



weekly
worker



Lars T Lih examines the myths and realities of Lenin's 'April theses'

- Tory conference
- Left and 'Red Ed'
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- M-theory and god

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CYBERWAR



LETTERS



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

Marbles

As expected, the pugnacious Robert Clough has replied to my article on developments in Cuba. It is a pretty scattergun account of the usual tropes of his organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Group.

It is to be expected, therefore, that he rises to the defence of the Cuban regime. I am roundly criticised for drawing on 'bourgeois' sources, such as his unlikely *bete noire*, Rory Carroll of the *Guardian*.

This is distinctly peculiar in itself, given his own citations of Lenin's theories concerning imperialism as the basis for opportunism - after all, a major source for Lenin's work is the thoroughly bourgeois Hobson. In fact, Marxists back to Marx have made critical use of bourgeois sources in their work (plenty of 'reactionary bourgeois journalists' turn up in the pages of *Capital*) - not shunned them for fear of the touch of pitch. It used to be called intellectual seriousness - now it is evidence of contamination. (As an aside, I do not refuse to use Cuban sources - indeed, I attempted, to no avail, to find news of Raul's reforms in the English edition of *Granma*.)

Once the wild fulminations against 'Trotskyism' (now, for once, I know how Bob Crow feels) are concluded, we do get some kind of commentary on these reforms. I must here retract a claim in my original article, which suggested that the RCG and the like may find it difficult to swallow the regime's twists and turns in the manner of the 'official communist' press.

There is no such vacillation on the part of comrade Clough - there are difficulties in building socialism, they must "raise the cultural level of the people" and so forth. Fair enough. But that implicitly characterises this spate of reforms as a tactical retreat - and one has to ask the question, to what are the Cuban 'communists' retreating? The only logical answer is capitalism. Nothing Clough writes on Cuba could not appear in the *Morning Star* with the word 'China' substituted for Cuba - one wonders whether his defence of China is quite so vigorous.

Moving on to the Labour Party, the comrade really loses his bearings - and his marbles. A roll-call of British 'Trotskyists' is accused of softness on Labour - including the Socialist Party, who have shared his opinion of it for two decades now. Perhaps he should consider this progress. That he relies so heavily on Lenin becomes deeply ironic in combination with his ultra-abstentionist line on Labour, whose antecedents were the subject of '*Left-wing communism, an infantile disorder*'. Then, as now, Labour had bloodstained hands - and the communists were weak.

He may object, perhaps, that then the Labour Party had a real base in the working class, whereas now it is dominated by middle class types. However, his yardstick for this is that large numbers of its membership have "degrees or equivalent", which, in the topsy-turvy world of the RCG's (as it happens, basically *bourgeois*) class analysis, apparently excludes you in advance from the wage relation.

This, of course, conveniently ignores the fact that, a week or two ago, the vast majority of trade union members in the country had a say in who the Labour leader was (perhaps enough of them have those perfidious degrees for the whole lot not to count for Clough); it also ignores the fact that the majority of class-conscious workers remain, despite the best efforts of all of us, Labour voters. You can forget

Labour's hold on the working class, comrade, but it will not forget you.

In fact, almost every accusation Clough makes is untrue of myself and the CPGB (and even of the sundry Trots with whom we are lumped in, except maybe that *ne plus ultra* of Trotskyist degeneracy, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty), but can quite easily be fired back at him. He says we turn a blind eye to Labour's crimes (what paper are you reading, exactly?) but pore over the Cuban leadership with a microscope; but the truth is that he is so blinded by disgust at Labour's perfidy he cannot even support it "as the rope supports the hanged man", yet obediently recites whatever line the Castros feed him. We "ignore" Lenin on the basis for opportunism in the workers' movement (actually, I disagree with Lenin, but that's another matter); he ignores Lenin's recommendations on Labour. The Cubans can take difficult decisions to deal with the problems of 'socialism' - but communists in the west are expressly forbidden from dirtying themselves by interacting with social democracy.

Finally, he accuses us of petty bourgeois lightness of mind, when in his persistent and overwhelming moralism he is nothing more nor less than the ultra-left shadow of Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells.

If the Cubans wait for the "Trotskyists" to make revolution in Europe, he says, they will wait forever. His ominous prediction will certainly be fulfilled if we adopt his political approach.

James Turley
London

Cuba

Comrade Robert Clough of the RCG is right to criticise the sectarian attitude of many on the left towards Cuba. (Letters, September 30)

In my view, Cuba is a standing refutation of the Trotskyist thesis about the impossibility of building socialism in one country, so in order to uphold this position in the face of contrary evidence, many Trotskyists are forced to deny the socialist nature of Cuba. Whether Cuba will remain socialist is another question. All I can say is that leaving the socialist path would be a disaster for the Cuban people in view of the coming global energy decline.

Cuba is very important for the left because it prefigures the energy future of the world for the generation now living. Cuba was able to survive its energy crisis when the collapse of the Soviet Union cut off its oil supply. The oil shortage which Cuban society experienced will eventually be repeated in other countries. Having correctly, in my view, opposed Trotskyist sectarianism in relation to Cuba, Comrade Clough launches into his own brand of RCG sectarianism. He claims that communists seek to destroy the Labour Party, "... just as Lenin wanted to destroy the Mensheviks". But did Lenin seek the destruction of the Labour Party, and did he destroy the Mensheviks? Rather than calling on communists to destroy the Labour Party, which turns him into an RCG-style sectarian, Lenin actually called on communists to seek affiliation to the Labour Party. In retrospect, we can see that Lenin's call was when capitalism still had many years to go. Now that capitalism is faced with permanent, terminal decline, the essence of the Lenin line is arguably more relevant today than it was in the 1920s.

Lenin stood for fighting the opportunists in the Labour Party, not for destroying it. A good example of the Lenin approach was the recent support that the CPGB majority gave to Diane Abbott in the Labour Party

leadership election. What the left will have to learn is that the coming energy decline, which will follow the peaking of world oil production, will demand from communists even more flexibility than Lenin needed in his time.

Tony Clark
email

Gangrene

The critical letter ('Campaign to end BBC bias on Palestine', September 30) against the BBC *Panorama* programme about the Israeli interception of the flotilla convoy conveniently forgets the context of the Israeli interception.

A selective blockade exists because Hamas controls Gaza and is at war with Israel. The Israeli blockade aims to prevent Hamas being re-equipped with military equipment supplied by Iran. It's really quite simple. The long list of signatories is a long forgetting of this obvious point. Strange how the left overlook this when it stares them in the face. But they want Israel destroyed so their attitude is 'Hey, why not let Hamas have *carte blanche*'?

The left critics of Israel end as a conduit for Hamas and Islamic militants who were clearly shown on *Panorama* acting as a cell within the convoy. Whilst the majority of boats in the convoy went peacefully to have their supplies (mostly out-of-date and useless) delivered to Gaza via safe ports, one boat load of Islamists were preparing 'for martyrdom'. There is a bias amongst those on the left who wish to see the Arab-Israeli conflict in simplistic terms, having patronisingly adopted the Palestinians as the 'victims' and demonising the Israelis as the 'persecutors', whilst the ultra-left become the 'rescuers'. But this leads us not to a two-state, mature, political solution to the problem, but a sleight of hand accommodation with the Islamist agenda of using covert psychological metaphors, which do no justice to social reality. The ultra-left does not really want peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It supports jihad: the eradication of Israel from the map. That is why the *Morning Star* and *Socialist Worker* are soft on Iran. The *Panorama* programme surprised me because its coverage showed up the extent of the bias towards Hamas, which has crept, like gangrene, into the heart of left politics in this country.

Henry E Mitchell
London

Slander

Chris Strafford maintains some gaping factual inaccuracies in his report from Manchester University ('Marxism as a guide to action', September 30). Communist Students and the CPGB don't characteristically present themselves as a group of people with a solid grounding in reality, but CS's activity on campus as of late seems to confirm that they have entered the stratosphere of the real.

Firstly, for Chris to argue that last year's anti-cuts group was "decent [and] committed to free education, working with the unions and run on a democratic basis" is a fallacy. Last year's group attracted only 'actually existing socialists', pulled in nobody from any other campaigns and failed to build a single event or demonstration. To accuse the union executive of thwarting the organisation is similarly unfounded. In fact, by publicising the first meeting of term, almost 40 students turned up, representing societies as broad as the union's record company, the classics society, the Labour left and others. Furthermore, it was Communist Students who insisted upon raising the question of "consensus" decision-making, against

the will of the majority of those present who wished neither to use it nor to consider doing so.

Chris reserves his worst slander for SWP members. He accuses us of opposing worker-student unity, shutting down debate and depoliticising the upcoming NUS demonstration. In fact, SWP members have been working closely with the Union executive to ensure the NUS demonstration is properly built with stalls, posters and open meetings - something CS has shown no interest in doing. SWP members helped draft a motion which is being put to a general meeting of students this month - openly in favour of worker-student unity and mandating our SU to support strikes and occupations at our university.

Finally, the only debate we have opposed is CS members' repeated insistence that we deliberate such abstractions as the "use of 'consensus' decision making" and the online formation of agendas as opposed to drawing them up at the beginning of meetings.

Publishing an SWP member's name in the *Weekly Worker*, without asking his permission, seemed both reckless and unsettling. However, the final straw for me was to see CS plastering posters of Joseph Stalin around the university on Monday morning (covering up several Action Palestine posters in the process), calling for an "open discussion" on whether Stalin was an anti-communist or not. The downright offensive notion that it is acceptable to uncritically plaster a mass murderer's face around the university proves to me that, while Communist Students have their eyes on the stars, they've forgotten that they are lying deep in the gutter.

Stuart Randle
Manchester University student

Reds

As a socialist, I was very pleased to see Ed Miliband elected as leader at the recent Labour Party conference held in Manchester.

The election of 'Red Ed' was a defeat for the supporters of New Labour, such as Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson, who wanted Ed's brother David to be elected leader. This, together with the election of 'Red' Ken Livingstone as Labour's candidate for London mayor, signifies a small but important shift to the left within the party. It opens up a space that socialists can use to win back the five million voters who have deserted Labour during the Blair years.

Winning back these mainly working class voters has been made a lot easier by the decision of the Labour conference to support the building of council houses. I will therefore look forward to seeing Fenland Labour Party include a major council house building programme in its manifesto for the May 2011 town and district council elections. Such a policy will be much welcomed by the 2,450 families, couples and individuals who are currently on the waiting lists for social housing in Fenland.

This, together with the election of Ed Miliband as Labour leader, will re-build Labour in the Fens.

John Smithee
Wisbech

Out of step

David Cameron's refusal to support same-sex civil marriage looks increasingly isolated and out of step. He is ignoring the growing calls for marriage equality from senior figures within the Conservative party and from his Liberal Democrat coalition partners, the Labour opposition and the wider public.

He is the only major party leader who is taking a stand against marriage equality. Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband back marriage for gay couples. London mayor Boris Johnson is in favour, as is Margot James MP, until recently the Tory party vice-chair.

Cameron's opposition to lifting the ban on gay marriage calls into question the sincerity of his professed pro-gay credentials. Nearly two-thirds of the public reject his support for the status quo, which bans gay couples from getting married in a registry office. A Populus poll in June 2009 found that 61% of the public believe that: "Gay couples should have an equal right to get married, not just to have civil partnerships." Only 33% disagreed.

The tide is turning in the UK in favour of same-sex marriage. It is also a growing trend all over the world, from Canada to South Africa, Portugal and Argentina. Why can't we have marriage equality in Britain too?

Some people say that civil partnerships are sufficient for gay couples. This is hypocritical. They would not accept a similar ban on black people getting married. They would never agree with a law that required black couples to register their relationships through a separate system called civil partnerships. It would be racist to have separate laws for black and white couples. We'd call it apartheid, like what used to exist in South Africa. Well, black people are not banned from marriage but lesbian and gay couples are. We are fobbed off with second class civil partnerships.

Civil marriage in a registry office should be open to everyone without discrimination. In a democracy, we are all supposed to be equal under the law. The Con-Lib coalition's professed commitment to gay equality cannot be taken seriously while it upholds the ban on same-sex marriage.

Peter Tatchell
OutRage!

Not my typo

Thanks a lot for running my piece, 'Tea Party: rumblings on the frenzied right' (September 30). Just one very minor quibble: Sarah Palin's twitter didn't call upon Republicans to "repudiate" claims that Abdel Feisal was a man of peace, as my draft was corrected to read. She called upon them to "refudiate" such claims, coining a much-ridiculed neologism, which she defended as a creative use of English.

Some things American politicians say are so ridiculous that an outsider can understandably mistake them for typos.

Jim Creegan
email

Warning

Jim Creegan writes of Paladino: "The 'ruling class' of his victory speech was not the one familiar to Marxists; he was referring instead to the politicians in the state capital at Albany, to whom he has threatened, figuratively, 'to take a baseball bat'."

But, surely, these politicians *are* the representatives of that ruling class familiar to Marxists! If not, who do these politicians, be they Republican or Democrat, represent - the workers? I don't think so. Which then begs the question about the validity of Jim's further statement that "Paladino's anger, like that of all Tea Partiers, is directed at politicians, not the capitalists they now serve more openly than at any time since the gilded age that followed the civil war."

In actual fact, all the evidence is that the majority of that capitalist class, certainly its upper reaches, in so far as it is represented in the

Republican party rather than the Democrats (which tends to represent big capital and its more liberal wing), has been trying to do all in its power to stop the Tea Partiers getting elected over the more mainstream candidates. The Tea Partiers do represent a kind of revolution against capital - a revolution by plebeian elements. It is a rightwing populist movement that brings together the libertarian right, which draws a lot of its support from those involved in the financial markets as traders, from small capital, from sections of the middle class and from backward sections of the working class. It is a more virulent form of rightwing populism than that seen in Britain, with the current Tories, and in parts of Europe.

But the reality is that the kind of policies they are putting forward - big cuts in spending at a time of economic uncertainty and, in the case of the Tea Partiers and others, reactionary social policies - are not the kind of policies that big capital wants. Big capital established the big state because it needs long-term stability both economically and socially. The policies that the populists are promoting threaten both unnecessarily. It is small capital and the middle class that seek spending cuts because they do not correlate their immediate interests to the macro economy in the way that big capital does. On the contrary, they are more concerned with keeping their taxes low and interest rates low. Big capital can avoid tax and its access to the capital markets means it has cheaper alternatives than reliance on bank capital.

It is these backward sections which tend also to have illiberal attitudes in relation to racism, sexism and so on, and which utilise such divisions to divide workers in order to increase exploitation.

The rise of the Tea Party is a worrying sign because, in some ways, it is similar to the rise of similar movements at the beginning the last century, which eventually became the basis of the fascist parties. But it is necessary to understand the role of time. Those organisations never won the support of anything other than the odd maverick within the ranks of big capital at that time. Big capital only gave its support to fascism when its back was against the wall and, with hindsight, probably had misgivings about having done so. But this is more like the period immediately after the turn of the last century, not the period just before or after World War I.

The other reason that these populist movements gain support should also be a warning to the left, and that is that the left itself has failed to provide a credible solution around which these elements of society could be won, as a credible alternative to monopoly capitalism.

Arthur Bough
email

Move forward

I need to clarify the Socialist Alliance's position on the Campaign for a New Workers' Party, and my own, in light of Phil Kent's report of the CNWP open steering committee meeting ('CNWP: dead men's shoes', September 30).

The SA did not argue that the CNWP 'was going nowhere'. We are concerned about the pace of the progress towards the campaign for a new workers' party becoming that actual party, as we have expressed on a number of occasions, but we are pleased that it is now a membership organisation which has agreed to discuss the potential structure of a new left party over the next 12 months. The CNWP is the most likely vehicle on the left to move the party-building process forward, and it is beginning to do so.

Similarly, in my speech moving

the resolution, I did not "frustratedly complain that people were not joining the CNWP because they didn't know what they were joining or which direction it was going in" or say that "People were more likely to join if the CNWP made a clear commitment to a party project".

What I did say was that trade unions and community groups are more likely to take a new left party seriously than a campaign or coalition for one - something I have been saying for some time. My concern is partly motivated by the increasing likelihood of a move back into the Labour Party, and all that that means in terms of reformism, if the left does not get its act together fairly quickly. In terms of the CNWP, it does in fact have a clear direction - to build a new workers' party.

Over 4,000 individuals have signed up to that, and Socialist Party members made it clear at the open steering committee meeting that they remain committed to campaigning for such a party, albeit at a slower pace than the majority in the SA would want.

One final minor correction: the CNWP is now committed to including a specific session at its 2011 conference to consider an outline draft constitution for a new left party which would then be put to a future founding conference. It is not the SA resolution that will be debated again at the CNWP conference next year. In the interim, we will discuss that constitution.

As Phil correctly points out in his article, the SA motion, and one from the Socialist Party, were both passed unanimously.

Not only does this suggest that the SP, like the SA, wants to move the project forward, but also that, despite a somewhat negative position against the CNWP being put forward by Phil on behalf of the CPGB, he and the CPGB must have voted in favour!

Pete McLaren
Socialist Alliance national secretary

Question

Thanks for your article 'Election lows and UN forces' (September 23). I learned a lot from it. However, I have the following questions:

1) Don't you think that the US does not want to eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, so that it has a convincing excuse to perpetuate its presence in the region?

Otherwise how is it possible that the creator (US) cannot annihilate the created (Taliban)?

2) What is behind the anti-US rhetoric of Karzai? Does he scramble to portray himself as an independent president and not a puppet? Is he trying to win the Taliban despite the US wish?

Robaza
email

Storm

On Sunday October 3 around 7,000 people marched through Birmingham against the onslaught of cuts lined up for us by the Conservatives and Lib Dems. The demonstration attracted trade unionists, socialists and students from across the country. I marched for a while with the GMB contingent who seemed upbeat and clearly energised. The weather was atrocious, yet the mood was militant. There was a common feeling that we could defeat the cuts agenda if we mobilise properly.

The speeches were in similar vein to what we have heard over the last few months. Labour left MPs Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell urged the movement to defend the welfare state. McDonnell stressed that if the Tories come for us, we will come for them, with strikes, occupations, civil disobedience and direct action. Jane

Loftus, president of the CWU, said that her union would build solidarity with those in struggle, whilst Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary, said politicians of all parties, including Labour, told us that cuts were inevitable. It's lies. The PCS is proud to say that there shouldn't be a single job lost, or a single penny out of public spending. The rhetoric that is on offer from the trade union leadership has to be transformed into action against the austerity programme.

The SWP's leadership decision to demand a general strike from the TUC was echoed throughout the demonstration, with placards, chants and a call to arms from Chris Bambery. He said, we need to go from here and start saying that if in Greece, if in France, if in Spain they can have a general strike, then we can have a general strike here in Britain. It is a common line of argument we have heard from the SWP time and time again.

Martin Smith and other SWP leaders appear unaware of the historic defeats that the working class in Britain has suffered over the last few decades. Working class solidarity and organisation is at an historic low; we have to carry out a struggle to rebuild working class organisation before we can consider calling a general strike.

Martin Smith argued in the SWP's *Party Notes* (September 21) that it would not be seen as ultra-left posturing. But that is exactly what it is. The arguments of the SWP leaders are reminiscent of the mistaken approach adopted by the Communist Party of Great Britain in the run up to the 1926 general strike. It was clear to them that the working class would have to fight and they had passed motions and written articles warning the class that the TUC would betray the struggle. However, they mistakenly mobilised their forces into backing the TUC's lacklustre campaign, which inevitably buckled at the key moment. The TUC was not up to the task of leading a successful general strike in 1926, and it is not up to the job today.

The demonstration was barely within view of the conference, which the police had barricaded with steel walls, blocked roads and thousands of police officers. They led us around back streets and forced us to hold our rally in a muddy pothole-ridden car park. The Tory's police protection could only have been overcome through mass action involving many more thousands than were in Birmingham on Sunday. The anarchists, however, decided to create a spectacle, a courageous defeat, when they marched at the police lines - before being kettled, searched and put on file. The stunt was futile and the claims of disrupting the conference were shown to be hollow.

The SWP issued a statement in favour of a united anti-cuts campaign. It called on the Coalition of Resistance and the National Shop Stewards Network to get together and work with their Right to Work (RTW) campaign. The RTW conference has been offered as a space to bring these campaigns together; we must demand that this conference is open to motions and will elect a steering committee where all sections of our movement are represented. If it does not, it will be obvious to all that the call was just a cynical ploy to outmanoeuvre the campaigns.

The demonstration and these anti-cuts campaigns are useful to a point: they can certainly bring together rank-and-file trade unionists, but only on trade-union politics. If we are to defeat these cuts and bring down this government, then we need a message that goes beyond what is acceptable to the left union leaders. We must imbue these struggles with socialist politics and fight not just for a programme of social democracy, but communism.

Chris Trafford
Manchester

ACTION

Communist Forums

London: Saturday October 9, 12 noon: 'Capitalist crisis and the communist alternative'. University of London Union, Malet street, WC1E 7HY (tube: Goodge Street, Euston Square, Russell Square).

Leeds: Using Jack Conrad's *Remaking Europe* as a study guide: **Saturday October 9, 3.30pm sharp:** Rick Savage - 'America organises Europe'. Then *Fightclub*, again introduced by Rick Savage of the Northern Film School.

Saturday October 16: To be announced.

Call 07852 740799 for more information.

Manchester: www.comuniststudents.org.uk.

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday: we upload a podcast of commentary on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.podbean.com>.

Communist Students

For meetings in your area, contact info@communiststudents.org.uk or check out www.comuniststudents.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Introduction to anthropology series - 'The human revolution'. Tuesdays 6.45pm to 9pm, St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (Camden tube).

October 12: 'Primitive matriarchy'. Speaker: Chris Knight.

October 19: 'Early human kinship'. Speaker: Chris Knight.

Miscarriage of justice day

Saturday October 9, 10am - 4.30pm: Meeting, The Dragon Hall, 17 Stukeley Street, Covent Garden, London WC2 (nearest tube Holborn). Speakers include Dr Andrew Green, Steve Grey, Gabe Tan, Melda Wilkes and chaired by Bruce Kent.

Organised by Miscarriages of Justice: mojuk@mojuk.org.uk.

Refugee and migrant rights

Saturday October 9, 10am - 2pm: Conference, STUC, 333

Woodlands Road, Glasgow. Networking and action planning event, bringing together a wide range of groups. Discussion and workshops.

Organised by National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns: ncadc.org.uk.

Housing Lobby

Monday October 11, 12 noon: Meeting, Committee Room 7, Houses of Parliament. Austin Mitchell will chair a meeting with MPs, trade unions, tenants and others. In the run up to the spending review, demand decent homes. Organised by Defend Council Housing: info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk.

Jerry Hicks rally

Monday October 11, 7.30pm: Rally, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1 (nearest tube Warren Street). Building support for Jerry Hicks election as general secretary of Unite. Speakers include Jerry Hicks, Ken Loach (film director), Steve Hedley (RMT), Ray Morell (Unite convener), Alberto Durango (Unite), Steve Kelly (Unite), Gerry Downing (Unite), Judith Atkinson (NHS Unite), Tushar Sarkar (Unite) and chaired by Billy Young (Unite).

Protect the ballot

Wednesday October 13, 12.30pm-1pm: Demonstration outside parliament. 2pm-3.30pm: Rally, Committee Room 14. 3.30pm: Lobby of MPs. Organised by United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws: www.unitedcampaign.org.uk.

Socialist History

Saturday October 16, 9.45am-4pm: Day school, People's History Museum, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester. *The Great Unrest, Labour and syndicalism 1900-1914* - presented by Ed Mustill; *Social Democratic Trajectories - Modern Europe: One or many families?* - presented by Prof Stefan Berger. £7 waged and £5 unwaged.

No cuts

Tuesday October 19, 12.30pm: TUC rally and lobby of parliament, Westminster Central Hall.

Wednesday October 20, 4.30pm: March from Lincolns Inn Fields, London WC2 to Downing Street on the day of the government's comprehensive spending review. Organised by Camden Trades Union Council: camdentradescouncil.org.uk.

End of march rally in Whitehall organised by Counterfire.

Wednesday October 20, 7pm: Public meeting, Portcullis House, SW1. Organised by Labour Representation Committee.

Saturday October 23, 11am: Demonstration called by the RMT, FBU, PCS, NUT and National Shop Stewards Network. March to South East Region TUC rally at Congress House, Great Russell Street.

Stop the War

Saturday October 30, 10am: Annual National Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn). Speakers include Tony Benn, Seumas Milne (*Guardian* journalist) and Joy Gordon (author of *Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions*). Organised by Stop the War: office@stopwar.org.uk.

Defend public services

Saturday November 6, 10am: Conference, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1 (nearest tube: Tottenham Court Road). One day conference for trade unionists in the South East TUC region with keynote speakers and workshops. Organised by SERTUC: 020 7467 1220.

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.

TORIES

Tails and wagging dogs

The Birmingham conference reveals the tensions and divisions over the coalition government, writes **Eddie Ford**

This year's Conservative Party conference in Birmingham, perhaps to the frustration of Tory spin doctors, has been dominated by George Osborne's announcement on October 4 that child benefit would be cut for top rate taxpayers. Outlining his plans, the chancellor stated that as from 2013 families with at least one parent earning more than about £44,000 a year would lose their entitlement to what was previously a universal benefit. Only a year ago the very same George Osborne had ringingly declared that he would "preserve" universal child benefit as it was "valued by millions" of families. Of course the tax system should be used to buttress the institution of marriage and "the family". Then his Birmingham bomb-shell.

Obviously, this creates an anomaly or loop-hole in that families where there are two wage earners - which is increasingly the case - would still be entitled to child benefit if each of them were paid just under the new threshold, but those where one parent stayed at home to look after the children (the 'homemaker' or 'house-parent') would effectively be penalised and lose their benefit. The rules of the game have suddenly changed. So about 1.2 million families, some 15% of all those in receipt of child benefit, will lose out on payments currently worth £20.30 a week for the eldest child and £13.40 for subsequent children.

But David Cameron has now heavily hinted that this tax break could be extended to higher earners as well, as possible 'compensation' for the loss of child benefit. Confusion reigns. Cameron even "apologised" for not including the plan to axe child benefit for higher-rate tax payers in Tory manifesto - sure, a real vote winner! And in turn the Liberal Democrats in the coalition are of course coming under pressure from elements of their rank and file to distance themselves from Osborne's child benefit 'reforms' and the putative tax break, even if the coalition agreement drawn up between the two parties states that it will "ensure that provision is made for Liberal Democrat MPs to abstain on budget resolutions to introduce transferable tax allowances for married couples without prejudice to the coalition agreement".

Self-evidently, the married tax allowance should be opposed as it discriminates against the nearly two million single parents in the UK - who should be treated equally, not as second class citizens, by the tax system. Ditto for Osborne's thoroughly retrogressive attack on universal child benefit. Yes, obviously, £44,000 a year is well above the average wage, but it hardly makes you 'rich' - after all, some skilled manual workers can earn up to that under favourable

conditions. For instance, if you are one of these better paid workers living in London - say bringing up three kids on your own or with a partner on a much lower wage - then you may be able to get by, the horrific London housing market notwithstanding, but you are not exactly living the champagne and jet-setting lifestyle.

Rather than declaring war on those working class families who might earn more than other working class families - the so-called "middle class" families we hear so much about from the lying tabloids - the way to deal with the *genuinely* rich is not to abolish universal child benefit but, to coin a phrase, to tax them until the pips squeak under a progressive taxation system and introduce a maximum wage for all. There is the more general point that the raising of children should not be seen as a purely private affair of the parents, almost as an indulgence, but more as the responsibility of society as a whole. From that perspective, a communist one, attacks on the universal child benefit system are a move to further privatise child rearing under capitalism.

Of course, for all that, George Osborne's child benefit scheme - or the initial plan anyway - was particularly ill-received by those disgruntled Tories who feel themselves outside the charmed circle of cabinet ministers and high-flyers. They clearly resent the coalition government, unhappy at what they perceive to be the Liberal Democrat tail wagging the coalition government dog - when it should be all power, and all jobs, to the Tory Party boys and girls. For some of them, the loose rag-bag of proto-oppositionists amongst the rank and file and the Tory backbenchers, the child benefit proposals represent an attack on 'family values'. And of course, from where they are coming from - where the bourgeois nuclear family is seen as the natural and eternal bedrock of society - their grievance has a legitimate basis, given the straightforward fact that more often than not it is the woman who brings up the kids whilst the man goes out to work to perform his god-given role as patriarchal provider (though over the years that trend or model has been undermined).

So, for instance, David Davis - seen by many on the rightwing of the Tory Party as the standard bearer of 'true blue' values - damned the new child benefit regime with faint praise. He told the *Daily Mail* that whilst it "does encourage wives or mothers to go out to work", which is obviously a good thing as far as he is concerned - and that he has "no problem" with the

"principle" of "reducing child benefit for the better off" - it was "an accidental piece of social policy", not the "wisest way" to go about things. Instead, for Davis, it "would be fairer to consider family income rather than that of individuals". Here we see Davis attempting to delicately position or balance himself between the traditionalist rightwing which wants to see the benefits system heavily skewed in favour of 'the family' - and to that extent want to preserve, even augment, certain aspects of the benefits system - and the more lean-and-mean populist right who relish a chance to quickly dismantle, if not sweep away, all universal benefits. Like the *Daily Mail* itself of course, which simultaneously, and totally contradictorily, wants both to be a stern defender of 'the family' and an ardent foe of what it calls - quite hypocritically and cynically - "middle class benefits" (ie, universal child benefit).

Of course, Davis was a former contender for Tory Party leader in 2005 - eventually losing out to David Cameron by a margin of 64,398 votes to 134,446 votes, with the latter appointing his rival as shadow home secretary following his victory: better to have him inside the tent pissing out than outside pissing in. Then in 2008 Davis, in a spectacular and well calculated move, resigned from his post in protest at the Labour government's attack on civil liberties - chucking in his job the day after parliament narrowly passed the counter-terrorism bill, which extended the limit on the period of detention of terror suspects without charge in England and Wales from 28 to 42 days. Not that his opinions on this matter prior to his resignation, as widely noted, were in any way different from the rest of the Tory shadow cabinet or indeed that of the actual government. Needless to say, he won the Haltemprice and Howden by-election with 72% of the vote, breaking several voting records in the process.

Maybe more to the point, Davis became notorious in July for his 'Brokeback' speech at a boozy 'private' lunch with former Tate & Lyle colleagues in the Boot & Flogger wine bar in Southwark. Here he claimed to have overheard Lord Ashcroft, the shady ex-Conservative party deputy chairman, refer to the government as the "Brokeback coalition" - implying that the seemingly cordial political friendship between David Cameron and Nick Clegg was analogous to the gay relationship portrayed in the Oscar-winning film. Davis's comparison was further emphasised by his follow-up joke about David Laws, the former Liberal Democrat treasury chief secretary who resigned from the coalition in May over relatively minor parliamentary expenses, was "one sort of minority" brought into government: Laws, of course, being gay. Possible homophobic remarks aside, Davis's speech was more significant for his dismissive remarks about Cameron's "big society" - which he described as "Blairite dressing", as "if you talk about the big society" people then "think you're Mother Teresa".

Furthermore, Davis's credentials as a leadership contender in waiting - or at least a rightwing stalking horse - were perhaps boosted by his BBC Radio Four programme broadcast on October 4: 'A working-class Tory is something to be'. On this show he trumpeted his working class background - the only child of a

single mother on a council estate and so on - and how people like Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher and John Major all came from relatively humble backgrounds, in stark contrast to their aristocratic predecessors: recounting how Harold Macmillan disparaged the 'upwardly mobile' Norman Tebbit as a "Cockney interloper" amongst the party elite. Yet, argued Davis, we seem to have gone backwards in some respects - having our first Etonian Tory prime minister in almost half a century.

To date, Davis's populist bid seems to be having some measure of success. ConservativeHome, a "centre right" website which offers "comprehensive coverage of Britain's Conservative Party", recently conducted a poll into prominent rightwing Tory backbenchers. Unsurprisingly Davis topped the poll with 70% of respondents stating that he "represents their views" and 54% believing that he articulates those views "effectively". John Redwood and Daniel Hannan were some way behind as Davis's closest rightwing rivals. And he has other potential backers, such as the 1922 committee secretary, Chris Chope - the MP for Christchurch and a supporter of the death penalty. He has complained, and he is hardly a lone voice, that Tory ministers are effectively being "held to ransom" by a "small group" of Liberal Democrats - who, in his view, are "the tail wagging dog on too many occasions". Not only that, he has spoken to Conservative ministers and a "number of them share those frustrations" - thinking that Cameron is "giving a lot of ground on issues" which are "sensitive" to many rank and file Tories, fearing that the coalition was "proceeding on a basis of continuous appeasement without consulting the backbenchers".

But having said that, many prominent Tories - even if they are uneasy with the direction in which Cameron is leading the coalition government and the Conservative Party - do not believe that David Davis has broad enough appeal, or the personality, to act as an effective or serious focal point for rightist opposition: too much of a loose canon, a maverick, undisciplined. So the plotting and scheming, something the Tory party has always excelled at, will doubtlessly continue and escalate in the years to come.

As for the rest of the Tory conference, Cameron used his first conference speech as prime minister to warn that spending cuts will "not be easy" for anyone - except perhaps for the millionaires who line the cabinet. He told the Tory faithful, whose faith is certainly being tested this year, that jobs will be lost and services cut following the coalition government's spending review in October. He also vowed to back "wealth creators", the "doers and grafters" - the "inventors and the entrepreneurs who get this economy going", the "people who leave the comfort of a regular wage to strike out on their own".

Cameron also promised to "protect" the vulnerable, whilst piously - and hypocritically - lecturing us on how you "can't measure fairness just by how much money we spend on welfare", as though "the poor are products with a price tag" and that the "more we spend on them the more we value them". Instead, Cameron went on, "fairness means supporting people out of poverty - not trapping them in

dependency". Naturally, he heaped praise on Iain Duncan Smith, the works and pensions secretary, for his plan to replace all out-of-work benefits with a single, universal payment or credit that - apparently - "rewards work". In the words of Smith, a universal credit system will restore "fairness and simplicity" to the welfare system.

Or to translate into real world speak, this government will slash benefits and impoverish large sections of the working class. As promised earlier by George Osborne with his benefit "cap" of £26,000 a year. In reality, this means that some 50,000 unemployed families will lose an average of £93 a week, and some might lose as much as £300 a week. This cap restricts benefits to £500 a week, which includes *everything* - jobseekers allowance, housing benefit, council tax benefit, etc. When you consider that for many families housing benefit accounts for £400 a week, due to the chronic lack of affordable housing thanks to the absolute dearth of council/social housing, that leaves these families with just £100 a week to pay for everything else - bills, food, travel, clothing, you name it. In other words, virtual starvation beckons. No doubt the *Daily Mail* will say that they deserve to be stripped of their "middle class" benefits. Talk about the politics of envy.

Well, what about the Liberal Democrat partners in the coalition government? Quite contrary to the paranoid fantasies of people like David Davis or Chris Chope, the Liberal tail is most certainly *not* wagging the Tory dog. In fact, if anything, the reverse is true - the Liberal Democrats are already being punished in the polls, unlike the Tories. Though of course that will change when the cuts start to hit, to *hurt* millions of ordinary people, over the coming weeks and months. No less than Kenneth Clarke, the coalition justice secretary, has warned that the UK faces the very real danger of a double-dip recession. Then things will get really, really, nasty. The coming storm of protests and resistance will batter the coalition government and it is the Liberals who are the weakest link, shamed by their association with the 'Tory cuts' and racked by internal dissent - with many rank and file Liberals wanting the blood of their misleaders.

Tellingly, at a conference fringe meeting, Tory MP Nick Boles called for "coalition candidates" to stand at the next election - declaring that in the "national interest" Liberal Democrats and Conservatives should not be opposing each other in certain seats. If so, and the chances of such an agreement are very high - the Tories would obviously eagerly embrace such a deal. The Lib Dems face the prospect of annihilation as a distinctly separate political organisation and identity, the wretched equivalent of the Liberals under the national government of Stanley Baldwin in the 1930s. Mere creatures of the Tory party. Yes, we could finally be seeing the tortuous but well deserved death of liberal England in the 21st century •

Notes

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11470983
2. www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00v1294
3. <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/theorydiary/2010/10/1922-committee-secretary-liberal-democrats-holding-conservative-ones-to-ransom.html>



David Davis

IRAN

Sanctions siege turns into cyberwarfare

The Stuxnet virus is a new form of warfare. Instead of Iran being attacked by planes and missiles it has been USBs. **Yassamine Mather** reports

While Israel, the US and Britain keep up their rhetoric of ultimatums and threats against Iran, and escalate the siege warfare of economic sanctions, Hands Off the People of Iran has been warning of the very real and ominous danger of a so-called pre-emptive attack. Now things have taken an unexpected and dangerous turn. Throughout the last couple of months Iran's nuclear plants as well as a number of major industrial complexes have been targeted by a sophisticated piece of malware: Stuxnet.

According to computer experts the virus's complexity suggests it was written by a "nation state" and it is the first known worm designed to target not software, but real-world infrastructure such as power stations, water plants and industrial units. Last week, after many denials, Iran confirmed that 30,000 computers in the country's power stations, including the nuclear reactor in Bushehr, had been attacked by the virus, blaming Israeli or American spies for infiltrating the plant.

A total of 40,000 computers worldwide are known to be affected by the virus. According to Liam Ó Murchú, manager of operations with Symantec's security response team, "It's amazing, really, the resources that went into this worm". It is suggested that the virus was introduced to Iran not through the internet but on a memory stick, possibly by one of the Russian firms helping to build the Bushehr nuclear

plant. The same firm has projects in other Asian countries, including India and Indonesia, which were also attacked. But Iran is thought to have suffered 60% of the attacks.

Stuxnet has already proven itself perhaps the most sophisticated piece of known malware to date, infecting computers through USB sticks, Windows file shares and other vectors. The virus exploits four known 'zero-day' vulnerabilities of the Microsoft operating system that until recently were unknown and unpatched. It spreads automatically without the computers user's knowledge.

Machinery used in automated plants and high infrastructure industries is usually controlled by computers running the more reliable Linux operating system. Engineers and some computing experts have expressed surprise that Siemens used the bug-ridden Microsoft operating system for plant control. A photograph taken inside the Russian-built Bushehr plant shows a computer screen - configured to run a Siemens operating system - infected by Stuxnet and configured wrongly, making it vulnerable to bugs.

The virus was aimed at a popular process controller - the Siemens Simatic Programmable Logic Controller - and exploited a zero-day vulnerability in WINCC SQL database.

Industrial control systems (ICS) operate using a specialised software similar to an assembly code on programmable logic controllers (PLCs). The PLCs are often programmed from



Infrastructure is the target now

computers not connected to the internet or even internal local area networks. In addition, the industrial control systems themselves should not be connected to the internet. Reports from Iran suggest some of the recommendations about PLC security were not followed. The virus is autonomous - it requires no operator to direct its actions. Once it finds its target, it writes new code into the controller to change a process.

First, the attacker needs to obtain design documents. These could have been stolen by an insider, but it is likely that an earlier version of Stuxnet or another malicious program gave that information to the hackers. Once attackers had knowledge of the computing environment in the facility, they could develop the more dangerous version of Stuxnet. Each feature of Stuxnet was implemented for a specific reason and for the final goal of sabotaging the ICS.

Mahmoud Jafari, the director of Iran's Bushehr reactor, was among those affected by the malware.

According to Ó Murchú, "The fact that we see so many more infections in Iran than anywhere else in the world makes us think this threat was targeted at Iran and that there was something in Iran that was of very, very high value to whomever wrote it".

An Israeli military unit responsible for cyberwarfare is accused of creating Stuxnet to cripple Iran's state computer systems and stop work at Bushehr nuclear power station. No one knows if Natanz, where uranium is being processed and where the US, UK and Israel claim nuclear weapons are being developed, has been penetrated by Stuxnet. However the number of working centrifuges, the main enrichment devices, produced in Natanz, fell suddenly by 15 per cent - at the very time the virus was first thought to have hit Iran.

Apparently there is also a biblical reference embedded in the code of the computer worm that points to Israel as the origin of the cyber attack. The code contains the word "myrtus", which is the Latin biological term for the myrtle tree. The Hebrew word for myrtle, Hadassah, was the birth name

of Esther, the Jewish queen of Persia.

The Book of Esther tells how the queen pre-empted an attack on the country's Jewish population and then persuaded her husband to launch a pre-emptive attack before being attacked themselves.

Ralf Langner, a German researcher, claims that Unit 8200, the signals intelligence arm of the Israeli defence forces, perpetrated the computer virus attack by infiltrating the software into the Bushehr nuclear power station. Langner said: "It would be an absolute no-brainer to leave an infected USB stick near one of these guys and there would be more than a 50 per cent chance of him picking it up and infecting his computer." Of course no one can prove whether Israel is behind this, though huge resources have been poured into Unit 8200, its secret cyberwarfare operation. The US department of defence and national security agency, and the UK's GCHQ have also been establishing elaborate cyberoffensive capabilities, and it is possible that they cooperated with Israel or acted alone.

This week the German daily *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* reported that 15 companies using Siemens equipment have been affected by the virus and have subsequently informed Siemens of the incidents. The clients were power stations, chemical plants and other industrial facilities.

A major supplier of industrial automated sorting systems based in Holland has reported two attacks by the Stuxnet worm, while separately, the Dutch nuclear power plant Borssele is on high alert.

Even though the worm has not yet been found in control systems in the United States, it could be only a matter of time before similar threats show up there. Some computer experts warn that the sophisticated worm designed to infiltrate industrial control systems could be used as a blueprint to sabotage systems critical to US power plants, electrical grids and other infrastructure.

The current version used in Iran stops computer operations. However, as Ó Murchú demonstrated in a computer exhibition in Canada, the

real danger is if the worm originated or *accelerated* a computer operation rather than stopping it. Ó Murchú set up a basic air pump, controlled by a Siemens system similar to the one used in Iran. The pump delivered a timed burst of air into a balloon, which inflated moderately. Ó Murchú then infected the system with Stuxnet, pressed a button, and the pump continued to work, but did not stop. The balloon went on inflating till it burst. No one in the lecture room was left in any doubt: if the balloon was, in fact, an Iranian nuclear power station, the consequences would be unimaginable.

According to Michael Assante, former chief security officer at the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, an industry body that sets standards to ensure the electricity supply, "A copycat may decide to emulate it, maybe to cause a pressure valve to open or close at the wrong time. You could cause damage, and the damage could be catastrophic." Joe Weiss, an industrial control system security specialist at Applied Control Solutions in Cupertino, California said, "the really scary part" about Stuxnet is its ability to determine what "physical process it wants to blow up". It is "essentially a cyber weapon."

The current fiasco in Iran's nuclear industry should come as no surprise, if we remember that the Natanz nuclear plant is built irresponsibly close to an earthquake fault line. As far as the country's nuclear industry is concerned, the cavalier attitude of the Islamic government and the nuclear agency towards basic safety and security issues shows the correctness of Hands Off the People of Iran's opposition to nuclear proliferation.

We are only witnessing the first stages of this cyberwar. New versions are developing and spreading from the original worm. If it is true that the Israeli state is behind this worm, irrespective of the damage it does in Iran, Israel and its supporters might live to regret the monster they have created ●

yassamine.mather@weeklyworker.org.uk

Fighting fund

Thanks for the flurry

After our near miss in September I am glad to say that our £1,250 fighting fund has made a good start. There has been a flurry of donations. In total we received £279 in the first week of October. So things are looking up. Thanks to comrades SL (£15), MG (£5), FD (£20), FK (£20), FD (£20), AM (£40), MG (£20), BP (£4), JS (£5), FJ (£50) and JFBIG (£100). Not that we can afford to be complacent. Costs constantly creep up.

It might be worth flagging up what is going to be in the *Weekly Worker* over the next month or so. As well as carrying the final article by Lars T Lih on Lenin we have comrades busy transcribing other important talks given to Communist University. They include Mike Macnair on permanent revolution, Chris Knight on science and Hillel Ticktin on capitalism and crisis. And naturally we shall be reporting the CPGB's forthcoming weekend membership aggregate - where we shall be debating our *Draft programme* and voting on our attitude on the Labour leadership elections. In relation to our internal disagreements, articles are in preparation on leftwing communism and Trotskyism and the Labour Party. As readers will have come to expect, both will have a certain polemical

edge to them.

I just wish others on the left would stop rejoicing at what they see as the next split and begin the serious fight to bring out into the open the differences that exist within their own organisations. As I have said before, disagreements should not be regarded as shameful, private matters. They are natural, healthy ... and highly educational.

Finally, our readership. Last week the e-readership was 9,953. Slightly up. Nor should it be forgotten that we have a respectable, though rather smaller, print readership. Though exactly how many is much harder to judge from week to week. We print 500 copies, but I know that not all of them are sold. Nevertheless, as a rough and ready figure the *Weekly Worker* can be said to have an average readership of 10,000 at the moment.

Almost certainly the vast majority of them will be committed leftwingers who are interested in ideas. That is certainly the target audience this publication aims at ●

Robbie Rix

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LENIN

'April theses': myth and reality



Many on the left see Lenin as undergoing a conversion to Trotskyism in 1917. Lars T Lih takes on this myth and reveals a Lenin, who while converging with Trotsky in certain respects, still has a different strategy. There is also the possible influence Kautsky exerted on Lenin

Let me begin with the potential discovery I've made about the role of an article by Karl Kautsky¹ in informing Lenin's thought in April 1917, which I think is quite unexpected and significant. I have since become more interested in the main problems of that time. So although I will explain the role of that article, I think my main points could be made even if the article did not exist, or if Lenin got the ideas in it from another source. The key thing here is what he introduced in the 'April theses' and what his rationale for it was.

I think we are going to spend more time than I expected back in 1905 and 1906 on the differences with Trotsky and permanent revolution because, obviously, that is one very strong, well supported and plausible story about what happened. I think that the differences between Lenin and Trotsky back then have not been properly elucidated.

I will also discuss the role of 'old Bolshevism', a term Lenin coined in the spring of 1917 and which I like as an object of study - what is the difference between old Bolshevism and what came later? I am not going to examine the actual text of the April theses too closely, though. It is the story I am interested in - what were the changes in Lenin's thought, why did he make them and what was the result?

First I must set up the basic aim of social democracy at this time - and I think this includes both Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. It is to carry the democratic revolution 'to the end'. That phrase is a rather interesting one; what it means is not just any old bourgeois revolution, but the absolute destruction of monarchical absolutism (I am quoting an old Bolshevik here) and the setting up of a radical democratic republic.

Now here is a little footnote - as I am famous for being interested in these translation issues. That term 'to the end' is never properly translated in Lenin's *Collected Works*; for some reason a conscious decision was made not to give it any one particular translation - every time it comes up, they produce a different paraphrase. So, for example, we find 'full victory to the revolution', 'consummation of the revolution', etc. This is a rather unfortunate decision. Firstly the importance of the phrase is completely lost because you do not see it, and you do not see how common it is; and secondly I think the phrase has a stronger sense.

So let's unpack this phrase, 'to the end'. First of all, it means that the democratic revolution that is coming up in Russia could have a range of

outcomes, and what we want to do is to ensure the best outcome. When we say 'bourgeois revolution' it could mean a wide range of things, from a mere monarchical constitution to a radical democratic republic - our job as social democrats is to fight for the most radical one. In the back of their minds was the German revolution of the mid-century. They had a very strong sense that it had only got so far, it had only set up a very limited bourgeois republic in Germany, and this had set back the worker and peasant movement. They had muffed their chance and we mustn't muff our chance when it comes, because we may have to live with it for a while.

So that is the first element of old Bolshevism - trying to get the best possible bourgeois republic on offer. This was very ambitious. Sometimes when we talk about this we get the idea that having a democratic revolution is not very ambitious, and we should be ambitious and go for a socialist revolution; but in the context of tsarist Russia it was very ambitious.

Second point. What force is going to stop the revolution from going 'to the end'? It's the bourgeoisie. This is not a particular innovation in Marxist theory - to say that the bourgeoisie does not want a full democratic revolution. As a matter of fact, almost instantly after the *Communist Manifesto* was written, Marx and Engels realised that the bourgeoisie is not interested in carrying it all the way, due mainly to a fear of the working class going too far.

So while tsarism is, as it were, preventing the revolution from starting, it is the bourgeoisie that will prevent it from going 'to the end'. This implies at least a two stage process within the democratic revolution. The first stage topples the tsar; then there is an attempt by the bourgeoisie to say 'that's enough, we got what we need, we can stop now'. The social democrats have to move past that.

The third point, then, is: how will the proletariat move past the bourgeoisie? It will do this by enlisting the peasantry as a whole (both rich and poor peasants), because the peasantry has an interest in the democratic revolution. The bourgeoisie will try to convince the peasants they have got what they wanted and that they should stop; so there is a fight between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat for hegemony over the peasantry.

The fourth point of old Bolshevism is that, if we are lucky enough to reach the final stages, we are going to need an armed uprising that will have to set up a provisional revolutionary government; that is what is meant by the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and

peasantry"². The point here is that there is division in the social democrats as to whether it was permitted, or proper, or expedient to participate in such a government - since it would not be a socialist government.

So, those are the four points: range of outcomes; two stages (one against the bourgeoisie); enlisting the peasants by fighting for influence over them; and setting up a provisional revolutionary government.

Did the situation after the February revolution in 1917 make this scenario obsolete? No, not in the least; it seems to me the old Bolsheviks predicted it. What happened in 1917? Well the tsar was deposed, so the bourgeoisie set up a government, saying 'okay, now we've got a government, stop'. The workers wanted to press forward to get the full radical democratic transformation of Russia, which was not going to happen with the bourgeois government. They had to fight for influence over the peasants to carry it through - and they did so. The strategy dictated by old Bolshevism then was to fight for influence over the peasantry in order to set up a class government that would kick out the bourgeoisie and push through the radical democratic transformation of Russia. Furthermore, old Bolshevism made a prediction that - if you gave them the land and liquidated the landowner class - the peasantry would support the workers against any counterrevolution. More or less, this is what happened, and the civil war, in that sense, was a great confirmation of old Bolshevism.

Mike Macnair has argued there was a conflict of interest between the workers and peasants at this time, as shown by the grain pressure, grain requisitioning. I agree that was a contradiction, but I think it was a contradiction within a genuine common interest. That common interest was to maintain an army that could keep the landowners from returning, and to get the devastated economy back into shape. It was not any sort of long lasting peasant-worker relationship; it was, rather, a temporary one. I could go into this more but I will just make the point that this was a fundamental common interest between the peasantry and the proletariat, and that is why they won the civil war.

Basically 1917 was a triumph of old Bolshevism; maybe 'old Bolshevism plus', but still old Bolshevism.

So what about this disagreement between Lenin and Kamenev? There is a difficulty here. Jack Conrad has made the claim that what Kamenev was spouting in 1917 was not old Bolshevism, but a Menshevik retreat

from it. Well, the difficulty in this view is that the person who explicitly condemned what Kamenev was saying as old Bolshevism was Lenin himself. He says, a lot of times, throughout the spring of 1917, 'to hell with old Bolshevism' - I paraphrase.

So what does Kamenev say, exactly, that leads to Lenin's ire here? He says: "Comrades, Lenin's general scheme proceeds from the assumption that the bourgeois democratic revolution is completed."

Now what does Kamenev mean? Well, I'm pretty sure he means what we've just been saying: the radical democratic revolution which is on the agenda has not been carried through, and it won't be carried through unless we apply the old Bolshevik recipe of getting together the workers and the peasantry as a whole.

So if that is the case, if Lenin says it is old Bolshevism, and it looks like old Bolshevism, it probably is old Bolshevism. But then we have the question - which I am going to leave here as a problem: why did Lenin condemn it, and who was right? We will set this aside and come to an answer to that puzzle later. To some extent, that is the puzzle of the 'April theses', that little exchange.

To understand what is happening I am now going to return to 1905-06. Why did Lenin, and everybody else, think it was impossible or inadvisable for a worker government, or any other government, to move towards socialism at the time? I have two points that I want to make before I answer that question, because I think these are two things that people misunderstand about Lenin's position, which is summed up by the phrase 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'.

The first is that Lenin was talking about a *temporary* provisional revolutionary government; he was not talking about anything long term. The phrase is 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'. The 'revolutionary' part is there to say that this is for the revolution. There are two articles that he wrote in spring 1905, 'The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' and 'Social democracy and the provisional revolutionary government'³; these are two straightforward articles where he argues against Martynov. He introduces this formula of the 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship' as a direct response.

Martynov says they should be a party of opposition; Lenin replies: "From Marx's correct idea that we must prepare, not a government party, but an opposition party of the future, Martynov draws the conclusion that we must form a tailist opposition to the present revolution."

There is a lot of other evidence but I think this is probably the clearest. Lenin is preparing an opposition party of the future. If you look at Trotsky's polemics against Bolshevism in 1905-06, that is the point he makes - 'are you guys seriously talking about setting up a revolutionary government and then just walking away? It won't happen.'

The second point is that it is a little simplistic to say that Lenin rejected the bourgeois democrats. He saw the peasants as petty bourgeois, but petty bourgeois who were radical

democratic revolutionaries. So, on the one hand he says they are not socialist but on the other hand he is very admiring of their revolutionary prowess and his whole rhetoric depends on this. I have a quotation from him here:

"The peasantry cannot carry out an agrarian revolution without abolishing the old regime, the standing army and the bureaucracy, because all these are the most reliable mainstays of the landed property of the landowners bound to this system by thousands of ties."

Class ally axiom

What Lenin is saying, then, is that we can have a radical democratic republic via a peasant agrarian revolution. That gives you both a sense of the radical nature of what he wants in this bourgeois democratic revolution and also the role of the peasants. They may not be socialist but they are revolutionary and will transform Russia so that it will be more democratic and more advanced than any European country.

This leads us to the question of why they didn't think they could go further. So I have another quote from one of Lenin's 1905 articles: "Martynov is overlooking the difference between the democratic and the socialist revolution ... [and] the existence of that immense petty bourgeois population which is capable of supporting the democratic revolution but that is, at present, incapable of supporting the socialist revolution."

In theoretical terms, I have called this the 'the axiom of the class ally'. In the article that both Lenin and Trotsky went into ecstasy about, called 'Driving forces and prospects of the Russian revolution in 1906', Kautsky said it in very explicit terms:

"It will not be possible in Russia, at present, for social democracy to achieve victory through the proletariat alone without the help of another class" - that is to say, the peasantry. "As a victorious party the proletariat will not be able to implement any more of its programme than the interests of the class that supports the proletariat allow."

He is saying that you cannot do more than your necessary class allies are ready for. So where does that leave socialism? It is off the agenda. There are other reasons, like the lack of productive forces, etc, but the main reason is that the peasants are not ready. Lenin says: "Only a revolutionary dictatorship supported by the vast majority of people can be at all durable."

If you believe that you need vast majority support, that the peasants are not going to support socialism and that you are establishing a radical democracy, then it follows almost automatically that you cannot have a socialist programme and a socialist government. So when we ask what kind of government there would be under this peasant democracy, the old taboo against being in government came back into operation. You would discredit yourself if you were in government in those circumstances because you would have a socialist programme and you would not be able to carry it out. You would find yourself putting down strikes, protecting property owners, etc. That is what

Lenin and everybody else thought.

Now we go on to Trotsky and the theory of permanent revolution. So, what is the theory of permanent revolution? There are at least two ways to think of that term. One is the whole theory that Trotsky came up with. The other one is to look at what made Trotsky separate from everybody else. Most of Trotsky's theory was shared with other people, especially the international revolution part. That was shared with everybody and was possibly the least original part of his theory.

The part on which Trotsky was by himself - and very often you hear about the Trotsky-Parvus theory, but Parvus denounced this, and Lenin and Parvus were closer on this original question - was his idea that the provisional revolutionary government would be long-lasting, would be a regular government. That is the step he took that the others were unwilling to take. That is why he criticised the Bolsheviks; he considered that they were utopian to think that the provisional revolutionary government would stay provisional.

The question then arises, how did he deal with the 'axiom of the class ally', and get around what seemed to everyone else an impassable barrier? He could have done it by saying that the peasants will support socialism, but that is exactly what he didn't say. The Socialist Revolutionaries (who, by the way, in July 1905 had argued for a "permanent revolution" going into socialism - before Trotsky had ever used the term), coming from the populist tradition, thought that the peasants were ready for socialism. But Trotsky did not go that route. As a matter of fact, while Trotsky and Lenin may have disagreed about the democratic revolution (and even there I think it was only a matter of emphasis), they certainly did not disagree about whether the peasants were ready for socialism.

My feeling is that Trotsky kept to the letter but violated the spirit of the axiom of the class ally. He thought that in the first part of the democratic revolution the peasants would support you and in the second part, when you go on to socialism, they would not support you. Therefore, unless you have an international revolution, there will be (and this is his own phrase) 'a civil war with the peasantry'. He agrees that you can't have socialist government without majority support. But, in a rather peculiar way, he says you can't have socialism because there will be a civil war with the peasantry. He says we will be discredited if we do not make the provisional government long-lasting.

But to me a civil war with the peasantry seems fairly discrediting, and the idea that a socialist government should end in civil war with the peasantry was blasphemy among Russian social democrats.

I want to read one of Lenin's

reactions. It is well known that Lenin did not have a specific polemic against Trotsky's theories and when he did say something it was usually because someone else had quoted Trotsky. I think this quotation shows what the real issue is. Martov, in 1909, quotes Trotsky: "Even if they, the peasantry, [support working class government] with no more political understanding than they usually support a bourgeois regime" - so he is saying that the peasants are not very advanced in their understanding but that this will work towards our benefit because they will support us in just the same way that they support a bourgeois regime.

Lenin's reaction is: "the proletariat cannot count on the ignorance and prejudices of the peasantry as the powers that be, under a bourgeois regime, count and depend on them. Nor can it assume that in a time of revolution the peasantry will remain in their usual state of political ignorance and passivity."

I think that sums up a real difference, not with Trotsky in general, but between Trotsky's 1905-06 theory and Lenin. Trotsky tries to finesse his way around the idea of peasant support whereas Lenin says that unless we can reliably count on conscious majority peasant support then we cannot proceed.

Just a footnote before we go to 1917. One of the arguments here is who influenced Lenin in 1917, Trotsky or Kautsky? In some sense, however, this may be a false dichotomy. In Trotsky's translation of Kautsky's 1906 article, he begins by getting annoyed at those criticising Kautsky: "... a completely unintelligent joke, on the other hand, is the attempt, dictated by spiritual laziness, to deny the competence of Kautsky on questions of the Russian revolution".

He compliments Kautsky specifically on the dialectic. He does not use the word dialectical materialism, but he implies it very well. Finally he says: "Here is Kautsky's article. If the reader will take the time to consider my article 'Results and prospects', he will see that I have no reason whatever to reject even a single one of the positions formulated in the article I have translated by Kautsky because the development of our thinking in these two articles is identical."

So according to Trotsky, his theory in 'Results and prospects' is identical to Kautsky's. I think he is doing a bit of wishful thinking here, however, as I do not think Kautsky would have ever supported his idea of turning the provisional revolutionary government into a socialist government without majority support.

October 1915 theses

Lenin came up with a set of theses in October 1915 which are never mentioned in discussions on this

question. They are a combination of old Bolshevism and the politics of the Zimmerwald left. (The left-Zimmerwald group got started in 1915, but I use the term for his positions from the start of the war, because - though it is a matter of controversy - I do not think his position changed.) The left-Zimmerwald positions are concerned with the international scenario. These 'October theses' essentially state that the socialist revolution in Western Europe can be triggered by the democratic revolution in Russia.

The phrase he uses is: "the task confronting the proletariat of Russia is the consummation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia in order to kindle the socialist revolution in Europe." ('Consummation' is yet another translation of the same Russian word for 'to the end'.)⁴

So what strategy is implied by the October theses? We find several key ideas in the text:

- a 'two stage' revolution;
- the soviet form of revolutionary power, as in "all power to the soviets"; the complete democratic transformation of Russia;
- complete opposition to 'revolutionary defensism';
- aggressive pursuit of revolution in other countries.

Most of Lenin's subsequent position is there. But what is missing? One thing certainly not present is the idea that Russia can take steps towards socialism before the socialist revolution in Europe. More generally, he has not wrapped his mind around the fact that a revolutionary government in Russia is going to have to solve the day to day problems of a government. He is thinking in terms of an international revolutionary scenario; he is not thinking about a government that's going to have to get up in the morning and make policy.

Kautsky's X

When the revolution breaks out in February 1917, Lenin's first reaction is to say, repeatedly, "Ha! The situation is exactly as we predicted in October 1915. We had it exactly right!" He returns to the October theses, and quotes from them at length in his *Letters from afar*.⁵ The uncompleted fifth letter is the first time we see something really new. He starts by summarising what he wrote in the first four letters. Then, for the first time, we see something like a call for steps towards socialism: "these steps are dictated, with absolute inevitability, by the conditions created by the war, which in many respects will become still more acute in the post-war period. In their entirety and in their development these steps will mark the transition to socialism, which cannot be achieved in Russia directly, at one stroke, without transitional measures, but is quite achievable and urgently necessary as a result of such transitional measures." Also for the first time he says that the proletariat

should make an alliance with the poorer section of the peasantry, as opposed to the peasantry as a whole.

In April 1917, Karl Kautsky assessed the prospects of the Russian Revolution in his monthly journal *Die Neue Zeit*. Lenin read the article just prior to leaving Switzerland for Russia. Lenin begins to criticise Kautsky's article, accusing him of being the leader of the "'centre', 'marsh' trend ... that oscillates between the social-chauvinists and the revolutionary internationalists" - which seems to be a softer criticism of Kautsky than others, implying that he is still capable of internationalist positions. Unfortunately the fifth letter trails off at this point. Perhaps Lenin has not yet decided what to make of Kautsky's article.

So what is it about the argument that I believe might have triggered this? I am not saying he simply read what Kautsky said and then thought he would say it too. I am simply asking what set him off thinking in this direction? If there is circumstantial evidence then we should look at the article. There are a number of things in it I particularly want to talk about.

What are Kautsky's arguments? Firstly on the peasants: in 1905, he argued that the peasants had been thrown from their peaceful existence and transformed into fighters for their democratic transformation, for their own class interests. This is one of the reasons that he and Lenin were on the same wavelength. Now, over 10 years later, he says that the vast reforms and changes under Stolypin have changed the peasants and promoted the "immense cleavage" of the rural population between the propertied and the propertyless; ie, the peasantry has been splitting all this time and the process of polarisation within the peasantry has been accelerated.

Then he says: "we cannot foresee how these changes have penetrated and influenced the thinking of the Russian peasantry", but the Russian peasantry is the "X, the unknown quantity in the Russian revolution".⁶ He says that with all the other classes in Russia, we can almost predict what they are going to be by looking at the classes in western Europe: the workers are socialist, the bourgeoisie are counterrevolutionary, and thus we can judge from this how they are going to behave. But he says that this is not the case for the Russian peasant. Why? Because "his material circumstances and historical traditions are quite unique, and at the same time have been in the process of colossal change for three decades".⁷

Lenin is on the verge of returning to Russia, so he has to come up with some kind of policy, and I am of the opinion that Lenin looks at this article and says to himself: 'correct!'. Kautsky also says, for example, that we do not know how far the Russian peasant will go in supporting the workers in a battle with the bourgeoisie: in western Europe they would probably support the bourgeoisie as they would be happy with their land, but we cannot say the same in Russia.

My hypothesis is that such things sparked Lenin off to come to more radical conclusions about saying that we can now support the peasants.

If you look at the 'April theses', they are a little cagier than we remember them, a little harder to pin down and to know what is going on. For example, where he is often quoted as saying that he does not want a transition to socialism, what he is actually emphasising is that he does not want an *immediate* transition to socialism. This indicates to me that he desired a mediate, gradual transition to socialism - not introducing everything all at once. I think the reason for this is that he has moved towards what Trotsky was arguing for in 1905-06 - that the provisional revolutionary government will be long term, it will

last and it will carry out that policy. So in that fundamental sense he does move to Trotsky's position - there is no doubt about it.

However, his *reasoning* is not only different, I think it is opposed. Lenin has convinced himself that the peasants will support socialist measures, and that there are other reasons why socialism is possible, so he is sticking with the old Marxist idea that you need majority support and you need a material background. He is not rethinking Marxism in any way, and in essence he is working with a different strategy to Trotsky's.

Back in 1905 Lenin said that we cannot have majority support for socialist measures and therefore we cannot have a socialist dictatorship, whereas Trotsky argued that they should have a socialist dictatorship anyway, without majority support. In 1917 Lenin said that they could now have majority support for socialist dictatorship. That is the main point I wanted to make.

Now for one little point as a sort of epilogue. What about the ideas that made him go beyond his old position and see that socialism was on the agenda and so forth? Well I think that he started retreating from them almost immediately. Against Kamenev he said that the petty bourgeoisie are defencist and that they will stay so, thus making old Bolshevism redundant because the petty bourgeoisie will not break with the bourgeoisie; the rich, propertied peasants will not break with the bourgeoisie either, so we cannot rely on them. Why? I think he wanted to jump the gun by moving towards socialist revolution with poor peasant support - but he was wrong.

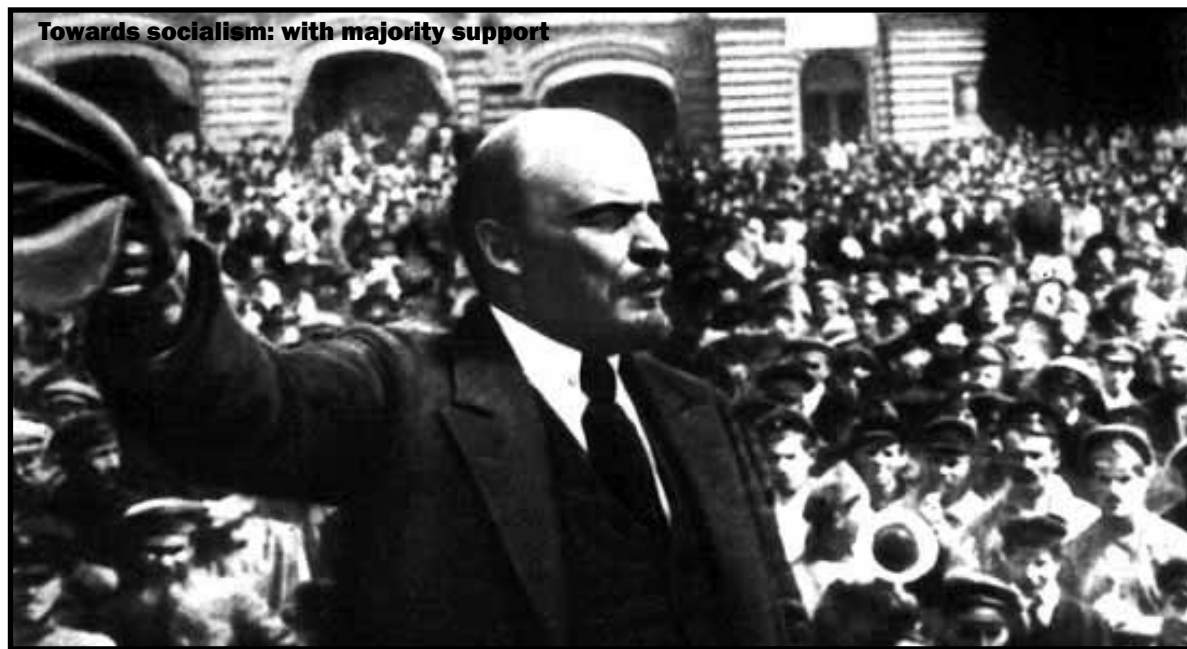
By the end of the summer the peasants were rebelling against the provisional government *as a whole* and that is why the October revolution took place. Lenin himself said this in many others places - ie, that October 1917 was the democratic social revolution. It seems to me that what Lenin is admitting in making these formulations is that Kamenev was right and that the bourgeois-democratic revolution had not been completed in April 1917. That Lenin was wrong and Kamenev was right is a rather shocking conclusion, perhaps!

Lenin said that, "in order to respond to the crisis we need socialist measures". But the crisis made socialism absolutely impossible. However, Lenin was absolutely right that a class-based revolutionary government was the only way to set up a coherent regime. A coalition regime could not solve the problems. You had to have a regime that was class-based, radical, democratic and which had socialism on its banner. So Lenin did move to accept that position, and he had some 'necessary illusions' as to why that was the case. So he did correct the party. But I think that the party then went on to correct Lenin's correction. They went on not to stress some of Lenin's ideas so much, but to focus on that one message: worker-peasant power is the only way to solve Russia's problems and to save the revolution ●

This is an edited version of the opening given by Lars T Lih at the Communist University in August 2010

Notes

1. 'Prospects for the Russian Revolution', *Weekly Worker* January 14.
2. <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/tactics/index.htm>
3. <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/sdprg/index.htm>; <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/apr/12b.htm>
4. <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/oct/13.htm>
5. <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/lfafar/index.htm>
6. www.cpgb.org.uk/worker2/index.php?action=viewarticle&article_id=1002036
7. *Ibid.*



Towards socialism: with majority support

LABOUR

What the left thinks of Ed

Jim Gilbert rounds up the response of the left to Labour's new leader

Although the election of Ed Miliband as Labour Party leader was not what most of its MPs or indeed much of its membership wanted, some have welcomed him as the least worst option (ie, he is not his brother). This attitude is typical of the reformist approach to politics. But when it comes to the purportedly revolutionary, dare we say Marxist, left, is what it is saying helping to take us forward?

The largest left group, the Socialist Workers Party, has Tom Walker in *Socialist Worker* reporting from the Manchester conference: "while the Blairites were holding back the tears, those with some connection to the left and the workers' movement were chuffed to bits."¹ In the same issue, *Socialist Worker* editor, Charlie Kimber, writes: "Ed Miliband's victory can open a gap for the left that would not have been there if David had won. It can be used to involve more layers of the Labour Party in action against the cuts, and is another avenue to bring pressure to bear on Labour to fight ... Miliband's victory is an echo of a growing mood. People don't want more of the politics of Blair that proved so disastrous." In a rather blinkered manner, comrade Kimber insists that "the real battles will be fought outside Labour." As if the Labour Party can be written off as a site of struggle and has no connection with the trade unions. Strikes and demonstrations are important. But so are the historically established institutions of the working class. Nevertheless, comrade Kimber insists that: "Everyone should demand that Ed Miliband supports the resistance."²

In the current issue of *The Socialist*, paper of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, a leading article fights the good fight, trying to confirm its dogma that Labour is no longer a bourgeois workers' party, merely a bourgeois one: "... an examination of the figures shows that this is far from a ringing endorsement amongst ordinary trade unionists for the 'new' Labour leader or the party. Nor does it

Party because trade union members still look towards this party." The paper goes on to argue that because trade union leaders could only turn out a paltry vote (8.7% of affiliated trade union members), their argument to stay affiliated is defeated. More bizarrely, trying very hard to find the SPEW constituency in this election, the article asserts, "Added to this were the 15% spoiled ballots in the union section. This cannot be explained away by confusion over voting procedure. It indicates most probably a conscious decision by a significant layer to spoil their ballots because none of the candidates reflected their urge for radical socialist policies to meet the challenge of the current devastating economic crisis."³ Well, no, actually, these were invalid, not 'spoiled', ballots; if these voters had wanted to spoil their ballots they would have defaced them in some way. In fact, these voters "did not tick a box to confirm that they support the Labour party and not another political party," as instructed on the ballot itself, according to a Labour spokesperson. SPEW is straining at the gnat on this one.

Giving up before even starting, *The Socialist* leading article claims that, "Nothing better illustrates the thorough rightward transformation of the Labour Party than the phobia of the right wing press and Blairite MPs that the party, which was founded by the trade unions, could now be 'controlled' by them. If only this were the case! Then ordinary

working-class people and trade unionists would have a possible route to enter and transform the Labour Party." An interpretation of this is that SPEW could only countenance workers entering and transforming the Labour

Party if the trade union bureaucracy controlled it. However, *The Socialist* discloses some of SPEW's abiding illusions in old Labour (ie, when *Militant* was wedded to the Labour Party body and soul). The paper wines, "It is fatal to cling to the hope that New Labour, because that is what the party is, despite the blandishments of Miliband, is not still a Blairite pro-capitalist party in its policy, in the social composition of its members and how it is likely to act in this crisis." So was the Labour Party of Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan anti-capitalist? Are the trade unions now bourgeois?

Finally, the clarion call: "Therefore the conclusion that all socialists and active trade unionists should draw is that this is no time to foster illusions in New Labour or that there will be a 'change' in its programme and actions in the next period. On the contrary, this leadership election has highlighted once more the absolute necessity to fight the Con-Dem government, not just on the industrial and social planes, but also the need to provide a clear political alternative. The basis for a new mass workers' party, the only hope for the millions who fear the cuts about to destroy them and their families, must be created now." A Labour Party mark two, some hope!

Socialist Appeal represents the Ted Grant group that remained in the Labour Party when the rest of Militant departed, splitting itself into SPEW and the main component of what became the Scottish Socialist Party. It is the main part of the International Marxist Tendency. SA's editorial board recently stated that, "In the 1970s, it was the rank and file who were to the left of the trade unions ... It was the Marxists who ... understood that the key to the Labour Party would be the trade unions. Today, the union membership is far closer to the workers than Labour's ranks, which have been depleted over the years. The unions remain the key to developments in the party."⁴ Unfortunately, it also gets it wrong about the invalid ballots: "It was also reported that more than 36,000 ballots were spoiled by members of affiliated organisations, including the trade unions - 15% of the total. This indicates dissatisfaction with all the candidates and policies on offer."

In an assessment shared even by some in CPGB ranks, the SA statement also thought that, "While there was little fundamental difference between the five candidates, the fact that Ed Miliband felt the need to appeal to the union membership shows how he could bend under the pressure of events" (emphasis added). Some of us would certainly beg to differ with respect to Diane Abbott's candidacy, but that can be dealt with elsewhere. Ed Miliband's relationship with the union bureaucracy is a mutually beneficially one, for the present, and SA is correct to stress it.

You might think that more than a week after a new leader had been elected the left groups inside the party would have got their act together and given us all some insightful commentary about him and what to expect. You would be disappointed. A blog on the

Labour Representation Committee website is the only item I could see dealing with Labour's new leader. Michael Chewter asks, "Where does the election of Ed Miliband as the new leader of the Labour Party leave the Labour left? What should be our strategy now?"⁵ In response, Marie Lynam comments, "... we are electing leaders a bit like the Palestinians elect theirs, in a the middle of an occupation. The invasion and the occupation of the media and the banks. Imagine! The new leader of the Labour Party is what we could get, in the circumstances, a little like the Palestinians got Abbas. Or the Afghans got Karzai. ..."

Somewhat complacently, comrade Lynam argues that "the Labour left is not in a worse situation than before. It is slightly better off for having got rid of the Blair-Mandelson clique, though this is not final, by any means. The Labour left is not determined, not entirely determined, by who leads the party. I take it that there have been advances made at the conference of the party, and this is going to help the Labour left. The task of the Labour left, and the LRC, is to continue to organise itself." A suggestion of sectarianism here, as the left in the Labour Party is certainly more than that organised by the LRC. But at least the LRC website contains *something* about the new leader: the website of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy⁶ has not even been updated since September 4. Even worse is the Socialist Campaign Group website⁷, which is stuck in a time warp: October 2008. Labour Briefing's website⁸ currently only has Christine Shawcroft's musings - before the ballot result - about what she hoped was not about to happen: "David Miliband ... I'm really hoping he isn't being acclaimed as leader while you're reading this - I have my fingers, toes, legs, eyes and everything else crossed ..."

As might be expected, given a hankering for the good old days of complementing the Labour Party in 'official communist' fashion, the *Morning Star* has delivered some verdicts on Ed Miliband. The day after he was elected, a leading article lectured: "the new leader must recognise that his chances of becoming prime minister depend less on mollifying Labour MPs and more on reaching out to the working people and their trade union representatives who were let down and taken for granted by New Labour."⁹ So what does the *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain recommend? General secretary Robert Griffiths calls for a "shadow cabinet which will support social democratic policies".

Meanwhile over at Respect, Salma Yaqoob's article on Ed's election¹⁰ ignored any possibility that Labour could be the site of struggle for working class partisans. She simply does not deal with how the fightback against cuts or to advance socialist ideas might be achieved together with Labour Party comrades, contenting herself merely with a description of the leadership election. "Ed Miliband received the votes of tens of thousands of people because they believed, or hoped, that he would put up a fight against Tory cuts. Instead, his first statements

as leader are designed to lower expectations, not raise them ... The good news is that Labour has not moved even further in the direction of the Tories. The bad news is that Ed Miliband has used his first minutes as Labour leader to reassure his opponents that he won't hit them too hard."

A statement from Socialist Resistance ("part of the Fourth International") puts a little gloss on Ed's victory at first: "The positive outcome of the Labour leadership contest is that the new leader is not David Miliband, and the privatising, war supporting Blairites have been rejected. We should not underestimate the discarding of Blairism and New Labour by important sections of the labour movement."¹¹ And it went on to say that, "Whatever else the leadership campaign showed, it represented a small shift to the left in the Labour movement and in society at large and showed that public opinion is moving against the savage Tory plans to reduce the deficit."

Less enthusiastically, though, it noted that "in his first few days as leader Ed Miliband has shown himself, on the decisive issue of this parliament, to be only marginally different to his right-wing brother ... Miliband may be just an opportunist, or too weak to challenge the pro-market and anti-public service establishment consensus ... We can be sure that there will be a big media campaign to keep Ed within the bounds of the establishment consensus, while arguing that if the Labour movement 'rocks the boat' Labour will become unelectable."

All quite lamentable, really. With few exception the left does not treat the Labour Party seriously. Even when it does the horizons are extraordinarily low. Instead of communism there is social democracy, instead of working class rule there is improving the lot of wage slaves. One thing has been good though. The revolutionary left seems to have drawn the line of demarcation against the four ex-minister, Ed Miliband included, and opted for Diane Abbott as the only supportable candidate. They did not urge a second reference vote for 'Red Ed' ●

jim.gilbert@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. 'Labour right mourns after Ed Miliband's victory' *Socialist Worker* October 2 2010 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=22549
2. 'Blairism rejected in Labour leadership vote' *Socialist Worker* October 2 2010 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=22549
3. 'No "lurch to the left" for Labour' *The Socialist* issue 640 www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/10321/29-09-2010/no-lurch-to-the-left-for-labour
4. *In Defence of Marxism* at www.marxist.com/britain-ed-miliband-wins-labour-leadership-contest.htm
5. l-r-c.org.uk/blog/post/the-new-labour-party-leader/
6. home.freeuk.net/clpd/
7. www.poptel.org.uk/scgn/
8. www.labourbriefing.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=88:christine-shawcroft-october-2010&catid=44:christine-shawcroft&Itemid=61
9. 'An important step towards social justice' *Morning Star* September 26 2010 www.morningstaronline.co.uk/index.php/news/content/view/full/95716
10. 'It's not David' www.therespectparty.net/articles.php?item=912
11. www.socialistresistance.org/1071/ed-miliband-rolling-over-on-cuts-already



Ed Miliband: no

vindicate the union leaders' insistence that they must remain affiliated to the Labour

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

Road to nowhere – the never ending ‘peace talks’

It is difficult to find anyone who has a good word to say for the ‘peace talks’ currently going on between Palestinian ‘president’ Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu. Indeed Abbas, the quisling leader of the Palestinians, whose mandate ran out earlier this year and who is only in office courtesy of the Israeli state and the United States, has openly admitted that he has no option but to take part in these talks.

For 40 years there has been a ‘peace process’ going on. In the early 1970s we had the Roger talks and Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy. Alexander Haig and various other secretaries of state have come and gone without an inch of Palestinian land being restored. Indeed during that time half a million Israeli settlers have occupied or confiscated some 40% of the land in the West Bank.

The only gain from the so-called peace process was the return of the Sinai desert to Egypt under president Sadat at the Camp David talks led by US president Jimmy Carter. This agreement to return the Sinai, which was never part of the land of milk and honey promised to God’s errant followers, enabled the US to base its Middle East policy on the Arab regimes of Egypt under Hosni Mubarak, as well as the Saudi ruling dynasty.

And the Egyptian state has been

true to its word. Through thick and thin it has supported US imperialism in the region, for which it has been rewarded by the largest military aid programme after Israel itself. The Egyptian regime has faithfully maintained the blockade against Gaza, signing up to Israeli and US attempts to dislodge the elected Hamas regime through starving out the Palestinians. Throughout the war against Gaza in January 2009 Mubarak kept up his support for the Israeli attack, maintaining the blockade and preventing the Gaza freedom marchers and others from breaking the blockade. Just as the Israelis attacked the Mavi Marmara, so Egypt attacked previous convoys physically.

President Obama has opined that there can be a Palestinian state within one year - at a time when the Judification of Jerusalem is proceeding apace and the Israeli far-right is on the offensive. This is of course a pipe dream. Such a ‘state’ would not even be a South-African style bantustan. The only comparison is that of an Indian reservation, a place where settlers could come and gawp at the indigenous population.

But even the hideous monstrosity of a mini statelet is highly unlikely to happen for the simple reason that politically it would be untenable. No Palestinian leader could maintain power in such a state without repeated Israeli armed intervention. No Israeli



government would voluntarily accept not going back into the territory to assassinate whoever takes its fancy. So the chances of these talks leading to any more success than previous ‘road maps’, Annapolis etc, are highly unlikely.

And as if to make it clear who is boss, Netanyahu has announced that the moratorium on settlement building, which never applied to Jerusalem and in practice was only honoured in the breach, is to end. Having been told by Abbas repeatedly that he would pull out of the talks if this happened, we now find out that he is going to consult with the Arab leaders. This reminds me of the Palestinian general strike of 1936. The Arab higher committee under the feudal leadership of the mufti of Jerusalem, Muhammed Amin al-Husseini (later a minor war

criminal), looked to the Arab leader to help them call off the strike. And of course they appealed to him in the name of ‘Arab unity’ to do just that.

So today that miserable pathetic creature called Abbas, and his Palestinian American thugs who imprison and torture Palestinian activists courtesy of Israel, hesitates to pull out of the ‘peace talks’ because he knows that he will not be thrown a bone in reply. Instead he looks for salvation to the very Arab regimes who have betrayed the Palestinian and Arab masses from the beginning. The reality is that the Palestinian authority under Abbas is merely a sub-contractor for the Israeli state, as was always envisaged under the Oslo accords.

What is more interesting is what lies behind this process. Even Israel’s far-right accepts that an immediate

transfer of the 3.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank to Jordan - their preferred solution - cannot happen at present. Restrictions will be stepped up, family unification prevented, those with problems with their papers will be quietly deported and so forth, as recent legal changes now allow, but nothing on the scale which is required to absorb the whole of the West Bank into Israel and yet keep the ‘democratic’ - ie, Jewish - majority nature of Israel. There can, at present, be no repeat of the *nakba* of 1948 when three quarters of a million Palestinians were expelled from Israel by massacre and terror.

It therefore makes sense to confine Palestinians within a separate ‘state’. A state without bars but which Israel controls. Without any access to the sea, without any control over its borders, with no army allowed and with its air space subject to Israeli control. Such a ‘state’ will enable Israel to continue denying the Palestinians of the West Bank any political rights and will be an open invitation to expel the Palestinians of Israel into it. It can only be a disaster, not least for the Arabs of Israel itself, whom the present government would dearly like to be rid of.

What the west terms a peace process is in reality a war process by other means ●

Tony Greenstein

Why I am not an Israeli peace activist

As the desultory “peace process” meanders from pointless appointment to meaningless meeting between heads of the Israeli settler state and the authorityless Palestinian Authority, with the US playing the part of dishonest broker, there can no longer be any lingering doubt that this is a charade staged by charlatans.

But behind and beyond this fairly obvious confidence trick there is a much more subtle deception or self-deception: it is widely assumed – even taken for granted – that “peace” is what it would take to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In other words: that what is needed is a genuine peace process instead of the present fake one.

This belief is held by almost all decent enlightened Israelis (the so-called Israeli left) – which is why they refer to themselves collectively as “the peace camp” and individually as “peace activists” – and it is shared by their friends and supporters in the west.

The ‘left’ Zionists of Peace Now as well as the ‘soft’ Zionists and semi-

Zionists of *Gush Shalom* (‘the Peace Bloc’) display this self-deception on their name tags. The non-Zionist, Stalinist-turned-reformist Israeli Communist Party insists on giving top prominence to peace slogans.

Many of the activities in which these good people engage are highly commendable: dissent from oppressive policies and actions of the Israeli authorities, and in particular opposition to the post-1967 occupation. Some of them show real moral and physical courage in various acts of solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians. Nevertheless, their self-description as “peace activists” reveals a profound misapprehension as to the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a delusion as to how it might be resolved.

The image it evokes is essentially symmetric: two sides, two nations, at war with each other, locked in a series of battles over a piece of disputed turf. To end the conflict, the two sides need to end the war, sit down together, and make peace.

In fact this is also the image promoted by Israeli *hasbarah* (propaganda). It likes to speak the symmetric language of “war” and “peace”. Thus, Israel and its friends describe the assault on Gaza in the winter of 2008-09, codenamed ‘Operation Cast Lead’, as a “war”. In reality, it was not a war: there was virtually no fighting. It was a one-sided massacre. Similarly, Israeli diplomacy insists on referring to the territories seized

by Israel in 1967 as “disputed” – a deliberately symmetric description – rather than *occupied*.

As for peace: none wish for it more ardently than most of Israel’s leaders. I am saying this with hardly a trace of irony. It is the truth. Only very few people - psychopaths, arms dealers and other war profiteers, as well as some cynical careerist demagogues and military officers eager for fast-track promotion - actually prefer war *per se* to any kind of peace. I suppose that a few Israeli political and military leaders do belong to each of these exceptional categories. But most Israeli leaders genuinely wish for peace - *peace on Israel’s terms*: their cherished wish is that the Palestinian people, dispossessed and subjugated, should peacefully accept their lot and give up the struggle.

Colonial conflict

The key to a proper understanding of the conflict is that it is an extremely asymmetric one: between settler-colonisers and the indigenous people. It is about dispossession and oppression. As was the case in other colonial conflicts, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has involved real wars between Israel and the neighbouring states; but these were spin-offs, consequences of the fundamental cause: the Zionist colonisation of Palestine. As this colonisation proceeds and expands, Israel will need to maintain its regional hegemony as western imperialism’s local sub-contractor, and new wars will no doubt be provoked.

In colonial conflicts, the colonisers always regard themselves

as coming in peace, bearing the gifts of enlightenment and progress. It is the benighted natives who are the aggressors, resorting to violence against their benefactors. This compels the colonisers to use their superior force in order to put down the native aggressors. The latter have only themselves to blame.

I suppose this is the kind of thing my late friend, the socialist poet Erich Fried, had in mind when he wrote this poem:

Clean Sweep

*The causes
now fight
their effects,*

*so that one can no longer
hold them
responsible for the effects;*

*for even
to make them responsible
is part of the effects*

*and effects are forbidden
and punished
by the causes themselves.*

*They do not wish
any longer
to know about such effects.*

*Anyone who sees
how diligently
they pursue the effects*

*and still says
that they are
closely connected with them*

will now have to

*blame
only himself.*

While the colonisers’ aim is to impose peace - on their own terms and, if necessary, by force - the indigenous people tend to have a rather different view of the matter. Their concern is not to make peace with their dispossessors but to resist being dispossessed. To this end they often need to come bearing not peace, but the sword.

This is why you would be hard put to find peace activists among the native Americans or Australian aborigines resisting colonisation in the 19th century, or among Algerian liberation fighters or anti-apartheid militants in the 20th century.

Of course, the Israeli peace activists do not support *all* the harsh “peace” terms that their government wishes to impose on the Palestinian people (although some of them do not object to some of these unequal terms). But by their reductive definition of the issue as being all about peace, they knowingly or unwittingly accept a point of view biased in favour of the colonisers.

This biased viewpoint is inconsistent with internationalism. So Israeli self-proclaimed peace activists cannot be genuine socialists. Israeli socialists, whether Hebrew or Arab, fight against the Zionist project and its practices: colonisation, dispossession, discrimination; and for equal rights and universal liberation.

Peace will be an outcome of liberation, not its starting point ●

Moshé Machover



OUR HISTORY

Splits and fusion

Forging a united Communist Party in 1920 involved principled splits as comrades put partyist revolutionary unity above sect loyalty

As the momentum towards principled communist unity gathered pace, tensions began to build in some of the participating groups. Specifically, the Socialist Labour Party, the Workers Socialist Federation and the (largely imaginary) South Wales Socialist Society started to lose coherence and all relevance. The genuinely working class political strands in the ranks of these sects were being drawn towards the project of a Bolshevik party in Britain. Correctly, loyalty to their existing organisations was subordinated to that higher duty.

With this in mind, it is important to define quite precisely the actual process that led to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This has importance for the work of today's CPGB and our campaign for the coming together of communists in a single party. In 1920, unity was not some peaceable rapprochement between the groups. Aside from the British Socialist Party, the sects failed the challenge of communist unity. What actually unfolded was a process of splits, then fusion on a higher programmatic, organisational and political level.

Now, there may be some who believe this simple fact justifies the schismatic nature of the left today. Of course, these are comrades that routinely caricature our campaign for a Marxist party as a call

for an ideological non-aggression pact on the left, evidence of a sort of squeamish reluctance to draw sharp and clear lines of political demarcation, even at the risk of divisions. Their own organisational practice is generally characterised by two interrelated distortions of the Marxist concept of party.

First, the idea that a criterion of membership must be agreement with the (often tediously detailed) programme. In contrast, Lenin insisted on acceptance of the programme as the basis for joint action and made clear that "a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the party programme."¹

Second, precisely the sort of "examination" - or rather, heresy-hunt - that Lenin warns of above. Inevitably, this method lends itself to the sort of frivolous, hissy-fit splits that plague today's left.² (It was sad, but indicative, that word recently reached our ear of a hoary old sect luminary who "had it on good authority" that the CPGB was just about to split - because we had a difference in our ranks over the tactic of voting for Diane Abbott. How pathetic.)

Last week we noted how the SLP's team in the unity negotiations - William Paul, Arthur MacManus and Tom Bell -

were instrumental in breaking the logjam resulting from sectarian intransigence of the SLP and WSF leaderships' stubborn sectarian obstinacy over the question of affiliation to the Labour Party.³ Their unofficial conference in Nottingham on April 3-4, timed to coincide with the SLP's official 7th annual conference, drew together the active elements of the SLP - the leaders with mass influence. The pro-unity SLPers agreed to call themselves the Communist Unity Group and adopted a manifesto committing them to working for the "unity of all elements scattered throughout the various groups and parties as the first essential to the formation of a Communist Party in Britain". Clearly, this was a de facto split with the SLP leadership.

Yet this was a principled split against sectarianism and for partyism. In fact, it was the leaderships of the SLP and the WSF that had behaved like our modern-day left. They had taken a stand against the principle of unity with other communists - unless what the BSP rightly dubbed a "question of tactics", that of "relations with the Labour Party and the existing industrial organisations", was decided in their leftist favour.⁴ The BSP quite correctly prioritised the principle of "unity" and thus "made concession after concession" on this tactical matter, "finally giving up the question of

Labour Party affiliation entirely, provided that non-affiliation was not imposed upon the Communist Party in advance, as a fixed basis to be adhered to at all times and under all circumstances."⁵ Given the continued inflexible intransigence of the SLP leadership, comrades Paul, MacManus and Bell were quite right to move independently to form the Communist Unity Group and impart some momentum to the fight to found the new party.

Successful negotiations between BSP and the CUG soon followed, resulting in a Joint Provisional Committee for the Communist Party being set up in June 1920. Its members were: Albert Inkpin (secretary), JF Hodgson, AA Watts and Fred Willis from the BSP; and Tom Bell, Arthur MacManus (chair) and William Paul from the CUG.

Sylvia Pankhurst's WSF had meanwhile become decidedly hostile to fusion and from the beginning of June it stood aside from the process. On the positive side, the collapsed anti-unity South Wales Socialist Society was replaced by eight pro-unity communist groups in the form of the South Wales Communist Council.

In early July 1920, the Joint Provisional Committee issued *A Call for a Communist Party* and its official invitation to the Unity Convention, the 1st Congress of the CPGB. The clarion call had been sounded.

The communist unity convention

The Joint Provisional Committee for the Communist Party announces that the national convention to form the Communist Party has now been definitely fixed to take place in London on Saturday, July 31. The date has been changed to a Saturday because it was impossible to obtain a suitable hall on the Sunday. The proceedings will start at 2pm and go on to 11pm if necessary in order to finish the agenda.

The following circular and invitation to the Convention is now being issued:

Dear Comrade. The negotiations for uniting the various revolutionary left wing organisations in Britain in one Communist Party have now taken definite shape. A great national convention to establish the Communist Party and settle all questions of immediate tactics will be held in the Cannon Street Hotel, London EC4 on Saturday, July 31, 1920, at 2pm.

tuesday, July 31, 1920, at 2pm.

An invitation to representation at this national convention is cordially extended to all organisations, branches of organisations, and independent socialist societies that accept the fundamental bases of communist unity: (a) the dictatorship of the working class, (b) the soviet system, (c) the Third International.

All bodies participating in summoning the national convention are pledged to abide by its decisions on points of tactics, and to merge their organisations in the new Communist Party. Representation at the convention will be held to imply that the branches, groups, and societies represented will also accept its decisions and become branches of the Communist Party.

Your branch, group, or society is cordially invited to send delegates to the convention to inaugurate the Communist Party and determine its tactics and policy. Representation will be at the rate of one delegate for every 25 members or part thereof, and voting at the convention will be on the same basis. The representation fee will be 2s 6d for every 25 members or part of 25 members represented.

Delegates' application forms and agenda for the Convention are attached hereto. Copies of a manifesto, "A Call for a Communist Party," are also enclosed.

A call for a Communist Party

To the communists and socialists of Great Britain.

Comrades, in face of the strongly entrenched capitalist bureaucracy in this country the most urgent and pressing need in our working class movement today is a united and consolidated front. Socialist revolution, formerly but an empty phrase, has become a real force, rending society at its very roots and challenging the power and authority of

capitalism the world over.

In Russia, the working class has rallied nobly to its clarion call and socialism there is seen in action, no longer in the club room and coffee houses, but in actual struggle, braving torture and death itself in a glorious effort to preserve the results of the first definite and permanent breach in the wall of international imperialism.

True to its class instinct capitalism is marshalling its forces, and imperialist nations rush to succour each other in a desperate effort to drench in blood the defenders of proletarian revolution.

It is thus that the Russian Revolution becomes the touchstone of international socialism; a veritable beacon light indicating the paths to follow and the course to pursue.

We, in this country, have yet to realise the great fact of the Russian Revolution has turned the whole current of socialist thought into different channels, giving us new conceptions in place of the old. By such a standard we are revealed as lacking in outlook, policy and tactics. Faced with the vigour and solidarity of the imperialists internationally, and their organised determination to crush every vestige of working class freedom, and particularly to batter down the workers' republic in Russia, who now can defend the time worn ideas still held by some socialists of a gradual evolution or peaceful transition from capitalism into socialism? Allied to such an illusion is the notion that social revolutions can be quite constitutional affairs and carried through by the most correct parliamentary procedure.

The experience and intensity of the class struggle in recent years has shattered such beliefs.

The parliamentary democracy - that idol of the social reformist - has been stripped of its veneer once and for all, and now stands revealed for what it in reality is, an "instrument of class oppression to be engineered and wielded in the interests of the bourgeoisie". Against this sham parliamentary democracy of capitalism the workers' republic places the method

of direct representation and recall as embodied in the soviet idea; only those performing useful social service being enfranchised. Thus the Marxist slogan that the proletarian revolution must march in the light of its own legality has been amply justified and demonstrated by experience.

The new institutions and order of things just arisen have become a constant challenge and menace to the whole system of international capitalism and indicates the task of the revolution. That task is to provide scope and freedom for their development and to assist in their realisation. Towards such an objective and to hasten the world revolution occurring, a Communist Party is wanted. A party of action. One that will wage the class war up to the point of revolution, rejecting with disdain all compromise and truckle with capitalist reform, but ever seeking to organise and rally the working class to the standard of international communism.

Such a party should be clear in its mission and courageous in its determination. Its fundamental principles must be:

a) Communism as against capitalism, ie, the maintenance of society on a basis of social service rather than class exploitation.

b) The soviet idea as against the parliamentary democracy, ie, a structure making provision for the participation in social administration only of those who render useful service to the community.

c) Learning from history that dominant classes never yield to the revolutionary enslaved classes without struggle, the communists must be prepared to meet and crush all the efforts of capitalist reactionaries to regain their lost privileges pending a system of thoroughgoing communism. In other words the Communist Party must stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

While being aware of the several legitimate claims of the existing parties we think the need for a united political organisation based upon the foregoing

principles and fusing all parties which accept the same cannot be gainsaid.

Unity of action must ever go hand in hand with unity of purpose. Against the predatory forces of capitalism we must hurl the united efforts of all who stand for a complete social change as the only way to end for all time the iniquity of class exploitation.

If you are in agreement with the principles of this manifesto, you are urged to prepare to attend a great rank and file convention, to be held in London on Sunday, August 1 1920 and help to lay the foundations of a real revolutionary Communist Party.

Lenin himself, in reply to a question from a member of the Labour delegation as to his views on the need for the formation of a united Communist Party in Britain replied: "Genuine partisans of the liberation of the workers from the yoke of capital cannot possibly oppose the foundation of a Communist Party that alone is able to educate the working masses."

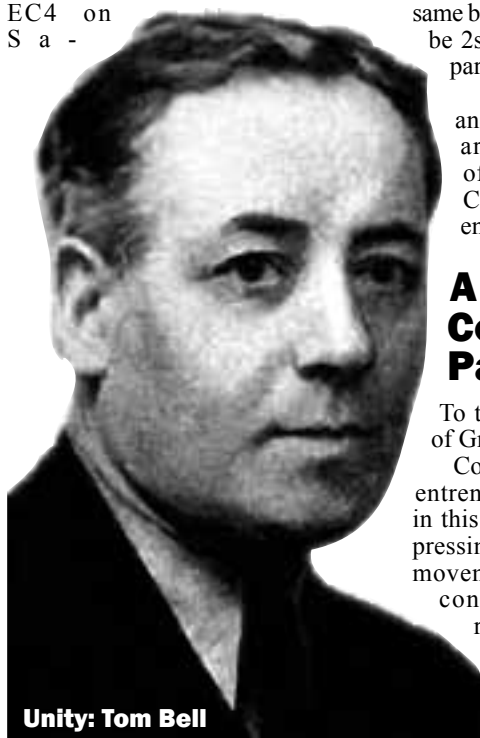
That reply indicates the fervent hopes of our Russian comrades.

Let us not disappoint them but rather be worthy of our responsibilities.

The Provisional Committee of the Communist Party, Thos Bell, JF Hodgson, Arthur MacManus, Wm Paul, AA Watts, Fred Willis, Albert Inkpin

Notes

1. VI Lenin CW Vol10, Moscow 1977, pp83-87.
2. The examples are legion - here are a small "cohort". The Workers Power/Permanent Revolution split of 2006 (www.cpgb.org.uk/worker2/index.php?action=viewarticle&article_id=598); the 2010 Socialist Workers Party/Counterfire split (www.cpgb.org.uk/worker2/index.php?action=viewarticle&article_id=1004027); the 2010 split in the International Marxist Tendency (www.cpgb.org.uk/worker2/index.php?action=viewarticle&article_id=1002564); and the short-lived 2004 'Red Party' split from our own organisation (www.cpgb.org.uk/article.php?article_id=1002413).
3. The WSF was also opposed in principle to any communist parliamentary work (www.cpgb.org.uk/article.php?article_id=1004113).
4. From *The Call* No176, August 21 1919 (www.cpgb.org.uk/article.php?article_id=1004086).
5. From *The Call* No 214, May 13 1920 (www.cpgb.org.uk/article.php?article_id=1004103).



Unity: Tom Bell

REVIEW

M-theory and god

Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow *The Grand Design* Bantam Press 2010, pp208, £18.99 hbk

For all the attention it has received, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow's new book *The Grand Design* is relatively uncontroversial with regard to the science. This is despite what you may have been led to believe from several newspaper reviews, with the story even making the front page of *The Times*. Perhaps the attention it has received is a reflection not of any 'shocking' conclusions that Hawking draws with regard to the absence of a god or gods, but of the state of the average level of general scientific education.

The book covers what you would expect from a modern 'popular science' cosmology and particle physics book: primarily the theories of special and general relativity, which are presented very clearly, and quantum mechanics, which, apart from the ubiquitous discussion of the double-slit experiment and other quantum 'weirdness', is primarily focused on the idea of the multiverse. This forms a core element of Hawking's concluding arguments in regard to the creation of the universe. Perhaps a few words are required to introduce this idea briefly.

Quantum mechanics is the theory required for an understanding of the behaviour of the building blocks of the universe, the particles and forces on which all macroscopic structure depends. This theory has been developed and refined since the early 20th century, when it was gradually realised that 'classical' physics could not provide an accurate description of new scientific discoveries.

Quantum mechanics, and the quantum field theories which were built upon it, now provide us with a fantastically accurate description of sub-atomic processes, although anyone who has studied quantum mechanics will know that everyday experience cannot be applied in this realm. One of the non-intuitive aspects of quantum mechanics is that instead of a single version of history having happened, the sum of all possible histories must be taken into account. What this means is that, if you consider a particle passing between two points, it is not enough to assume that the particle took a straight line path between these two points. Due to the probabilistic nature of quantum mechanics, all of the possible paths must be considered, including paths that involved the particle travelling around the galaxy before reaching a point close to the starting point.

Extrapolating the idea of the sum of all histories to the universe is what leads us to the multiverse. The theory of the multiverse states that the birth of our universe was a quantum event, when the size of the universe was what is known as a singularity, a point of infinite density and curvature, and our laws of physics do not apply. It can be argued that this quantum event not only spawned the universe that we find ourselves in now, but an astronomical number of different universes (a number of 10^{500} is stated by Hawking: 10 with 500 zeros after it, although I am not sure how he arrives at this figure). It is impossible to explain this idea coherently in such a short review as this, but Hawking does a very good job of providing a pedagogical introduction to it, particularly the connection between the sum of all histories concept and the multiverse.

Hawking goes on to explain that the idea of the multiverse can arise naturally within M-theory, which is a vague umbrella term for a collection of theories that are still being fleshed out and meshed together, and based on work primarily in the areas of string theory and quantum gravity.

Hawking applies some of the ideas of the multiverse to address one question, which is why our universe is hospitable for life, when this seems statistically very unlikely. There are a number of parameters that define the



Many universes?

universe that we live in, such as the strength of the different forces, or the number of spatial dimensions we live in, to name but two. Physicists have been searching for a theory that will provide these values as an output, a Grand Unified Theory of which these are a natural consequence.

One of the cosmological arguments offered by those in favour of intelligent design is that these parameters are so finely tuned in order to allow us to exist that shifting any of them by a few percent will generally lead to a universe in which nothing is capable of existence.

What Hawking argues is that the theory of the multiverse can provide us with a Goldilocks style analysis: the reason that these numbers appear so finely tuned is that we exist in this universe and are here to observe them, and there could be a countless number of universes in which these numbers ended up at some other values and subsequently life did not develop. In the same way that it is argued that conditions on Earth have been tailored by some mysterious designing god to be hospitable for life, this argument can also be applied to the state of our universe. The theory of the multiverse offers a possible scientific explanation of this, although there is currently no evidence for this theory.

This lack of evidence leads us to another counter argument against the idea of the multiverse, and against M-theory, and that is that these are questions that are still beyond the realm of modern science. Can we really say with any certainty that the existence of a multiverse could ever be proved? In my opinion it seems far too early to make claims of that nature in either direction.

However, as scientists and not theologians, we are able to separate our lack of evidence for a theory from their lack of evidence for a belief. We can make progress in the direction of being able to prove, or disprove, any prospective Grand Unifying Theory in a way that religion is simply incapable of doing. The Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Geneva is now colliding beams of protons at energies of 7 TeV (tera-electron volts), allowing us to probe new physics that may lie in the previously unexplored TeV scale, where the Standard Model (the name given to our current theory of particle physics) begins to look shaky.

Among the various pieces of supporting evidence that could materialise from this work is the discovery of 'supersymmetry', a proposed new symmetry between the two groups of particles in the Standard Model (fermions and bosons), which both the ATLAS and CMS detectors are well equipped to discover. The existence of supersymmetry is a requirement for

M-theory, and if it is realised in nature then there will be a number of observable particles, as each currently understood partner has a proposed 'superpartner', likely to be in the mass range accessible at this experiment.

So, Hawking explains, M-theory is a candidate for a Grand Unifying Theory, and may well have something to say, at some time in the future, about the beginnings of the universe. This theory is still very much in its infancy, and even after the details are fleshed out over the coming years (decades!) it may well not stand up to experimental verification. The only thing we know with any certainty is that there is a great deal of physics that remains unknown, and the effective theory that is the Standard Model is about to face its greatest challenge yet, in the shape of the Large Hadron Collider (as well as a huge number of other experiments that are pushing at the boundaries of what we know about fundamental physics - such as investigating the nature of neutrinos, dark matter and a huge number of other phenomena). A quote from Engels in *Anti-Dühring* springs to mind when considering this question: "... how young the whole of human history still is, and how ridiculous it would be to attempt to ascribe any absolute validity to our present views ...". There are inevitably a huge number of surprises to come over the next few years.

Science is inherently revolutionary due to the constant testing and development by members of the scientific community. It is vital for the progress of humanity that society is educated against the irrationality and lack of understanding so prevalent today. A strong scientific education and the skills that come along with it, such as the ability to think critically, are the key to this social progression. Simply speaking, members of society that do not have a basic understanding of science and the scientific method are simply not in a position to develop informed opinions on the challenges that face our world. Science alone will not provide a means of social change, but it is in the interests of the working class to develop scientific literacy and education.

I'll leave you with a nice summary from the authors themselves: "Many people through the ages have attributed to god the beauty and complexity of nature that in their time seemed to have no scientific explanation. But just as Darwin and Wallace explained how the apparently miraculous design of living forms could appear without intervention by a supreme being, the multiverse concept can explain the fine-tuning of physical law without the need for a benevolent creator who made the universe for our benefit" ●

Anthony Rose

What we fight for

■ Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but 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 have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars 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'. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.

■ 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. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be ready to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.

■ Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.

■ 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.

■ All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.

Become a
Communist Party
associate member

Name _____

Address _____

Town/city _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Age _____

Email _____ Date _____

Return to: Membership, CPGB, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

weekly worker

**Left needs to
look beyond
capitalism**

Divided we stand

Should anyone in Britain decide that the government's plans for enormous public sector cuts need to be resisted, they will quickly realise it is their lucky day - after all, the number of left fronts for precisely this purpose is already verging on the ridiculous.

The longest standing option, of course, is the 'official' Communist Party of Britain's 'People's Charter'. It started life as a grab-bag of sleepy left-Keynesian minimum demands, and so, in a sense, it remains; but circumstances have propelled it into a second life (or, perhaps, a second undeath) as a point of organisation against cuts. Early support came from various union officials in and around the CPB, along with sundry left-Labourites.

Its website now prominently links to the Coalition of Resistance against Cuts and Privatisation, which smacks rather of the Counterfire media grouplet formed by John Rees's supporters after his undignified exit from the Socialist Workers Party. This one sells itself transparently on the basis of support from prominent individuals rather than unfriendly-looking organisations - Tony Benn has been put up as the lead figurehead for the jamboree, and it is his face that appears on the by-line in *The Guardian's* reprint of the founding statement, as well as all over the CRCP website (and, for that matter, Counterfire).

What does it have to say? Even less than the People's Charter, of course. Point one, a little redundantly, is to oppose cuts and privatisation. The comrades also want to "fight rising unemployment and support organisations of unemployed people," "develop and support an alternative programme for economic and social recovery", and so forth. Not a single concrete commitment appears in the whole thing, but rest assured: the comrades intend to "organise information, meetings, conferences, marches and demonstrations" - because, god knows, they were not going to be doing that anyway (August 4).

The SWP itself, of course, is not going to be outdone. It continues to push its Right to Work campaign. The name may lead the naive to believe that it is a campaign against unemployment, but as time has gone on RtW has been retrofitted into an all-purpose 'united front' on whatever economic issues come to hand. It achieved some short-lived infamy for an utterly voluntaristic disruption of Acas talks between British Airways and the Unite union, which won the SWP yet another raft of detractors. It also, by the most generous estimates, managed to turn out 7,000 people to protest against the Tory conference (though the weather was horrendous).

There was, needless to say, no mention of this protest to be found on Counterfire (although it managed to put up a short video after it had taken place, whose dreadfully distorted soundtrack suggests a lack of interest on their part). It, instead, is building for another demonstration, outside Downing Street, to coincide with George Osborne's spending review, which will make it clear exactly who is at risk from the



Rival campaigns

following austerity programme (that is: more or less everyone).

As always, the *political* divisions are so insubstantial as to be non-existent. There is no compelling reason why we should be forced to name three of these campaigns in as many paragraphs (and that is to ignore the smaller 'broad fronts') instead of one, when all speak in the same terms about the same problems and offer the same solutions - no reason except the unprincipled divisions between the different groups. Indeed, John Rees's official cause for dissent in the SWP was that it did not have an economic 'united front' on the model of the Stop the War Coalition. Now, of course, it does; but that did not stop both sides seeking and finalising a split in any case.

That is what we might call the sectarian axis of division. There is also the sectional. Here, as always, the worst culprit is the Socialist Party in England and Wales, whose socialism has always had something of the municipal to it. Perhaps most prominent is its Youth Fight for Jobs front, which, unlike Right to Work, does exactly what it says on the tin - it is a campaign against youth unemployment. Beyond that, there are sundry campaigns against NHS

privatisation and such, as well as local anti-cuts fronts wherever the comrades have a foothold.

Of course, these local movements partly get around the problem of having nothing substantial to say because, after all, that is not really the point of a local campaign. Yet the problem does not simply go away for that. A campaign to save a particular hospital or school may get enough support in the area actually to succeed - but there is nothing to stop the cut in question simply being shifted somewhere else. It is a matter of detail for the government whether these jobs go or those. In fact, this also goes for Youth Fight for Jobs - it would hardly be a victory for the working class if it became a serious force, with the result that the young simply forced the old out of their jobs.

As far as national campaigns go, SPEW seems limited to its decrepit Campaign for a New Workers Party, which is forever waiting for substantial union support, along with its increasingly calamitous electoral fronts. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition was undemocratically cooked up a matter of months before this year's general election, and - except for some candidates with some serious local

roots - performed to the standard it deserved, though those in attendance at the recent CNWP open steering committee meeting were assured that the whole thing would be warmed over in time for the local elections next year.

In this, SPEW is somewhat crippled by its abstentionist and sectarian attitude towards the Labour Party. This was an attitude it previously shared with the likes of the SWP; but while the latter's hyper-opportunism at least had the effect of alerting it to the changing circumstances in Labour, the former's founding myth - that the Labour Party had *definitively* transformed itself into a common-or-garden bourgeois party in the early 90s - made such a turn impossible.

Indeed, the *appearance* of strength intermittently projected by RtW and CRCP draws in large part from the acquiescence of unions and individuals associated with the Labour Party, who thereby enjoy greater public prominence than the marginalised far left.

Apart from the kaleidoscopic fragmentation of the left's resistance to cuts, the major structural weakness in common among these fronts is their strictly reactive, defensive nature. Yes, there are a great number of tasks before

us that will pit us in a defensive posture against a bourgeois class offensive; but it does not follow from this that the left needs to keep it simple, and raise only those demands acceptable to the broader milieu which it wishes to mobilise.

Early on in the run of *the X Files*, Fox Mulder is told by a mysterious ally that "a lie is best hidden between two truths". So it is with George Osborne and David Cameron - and Thatcher before them. They are able to win substantial public support for their rampage, because it is transparently obvious that the preceding state of affairs did not represent an earthly paradise. A large proportion of public sector jobs, of course, provide useful services on which the rest of us rely at one time or another - but another exists primarily to massage unemployment figures by employing people to do something, *anything*.

For example, a socially-housed individual who receives housing benefit solicits money from one arm of the state to be paid directly to another arm of the state. This is not useful work - by any rational definition, it is waste. So it goes for the labyrinthine bureaucracies that exist to promote targets and manage services from schools to hospitals to the police. The vast majority of this activity is simply irrational.

Of course, to pose serious solutions to these problems is to move beyond saving every job for the sake of saving every job. Marxists have forgotten why it is that we do fight for all these jobs: to maintain the integrity of our organisations, to avoid the downward spiral into de-proletarianisation that begins with the dole queue and ends in all manner of degradation.

We do it, in other words, because *we have better solutions* - about which the CPB, SWP, Counterfire et al remain conspicuously silent in their moronic mimicry of stale 70s-style official leftism (at least the CPB were there first time round, after a fashion) ●

James Turley

james.turley@weeklyworker.org.uk

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