a continuation of a revolutionary-republican, democratic tradition within Marxism - something that she fought to uphold against both putschist and reformist tendencies within the workers’ movement of the time.

Indeed, when in January 1919, Karl Liebknecht, the very embodiment of proletarian internationalism in the German movement, sought to seize

power in the name of a small and unrepresentative ‘Revolutionary Committee’ in Berlin without the knowledge of the KPD leadership, Luxemburg’s response, “Is that our programme, Karl?”,⁴ highlighted one consistent aspect of her Marxism: an understanding of revolution as an act of self-liberation on the part of the majority, with clear aims and goals, that culminates in the *conscious* rule of the working class. Not that of some enlightened minority taking power in the name of the people.

This basic approach also found clear expression in the KPD programme: “The Spartacus League [KPD - BL] will never take over governmental power except in response to the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian mass of all of Germany, never except by the proletariat’s conscious affirmation of the views, aims and methods of struggle of the Spartacus League”.

Indeed, in his meticulous study of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Marxism - a term mangled, misinterpreted and distorted by both Marxist and anti-Marxist thinkers alike - the American Trotskyist scholar, Hal Draper, has convincingly argued that Luxemburg was perhaps the *only* Marxist of her time to “consistently and without exception” use it “in the manner of Marx and Engels”. According to Draper, for Marx, Engels and Luxemburg, the term meant “a workers’ state with *no* implication that it necessarily entailed special dictatorial measures without which

it could not be called a dictatorship”.⁵ The liberal and social democratic nonsense about “Bloody Rosa” can thus be seen for the calculated and cynical defence of *capitalist state violence* that it is. Yet how did Luxemburg’s championing of radical democracy find expression during the tumultuous events of the German revolution, and where exactly do these views place her in the history of Marxist revolutionary thought?

Marx and Engels

Showing how seriously Luxemburg took both the study of history and the writings of Marx and Engels, her New Year’s Eve 1918 speech on the political situation soon proceeded to discuss their legacy on strategy, looking at Engels’ controversial 1895 introduction to the German edition of Marx’s *Class struggles in France*.⁶

Among other things, in this work Engels dealt with the development of his and Marx’s strategy since 1848 and underscored the importance of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) exploiting all legal avenues not least parliament in order to expand its forces and extend the reach of its message. Unknown to Luxemburg at the time, this preface had to be watered down to avoid a state crackdown, meaning that passages outlining how the SPD should not “fritter away this daily increasing shock force in vanguard skirmishes [street fighting - BL], but to keep it intact until the decisive day” were cut altogether. On occasion this made Engels appear to be some sort of advocate of the old ‘growing over into socialism’ outlook,

whereas his actual strategy was premised on destroying the old order.

Engels was livid, protesting in a letter to Kautsky that the edited version had presented him as a “peaceful worshipper of legality at any price”.⁶ Engels was for using parliament, even one as powerless and ineffectual as the German Reichstag, but not for cosying up to the kaiser’s constitutional order, let alone spreading the illusion that socialism could be built within that framework. Luxemburg was obviously unaware of the existence of Engels’ letter - the full edition of the ‘Introduction’ was only published in 1955.

Yet she could smell a rat. Luxemburg insisted that the betrayal of August 4 1914, when the SPD’s parliamentary fraction approved war credits, could not be laid at the feet of Engels, but she did argue that aspects of the *legalist* and *constitutional* approach in the watered down version paved the way for the SPD’s subsequent drift to the right. In short, this drift entailed the gradual erosion of German social democracy’s programme, with the ‘minimum’ demands gradually deemed ‘too advanced’ or insufficiently ‘popular’ for the masses under capitalist conditions and increasingly transformed into ‘maximum demands’ - high politics and socialism were thus pushed further into the future: a “distant guiding star”, to use Luxemburg’s apt phrase. A series of hollowed out day-to-day demands is how most historians and activists generally view the minimum programme today, yet it must be said that we have been looking at this programme through the wrong

end of the telescope.

After all, an examination of some of Engels’s (unadulterated!) writings makes it clear that, for him, the culmination of the political demands of the *minimum* programme represented working class rule, something almost inseparable from the ‘democratic republic’. In his largely positive critique of German social democracy’s Erfurt programme, he emphatically states: “If one thing is certain, it is that our party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic.”⁷

This “democratic republic” was synonymous with “the form for the dictatorship of the proletariat”,⁸ he declared, or, as Marx put it, the “political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour”;⁹ the “last state form of bourgeois society”, in which “the class struggle will be fought out to the end”.¹⁰ Drawing on the experience of the Paris Commune, the first workers’ government, Marx and Engels argued that this state was defined by several features, such as a single legislative and executive assembly, the regular elections of officials, including judges, recallability, workers’ wages for bureaucrats, the armed people and so on.

Many of these demands were also present in the Erfurt programme. For Engels, the programme’s main shortcoming was in the fact that the democratic republic was absent: “The political demands of the draft have one great fault. It lacks precisely what should have been said. If all the 10 demands were granted we should

indeed have more diverse means of achieving our main political aim, but the aim itself would in no wise have been achieved.”

Councils central

Both Luxemburg’s speech and the KPD programme accord with the revolutionary republican spirit outlined by Engels in this and similar writings. The programme’s first political demand calls for a republic (albeit in the form of a “united German *socialist* republic”, which we shall discuss below).

It also demands the disarming of the police and the establishment of a Red Guard of “male proletarians”, the abolition of rank and command within the army and calls for an “executive council” as the “highest organ of legislative and executive power” - to be elected by a central council of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils that shot onto the political scene after the collapse of the Kaiser regime in November 1918. In turn, these councils were to be elected by all adult men and women, with emphasis on control from below through regular elections, rotation and recallability.

In her speech, Luxemburg does a wonderful job of lampooning the new German constitution being proposed by the SPD leadership. She savaged the new constitution’s presidentialism (“the election of a president who is to have a position intermediate between that of the king of England and that of the president of the United States”!) and checks and balances against popular pressure in the form of federalism and a second chamber, the *Bundesrat*.

Nonetheless, with the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen that the KPD programme’s sole focus on the council system as the *alternative* to the new constitution was quickly overtaken by the course of events, perhaps even rendering the programme outdated within a couple of weeks.

For whatever particular reasons, the majority of the German population was *not* striving to replace parliamentary democracy with council democracy. Indeed parliamentary democracy was no longer a mere fig leaf for kaiserdom and was for the first time based on universal suffrage. There was a substantial turnout in the national assembly elections of January 1918. Women in particular, having gained the right to vote, were eager to participate. The workers’ and soldiers’ councils were overwhelmingly built by members of the two main workers’ parties: namely the SPD and the left-centrist split from it, the Independent Social Democrats, to which Luxemburg and her supporters had belonged until December 1918. As such, the fate of these councils was determined by the political evolution of these parties.

From 1914 till 1918 the SPD remained the majority party in the working class. As such it was able to win most of the councils to its outlook. The SPD leadership’s approach, of course, was to use its power within the council system to gradually restore capitalist order (doing a deal with the German high command, attempting to disarm the council movement, repressing the Bolshevik revolution in the east), while offering some (on occasion quite substantial) reforms, including abolishing the hated Prussian three-class voting system and conceding the eight-hour day.

This shift of political gravity from the councils to the new parliamentary constitution, which in turn was premised on the kind of brutal suppression of the councils actually predicted by Luxemburg in her speech, ensured that the sole focus of the KPD on the councils as the basis of workers’ power in Germany was to leave it in a difficult strategic position. This was doubtless compounded by the fact that Luxemburg’s forces, and others

committed to genuine working class rule, were still marginal and/or unorganised.

Again with the benefit of hindsight it can be seen that some of these weaknesses resulted from the fact that the Communist Party of Germany was born both too *late*¹¹ and too *early*: subsequently, leading KPD members like Clara Zetkin and Paul Levi agreed that the KPD split from the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), had little to no effect on the ranks of the USPD that had played such a pivotal role in Germany’s revolutionary upheavals. Luxemburg’s life-long collaborator, Leo Jogiches, even opposed the foundation of the party, rightly arguing that they had formed a group with little by way of a social base, that was going to boycott the coming elections and that had only avoided deciding that its members should leave the official German trade unions by way of postponing the vote! Only with the Halle Congress of October 1920 - ie, the merger with the left wing of the USPD - could the KPD be seen as a *real* party.

At any rate, the fact that the KPD programme had little to offer by way of an alternative to the constitution and the national assembly - beyond replacing it with a system of councils - was bound up with an incorrect assessment of what lay ahead. It is clear both from her speech and from her correspondence that Luxemburg misjudged the immediate situation. So convinced was she of the depth of the crisis in the German state, the level of disillusionment with the SPD and USPD leaders and the power of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils that she thought that the national assembly elections might not even take place at all. Urging Clara Zetkin not to be too concerned about the young KPD’s decision to call a boycott, Luxemburg wrote, just eight days before the elections: “In reality, the rush of events has put the question of [participating] in the national assembly on the back burner and, if things continue in this way, it is highly doubtful whether there will be elections and a national assembly”.¹²

Luxemburg seems to have been convinced that the “first stage” of the German revolution had now passed and was now moving onto the “second stage”, which was to be characterised more by its economic than its political content. As she puts it, “No government, however admirably socialist, can inaugurate socialism”. In a certain sense, of course, this is correct, reflecting a clear rejection of the SPD-USPD joint provisional government formed in November 1918. For all the talk of ‘socialism’ on the part of these self-styled ‘people’s commissars’, this government was actually seeking to act as a caretaker for a German capitalist state and class in disarray. In fact the commissars themselves were not ministers in the new government - the old state bureaucracy and the military top brass remained masters of the situation. While this often led to disgust among the rank and file of both the SPD and USPD, with the USPD commissars even being forced to resign in late December following an armed assault on worker militants in Berlin, the two parties would nonetheless remain dominant for some time to come.

Luxemburg had misjudged the mood of the masses. Yet there can be no doubt that she did not misjudge or misrepresent the revolutionary spirit of Marxism. In this she towers above the former ‘pope of Marxism’, Karl Kautsky. For all that she and Kautsky may have sung from the same hymn sheet in fighting the pro-capitalist coalitionism of Alexandre Millerand and co at the end of the 19th century, a cursory look at Kautsky’s writings in this period, such as his ‘Guidelines for a socialist action programme’ or ‘Driving the revolution forward’,¹³

make it clear that, in marked contrast to some of his earlier writings, he was disingenuously deploying key Marxist terms like the ‘democratic republic’ and the ‘minimum programme’ to provide left cover for the Millerandism of the hour: the actions of the joint SPD-USPD government.

Content and form

This may account for another central thread of Luxemburg’s speech: namely, that the minimum programme had to be “liquidated”. Her approach here was obviously bound up with her false assessment of the immediate situation, as I have just outlined. Yet despite all that happened in the course of the two revolutionary months in 1918, the German working class was *not* in power (despite Kautsky’s spurious claims to the contrary) or, I would argue, in any real position to *immediately* challenge for it. For some time there was a situation of dual power, but the working class lacked the organisation, strategy and consciousness necessary to resolve this positively. To the extent that one strategy was hegemonic, it was that of the SPD leadership. Against Luxemburg, then, I would argue that ‘Down with the wages system!’ was *not* the slogan of the hour. This approach clearly informed the KPD’s call for the “united *socialist* republic” or the fact that, much more bizarrely, Karl Liebknecht had actually *proclaimed* the socialist republic in November 1918!¹⁴

Interestingly, Luxemburg’s assertion that the minimum programme should be discarded and that the workers should “seriously set about destroying capitalism” were (quite independently, as far as I can tell) echoed in the Russian revolutionary movement. In the run-up to the October revolution, Nikolai Bukharin and his supporters contended that the minimum programme of the Russian communists was obsolete. What was posed, for them, was beginning the realisation of the maximum programme of human liberation. Lenin’s response provides a better, less rash, more realistic perspective:

“It is ... ridiculous to discard the minimum programme, which is indispensable while we still live within the framework of bourgeois society, while we have not yet destroyed that framework, not yet realised the basic prerequisites for a transition to socialism, not yet smashed the enemy (the bourgeoisie), and even if we have smashed them we have not yet annihilated them ... Discarding the minimum programme would be equivalent to declaring, to announcing (to bragging, in simple language) that we have already won.”¹⁵

The absence of such a Leninist approach left the KPD with very little to fall back on strategically, other than promoting and supporting strikes and clashes between workers and employers, with Luxemburg (erroneously in my view), describing these conflicts as the “external form of the struggle for socialism” - perhaps an echo of her earlier view that the mass strike, “a natural historical phenomenon”, represents “the first natural, impulsive form of every great revolutionary struggle of the proletariat”.¹⁶

Luxemburg was undoubtedly correct that “It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would good-humouredly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or of a national assembly”, yet in my opinion there is no *natural* form of proletarian revolution. It can take the *form* of mass strikes, military collapse and rebellion, a revolutionary party or parties winning a huge vote and so on.

The differing experiences of 1871 (an election to a local council) and 1917 (military rebellion, mass strikes, peasant unrest, soviets) underline this basic point. What is crucial is the question of *government*: which forces, and on the basis of what political *content*, will crystallise to take the decisions

necessary to break the inevitably ‘bad-humoured’ and vicious response of the capitalist class? This is perhaps the major problem with liquidating the minimum programme: it gets rid of the *minimum* terms on which the KPD’s participation in such a government could be made contingent - something that, it could be argued, would later come back to haunt the party as well.

We will never know how Luxemburg would have responded to the new political situation in the aftermath of the national assembly elections, as she was cruelly, brutally murdered four days before they took place. The young Communist Party was robbed of its brightest star.

Looking back, notwithstanding the consistent and pronounced republican aspects of Luxemburg’s thought, it is evident that her response to the betrayals of social democracy threw out the baby with the bathwater. Unlike Lenin and the majority of the Bolsheviks, she rejected the minimum programme as constitutionalist and bourgeois-parliamentarian *by its very nature*.¹⁷

Just as Draper argues that very few Marxists seem to have properly grasped what Marx and Engels meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat, it may be said that, similarly, there is a *republican-democratic* tradition in Marxism that was largely forgotten/misrepresented, or even consciously buried, in the Second International. The lack of clarity about the kind of republican-democratic government that social democracy was aiming for facilitated confusion in its ranks and perhaps even provided more favourable ground for the rise and spread of the opportunism that eventually finished off the Second International ●

ben.lewis@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. R Luxemburg, ‘What does the Spartacus League want?’: www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/12/14.htm.
2. R Luxemburg, ‘Our programme and the political situation’: www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/12/31.htm.

3. Quoted in MA Waters *Rosa Luxemburg speaks* New York 1970, p403.

4. However, Ottokar Luban’s detailed account of the ‘January days’ of 1919 underlines the general confusion in the KPD when assessing the political situation - something that also impaired Luxemburg’s judgement in deciding whether it was possible to overthrow the government in Berlin. See O Luban, ‘Rosa at a loss - the KPD leadership and the Berlin uprising of January 1919: legend and reality’ *Revolutionary history* 8, 4 (2004).

5. F Engels, introduction to K Marx *Class struggles in France*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1895/03/06.htm.

6. Quoted in VI Lenin, ‘Dead chauvinism and living Marxism’: www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/dec/12.htm#fwV21E042. Lenin, writing in 1914, actually quotes Engels’ letter to Kautsky.

7. F Engels *Critique of the Erfurt programme*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1891/06/29.htm.

8. F Engels, introduction to K Marx *The civil war in France* London 1941, p19.

9. K Marx *The civil war in France*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm.

10. K Marx *Critique of the Gotha programme*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch04.htm.

11. Only with the crisis of August 4 1914 did Luxemburg and her co-thinkers seriously set about organising some sort of coherent oppositional grouping to the SPD leadership based on a common outlook and programme.

12. Quoted in S E Bonner (ed) *The letters of Rosa Luxemburg* New Jersey 1993, p300.

13. For more on Kautsky’s hollowed out ‘republicanism’ of this time, see B Lewis, ‘From Erfurt to Charlottenburg’ *Weekly Worker* November 10 2011. My translation of ‘Driving the revolution forward’ will hopefully be published soon.

14. Some attribute this slightly voluntarist and moralist approach to Liebknecht’s neo-Kantian views, although it is clear that this approach found some support among revolutionary workers in Berlin in particular.

15. VI Lenin, ‘Revision of the party programme’: www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/06.htm.

16. R Luxemburg *The mass strike* chapter 7: www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1906/mass-strike/ch07.htm.

17. The fact that Kautsky had entertained the illusion that aspects of a modern capitalist state bureaucracy could be retained under socialism does not mean that it is outright false to argue, as he did in 1893, that “a real parliamentary regime can be just as well an instrument for the dictatorship of the proletariat as an instrument for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie” (quoted in RB Day and D Gaido *Witnesses to permanent revolution* Leiden 2009, p55, note 159). Marx, for example, also saw the need to transform universal suffrage “from the instrument of deception that it has been until now into an instrument of emancipation” (K Marx *Programme of the French Workers Party*: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/partiouvrier.htm).

Fighting fund

Complain about it

Many of our readers have experienced delivery problems. As I noted last week, Royal Mail has been affected by unofficial action by Communication Workers Union members in some areas, but comrades have reported that elsewhere they have been asked to pay a surcharge.

It is claimed that the envelope containing the *Weekly Worker* is “too thick” to qualify as a ‘small letter’ and so the rate for a ‘large letter’ applies. We have previously pointed out to Royal Mail that sometimes the air inside the envelope expands, but gently pressing down on the envelope results in that air being expelled, thus reducing the thickness below the 5mm official maximum. In fact we received an apology on that occasion, but this does not seem to have stopped what appears to be ridiculously officious behaviour. So the best thing to do is to complain to Royal Mail. If the paper is okay every week in the year except one, it is self-evident that Royal Mail is at fault, not the *Weekly Worker*. We consistently use the same paper, the same envelopes and the same folding techniques.

If the problem keeps recurring, one solution would be to pay the higher ‘large letter’ rate, but that would increase our postage costs by well over £1,000 a year. So there is every reason for readers to

phone up and explain the situation to Royal Mail.

The worse thing for us to do would be to increase our subscription rates because of this silly one-off. The fact of the matter is that we would dearly love to make the cost much cheaper. But we have printers’ bills, stamps to buy, lawyers fees to pay, etc. The fact that we charge as little as £60 a year is because of the subsidy provided in no small measure by those who contribute to our fighting fund. Speaking of which, apart from the £135 in standing orders received this week (thanks to DV, RK, SM, GD, FK, CG and JA), there was a nice £50 PayPal donation from comrade EJ (he was one of 10,240 online readers) and two £10 cheques from comrades GT and BL. And I must mention the £20 note handed personally to our editor by comrade TB, who is visiting from South Africa.

The £225 received this week takes our total for October to £421. But we need £1,500 every month (that is without having to pay extra in postage, of course), so we are slightly behind the asking rate. Can you help? ●

Robbie Rix

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

DAILY MAIL

Patriotism and the sins of the father

Communists hate the *Daily Mail* even more than Ed Miliband, writes **Eddie Ford**, but reject Leveson and any moves towards state regulation of the press

Still making the headlines, Ed Miliband's ongoing war with the *Daily Mail* over his late father can only boost his poll ratings and overall political prestige. That in no way implies, of course, that his response to the now notorious September 27 article attacking Ralph Miliband as a loony Marxist who "hated Britain" was anything less than heartfelt or genuine. The news that a *Mail on Sunday* reporter had gatecrashed a memorial service for his uncle merely reinforced the feeling that the Labour leader was conducting a righteous battle against the odious Paul Dacre, editor of the *Mail*.

Then again, in politics you should never look a gift horse in the mouth. Whilst Miliband did not pick the fight, it is true to say that the timing suited him well. His popularity was already on the rise after promising to freeze fuel prices, scrap the hated bedroom tax, 'strengthen' the minimum wage, end the "misuse" of zero-hours contracts and even "bring back socialism" - or so Miliband said in a pre-conference question-and-answer session in Brighton (Miliband's aides seem to be ditching 'triangulation' in favour of tacking slightly to the left and concentrating on Labour's core voters).

His struggle against the paper is proving, if anything, to be even more popular. A *Sunday Times* poll indicated that at least 72% of the British public disapproved of the *Mail* article, penned by Geoffrey Levy, and most people, including readers of the *Mail*, think the newspaper should apologise - as demanded by Ed Miliband and others.

As for Dacre though, his timing could not have been worse. More like a suicide mission in fact, given that the privy council was just about to meet in order to finalise its recommendations following the Leveson inquiry, which were for a "tougher form" of supposed self-regulation backed by legislation. Levy's article, needless to say, just acted to further empower those who want to curb the power of the press in some way or another - which, of course, includes the morally renewed Ed Miliband. However, Maria Miller, the culture secretary, turned over the apple cart. Invoking the spirit of "300 years of press freedom", she has called for a compromise deal with the press barons. The privy council is expected to come to a final decision on October 30.

Some are sensing treachery. Actor and former heart-throb Hugh Grant declared that any "further compromise" by ministers over press regulation would be a "betrayal of the promises" made to media abuse victims, such as himself and the families of Milly Dowler and Madeleine McCann. In his opinion, the government was "terrified of the press" - hard to deny - and was doing all it could to "oblige the press barons". Indeed, argued Grant - a leading member of the Hacked Off campaign - unnamed senior Tories are guilty of an "abuse of democracy" by trying to "sabotage" plans for a royal charter already agreed by all the mainstream parties.

Representatives of the press industry, on the other hand, expressed concern that the general drift was towards authoritarianism. Roger Alton, executive editor of *The Times*, told the BBC that the Leveson plans - "improved" or otherwise - amount to an "unjust law". According to him, the newspaper industry had already made "extraordinary concessions" on regulation - especially when you consider that there are plenty of laws "engulfing the press" as things stand now.

We in the CPGB could not be any



Time to say goodbye to Paul Dacre

more explicit about where we stand on this issue. We may hate the *Daily Mail* - and the entire moneyed bourgeois press, for that matter - but we oppose any attempt at state censorship or control of what is published. If that means we are on the same side as Paul Dacre, Richard Littlejohn, Hugh Whittow, Tony Gallagher, etc - so be it. A price worth paying. We demand freedom of the press and will not tolerate some bureaucratic creep trying to interfere - for example - with the *Weekly Worker*. Our communist project of human liberation cannot succeed unless we convince the majority of people of the necessity for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic capitalist state - not an obvious or 'common sense' message. Hence we fight for the right to *openly* say what we want in the way we want, in whatever medium we care to choose.

It goes without saying, therefore, that we communists dismiss out of hand the madcap - and nightmarish - notion of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, which has proposed that the media should be nationalised and duly allocated to organisations on the basis of their 'proven support' - except for fascists, who are beyond the pale. You do not have to scratch your head too much to work out who is going to control and supervise this allocation of resources or decide who exactly is fascist - *state bureaucrats*, albeit 'red' ones.

There should be an unrestrained 'free market' when it comes to ideas. We have every confidence that *our* ideas, those of Marxism and communism, will win mass support because they are true.

Foul

Of course, the original September 27 article was truly foul - even by *Daily Mail* standards, which are about as low as you can get. It was a classic bit of old fashioned red-baiting

from a newspaper which has form when it comes to such operations, having helped bring down the 1924 Labour government by publishing the forged Zinoviev letter. Naturally, the *Mail* relies on the ignorance of its readers. Ralph was a Marxist, Stalin was a Marxist, therefore Ralph was a Stalinist - and hence by extension so too is Ed. The obvious objective is not to just smear the Milibands, but to prevent Labour getting into government. Scarily, it also gives us a glimpse of what the future would be like if the working class movement, and the far left, ever became a serious force in British politics - it would face attacks like this every day and on a far bigger, nastier, scale.

With a sort of unintended grim humour, Geoffrey Levy proves the very point made by the 17-year-old Ralph Miliband in his diary - that "the Englishman is a rabid nationalist" and "perhaps the most nationalist people in the world", so much so that you "sometimes want them almost to lose [the war] to show them how things are". Furthermore, the Englishman has the "greatest contempt for the continent" and to "lose their empire would be the worst possible humiliation" - had Ralph Miliband been reading the *Mail* by any chance?

Levy recounts in horror the "disdain" that Miliband senior felt for the British establishment - including Eton and Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge, the Church of England, the army, the "respectable" Sunday papers, etc. For Miliband, as Levy quotes, that also meant detesting the "values of the ruling orders, keep the workers in their place, strengthen the House of Lords, maintain social hierarchies, God save the Queen, equality is bunk, democracy is dangerous" - not to mention "respectability, good taste, don't rock the boat, there will always be an England, foreigners, Jews, natives, etc are all right in their place

and their place is outside". The man is obviously a barbarian.

Madly, we are meant to believe that Ed Miliband is carrying out the mission of his father. Red Ed's "pledge to bring back socialism", we read, is a "homage to his Marxist father" - we are reminded that his leadership victory over his brother was only made possible through the unions' block votes, something "perfectly in step" with his father's "fervent and undimmed conviction" that the alliance with the trade unions is Labour's "greatest strength". So Ralph, writes Levy, would also have applauded his son's proclamation that he would cap energy prices - an announcement that has "already knocked billions off share prices, affecting many ordinary workers' pension funds". The dangers of socialism.

True, Ed Miliband did get to reply in the *Mail*. However, the paper ran Miliband's riposte on October 1 next to a republished version of the original offending article and alongside an editorial not only refusing to apologise, but actually *stepping* up the attack levels. What is "blindingly clear" about Ralph Miliband, the editorial says, is that he had "nothing but hatred" for the values, traditions and institutions that made Britain the "safe and free nation in which he and his family flourished". The constitutional monarchy, the bicameral legislature, property rights, common law, etc were all "anathema" to this "unreconstructed Marxist who craved a workers' revolution". In which case, though the Labour leader may be proud of his father's war record as a volunteer in the navy during World War II, "isn't it permissible to surmise that a man who had expressed such views joined the Royal Navy not so much to fight for Britain as to fight, like the Soviet Union, against the Nazis?"

Going to the heart of the matter, at least for the *Mail*, we are informed that Marxism "supplied the philosophical underpinning to a monstrously evil

regime", where "countless millions were murdered, tortured, starved to death, executed or sent to endure a sub-human existence in the gulags" - where "freedom of expression was purged" and "dissidents were locked in mental asylums". It is for that reason, we discover, that the *Mail* will never apologise for highlighting Ralph Miliband's "evil legacy" nor desist from showing how Ed Miliband is determined to crush press freedom in a way that would "drive a hammer and sickle through the heart of the nation". Rabid sentiments, it should be noted, that were essentially endorsed by the health secretary, Jeremy Hunt - who noted that Ralph Miliband "was no friend of the free market" and that he had "never heard" Ed Miliband saying he *supports* the free market. George Osborne, meanwhile, could not resist accusing Ed Miliband of making "essentially the same argument" Karl Marx made in *Capital* - proving that the chancellor is indeed a cretin and that Oxford University will give a 2:1 degree to anybody.

Comments implying that Ralph Miliband had a soft spot for the Soviet Union are pitiful slander. He was a life-long anti-Stalinist and fierce critic of the Soviet bureaucracy. Something candidly admitted in *The Daily Telegraph's* obituary of the man, which accurately described him as someone who "never hesitated to criticise" the "distortion" of Marxism by Stalin and always "inveighed against the timidity and limited horizons of west European social democracy" - as the "ideal he sought was a democratic and open Marxism" (June 7 1994). This commitment to revolutionary democracy and humanism, in the true Marxist sense of the term, shines through his excellent *Parliamentary socialism* - a rigorous rebuttal of the notion that there was a Labour Party 'golden age' and that the working class should rely on Labour as a vehicle for socialism. And those who say that Ralph Miliband would be turning in his grave are right - the Marxist Ralph would abhor the dull Labourism of Ed, who seeks a 'reformed' and 'progressive' capitalism. A reactionary utopia.

What is apparent from the *Mail's* denigrations, and also those who lined up to defend Ed, whether on the liberal left or the mainstream centre-right, is that everyone is expected to be a *patriot* - as we have been told a thousand times, Ralph proved that he loved the country by volunteering to join the British navy and fight the evil Nazis. Must have been a good egg. Communists, however, find no need to court the title of patriot. We do not champion our country in opposition to all others.

Yes, of course, you can locate progressive traditions and movements in British history - Levellers, Diggers, Chartists, and so on. But that is true for *every* nation - there will inevitably be progressive and reactionary features in any society. We should then seek to locate the universal, not the particular or exclusive.

Like Tom Paine, communists are citizens of the world and are loyal to what is best and most advanced in humanity - not individual countries. Marx, after all, was a *cosmopolitan* - a truly international person, as racists and anti-Semites never tire of pointing out. Ralph Miliband too, being both a Marxist and Jewish, was a highly cosmopolitan individual in terms of politics, education, languages and culture ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.org.uk



Lord Rothermere and Adolf Hitler: much in common

Fear of everything

After its latest brush with notoriety, Paul Demarty examines the *Daily Mail*

The Ralph Miliband farrago is the latest in a long line of instances which serve to remind us just how weird the *Daily Mail* is.

There is a sequence in Michael Moore's documentary *Bowling for Columbine* featuring a silly-season scare story about swarms of killer 'Africanised' bees arriving in the United States from foreign quarters, laying waste to native species and terrorising small towns. Predictably, it all came to nothing; but Moore expertly deploys this small national wig-out as a fleeting window into the middle American neurosis.

In the *Mail*, every day falls in the silly season. The clichés are well rehearsed - the obsessive-compulsive litany of innocuous potential carcinogens and cancer cures, the horror of young sexuality, the interpretation of all economic data in terms of house prices ... *Daily Mail* readers exist in a world where they are constantly under attack, by foreigners, and by 'enemies within' - within the country, their home, even their food.

The hum of reactionary and irrational dross is just about ignorable on a day-to-day basis. (How many *Mail* stories about dole-cheat lesbian gypsies can even the most energetic liberal read before exhaustion trumps outrage?) Every so often, however, it lurches into view. The most recent instance before last concerned Christopher Jefferies, briefly a suspect in the Joanna Yeates murder case and trumpeted by the *Mail* as obviously guilty. It turned out that their evidence was more or less that, er, some people had described him as a bit eccentric. In the *Mail* universe, this was enough to paint him as a Norman Bates figure. He ultimately extracted a substantial libel award from the paper.

No such recourse is available to Ralph Miliband, of course. That said, we should perhaps be grateful to his son for making an issue out of Geoffrey Levy's swivel-eyed attack piece, for it reminds us inevitably of the *Mail*'s grim history. Perhaps Paul

Dacre, the paper's editor, is merely being cynical in his tawdry red-baiting. Yet that distinctive ideology of the *Mail* - a libidinally charged fear of everything - has, as is well known, led its proprietors and staff into some very dubious company in the past.

Founded in 1896 by Alfred and Harold Harmsworth - later Lord Northcliffe and Viscount Rothermere - the *Mail* has, from the start, always been an outlet for vigorous conservatism. It was initially conceived as a paper targeted at women, with a certain middle class populism in its news values. Its fanaticism, even in those early years, led even some Tory grandees to worry at its influence.

The 1920s saw the paper and its proprietors fall out with the Conservative Party, considering Stanley Baldwin entirely too soft (although its publication of the infamous Zinoviev letter helped Baldwin out in 1924). An alliance with Lord Beaverbrook briefly resulted in the formation of the United Empire Party, which sought a tight fiscal union between Britain and the colonies, and to strengthen it as a tariff-protected trade bloc.

It was one of many offshoots of the major parties to be thrown up in the tumult following the 1929 crash. Rothermere, who by then had sole control of the paper, was to become better known for his support of one of the others. The *Mail* had already supported the rise of Benito Mussolini in Italy in the 1920s, and hailed the Nazi seizure of power as "youth triumphant", before Rothermere provided the most infamous headline in the history of the British press: "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!"

The paper's support for Oswald Mosley's sordid crew was, admittedly, short-lived - a fascist riot in Kensington the following year put paid to that. Its support for fascism as such was not. Rothermere, and his chief flunky, George Ward Price, remained friendly to Hitler down to the very outbreak of the war. It was not a matter of support

for appeasement or any such thing; for them, as for many others, Hitler and Mussolini represented, precisely, "youth triumphant": a chance to sweep away the corruption of a dried-out elite with a vigorous, determined authoritarianism.

They were also in accord with Hitler on other matters: the *Mail* routinely ran stories in this period affrighted by specifically Jewish immigration. Ward Price's almost forgotten book, *I know these dictators*, blames Germany's Jews for their plight, accusing them, in an exact echo of Nazi propaganda, of exploiting currency fluctuations to grow fat at the expense of Germans. ('German Jews' were equally, of course, responsible for communism.)

The war, inevitably, changed the *Mail*'s tune; its two-decade love affair with fascism is now one of the worst-kept dirty secrets in the world. How relevant this episode is to the paper's current condition is hotly disputed. It can be argued, with complete justification, that the *Mail* was hardly the only paper to lean in that direction at the time. More broadly, anti-Semitism was simply common sense on the British (and European) right at the beginning of the last century, let alone anti-communism; it is hardly surprising that so many should feel solidarity with Hitler and Mussolini, at least from a safe distance.

And yet ... While the *Mail* has gone from anti-Semitism to ardent pro-Zionism (not that big a leap, perhaps), while its love of Hitler has given way to wall-to-wall Spitfire chauvinism, it rather more frequently reminds us of its 1930s 'errors' than, say, the *Mirror* (which also supported Moseley). In the run-up to the last French presidential elections, the paper ran an op-ed by Richard Waghorne urging those across the Channel to vote for the post-fascist Front National. Now the attack on Ralph Miliband; and many have already pointed out the uncomfortable echoes in this portrait of a foreign Jew arriving on these shores and swearing to make a revolution. A Jewish by-line in the

piece cannot mask the similarities to the 'rootless cosmopolitan' stereotype, which has served Jew-haters so well, from Wilhelm Marr to the degraded remnants of Stalinism in today's Russia.

Petty bourgeois

The *Mail* slips so easily into this territory because the *psychology* of its output remains unchanged from its fascist period. Its pages spew forth the very essence of petty bourgeois *enragé* ideology, in so pure a form that any equivalent Marxist diagnosis would immediately be denounced as vulgar and mechanical. The sharp contradictions of this mindset are almost campily obvious; the endless moral panics about 'sexualisation' appear on a website adorned with scantily-clad celebrities falling out of their bras, and the vitriolic denunciations of the 'totalitarian' mindset of lefts (expressed in hatred for Margaret Thatcher, say, or 'political correctness') sit uneasily with denunciations of a Ralph Miliband.

Keeping all these plates spinning is a task that has, for the past two decades, fallen to Paul Dacre. He has brought the *Mail* to its highest historical point of success - it boasts, terrifyingly, of the most read newspaper website *in the world* - because he has a conman's instinct for human frailty, calibrated precisely to the English petty bourgeois. Despite his infamously tyrannical editorial style (morning editorial meetings have been dubbed by hacks the "vagina monologues", in honour of Dacre's habit of screaming curses at his underlings), and the apparently endless scandals, Dacre has survived.

How much longer can he last? He hits retirement age next year, and is now on a shorter-term contract than he has been previously; but he also appears to be out of favour with Lady Rothermere, who clearly fancies Georgie Greig, *Mail on Sunday* editor, as a replacement. A cryptic turf war has developed between the daily and Sunday papers,

with each indirectly rubbing the other's stories. There is speculation that Greig's disastrous attempted gatecrash of a Miliband family memorial service was not in aid of attacking the Milibands, but rather another power-play against Dacre. In the end, the *MoS* ran a piece by avowed ex-Trotskyist Peter Hitchens, which ridiculed the millenarian anti-Marxism of the *Mail* article.

Whoever comes out on top, it can be expected that the *Mail* will continue in its present vein. Not only is such gibberish profitable: it is in its very genes. More to the point, it is spreading. 'Mad' Melanie Phillips, until recently the best known columnist in its pages, has turned her attention to the United States. It is a fortuitous coincidence indeed for a leftwing writer that the *Mail* should propel itself into public controversy at the very moment its readers' American equivalents, the Tea Party Republicans, should paralyse the government of the hegemonic world power.

The implied condemnation of Ed Miliband through the sins of his father is half a step closer to sanity, no more, than the Tea Party obsession with Barack Obama being a foreign Muslim communist. The bourgeoisie needs the support of the petty bourgeoisie, and finds it by appealing to that class's lowest instincts. Yet these things can always get out of control. It is clear that 30 years of just such an ideological offensive, in Britain and the US (and elsewhere), have resulted in a politically paralysing outcome for the parties of big business. The Republicans are left carrying the can for the brinksmanship of their craziest congressmen. As for the *Mail*, so consistently a bastion of British Toryism in the last half century, its ideology drives its readers ever more towards the UK Independence Party. The grip of capitalist reality on its support is cracking - but in the worst imaginable way ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.org.uk

REVIEW

How liberal were the bourgeois revolutions?

Neil Davidson *How revolutionary were the bourgeois revolutions?* Haymarket Books, 2012, pp840, £22.99

I have already reviewed Neil Davidson's book for *Reviews in History*.¹ It may seem rather cheeky, therefore, to take a second bite. This tremendously knowledgeable work - which should find a home with anyone interested in modern history - is deserving of wide acknowledgement, however.

Here I would like to briefly comment on an observation left a little underdeveloped in my original review. As one online reader justifiably complains, my rejoinder to Davidson that liberal constitutionalism is "rooted in the real conditions of commercial civil society" was unsatisfyingly cryptic.² I was perhaps somewhat clearer in a previous article in the *Weekly Worker*.³ But now I would like to clarify a bit more.

Davidson's position is that bourgeois revolution is not defined by bourgeois participation or by ideology; only by consequences. He writes:

The theory of bourgeois revolution is not ... about the origins and development of capitalism as a socioeconomic system, but the removal of backward-looking threats to its continued existence and the overthrow of restrictions to its further expansion. The source of these threats and restrictions has, historically, been the pre-capitalist state, whether estates-monarchy, absolutist or tributary in nature (p420).

However, when Davidson writes - at length and with considerable penetration - about the greatest theorists produced by the immediacy and aftermath of the English civil wars and the French Revolution, he treats them as historical ancestors of Marx. Perhaps it is better to take them as debating the politics actually produced by these revolutions, politics rooted in the real conditions of commercial civil society.

Davidson begins by looking at Thomas Hobbes, who argued that the state should be freed from the influence of the fractious nobility and churchmen. Samuel Harrington, Davidson says, founded the concept of social revolution based upon class struggle (though surely Aristotle is a more likely contender). The 18th-century Scottish enlightenment thinkers - Adam Smith, David Hume, Samuel Ferguson, James Steuart - proposed a stadial (or stages) view of history based upon modes of subsistence: first came hunting and gathering, then pastoralism and nomadism, followed by agriculture, finally arriving at 'commercial society'. Antoine Barnave explained the French Revolution as political laws catching up with the social impact of the rise of commerce.

Such men, for Davidson, were bourgeois thinkers seeking to show "why their class was entitled to take power through revolutionary violence" (p3). They were developing a "proto-theory of bourgeois revolution", with Harrington, Steuart and Barnave singled out as coming closest to Marx's insight (p102).

This evaluation seems problematic to me. With the exception of Harrington, whose work was not published until long after his death, these writers were developing ideas that met with a receptive public. As such, they should be understood as being of their own time, not simply anticipating Marx. They were popular because they were acknowledged as the masters of an era understanding itself.

They did not suggest that the bourgeoisie should "take power". Their argument was that the old 'feudal' aristocracy or the absolutist



France 1798: a classic bourgeois revolution

state used coercive authority to live off rents, tithes, taxes and booty. The trading and industrious middle classes, in contrast, lived by commerce. David Hume celebrated farmers, tradesmen and craftsmen as "the best and firmest basis of public liberty" because,

These submit not to slavery, like the peasants, from poverty and meanness of spirit; and having no hopes of tyrannising over others, like the barons, they are not tempted, for the sake of that gratification, to submit to the tyranny of their sovereign. They covet equal laws, which may secure their property, and preserve them from monarchical, as well as aristocratical, tyranny.⁴

With the spread of such a bourgeoisie, the modern state could be emancipated from reliance on the fractious nobility, yet constrained by its reliance on trade. Once taxes depend upon "the consequences and effects of commerce", said James Steuart, the effect is a "revolution in the political state".⁵

The point coming into focus for these thinkers, from Hobbes onwards, is that the bourgeoisie is uniquely free of the temptation to seize upon state power. All it requires is sufficient liberty from the state to prosper. As liberal thought developed, these

liberties were typically categorised as:

- personal liberty (equality before the law, freedom of religion, security of property);
- civil liberty (freedom of speech, association and press);
- political liberty (the right to petition and influence government, no taxation without representation in the legislature).

This was the view, more or less, of Marx and Engels. As Marx put it,

The bourgeoisie had to claim its share of political power, if only by reason of its material interests ... the bourgeoisie had also the ambition to secure for itself a political status in keeping with its social status. To attain this aim it had to be able freely to debate its own interests and views and the actions of the government. It called this 'freedom of the press'. The bourgeoisie had to be able to enter freely into associations. It called this the 'right of free association'. As the necessary consequence of free competition, it had likewise to demand religious liberty and so on.⁶

One should note Marx's points here: first, the bourgeoisie required only a share of political government, not a monopoly; second, bourgeois attachment to liberties arose from material class interests. This latter

is quite at odds with Davidson's repeated insistence that talk of bourgeois liberties was nothing other than 'false consciousness' or a ploy to gull the masses.⁷

It is true that Marx and Engels grew more sceptical as time went on about bourgeois commitment to liberty, especially as a worker movement developed that might use such liberties to its own advantage. Still, in 1865 Engels said of the bourgeoisie that

as distinct from the old estates, distinguished by birth, it must proclaim human rights; as distinct from the guilds, it must proclaim freedom of trade and industry; as distinct from the tutelage of the bureaucracy, it must proclaim freedom and self-government.⁸

This indeed was the view of the generation or two after Marx, during the era of the socialist Second International, as Davidson himself notes, a little coyly (p188). Davidson is not happy that socialists saw liberty as constitutive of the 'bourgeois revolution' and as something still to be fought for - with the bourgeoisie where possible, alone where required. He notes that Karl Kautsky favoured democracy, "but his was a very particular form of democracy: namely the representative form practised in the developed capitalist states of the west".⁹

But if this was a mistake Engels was equally in error. As he wrote to Paul Lafargue in (democratic, republican) France in 1894, "A republic ... is the ready-made political form for the future rule of the proletariat. You [in France] have the advantage of us that it is already in being ..."¹⁰ The lesson Marx and Engels had taken from the Paris Commune was not that there was anything fundamentally wrong with representative democracy as such. What in their eyes made revolution was not the abolition of parliament, but rather a workers' government and the smashing of the reactionary "bureaucratic-military machine".¹¹ This referred to those anti-democratic officers, civil servants, judiciary and police who in Europe opposed and imperilled any advance towards popular democracy until 1944 at least (Egypt presents a nice current illustration of the truth that an entrenched "bureaucratic-military machine" is no safe and pliable tool for revolutionaries).

Mature Leninism consciously declared that Marx and the Second International were outdated. Lenin argued that in the global core the bourgeoisie were no longer a restraint on state power. As a class it was entirely bound up with state-monopoly capitalism and imperialism. Parliamentarianism, thus, was historically exhausted and must be superseded by 'soviets' operating under the supervision (to use a euphemism) of the vanguard party. The progressive emancipatory drive that had characterised the era of bourgeois revolutions was exhausted. Trotsky went further still in arguing (by the 1930s) that even in the colonial and ex-colonial world the bourgeoisie were no longer progressive, and that proletarian dictatorship was the only way to escape pre-capitalist social and political forms.

It was not altogether true even in the inter-war period that the bourgeoisie was on a one-way shuttle to illiberalism, but there was enough evidence to give the argument credibility. Since 1945, it is no longer tenable. What we might call 'bourgeois liberalism' survives and prospers, now as almost never before. The view that a commercial society with a strong

middle class secures constitutional stability, spreads bourgeois values, squeezes out rent-seeking activities and preserves essential liberties has taken some knocks in the great recession. But it is still clearly the reigning common sense.

It seems fairly straightforward to me to define revolutions as being more or less 'bourgeois' insofar as they are influenced by an ideology that seeks to establish the state upon the steady platform of an industrious middle class in a commercial society, whilst constraining state absolutism, sidelining the aristocratic estates and keeping the masses in check. To qualify, I would suggest, revolutionaries need not be bourgeois themselves, but they need to have such a goal in view. Of course, without an existing and active commercial society generated by capitalist activity, either existing domestically or clearly evident as a model in a competing nation, such views cannot even be entertained.

The politics of bourgeois constitutionalism are perhaps mistily present in the English Civil War, certainly evident in the Glorious Revolution and the American Civil War, well understood by the French Revolution, and quite pervasive throughout the 19th century. The 'revolutions from above', most famously in Germany, fine-tuned just such a constitutionalism within a commercial and bourgeois context without entirely surrendering the power and prerogatives of the traditional elites.

For Davidson, however, 'bourgeois revolutions' cannot be recognised as those promoting a certain political mode. This is not surprising, as he defines every communist coup, putsch or uprising between the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the Derg coup against the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, in 1974 as 'bourgeois revolutions'. Davidson observes that "false consciousness had been a characteristic of almost all previous bourgeois revolutions, but the level of cognitive dissonance here was of a quite different order" (p619). Well, that is putting it mildly. Whatever the merits there might be in describing the former communist states as 'state-capitalist' - and I cannot see very many - it makes a dog's dinner of any concept of bourgeois revolution. Davidson is, in effect, left with a purely negative definition: it destroys pre-capitalist formations and is not socialism. But bourgeois revolution had a positive programme: a state and a civil society mutually dependent, but autonomous. Such was not the Stalinist experience ●

Marc Mulholland

Notes

1. M Mulholland, 'How revolutionary were the bourgeois revolutions?': www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1420.
2. Comment by 'Breviosity': <http://breviosity.wordpress.com/2013/05/29/from-bourgeois-revolution-to-combined-and-uneven-development/#comments>.
3. M Mulholland, 'Revolutionary road: a bourgeois saga' *Weekly Worker* November 15 2012.
4. D Hume, 'Of refinement of arts' (1742): www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL25.html. Quoted on p42.
5. J Steuart *An inquiry into the principles of political economy* (1767): www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/steuart/book1.htm. Quoted on p52.
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7. pp145, 329, 510, 591, 619.
8. F Engels *The Prussian military question and the German Workers' Party* (1865): www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/02/12.htm.
9. Quoted in GP Steenson *After Marx, before Lenin: Marxism and working class parties in Europe, 1884-1914* Pittsburgh 1991, p238.
10. *Ibid* p39.
11. Marx to Dr Kugelmann (1871): www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_04_12.htm.

LEFT UNITY

Communist Platform formed

We are proposing this Communist Platform in Left Unity to ensure that there is a hearing for genuine working class politics in the debates on the founding principles of any new party, culminating at the LU conference on November 30.

Readers will see that our statement consists of the original text of the Socialist Platform plus the amendments the CPGB put forward at the SP's September 14 national meeting. With the single exception of an amendment on Europe, all these won a majority - although the vote was

indicative.

This new platform is an unfortunate necessity, in many ways. From the point of view of the CPGB, the original draft of the SP represented a step forward - it was pleasing in that here seemed to be a group of comrades actually putting forward the politics that they professed to believe in as the political basis for a new party.

The unfortunate fact is, however, that at the September 14 meeting, the SP's original drafting group - and in particular its leading figure, Nick Wrack - collapsed

politically. The comrades took two steps back.

They won the support of the meeting to limit itself to indicative votes only on possible changes to the platform, using a spurious argument about protecting the democratic rights of the platform signatories who were not present. Notwithstanding this, comrades like Nick Wrack then proceeded to vote against amendments they apparently believe in, despite previously underlining his sympathy with our approach in several CPGB forums in the recent past.

Logically therefore,

the original drafting committee does not believe in these politics and have presumably framed the original text in a way that would obscure the differences between Marxism and a left reading of clause four-type politics.

Under these circumstances, clarity is key. Given that it now seems certain that there will no opportunities to amend the SP before (or at) Left Unity's November conference, putting forward this Communist Platform will at least allow principled Marxist politics to be argued.

Mark Fischer

Statement of aims and principles

1 The [Left Unity] party is a socialist party. It seeks to bring about the end of capitalism and its replacement by the rule of the working class. Our ultimate aim is a society based on the principle of 'From each according to their abilities; to each according to their needs'. A moneyless, classless, stateless society within which each individual can develop their fullest individuality.

2. Under capitalism, production is predominantly carried out in order to make a profit for the few, regardless of the needs of society or damage to the environment. Neither capitalism nor its state apparatus can be made to work in the interests of the mass of the population. The rule of the working class requires a state to defend itself, but a state that is withering away, a semi-state.

3. Socialism means the fullest political, social and economic democracy. It means a society in which the wealth and the means of production are no longer in private hands, but are owned in common. Everyone will have the right to participate in deciding how the wealth of society is used and how production is planned to meet the needs of all and to protect the natural world on which we depend. We reject the idea that the undemocratic regimes that existed in the former Soviet Union and other countries were socialist, or represented either the political rule of the working class or some kind of step on the road to socialism.

4. The [Left Unity] party opposes all oppression and discrimination, whether on the basis of gender, nationality, ethnicity, disability, religion or sexual orientation and aims to create a society in which such oppression and discrimination no longer exist.

5. Socialism has to be international. The interests of the working class are basically the same everywhere. The [Left Unity] party opposes all imperialist wars and military interventions. The [Left Unity] party rejects the idea that there is a national solution to the problems of capitalism. It stands for the maximum solidarity and cooperation between the working class in Britain and elsewhere. It will work with others across Europe for the overthrow of the constitution of the European Union and the creation of a united socialist Europe under democratic working class rule.

6. The [Left Unity] party aims to win support from the working class

and all those who want to bring about the socialist transformation of society, which can only be accomplished by the working class itself acting democratically as the majority in society. This means that the organisations of the working class must be democratically, not bureaucratically, organised.

7. The [Left Unity] Party aims to win political power to end capitalism, not to manage it. It will not participate in governmental coalitions with capitalist parties at national or local level.

8. As long as the working class

is not able to win political power for itself the [Left Unity] party will participate in and seek to lead campaigns to defend and radically extend all past gains: eg, living standards and democratic rights. But it recognises that all gains can only be partial and temporary so long as capitalism survives.

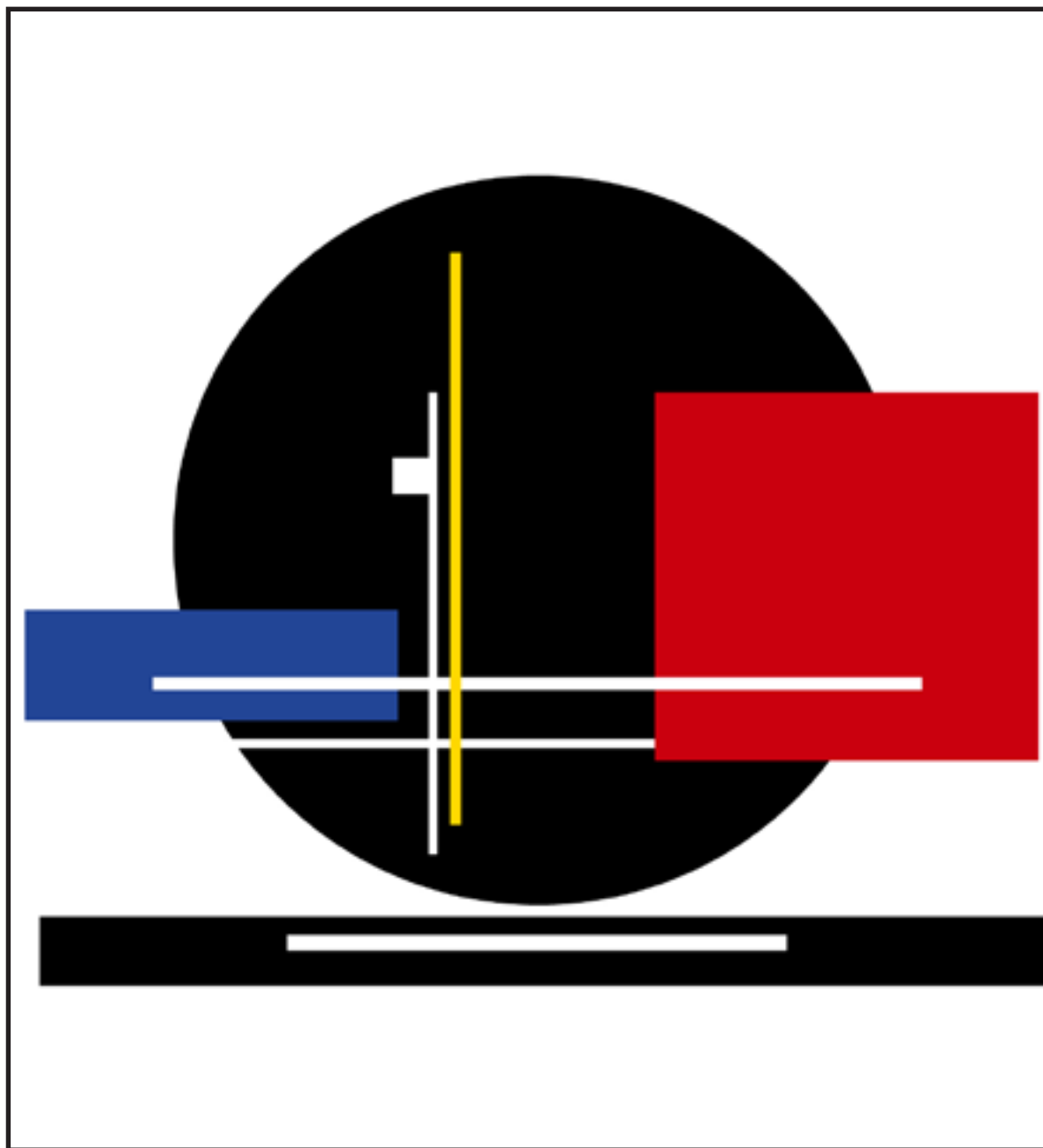
9. The [Left Unity] party will use both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means to build support for its goals of sweeping away the capitalist state and the socialist transformation of society.

10. All elected representatives will be

accountable to the party membership and will receive no payment above the average wage of a skilled worker (the exact level to be determined by the party conference), plus legitimate expenses.

11. All members of the party must accept that these aims and principles form the basis of agreed common actions, though they might have disagreements with particular points.

Tina Becker, Ian Donovan, Moshé Machover, Mike Macnair, Peter Manson, Yasmine Mather, Sarah McDonald, Emily Orford, Lee Rock, James Turley



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.

Printed and published by
November Publications Ltd (07950 416922).
Registered as a newspaper by Royal Mail. ISSN
1351-0150. © October 2013

weekly worker

Broad mush or
solid Marxist
principles

Crisis for government - and for the left

Last week's defeat of the Irish government in the referendum to abolish the upper house was a major blow for the Fine Gael/Labour coalition.

The abolition of the Seanad (second chamber), a brainwave of taoiseach Enda Kenny, was included in Fine Gael's 'programme for government' in the last election. Given the elitist and unaccountable nature of the Seanad, he was very confident of huge support. So confident, in fact, that he and his government made no real effort to campaign. Kenny himself refused to take part in any media discussions, dismissing calls for a televised debate with arrogant contempt. He believed that talk of the projected annual savings resulting from abolition of €20 million per annum would bring the cash-strapped working class flocking to the polls to back him.

And his bullshitness seemed to have a strong basis in reality. A week before the referendum an *Irish Times* opinion poll showed 44% in favour of abolition, 21% against, 21% undecided and 8% who would not vote. However, the actual vote was something altogether different - a narrow victory for 'no' (51.7%), while only 48.3% were for abolition, in a turnout of less than 40% of those eligible to vote.

The opposition Fianna Fáil campaigned for a 'no' vote and there is no doubt that its supporters accounted for a significant portion of those opting for rejection. But it was essentially an anti-government vote - a slap in the face for a haughty elite which has inflicted major attacks on all aspects of social provisions, closed hospitals, cut benefits and imposed massive taxes as part of its austerity programme. With the budget looming later this month, we have been warned that there will be still more pain. €20 million is a tiny fraction of the billions already cut in public expenditure. Doctors and teachers are currently taking strike action over long hours and low pay. Conditions at the majority of hospitals are now dangerous because of overcrowding and a lack of resources. People are dying, as ambulances take hours to reach them. Charities like St Vincent de Paul have now become an everyday resource for families too poor to pay for food or heating.

If it had been just about the Seanad it would have been a very different story. It is not a popular institution - in any sense of the word. It is based on a sort of honours system for the business, academic and political elite, leaving the government of the day with little or nothing to fear. Created in its present form by Eamonn De Valera as part of the 1937 Catholic constitution, it was envisaged as a bulwark against mass pressure from below. The vocational panels set up to elect senators were a brainchild of Pope Pius XI, who in his 1931 encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, argued for measures to ensure a cooperative social order to safeguard against Marxist class conflict. The Seanad would act to subdue any dangerous elements in society. And it, rather than the masses, would hold the government in check.

Of course, the reality has been that the Seanad rarely opposed the government. It can only delay the passing of legislation (this has only happened twice since 1937) and the government can override it after three months. Therefore



Women demand right to choose

any idea of this institution being a brake on the government is pure rubbish. It is an illusion - designed to keep the population acquiescent and to mask the reality of power relations. Of course, if the TDs began to feel the pressure of a mass movement and felt obliged to make concessions, then no doubt the true role of the Seanad would be revealed.

Obviously Enda Kenny believed he had no need for this institution and as part of his 'modernising' agenda decided to lop it off. But, despite their general demoralisation after years of austerity attacks, people will automatically oppose anything the government proposes. True, some undoubtedly have illusions that the Seanad will act as a restraint on the government, but significantly there was an effective boycott of the referendum by a very sizeable majority of the electorate. Poor inner-city constituencies and rural areas had the lowest turnouts.

Sham

The response of the left has been interesting. The Socialist Party called for a 'yes' vote and published a detailed article setting out the history of the Seanad and its reactionary history.¹ The Socialist Workers Party, on the other hand, published a short article by its leader, Kieran Allen, making similar points, but arguing that the outcome of the referendum was irrelevant.² This seems a very strange position for a socialist organisation to take, when it is surely ABC that an elitist second chamber is of no value to the working

class and gives every advantage to the bourgeoisie. No matter even that it is a "sham debate" or that Kenny has only cynical motivations. Faced with a vote on whether or not to retain the undemocratic second chamber, the left should not just have voted for abolition, but made use of the opportunity to campaign for full-blown democratic demands. Maybe Allen and the SWP were attempting to swim with the anti-government tide and did not want to tie themselves down. But I have been reliably informed that the SWP's Brid Smith, People Before Profit councillor and recently announced candidate for the European elections in the Dublin constituency (where she will stand against the sitting Socialist Party MEP), has said she is for "reform" of the Seanad.

What is missing even from the Socialist Party is a worked out approach to the constitution and demands for an alternative. The 1937 constitution brings together everything that is reactionary, from the central role of the church, the subjugation and denigration of women, the funding of church-run social care and education, with almost all schools and hospitals dominated by priests and nuns. It was drafted deliberately to institutionalise the role of the Catholic church and remains so today. Rather than leaving it to Kenny and his cynical 'modernisation', the left should take up the question itself. We should have used the opportunity to place our programme for a democratic republic centre-stage. Irish republicanism does not have to

mean Catholic rule. We need a *secular* republic - and we should outline an alternative democratic constitution.

However, the crisis on the left deepens. The announcement that Brid Smith will run against Paul Murphy in next year's European elections has caused huge anger among many in our movement. Murphy, who replaced Joe Higgins when he became a TD, has a difficult enough challenge to hold on to his seat in this three-member constituency. The decision to oppose him is an act of pure sectarianism, especially when you consider that both candidates will be standing on essentially the same (reformist) politics.

The sad joke is that the United Left Alliance still just about exists. Or at least somebody is still sending out regular press releases on behalf of the ULA. This is farcical. In the middle of a storm of debate some leftwingers, including Brendan Young in the *Irish Left Review*, have argued that the SP and the SWP should come together on a 'broad' platform so as to overcome the problem - in other words, a ULA mark two. Does it not occur to Young and his supporters that this is exactly the project that collapsed amid accusations of sabotage and sectarian recruitment by the SWP? The prospects for leftwing unity based on reformist, lowest-common-denominator demands has been exposed time and again as a complete waste of time. Not only do the central differences between left groups remain: they actually deepen. All are in it for what they can gain and there is deep distrust. Non-aligned members become demoralised and have no real voice. And, of course, there is the fact that the politics put forward are dreadful. Why should we go back to that form of unity? Tried, tested and failed. Comrades, we need to learn some lessons from our experiences!

Meanwhile, a campaign has been launched to repeal the 8th amendment, which provides that the life of the 'unborn' is preserved under the constitution and is of equal value to that of a woman. But there are tensions between the various groups involved as to how to pursue the campaign. The Abortion Rights Campaign and Cork Women's Right to Choose have taken

by far the best approach by arguing that the central question should be choice. Action for X and the Women's Council want a more 'moderate' approach, with the latter looking to the Constitutional Convention,³ a quango of selected citizens and politicians. This body is completely in thrall to, and part of, the establishment and will certainly not support any measures that will allow a women's right to choose.

A recent demonstration organised by Abortion Rights Campaign showed the possibilities for principled action.⁴ A thousand people gathered for what was a very youthful and dynamic demonstration. Speeches were defiant, with Clare Daly TD - now no longer an SP member, of course - committing herself to fighting for the scrapping of the 8th amendment on the basis that women should have control over their own fertility and not be part of another generation to suffer ill-treatment at the hands of the Catholic state. It was small, but impressive, despite very little mobilisation by either the SP or SWP. These groups seem unable to make the break from the lowest common denominator and embrace principle.

Those in Ireland who consider themselves revolutionaries need to come together *as* revolutionaries. A venture called the Left Forum seemed to be an initiative where that could happen, but it has already descended into 'broadness' - a planned public forum of the left is to include Sinn Féin! Yes, the party that is part of the bourgeois government in the north and would welcome a coalition with Fianna Fáil in the south.

If we consider ourselves Marxists we need to take Marxist ideas seriously. That means openly putting them forward in our political campaigning. Or do comrades think Marxism is no longer relevant? ●

Anne McShane

anne.mcshane@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

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