



weekly **worker**

**Occupy London protest
camp and the money-
makers of St Paul's**

- Europe referendum debate
- Die Linke programme
- CPGB Irish tactics 1921
- Lars von Trier's Melancholia

No 887

Thursday October 27 2011

Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

www.cpgb.org.uk

£1/€1.10

Euro: disaster beckons



LETTERS



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

Sepia

My comrade Dave Douglass should learn to quit when he's behind (Letters, October 20). Indeed, I'm a little at a loss as to why he is still squabbling, since he appears actually to agree with me on the central point about the *politics* of the Jarrow march. To quote the comrade himself, these politics defined it as "a popular front-style protest" - that is, an action that subordinated independent working class interests to curry favour and foster a possible alliance with trends of *bourgeois* political opinion.

Having conceded this, the rest of the copy the comrade churns out in his characteristically Stakhanovite quantities is, like its Soviet variant, more or less non-functional - when it is not factually incorrect, of course. Yes, I am happy to accept as good coin the left political credentials of some Jarrow marchers, the bloodcurdling revolutionary speeches made *before* and *after* the action itself, the opposition to it from the establishment and the leaders of the official workers' movement (to reiterate, Dave, when I talk of Jarrow 1936 being "officially lauded", I am speaking of our *contemporary* mainstream politics, not the establishment's reaction at the time - as I made abundantly clear in a previous letter (September 8)).

So what? The original article I penned was about the political template of the Jarrow event and the efficacy of - as you precisely define it, Dave - "popular front-style protest" for the battles our class, including its unemployed components, will face in the coming years. It is in that sense we must reject the lessons taught by Jarrow and critically engage with the militant history - warts 'n all - of the National Unemployed Workers Movement.

Instead, Dave's allergic reaction to drawing a sharp political line like this inclines him dangerously close to a type of mawkish proletarian sentimentality. So it seems one of his key objections to my criticism of Jarrow is that, "whatever [my] motive", the effect is to "[diminish] class identity at a time of growing hopelessness among the class". It is hard to follow Dave's logic here. I contend that the 1936 march was *precisely* an exercise in diminishing and diluting class-consciousness - something we should reject in favour of the genuinely mass traditions of militant unemployed organisation we have in our common heritage and that should be culturally integral to any healthy workers' movement.

You've got it arse-backwards, comrade. Our class shouldn't buy

into sepia-tinged, establishment-endorsed myths about its own history. When we do, it acts to cripple, divert and *dilute* our struggles in the here and now.

Mark Fischer
London

Nuclear v coal

In response to Dave Douglass' strident defence of the continued use of coal (Letters, October 20), I want to correct him where he is clearly wrong.

On 'coal versus nuclear' and issues of safety, coal is, factually, the highest source of heavy metal content in the world today. This is not a new finding. It is one of the leading causes of particulate death in the United States - up to 30,000 a year.

Yes, coal is way more dangerous than nuclear. Nuclear energy hasn't killed anyone in the US. Coal kills. Not from 2,000 years ago as a cumulative number, but right now, today. Dave cheers the fact that coal mines are "popping up like daisies". But every consumer of coal - be it for home heating in China or coal plants in the US - means death. There is not a significant number of plants going up using carbon capture and storage (CCS) or particulate mitigation. Thus, every new plant that burns dirty coal is just that - a burner of dirty coal - and it will kill people. Every plant, bar the half dozen with some CCS, means going a step closer to climate change.

I actually support CCS. There are only a few plants in the world that have it because it is very expensive to implement. The Chinese are indeed spending vast sums rolling out pilots to test the ability of their thousand coal plants to adapt the technology. I think it would be a good thing if it could be rolled out because, like Dave, I have no green fantasies that we won't be burning coal decades from now.

But every coal plant can be replaced with a clean, zero-carbon nuclear plant (the eventual goal of the Chinese, in fact). The Scots just announced the closure of their pilot CCS plant in Longannet. It seems a pity to interrupt, but it's now official that the UK's CCS demonstration project has bitten the dust. Costs had risen to the point that it was going to add about £2 billion to add post-combustion CCS to just one of the eight 300MW units at the Longannet coal-fired station (and even then it'd have captured only 90% of the CO₂ produced. HMG was going to put £1 billion into the scheme, but private investors would commit only £500 million, so it failed).

On that basis, CCS coal is going to come in at about £7.5 billion per GW (let's be generous and say £5 billion for economies of scale and improved design over the next decade), or about £8 billion adjusted for avail-

ability to average output. New-build nuclear here is on course to cost £3.3 billion-£5 billion on that same basis. This, of course, is nation-dependent: ie, where both coal and nuclear are built. But coal dust and CO₂ are going to continue and there is simply no momentum towards planetary CCS.

Secondly, the coal tailings around which Dave claims to have had frolicking days camping and sleeping around are *notorious* for their pollution of ground water, dam collapse and so on. Like him, I'd be for totally transforming the vast areas surrounding the coal mines and collieries of both our countries to true greenfield status. But this dirt is polluting a lot more than it's not, and it's getting worse here in the US, in the UK and in India and China, where it represents a huge environmental disaster. That coal continues to expand is dooming the planet and no manner of spin is going to make coal 'clean'.

As for uranium, this produces the decay product, radon, which is ubiquitous in the Earth's crust. It has a short biological half-life, meaning it's usually gone in about three days. However, miners, especially those in deep shaft mines with little or no ventilation, stand a good chance of getting ill and dying. But, with proper ventilation and union-enforced safety rules, uranium becomes much less dangerous - probably safer than coal mining. But there are so *few* uranium miners that it becomes less of a concern, generally. As with coal mining, danger can be mitigated by proper safety and engineering procedures and enforcement.

The future will be to eliminate all uranium mining for the reactors now coming on line - be they fast reactors, which use nuclear *waste* as fuel, or thorium, something the Chinese are pouring money into now.

As for nuclear energy and military weapons, this is on old green canard raised by Dave. Nuclear energy rests only on its own civilian infrastructure. It doesn't need a military connection and, in fact, almost all nuclear weapons use enriched uranium and plutonium produced from specialised nuclear WMD reactors. The connection between nuclear energy and weapons is akin to that of the aerospace industry that derived every single passenger jet liner from the B-52 and other weapons programmes.

Commercial nuclear energy is wholly independent of the military wing outside the 'theoretical physics' that is fission. This is why most nations with nuclear energy do *not* have weapons programmes. It's cheaper to just build the weapons from these specialised reactors. Above all, nuclear weapons are a *political* decision, one of *policy* for pro-war governments. Having or not having a civilian energy programme is wholly irrelevant. We need to attack nuclear weapons and campaign politically for nuclear disarmament.

Only nuclear energy can truly get rid of nuclear weapons by downblending highly enriched U235 into usable fuel to be burned up in nuclear plants. We should demand the expansion of these programmes to include the Chinese, British, French and American nuclear stockpiles.

So we have three major on-demand fuel sources being developed, despite any protestations from greens or the left: coal, nuclear and - the big one - natural gas, sneaking in under the cover of 'green energy' and promoted wholesale by wings of the green movement. And it will be this way for decades, as the need for more and more energy shows no abatement.

David Walters
left-atomics.blogspot.com

Swinging

I was once a supporter of Kondratiev's long-wave economic theory, which is what Arthur Bough is supporting today, with a great deal of insistence, it would seem (Letters, October 13). Unlike Bough, I realise that the long-wave theory no longer applies. So why does Bough not recognise this?

Once again, I need to remind readers of the *Weekly Worker* that traditional political economy, left or right, Marxist or capitalist, was formulated at a time when economic processes were not related to energy availability. This tradition continues both in Marxist and bourgeois circles. According to the long-wave theory, revolution and wars tend to occur during the upward phase of the cycle. This no doubt is one of the reasons why Bough is adhering to Kondratiev.

Stalin rejected the theory and had Kondratiev arrested, no doubt because he interpreted it as removing revolution from the agenda, or removing conscious control from the party. Trotsky, as Bough points out, played it down because the theory did not take account of exogenous factors. Bough is making the type of mistake which Trotsky surely would have recognised. In other words, to uphold Kondratiev's theory today in the light of new economic conditions, when the peaking of global oil production, a geologically imposed exogenous factor, is now serving to sabotage the normal working of the upward phase of the long-wave cycle, would be mindless dogmatism. The crisis from 2007-08 signalled the end of Kondratiev theory, meaning that, generally speaking, from now on there will be no more upswings for capitalism, but continual decline, as oil production continues to stagnate before starting its long-term decline.

Today it is not the up-waves of capitalism which will trigger wars and revolutions, but capitalism's permanent crisis and decline. It is necessary to be charitable to Arthur Bough, though. He may not be familiar with peak oil theory, or the notion of an energy crisis bringing capitalism to its knees, and so he is not in a position to think about its social and political consequences and how socialism will have to get around this problem.

Tony Clark
email

Hypocritical

I found the article 'Black Bloc allowed to wreck protest' (October 20) highly controversial in light of the violence amongst demonstrators soon afterwards in Greece.

The 'No stewards' caption under the photo of the protests suggests that you advocate stewards fighting young anarchists. To promote the importance of parties having "a degree of internal cohesion, group loyalty and discipline" is in marked contrast to your very recent articles about the actually existing Moonie-like parties over the past decades. However, I do appreciate that the CPGB would complain about the actual, ongoing reality of what you would wish for in your imagination. I feel past exchanges of letters in your paper illustrate that the Bolsheviks could be defined as 'substitutionist' (party in power rather than the working class in power).

You complain that "the behaviour of the Black Bloc was completely counterproductive in terms of the demonstration's original organisers, who sought to build the broadest possible mass movement". You are being hypocritical here, as you have constantly criticised attempts to build

the widest possible popular fronts, such as Stop the War Coalition - the difference being that you failed to be "counterproductive" to this ineffective strategy.

You (rightly) didn't criticise the 1984 miners' strike for giving the government "the wonderful excuse" to respond with authoritarian measures. Some in your paper have advocated 'class war', which would inevitably bring warlike measures from the government and result in "intensifying repression". You never 'owned up' that strikes you supported brought in anti-union laws. Your article suggests the Rifondazione Comunista leader was somehow brilliant because he simply didn't support banning strikes and marches! You are being hypocritical if, in the future, any working class activity you advocate brings in the "wonderful excuse" of "state repression" and then you fail to be self-critical and condemn your own programme.

You mention how anarchist behaviour towards other demonstrators is "absolutely inexcusable", but the article suggests you are advocating stewards dishing out violence against young anarchists - though again I expect you would complain about the actual reality of this police-steward united front in practice rather than what you imagined. Indeed could it be that the bureaucracy of a trade union arranging to physically sort out anarchists ends up being "counterproductive" and brings on more violence and increases anarchy?

We should be serious and careful about these events rather than simply advocating some Stalinist or David Icke-like conspiracy theories about the police and Black Bloc working together based on 'suggestions' from "some" and the feeling they were acting "suspiciously".

Bob Harding
Norwich

Whole point

James Turley writes of the Occupy movement: "Sniffy comments [from parts of the left] ... about ... their left-liberal campaignist political character rather miss the point" ('A global act of refusal', October 20).

Did I miss something? I thought this was the whole basis of the article - and justified, in my opinion.

John Malcolm
email

Implicit threat

The murder of Gaddafi is a victory for imperialism. While Gaddafi was no more a revolutionary than Saddam Hussein, neither military figures were the puppets that imperialism expects from bourgeois politicians. It is no coincidence that both countries have huge oil resources.

Gaddafi was apparently killed or injured by Nato bombing. While imperialism faces world economic crisis, the imperialist military still has a privileged status, which functions without the cuts faced by social services throughout the world. Imperialism always attempts to use military technology to suppress its economic contradictions.

The killing of Gaddafi is an implicit threat to genuine revolutionaries who did not share Gaddafi's petty bourgeois politics, but will surely face the same imperialist intervention in a future genuine socialist revolution.

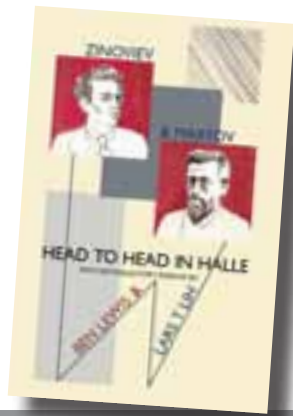
Earl Gilman
El Nuevo Topo

What are you doing?

Marx famously said that "philosophers have long interpreted the world - the point is to change it".

Head to head in Halle

In publishing Zinoviev's largely forgotten four-hour speech and



Martov's counterblast for the first time in English, this book helps to deepen our understanding of a crucial chapter in the history of the European working class movement.

The text includes introductory essays by Ben Lewis and Lars T Lih, alongside Zinoviev's fascinating diary entries made during his stay in Germany ●

Now available:
pp 228, £15, including
p&p, from November
Publications, BCM Box 928,
London WC1 3XX.

In that context, while I see the importance of engaging in critique of what other professed revolutionary socialist organisations are doing, I would ask what members of the CPGB are doing on the ground themselves to push forward the workers' movement, besides making interventions at events like Marxism (SWP), Socialism (SPEW) and Anti-capitalism (Workers Power), where they call for a new communist party and for the left to face a massive regroupment.

I look forward to a reply in the following issue of *Weekly Worker* and engaging in this debate about how communists relate to the wider working class.

Anti-Kapitalist Revolt
email

Crisis and cuts

On Saturday October 23 comrades gathered in Manchester for the first Northern Communist Forum. The meeting was on 'Can we beat the cuts?' and was opened by the chair of the CPGB's Provisional Central Committee, John Bridge.

Comrade Bridge outlined how the economic crisis had arisen, placing it within the framework of capitalist decline. He noted that what is "remarkable" is that the bourgeoisie is virtually in a state of panic. It does not have a plan to overcome the crisis and is reduced to reacting frantically to events as they occur. But the bourgeoisie has learned from the mistakes it made in the 1930s, when it refused to intervene and watched the crisis morph into the great depression and eventually World War II. Following the 2007 financial crisis there was a pragmatic, 'road to Damascus' conversion of the majority of the bourgeoisie, who broke with the neoliberal paradigm

and began pumping trillions of dollars into the economy.

He also contended that Keynesianism, a civilised version of capitalist decline, actually causes the system to further malfunction. Nevertheless Keynesianism and organised capitalism can be seen as a *negative* anticipation of socialism, as discussed by Engels in *Anti-Dühring*. However, even when the ruling class abandoned Keynesianism in the 1980s it was unable to go back to classical capitalism. What we have with financialisation and globalisation is "pseudo-markets", which, of course, themselves malfunction, and are further evidence of systemic decline. We should reject superficial references to the GDP and so on, which demonstrated continued expansion of the system before the present downturn. Instead Marxists look deeper - eg, at the historical undermining of the law of value - in order to understand where the system is going.

Comrade Bridge went on to criticise the revolutionary left for failing to step up and meet the challenges. Instead of uniting on a principled, Marxist basis as the attacks increase, many groups have seen the economic crisis as an opportunity for their own sect. This is, of course, most eloquently demonstrated by a Socialist Workers Party pre-conference bulletin last year, which set the aim of recruiting a paltry 1,000 members in 2011.

Comrade Bridge went to say that what we need is "a radical break" with sectarianism and bureaucratic centralism. We must build a revolutionary party that is as democratic as it is dynamic - a party that the whole left can make its own. If we want to stop the slide into barbarism, with which the present situation is

pregnant, we need to organise for the working class to come to power at the very least on a regional basis. In Europe, the strategic task of communists is to unite the movement, fight for European unions and a Communist Party of the European Union.

The debate that followed centred around the failure of the left to move forward and lead the resistance against the cuts in a principled manner. Several contributors noted the complete stupidity of competing socialist groups setting up rival 'united' campaigns against the cuts. Many comrades agreed that the Keynesian approach pushed by large sections of the self-styled revolutionary left is an utter dead end. We also discussed whether the relative decline of the United States would lead to a multi-polar world in which China would usurp the USA as the imperialist hegemon, just as the USA supplanted the British empire. Most comrades thought not.

The Northern Communist Forums are a CPGB-sponsored series of meetings in Manchester. We are looking to work and hear from a variety of comrades and tendencies over the next few months. We have also organised a reading group, which will be studying Victor Serge's *From Lenin to Stalin*. The next forum, on November 20, will be on 'Women's liberation and the Russian Revolution' at the Friends Meeting House at 3pm.

If you want to get involved or have any suggestions please contact us at north@cpgb.org.uk.

Fran McKeivitt
Manchester

Sustainable

It is true that Chris Knight's thesis on the self-creation of the human species is enhanced if it can be shown that women are able to synchronise their menstrual periods.

But his theory also argues that the females collectively conspire to prevent any male having sex with any female except on their terms. This was the cutting edge of their fight for human equality. Sex is the central relationship in the survival of all animals. All apes are sexually manipulative. It is a mistake to equate sexual manipulation in the name of the survival of the species with human prostitution. A view so common on the left that Frederick Engels invented a phrase for it: viewing the world through 'brothel-tinted' glasses.

Comrade Knight's argument also explains why the females can rely on the support of the beta males. The females are in fact acting in the majority interest, not just their own. They are making truly democratic demands.

No alpha male would confuse red ochre for real blood, but they did, and still do amongst the few remaining matriachal tribes, relate to the symbolism of the ceremonies positively. The singing, dancing and development of tradition drew the alpha males into the larger community. They are not destroyed: rather they are socialised. Also the ceremonies create a relationship of partnership with the world around, rather than one of simple animal exploitation.

The males do get sex after they bring home the hunt. This changes them into fathers and providers. Unlike other male apes that just follow the females around waiting for sexual opportunities, but are otherwise of little use. So it is not just a question of manipulating male sexuality, as Heather Downs asserts (Letters, October 20). Rather it is a question of a sustainable mode of production, in which work and culture are united.

Phil Kent
Haringey

Fighting fund

Rankings and the long statistical tail

Thanks mainly to a couple of fantastic donations, our October fund is within touching distance of the £1,250 we need to raise by the end of the month.

Comrade TDB donated a brilliant £200, making use of our online PayPal facility, while comrade SK came up with his regular standing order for £230. Then there were standing orders for £20 (DO), £10 (RP) and £5 (GD), plus a £20 note from comrade PG handed over at our Communist Forum in Manchester last Sunday.

All that comes to £485 and takes our October total to £1,190. Which means we have just four days left to raise at least £60 - preferably a lot more! Why not follow the example of TDB and make your contribution via our website?

Speaking of which, the recent increase in our online readership seems to be holding up - we had 15,673 visitors last week. According to alexa.com, the world's top ranking website is the famous search engine, Google, followed by Facebook and then Youtube. After these veritable giants there is a very, very long statistical tail. Our website is ranked 1,726,971th in the world over the last three months. Pretty lowly, you might think. But there are an estimated 266,848,493 websites ... and we compare

pretty well with, for example, the Socialist Workers Party.

Despite the frequent boasts of the comrades, their site sits more than 100,000 places below ours, at 1,835,549th. About 74% of visits to swp.org.uk are 'bounces' (ie, a single page-view only). But the bounce rate for cpgb.org.uk stands at just 42%.

To be honest, the CPGB - and the left as a whole - needs to be doing a lot better. Capitalism is patently failing and only Marxism and the project of working class rule and the transition to global communism can provide a viable alternative. That's what the SWP and a range of others will tell you too - but only the CPGB and its paper, the *Weekly Worker*, will tell you that the answer lies not with this or that group alone, but the unity of the revolutionary left into a single, fully democratic, Marxist party.

If we could achieve that it would not only see our global web ranking soar. It would put us in the collective position where the left could at last really begin make a decisive difference organisationally.

Robbie Rix

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

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

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

Northern Communist Forum

Sunday November 6, 3pm: Seminar, based on Victor Serge's *From Lenin to Stalin*. Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2.

Organised by CPGB North: <http://northerncommunists.wordpress.com>.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesdays, 6.15pm, St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (two minutes from Camden Town tube).

November 1: 'Apes like us: confessions of a primatologist'. Speaker: Volker Sommer.

Save our NHS

Thursday October 27, 7.30pm: Meeting, The Orwell, Wigan Pier. Organised by Wigan and Leigh Save Our NHS/Keep Our NHS Public: WiganSaveOurNHS@gmail.com.

Stop the EDL

Saturday October 29, 12 noon: Demonstration, Waterstone's (Bullring), High Street, Birmingham.

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

No more deaths in custody

Saturday October 29, 12.30pm: March, assemble Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square, London WC2.

Organised by United Families and Friends Campaign: info@uffc-campaigncentral.net.

New College of Resistance

Saturday October 29, 11am: Conference, Kings College, Stamford Street, London SE1. Workshops include: 'The movement one year since Millbank'; 'Alternatives to austerity'; 'Gender inequality in education'; 'Building universities of international solidarity'; Speakers include: John McDonnell MP, Laurie Penny, Alex Callinicos, Liam Burns (NUS president), Katy Clarke MP, Owen Jones. £6/£3.

Organised by Education Activist Network: educationactivist@googlemail.com.

Don't buy into Israeli occupation

Saturday October 29, 10am: Conference, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Speakers include Sarah Colborne (PSC), Bob Crow (RMT), Nina Franklin (NUT), Hugh Lanning (PCS), Alison Shepherd (Unison), Pat Stuart (Unite).

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: 020 7700 6192.

Remember CLR James

Sunday October 30, 2pm: Celebration, Open the Gate cultural centre, 33-35 Stoke Newington Road, London N1. Register at <http://clrjameslegacy.eventbrite.com>.

Organised by CLR James Legacy Project, c/o HCVS, ground floor, 84 Springfield House, 5 Tyssen Street, London E8.

Traveller solidarity

Saturday November 5, 11am: Meeting - 'Dale Farm: building the traveller solidarity movement' - 3rd floor, Cityside House, 40 Adler Street, London E1.

Organised by Traveller Solidarity Organisation: savedalefarm@gmail.com.

Reinstate Abdul Omer

Monday November 7, 9am: Picket, Radius House, 51 Clarendon Road, Watford. Support victimised Unite convenor Abdul Omer at his employment tribunal.

Organised by Reinstate Abdul Omer: reinstateomer@hotmail.co.uk.

Financial crisis and Arab revolution

Tuesday November 8, 5pm: Seminar, room 915, Adam Smith Building, Centre for the Study of Socialist Theory and Movements, University of Glasgow. Speaker: Yassamine Mather.

Organised by CSSTM: gziinfo@udcf.gla.ac.uk.

Historical Materialism

Thursday November 10 to Sunday November 13: Conference, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Dozens of international speakers.

Organised by *Historical Materialism*: www.historicalmaterialism.org.

No to academies

Saturday November 12, 10am: Midlands conference, Birmingham and Midlands Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3.

Saturday November 26, 10am: North West conference, Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1. Organised by Anti-Academies Alliance: <http://antiacademies.org.uk>.

Give our youth a future

Saturday November 12, 1.30pm: Rally, Windrush Square, Brixton, London SW2, for march to Max Roach Park.

Organised by Lambeth Save Our Services: www.lambethsaveourservices.org.

Labour's resistance

Saturday November 19, 10am to 4.30pm: LRC annual conference, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Organised by Labour Representation Committee: <http://l-r-c.org.uk>.

Justice for Miami 5

Thursday December 1, 6pm: Candlelit vigil, US embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1 (nearest tube: Bond Street). Speakers include Miami 5 mothers.

Organised by Cuba Solidarity Campaign: www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk.

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.

OCCUPY



Questioning the system

Finding a wide resonance

Simon Wells is impressed by what he has witnessed outside St Paul's cathedral

Nearly two weeks on and the occupation at St Paul's is still going strong. What started out on October 15 as a gathering of 1,500 has become a permanent encampment at the foot of the cathedral. There are now 150 tents, including a large kitchen, a mini-cinema, a small temple, a music room ... the list goes on. Suffice it to say, the occupants look set to be in it for the long haul.

This will be no mean feat, as the weather gets increasingly colder and the constant noise of city life rumbles on. Just maintaining the site as a community of activists takes hard work and organisation. There are issues of food, waste, security, alcohol, legality and the media to be handled and the requirement to communicate them to the whole camp. These things have evolved over the past two weeks, as each mini-crisis has provoked a response.

However, there was already a framework for overcoming these issues learnt through historical precedents of direct action. These are the action groups, spokes-councils and general assemblies, where decisions are arrived at by consensus. For example, one of the issues raised was alcohol on the site. Three proposals were put forward at the general assembly: a ban, 'drink but be discreet' and a libertarian approach. All views were expressed and after a long discussion a decision was made to drink discreetly.

The general assemblies are not just restricted to those camping on site - anyone can join in: the tourist, banker or Starbuck's worker from across the site can have a say. There is no three-line whip or democratic centralism - it is as if there is a common-sense approach to the assembly. The prohibition of alcohol would have failed

anyway.

What has slowly come into being is a community which does not need the state to support it. David Graeber, anthropology lecturer at Goldsmiths University, has been involved from the start with the Occupy Wall Street movement. His ethnography of central Madagascar on the people of Betafo showed that the state had withdrawn because people made decisions through consensus and not through the state apparatus. This is the description given to direct action, where people do things for themselves, and what is experienced around the site is a constant buzz of activity where anything is possible without the tyranny of the minority.

The majority, the 99%, hope to build a "better world". If there is a programme, then it is the collectively agreed statement issued on the first day of the occupation, which includes an alternative to the current system of democracy, a refusal to pay for 'their' crisis, an end to global tax injustice, regulators to be independent of the industries they regulate, resources for the care of the planet and an end to oppression. 'This is what democracy looks like', the ninth point, was a common refrain at Democracy Village, last year's encampment at Parliament Square, and was chanted by protestors at the World Trade Organisation talks in Seattle in 1999.

This gives hope that perhaps the anti-globalisation movement is re-viving following the failure of the 'war on terror' that 'disappeared' the movement from people's consciousness. Even though the protestors failed to camp at their original target of Paternoster Square, the intention to locate the occupation at that symbol of injustice, the London stock exchange,

is finding a resonance.

A British tourist I talked to was not disappointed that she could not enter St Paul's. She was sympathetic to the aims of the occupation and felt something had to be done to make people aware of the issues. Her view was that the cuts were necessary, but were too much and too fast. She could remember the civil service as it was, where it took four people to open an envelope and deliver the letter, but now she and her fellow workers are fed up with the cuts and shared the activists' view about taxpayers donations going to the bankers. If this woman is representative of the 99%, then the occupation will have struck a chord.

Anti-capitalist

The attitude of the activists is demonstrated by the slogan on the conspicuous banner hanging over the camp: 'Capitalism is crisis'. I noticed this kind of vague anti-capitalism with the Spanish activists I talked to - the comrades from Spain involved in the 15M movement or Real Democracy Now. This anti-political viewpoint is characterised in their manifesto as the ordinary people who "get up every morning to study, work or find a job" and who can be progressive, conservative, socialist or a believer in *laissez faire*. Such activists decry ideology: they say they are 'neither of the left nor right, neither up nor down'.

When I pointed to the message on the banner to one young activist, he said that he too was anti-capitalist, but did not know what the alternative was. This is the first time he has taken part in anything you could call political - he said that all the parties are the same: whoever you vote for, they push through the same policies

in the interests of the bankers. He said he would stay for however long it takes to "change things". He felt something had to be done, but whether the answer lies in the regulators being independent of the industries they regulate is another question. I don't think the bankers have much to fear yet. But the banner remains and the debate continues.

That debate also continues in the daily newspapers, and as such the occupation media action group is working hard to rebut the constant criticism and black ops. The latest controversy is over the decision by the dean of St Paul's to close the cathedral on October 21, citing fire, health and safety risks. Those issues had been debated at the previous evening's assembly, and measures were put in place to comply with the regulations following an earlier inspection. As such the occupiers are mystified why the cathedral remains closed, now that the barriers cited in the dean's statement have been removed. The cathedral authorities have failed to provide any evidence for their continued 'concerns'.

One contributor to the following day's packed assembly thought he had the answer: seven of the trustees of the St Paul's Foundation, the fundraising arm of the cathedral, can be described as part of the 'one percent'. These include a former City lord mayor, the deputy president of the Confederation of British Industry, the former chief risk director at Lloyds TSB and Lord Ian Blair, the ex-commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service. To a crescendo of cheering and clapping, he said it was about time we got the money lenders out of the church. But the problem remains getting the message out to the media.

Walking around the site, I can only say it feels alive. You can go to the kitchen for hot food and drink, stop by the cinema, listen to someone playing the piano in the music 'room', browse a book in the library or take part in the numerous daily activities, such as a homelessness workshop, a land work group or a process meeting. The pillars of the small shopping arcade next to the cathedral are festooned with posters and slogans, including 'Sex workers demand decriminalisation', 'Now is the winter of our discontent', 'More to life than money' ... There are also the numerous posters for upcoming actions, including the October 31 Dancing on the Grave of Capitalism event, the November 9 student demonstration and the November 30 pensions strike. People wander around taking photographs and reading the signs. They sit on the steps and just watch.

It cannot be said that life for the activists revolves only around the site: there have been solidarity marches to the electricians' picket line at Blackfriars, and UK Uncut actions against the head of the HMRC, David Hartnett. A second camp has been set up in Finsbury Square opposite Moorgate tube - about a mile from St Paul's.

Observing the general assembly of this camp in action, you can see people grapple with common issues that are often taken for granted - organising a water supply, cooking a decent meal, not to mention questions such as waste recycling and getting out the message to the media. Activists are learning from organising themselves but also from debating ideas. And in the present period it is the ideas that have to be debated - about the state, capitalism, party and programme ●

EUROPE

Vile class-collaboration on display at Westminster Hall

Peter Manson looks at the reaction of the *Morning Star* to the defeat of the Commons motion for a referendum on the European Union

It was, of course, no surprise that the Commons motion calling for a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union was defeated on October 24. Equally unsurprising were the contortions of the 'official communist' *Morning Star* in its rush to support the motion.

The problems for the *Star* and its Communist Party of Britain were caused by the small matter of the motion's supporters being mainly rightwing Conservatives. In the words of the paper's editorial, "... Tory hostility to the EU oscillates between national democracy and far less attractive xenophobic motives ..." (October 26). Personally I find it difficult to distinguish between xenophobia and a campaign to win "national democracy" for a major imperialist power such as the United Kingdom. I certainly find it difficult to see how the two cannot help but merge.

As readers will know, 81 Tory MPs voted for the rebel motion, while others abstained or stayed away - this total amounted to around half of the party's MPs who do not have any role in government, such as ministerial aides. Two of the latter resigned after supporting the motion. The vote had been demanded by Conservative backbencher David Nuttall after more than 100,000 people signed an online petition calling for a parliamentary debate. Ironically, the petitioning facility had been introduced by the Tory-led coalition government under the pretence that this would aid accountability and ensure that MPs did not become divorced from popular sentiment.

In total 111 MPs voted for the motion, including 19 from the Labour Party. Amongst their number were Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and several other notable leftwingers. Like the Tories, Labour leader Ed Miliband had imposed a three-line whip and demanded that his MPs vote against.

For his part, prime minister David Cameron combined his attempts to force the rebels into line with a pledge to launch a campaign to "reclaim powers" from the EU - mostly on questions such as workers' rights, and health and safety. Tory rightwingers say Britain is "hobbled" by EU "red tape" and the "massive burden of regulation", while *The Sunday Telegraph* claimed in an editorial that "... a majority of chief executives now think that the costs of EU regulation outweigh the benefits of the single market" (October 23).

The *Star* approvingly quoted the construction union, Ucat, which "warned that David Cameron may try to appease Eurosceptic backbenchers within his own party by seeking to remove Britain from many of the existing EU directives on employment, social affairs and safety", which "underpinned many of the most basic rights enjoyed by British workers" (October 22-23). The paper did not seem to be aware that this was a little at odds with its own insistence that, unlike the good old British state, the EU is anti-working class through and through.

In an effort to persuade his backbenchers to drop their backing for a referendum Cameron promised to support a new EU treaty. At the same



Brian Denny: British nationalist

time as insisting that now is not "the right time" to be rocking the EU boat, he mounted a very public campaign to demand that Britain be represented at the October 26 Brussels summit on the euro. Nicolas Sarkozy's "we're sick of you" tirade against Cameron - in which the French president said that details of the euro crisis were a matter for euro zone members only, not those who have refused to have anything to do with the currency - was just as useful domestically for the prime minister as it was for Sarkozy.

All this pointed to the central EU contradiction: the interests of British capital are tied to the EU, its main trading partner, and the collapse of this major currency would be a disaster for all EU members, not just for those in the euro zone. As Cameron says, in an effort to square the circle, "I've argued that greater fiscal and economic integration of the euro zone is inevitable. But this must not be at the expense of a Britain's national interest."

Europhobes

In the build-up to the Commons vote a whole range of British nationalists - from the far-right UK Independence Party to, yes, the CPB - had gathered at Westminster Central Hall for the grandly named People's Pledge Congress on October 22. More than a thousand Europhobes listened to speeches mostly from mainstream politicians belonging to the two biggest parties, including former Tory leadership contender David Davis and Labour left MPs such as Kelvin Hopkins.

The director of the People's Pledge is Mark Seddon, the former leftwing Labour national executive member, who was editor of *Tribune* from 1993 to 2004. He was joined by Bob Crow, general secretary of the RMT union, and, in addition to a whole range of insignificant Tory MPs, Brian Denny of 'No to the EU, Yes to Democracy' and John Foster, who, according to the programme, treated the audience to a "Scottish perspective" on the EU. Comrades Denny and Foster are part of the CPB's extreme nationalist wing.

Although on the eve of this all-day

event the *Morning Star* led on its front page with "Democracy defenders rally before crunch vote" (October 22-23), it rather mysteriously failed to report on the 'congress' subsequently - apart from stating in passing that 2,000 had attended and that they had "issued a warning that the EU had sparked a race to the bottom in terms of wages and conditions of work" (October 25). Yes, no doubt that was included amongst all the rest of the pro-British anti-Europeanism.

Both comrades Denny and Crow, according to the *Star*, had laid out rather bizarre either-or options before the People's Pledge event. Denny is quoted as saying: "The choice is whether you want corporate feudalism or national democracy"; while Crow urged MPs: "You can either kowtow to your supine leaders and endorse this drift towards fiscal fascism or stand up for democracy and represent the people that elected you" (October 22-23).

The two were also agreed that the whole establishment was rallying behind the EU. Denny "accused politicians of uniting against the working class", while Crow alleged: "They are closing ranks, while the working class are getting slaughtered." This is at odds with reality. The parliamentary vote surely showed that the establishment is not united, and that the anti-EU wing - including the "democracy defenders" - is just as viciously anti-working class as the pro-EU majority.

In its October 24 editorial, which also dealt with the paradox (for it) of anti-EU Tories, the *Star* remarked: "Too many comrades in the labour movement remain wedded to this parody of internationalism, incapable of appreciating its fundamentally undemocratic nature and its priority of corporate profitability."

The problem with this statement is obvious: all bourgeois states, and unions of bourgeois states, are by their nature "fundamentally undemocratic", in that they do indeed prioritise "corporate profitability" in the interests of a tiny minority. The UK - like any capitalist state, whether inside or outside the EU - is no more worker-friendly. It is true that there is only formal de-

mocracy in the European Union, but what should our response be to that?

Surely we should be demanding the abolition of the undemocratic EU commission and council of ministers and a EU parliament with legislative powers that is fully accountable to the peoples of Europe.

In a way an article by Steve McGiffin in the same issue unwittingly touches on this issue. Having insisted that Britain should pull out, he concedes: "It is highly unlikely that Britain will ever leave the EU." That leads him to the conclusion that there should be a campaign - which he dubs "European Worker Rules" - to level up working class conditions across the continent.

You are on the right track, comrade. But why limit this campaign to trade union-type demands? Is it not also in workers' interests to fight for political demands on a continental level? Not for the CPB, which insists, totally without logic, that political/democratic demands are exclusive to the terrain of the nation-state.

United States of Europe

In this the *Star* turns to VI Lenin for support. With the development of the EU, its editorial claims, "the plans to construct a monopoly capitalist United States of Europe have come closer to fruition". And it reminds readers that Lenin had once written that a United States of Europe "would either be reactionary or impossible".

This question had been raised a few days earlier by Brian Denny in the *Star* letters column. He wrote: "Lenin's treatise, 'On the slogan for a United States of Europe', has always deeply troubled Trotskyites, as indeed it was designed to do ..." (October 20). Anyhow, here is what Lenin actually wrote: "... while the slogan of a republican United States of Europe - if accompanied by the revolutionary overthrow of the three most reactionary monarchies in Europe, headed by the Russian - is quite invulnerable as a political slogan, there still remains the highly important question of its economic content and significance. From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism - ie, the export of capital and the division of the world by the 'advanced' and 'civilised' colonial powers - a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary" ('On the slogan for a United States of Europe: www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/aug/23.htm).

Things are not quite as straightforward as the *Star* makes out then. Lenin actually starts by asserting that "a republican United States of Europe" is "quite invulnerable as a political slogan". But economically, "from the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism", it is "either impossible or reactionary".

It should be obvious from this that Lenin was not ruling out a united Europe for all time and in all circumstances. He was stating that communists should not campaign for such a slogan in the circumstances of 1915. And the fact of the matter is that in 1923 - at Trotsky's urging - the Communist International adopted the United States of Europe slogan.

Lenin raised not the slightest objection. Indeed that slogan appeared in Comintern literature until 1926, when Stalin pulled the plug on it in the name of his 'socialism in one country' perspective.

Lenin was a through-going internationalist who favoured the closest unity of the world's different people. Hence, when it came to the tsarist prison house of nations, far from calling upon it to be redivided into its national components, he envisaged the revolution bringing about a situation where the democratic right to self-determination would be exercised in favour of unity.

By the way, unlike the *Star* itself, comrade Denny is far from diplomatic when it comes to the 'official communist'-dominated European Left Party, which he dubs "top-down" (unlike the CPB, of course). It "doggedly avoids the issue of the euro and, indeed, EU withdrawal and simply maintains that 'another Europe is possible'" - what he calls "irrelevant sloganeering".

However, let me return to the *Star* editorial, which concludes: "A referendum campaign in Britain against the EU would be the profoundest act of international solidarity with the workers and peoples of Greece, Portugal, Spain and other countries targeted by the banks and their political champions ... Breaking free and taking the road to socialism would increase our capacity for international solidarity with workers and peoples across Europe and beyond."

It is all so simple, isn't it? We should all 'break free' and 'take the road to socialism'. Talk about "irrelevant sloganeering". The fight for socialism must begin with the current reality and the terrain must be Europe. Instead of all going our separate ways, let us attempt to unite the forces of the working class across the continent. Let us *take advantage* of EU institutions and the process of EU integration to construct workers' organisations more powerful than in any single country. Let us fight for an all Europe trade union federation and an all-Europe Communist Party.

It has to be said, however, that the *Star* at least considers the EU to be an important question - unlike the Socialist Workers Party, which appears to think the whole fuss about a referendum has been a "distraction": "The rows over Europe may seem to be a distraction, but they have left the government looking weak and divided. Yet it still has the capacity to be nasty. The Tories' fight for survival will involve ever more devastating cuts and attacks on ordinary people" (*Socialist Worker* October 29).

Well, the Tories have always been split over the EU - basically the division is between different sections of capital. The Altanticists and narrow nationalists either oppose the EU outright or at least oppose any further British integration. Others, especially those reliant on exports, want the European capitalist project to succeed and are worried sick by the prospect of its failing. However, that does not mean the coalition government is "weak" when it comes to attacking our class. Do not be fooled ●

peter.manson@weeklyworker.org.uk

ECONOMY

Euro: disaster beckons

Another summit, another failure. Despite repeated attempts to ‘stop the rot’ and save the euro there is still no sign of a ‘comprehensive plan’, writes **Eddie Ford**



If there is no rescue plan

To nobody's great astonishment, the October 23 Brussels meeting of European Union leaders failed to come up with the promised “comprehensive plan” to save the euro zone from collapse. Rather, they agreed to reconvene on October 26 to “finalise” the details on how to tackle the Greek crisis, recapitalise the banks, bolster the European Financial Stability Facility bailout fund and in general prevent debt contagion sweeping the continent - an eventuality that would trigger a world slump.

Not happy, Jean-Claude Juncker, the prime minister of Luxembourg and chairman of the euro group, said that the delay portrayed a “disastrous” image of the euro zone to the rest of the world - seeing how the October 23 emergency summit itself was originally scheduled to take place the previous week. As I write, it seems certain that the October 26 meeting will fail to produce any sort of definite rescue plan and some are now talking about the G20 summit on November 3-4 in

Cannes being the “ultimate deadline” for resolving the euro zone's sovereign debt crisis. The can keeps being kicked down the road. But very soon the end of the road will be reached - then crunch time.

Feeling the heat, David Cameron cancelled visits to Japan and New Zealand so that he could attend the Brussels meeting - albeit in an ‘informal’ capacity. No doubt he urged the euro zone leaders to get their act together - maybe even get their big “bazookas” out - so as to solve the crisis that is having a “chilling” effect on the world economy and threatens to tip the UK too into a double-dip recession. Chancellor George Osborne declared that he was fed-up with “short-term sticking plaster” that solved nothing. Of course, the spectacle of Cameron pleading with the “Brussels bureaucrats” to show firm and decisive leadership will further infuriate the Tory Eurosceptics (“the bastards”, as John Major called them), who at the start of the week effectively delivered a ‘no-confidence’ verdict on

Cameron's own leadership by defying a three-line whip and voting in favour of motion calling for a referendum on the UK's continued membership (or not) of the EU.

EFSF leveraging

After the October 23 meeting, officials in Brussels had claimed that finance ministers were “close” to agreement on new rules to recapitalise the EU's biggest banks - a necessity in order to offset the losses that Greek debt holders will be forced to take on when a deal is eventually struck. The figure that seems to have been arrived is €108 billion, a far cry indeed from the €200 billion that was initially bandied around by Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and also by the Financial Services Authority in the UK. Many commentators believe €108 billion is quite inadequate for the job in hand or, at the very least, regard it as a wildly optimistic figure in terms of what it will be able to achieve.

For instance, the European

Banking Authority has recommended that banks should be forced to increase their reserves so that they have core ‘tier 1’ capital equal to at least 9% of their risk-weighted assets, after marking down to the market price the loans they have made to the Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Irish governments. Significantly higher, that is, than the 6% that only in July was deemed enough to pass the ‘stress tests’ conducted by the EBA and which at the time was widely treated with derision - a ‘test’ purposely built to be passed in order to engender market confidence. It didn't.

The EBA has stated that this devaluation of sovereign debt should apply to loans held in trading and banking books. In other words, banks cannot ignore the losses on loans to Greece by simply parking them where market prices are not typically used for valuations. Logically, a *consistent* policy of pricing to market, irrespective of where the sovereign debt is held, would force banks to raise significantly more capital as protection against

potential losses than the previous approach of ignoring the banking-book holdings. Overall, the EBA calculated that its proposal would require European banks to raise nearly €200 billion in additional capital, not the €108 billion that seems to be on the table.

Though the proposals are still not entirely clear, recapitalisation is expected to be met by the banks themselves where possible, with governments and the EFSF only stepping in as a last resort - or that is how the theory goes. Similarly, the plan (or hope) is that French and German capital deficit will be remediable through selling bonds to investors or selling non-core assets, without recourse to yet more taxpayers' money. Well, the best laid plans ...

However, there is an obvious pit-fall. Many of the banks may well decide that the only way to comply with the new requirements - and plug any possible gaps in their capital holdings - is just to lend less and sell off more assets, which in turn could

starve households and businesses of vital credit - thereby killing off growth and sending the entire euro zone into recession. The return of the credit crunch.

Inevitably, particularly acute divisions have opened up between France and Germany, as the crisis rumbles on and as the meetings become more numerous and longer. The most serious disagreement is over the role and function of the EFSF mechanism, its current €440 billion bailout fund looking less impressive with almost each day that passes: *trillions* are obviously required.

Essentially, France wants the EFSF to become a bank in all but name and borrow money from the European Central Bank - therefore providing access to potentially limitless funds (or as good as) with which the EFSF can directly lend to states, if necessary. Like France? President Nicolas Sarkozy is, of course, terrified by the prospect of the country losing its triple-A status - and for good reason, considering Moody's October 17 warning that within the next few months it might deliver a "negative" verdict on France's credit rating. But the dark reality is that the French economy is in trouble and its banks have a dangerously high exposure to Greek debt - let alone Italian or Spanish debt. In which case, a 'super-EFSF' could be France's saviour.

Germany, however, is vehemently opposed - along with the Dutch and Finnish - to the very notion of the ESFS effectively becoming a bank, believing that it would undermine the ECB's traditional 'impartiality'. In the intransigent words of Wolfgang Schauble, the German finance minister, "we will stick to the agreed guarantees ... we will stick to the situation, as it is in the treaty, that the central bank is not available for state financing". Everything so far indicates that Germany has won the day on this issue and that EU leaders appear to have discounted the possibility of the ECB boosting the EFSF's firepower.

Instead, Germany has endorsed an option for the EFSF to have the power to guarantee new loans - government bond sales - to countries such as Spain and Italy that are struggling to borrow; the EFSF (ie, the euro zone taxpayer) would be in line for the first 20% of losses on these loans, so commercial investors could lend to Spain and Italy with greater confidence that they would get their money back. This could either be achieved by offering straightforward insurance or, in an alternative apparently gathering more support, using insurance to attract or lever up bigger amounts of private and public investment. 'Sovereign wealth' funds from Asia and the Gulf, including China, could possibly be tapped, along with the IMF. The statement issued by the EU-27 after the Brussels summit certainly indicates such a line of thought, asserting that the G20 "should ensure that the IMF has adequate resources to fulfil its systemic responsibilities" and "should explore possible contributions to the IMF from countries with large external surpluses".

Naturally, the German government is ever mindful of domestic politics - unwilling to increase either the potential liabilities of the German taxpayer or its own contribution to the EFSF (€211 billion). Try selling that in a general election - getting hard-working and upright Germans to subsidise 'lazy', 'work-shy' Greeks or Portuguese. But with the above 'insurance' scheme in the pipeline, Germany will consent to raising the EFSF's fund to €1 trillion-plus - even if it is a purely hypothetical increase at the moment, given that the ECB is out of the picture. Reinforcing the German stance, Angela Merkel had to briefly fly back to Berlin on October 26 to face a vote in the Bundestag on this very issue of increasing the leveraging

power of the EFSF. She comfortably won, once the opposition and her own critics within the Christian Democratic Union were reassured that there would be no increased German contribution to the EFSF fund. This enabled Merkel to return to Brussels and say - perhaps conveniently - to her fellow EU leaders that her hands are tied. No new German money for the EFSF.

Or, to put it another way, the German administration wants to extinguish the fire - but does not want to pay for the firefighters. Unsurprisingly, the markets began to fall by late afternoon on October 26, as the realisation dawned that the German-backed plan to save the euro zone was based more on financial jiggery-pokery - or 'creative accounting' - than real, hard cash. A distraught investor told BBC News 24 that the only solution to the crisis was in fact a "blank cheque" from the ECB or some other major financial institution. Anything else was just pissing in the wind.

Greek crisis

On October 21 EU finance ministers finally approved the next tranche of €8 billion in bailout loans to Greece - subject, that is, to IMF blessing. Athens will receive the money by mid-November and this should, all things being equal, save the country from immediate bankruptcy. But the situation is still unbelievably dire and a Greek default is virtually unavoidable, the only question being whether it will be 'orderly' or 'disorderly'. The latter scenario would surely signal the death of the euro zone, with contagion spreading into Portugal, Spain and Italy - and beyond. There would be a run on the euro and banks would fall, especially French banks.

Greece could face accumulated capital requirements of €252 billion by the end of the decade and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 186% unless write-downs can be agreed this week. But there are no signs yet of a consensus emerging on Greece - quite the opposite. Differences are getting bigger. Ministers say they are working on the fine details of a second rescue package. There is vague talk of "fresh aid money" and "private sector contributions", but nothing much more than that. What we do know is that Germany, the IMF and various EU leaders have been aggressively pushing for investors (ie, banks) to take a much bigger 'haircut' or write-down on Greek debt, maybe up to 60%.

But France and the ECB are fearful of such a prospect, thinking this would destabilise the banking sector and just frighten the already volatile markets. Bondholders reportedly offered on October 23 to increase their voluntary write-downs to 40%, almost double the 21% initially agreed in July - but not more. Italian, Spanish and Portuguese banks could be hardest hit by both these plans and have put up stiff resistance. Bankers have warned that anything over 40% risks setting off a 'credit event', triggering credit default swaps and in turn threatening economic meltdown. As for the EBA, it is thought to be preparing to publish the capital requirements in a breakdown by country, rather than individual bank, once the extent of the Greek 'haircut' is determined. Raising the stakes even further, the head of Germany's second biggest bank, Commerzbank, has strongly hinted that the best course for Greece (perhaps other countries as well) is to bite the bullet and declare itself bankrupt in order to calm down the markets. There are only two options: "either they service their debt as agreed or they declare insolvency with all the tough consequences".

Another widely circulated story is that 'hard-line' EU leaders, backed by the IMF, have delivered an ultimatum to the bankers - threatening to trigger a formal default on Greek debt, thus

risking the aforementioned 'credit event', if banks refuse take at least a 50% 'haircut' and accept the losses on their holdings. This ultimatum would take the form of the IMF refusing to pay its share of the bailout money for Greece, a contribution worth €73 billion.

To this end, the 'haircut hawks' at Brussels presented a report which maintained that in a "worst-case scenario" Greece could end up needing a second bailout of €450 billion, twice the size of the current package and more than the €440 billion available to the EFSF's rescue fund - meaning, of course, that the Greek debt crisis alone could swallow the euro zone's entire bailout fund, leaving nothing to spare to help the affected banks of Italy, Spain, France, etc. We further read that Vittorio Grilli, a senior EU official, travelled to Rome to present the 'take it or leave it' deal to the Institute of International Finance, which is leading the negotiations for the banks. If the banks called the EU-ECB-IMF troika's bluff, they would potentially face nationalisation.

Italian collapse?

Meanwhile, if possible, the euro zone crisis took a turn for the worse as the EU gathered at Brussels in the evening of October 26, with the news in the morning that Italy's borrowing costs had nearly hit 6% - despite the fact that in August the ECB had been busily buying billions-worth of Italian and Spanish bonds, temporarily pushing the interest rate on Italian government bonds down to 5% or thereabouts. How short-lived.

This is clearly unsustainable and Italy's mountain of debt is set to reach somewhere in the region of €1 trillion. Without drastic action, like a write-off or bailout - *something* - Italy could find itself sliding into default and near bankruptcy. If that were to occur, Greece could be the least of the euro zone's worries - a mere storm in a teacup. Italy may be too big to fail, but it is increasingly becoming too big to bail out. Not to mention Portugal, Spain, Ireland, etc - what is to be done about them if the situation spins out of control?

Panicking, EU leaders have piled the pressure on the 'feckless' Silvio Berlusconi over Italy's growing debt - sternly telling the Italian premier that he must 'stop the rot' and take more "radical measures" to reform the country's economy. Deepening the humiliation, Merkel and Sarkozy told Berlusconi in face-to-face discussions that he needs to provide "credible evidence" that Italy is "serious" about its programme of "structural reforms" - which is EU-speak for more austerity and attacks on the working class. At the same time, they are demanding that Italy draws up a plan for growth. An impossible squaring of the circle, given that in the real world - as opposed to the fantasies of conservative governments and mainstream anti-Keynesian economists - attempting to 'balancing the books' and implementing a vicious regime of cuts just sends the economy ever downwards, as consumer spending diminishes and tax receipts dry up. A negative feedback loop, to coin a phrase. Look at the disaster that is Greece. Yet, irrationally, this is the very same medicine that Merkel, Sarkozy, the IMF, etc want to impose on Italy. Disaster beckons.

The Berlusconi government now teeters on the edge of collapse, running out of support both internally and externally. The contradictions have become too much to bear. Yet the plight of Italy could easily be a presentiment of the European future to come, of failing states and failing banks - and general impoverishment for the masses ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.org.uk

Communist Party Books



■ Revolutionary strategy

Marxism and the challenge of left unity. Mike Macnair critically examines the strategic ideas of socialists since Marx and Engels.

£7.99/€9.50

■ Remaking Europe

Jack Conrad argues that the working class can and must establish a fully articulated programme with a view to winning our own, social, Europe. A Europe stamped by the working class, which is ready for its domination and rapid emancipatory extension.

£5.00/€6.00

■ Which road?

The programmes of 'official communism' were designed to serve those in the workers movement who had no interest in revolution, those who preferred compromise with capitalism rather than its destruction.

£6.95/€8.30

■ From October to August

Articles by Jack Conrad, charting the rise and demise of the USSR from Stalin's monocratic dictatorship to the twists and turns of Gorbachev's perestroika and Yeltsin's counter coup. Throughout the stress is on the necessity for democracy.

£6.95/€8.30

■ In the enemy camp

Examines the theory and practice of communist electoral work. Particular attention is paid to the Bolsheviks anti-boycottism and their strategy for revolution. Vital for principled activists.

£4.95/€6.00

■ Problems of communist organisation

What is the correct balance between democracy and centralism? Jack Conrad explores this thorny issue and shows that unity in action is only sustainable when minorities have the right to organise and become the majority.

£4.95/€6.00

**Buy all 6 books for £30/€36 and save £6.79/€8.10
Delivery free within the United Kingdom**

Please send me a copy of:

- Revolutionary strategy** ☐
- Remaking Europe** ☐
- Which road?** ☐
- From October to August** ☐
- In the enemy camp** ☐
- Problems of communist organisation** ☐

I enclose a cheque payable to CPGB for £/€ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Send payment to: BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

GERMANY

A better version of social democracy

At its conference in Erfurt on October 21-23, the German left party Die Linke agreed a new programme. **Edith Bartelmus-Scholich**¹ reports

Four years after the fusion of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and the Wahlalternative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit (WASG), Die Linke has adopted a new programme. This replaces the shorter *Programmatische Eckpunkte*, which was negotiated between the PDS and WASG. The new programme deals with issues that were not mentioned in the old *Eckpunkte*. It also tries to provide a vision for a different society that goes beyond day-to-day politics.

The 519 delegates voted by an overwhelming majority for the programme: only four raised their hands against, while 12 abstained. According to the party's constitution, the programme must be passed by a poll of the whole membership before it comes into force. Here too overwhelming support is expected.

The left in Die Linke insists that the programme gives the party a clear anti-capitalist character, but this does not stand up to scrutiny. Yes, the programme starts off by blaming capitalism for economic failure, social hardship and war. But take a closer look and you will find that it is actually only the "unbridled financial markets" (*entfesselte Finanzmärkte*) that are concretely criticised. In this way, the aim of superseding capitalism has, in effect, become nothing more than the attempt to create a regulated version.

In Die Linke's tamed version of capitalism, the market economy, different forms of property ownership, wage labour and competition are all to be kept on board. What is described as "democratic socialism" looks a lot like a benevolent version of the social market economy.

The organisation has borrowed quite heavily from the tool kit of social democracy. Some demands are quite supportable: more democracy in the economy, a reduction in working hours, a national minimum wage and a basic income for the unemployed (*Grundsicherung*). But the party falls short when it comes to the "new social idea" it set out to promote in 2007.

The party has been fighting hard for its positions on peace and war. The new programme calls for the banning of weapons exports and for Germany to leave Nato. It rejects the participation of the German armed forces in all foreign missions, even "peacekeeping missions" (chapter 7 of the UN charter). It is less clear on the role of the Bundeswehr in "humanitarian missions" (chapter 6). We can probably expect more controversy on this question, as some in the party support such missions.

Lack of democracy

Oskar Lafontaine² in particular has in recent years emphasised over and over again that Die Linke is a movement for more democracy. Accordingly, the party has put forward demands for electoral reform, referendums, participatory budgets, more democracy in the workplace etc. However, programmes are one thing, reality is another: there is a lack of a truly

democratic culture in the ranks of Die Linke.

The conference showed how Die Linke actually works. The party conference is not the sovereign body of the organisation, as stipulated in the constitution. In reality, it is a dutiful assembly that nods through everything the real centre of power has decided beforehand. The decisions on the crucial questions are made by an informal meeting of representatives of these four main political platforms: Demokratischer Sozialismus, Emanzipatorische Linke, Sozialistische Linke and Antikapitalistische Linke.

Just before the conference, the platforms got together and worked out compromise positions on six controversial questions: for example, the relationship to Israel, Bundeswehr foreign missions and the so-called 'red holding lines'.³ The conference was urged to accept these compromises and agreed to do so almost without opposition.

In order to prevent any big changes to the lead motion, a tight schedule was put in place, which effectively prevented any real debate. Most of the 1,393 amendments were not discussed at all. In general, all amendments to each section of the programme were 'pooled' and then, citing time constraints, the chair recommended that they should all be rejected together in a single vote. Only very rarely did the conference reject this method - and then each amendment had to be dealt with in two minutes: one minute to move it, one minute for the objection.

A number of constitutional amendments were also dealt with in an extremely rushed manner. All amendments by the party leadership - which sought to restrict the rights of

members - were voted through by the necessary two-thirds majority. But all amendments that sought to extend democracy were defeated.

Despite the tight schedule, the party leadership treated the conference to six long speeches from leading members, which took up several hours. The delegates accepted that the time for debate had to be cut short so that they could listen to their leaders, particularly Gregor Gysi and Oskar Lafontaine - and they often did with glazed eyes.⁴

Lafontaine even succeeded in presenting former SPD chancellor Willy Brandt as some kind of figure of light to the conference. Lafontaine totally ignored the fact that Brandt is not just a former Nobel peace prize winner, but that he also introduced the *Notstandsgesetze*⁵ and the *Berufsverbote*⁶. Incredibly, Lafontaine got conference to vote for the establishment of a "Willy Brandt peace corps in the Bundeswehr", and this is now enshrined in the party's programme.

The leadership consciously tried to present the organisation as a traditional working class party - by staging the conference in Erfurt (where the SPD voted for its Erfurt programme in 1891), by putting wage-labour at the centre of its programme and especially in the speeches given by Lafontaine. But the party has chosen only those traditions that have come to be characterised as authoritarian. Conference voted down a motion by the Emanzipatorischen Plattform to include the libertarian tradition of German anarchism in the range of political views that have influenced Die Linke.

When the SPD voted for its Erfurt programme it really was a growing working class party. It had survived

the anti-socialist laws and emerged stronger. It was supported by millions of workers. In comparison to that, Die Linke is a *Scheinriese*,⁷ as former executive member Thies Gleiss has put it. It has about 70,000 members, only a small minority of whom are actively involved in the workers' movement. Die Linke has a handful of workplace groups across Germany. A couple of hundred members have positions in the trade union movement and the organisation is hardly represented in any other extra-parliamentary organisations in Germany.

The SPD still commands a huge influence over the German workers' movement. It is a bulwark that Die Linke has to overcome before it can present itself as a (hopefully modern) workers' party. Because it does not have real anchorage in the working class, the organisation's self-image as a traditional workers' party is nothing but a mirage, which will create illusion and disappointment.

Crisis management

The recent crisis of the party and the bad results in the polls are, according to the party's leadership, down to a "lack of solidarity" and a lack of unity. To get out of the crisis, Gysi and Lafontaine especially demand "unity" - the members should stop criticising the leadership. Instead of "looking inwards", members should "do politics". They fail to see that a party that unites liberals, social democrats, socialists and communists will inevitably be embroiled in arguments.

But instead of trying to work out what is at the root of these criticisms, the leadership reacts with authoritarianism. Gysi said that he understands

that the Pirate Party⁸ has somewhat replaced Die Linke as the main protest party. He said that a lot of people in Germany support the pirates, because they ache for a different political culture, with an open society and radical democracy. And yet he commands the party to demonstrate unity and obedience.

In my view, Die Linke is in crisis, because the leadership has failed on a range of issues. In my opinion, these are:

- The breadth of the party's political positions. They are supposed to make the party stronger and reflect the representation of many different views. In reality, the party is weakened by a lack of a clear vision. Where liberals, social democrats, socialists and communists work together, there will always be arguments over aims, strategies and personnel.

- The party's participation in coalition governments. Die Linke in government has helped impose cuts in jobs and social services, and force through privatisation.

- The party lacks a strategy for opposition. For years, the party sought to create leftwing government coalitions in order to push the SPD and the Greens to the left. But after disastrous results in a number of regional elections, Die Linke currently only governs in the federal state of Brandenburg (with the SPD). Attempts to create left-leaning government coalitions elsewhere have backfired, as the SPD and the Greens have steadily moved to the right (with Peer Steinbrück as the most probable candidate for chancellor, the SPD will now move even further to the right).

- The attempt to build the party in the west of the country has failed. The leadership is still attempting to create an idealised version of the SPD. Lafontaine was supposed to bring voters and members of the SPD on board. But this has only worked in the Saarland, Lafontaine's home region. Still, the leadership persists.

- A lack of democratic culture. For example, at the 2010 conference, delegates were forced into accepting a new leadership that was in effect put together by the old one. This carefully arranged *Personaltableau* reflected the different fractions in the party. That's how mainstream political parties choose their leadership. A left party should do better.

Even though Die Linke now has a programme, it is still in crisis ●

Notes

1. The author is a member of the Revolutionär Sozialistischer Bund, part of the Fourth International.
2. Former finance secretary under chancellor Gerhard Schröder.
3. These spell out political demands that, as a minimum, should be fought for or defended when taking part in a government coalition.
4. Gregor Gysi is one of the most popular politicians in the east of Germany. Just like Lafontaine, he holds no official position in the party, but they are both the *de facto* leaders.
5. The 'emergency law' which gave the state a range of new powers and was opposed by huge demonstrations in 1968.
6. The *Berufsverbote* banned communists from any public service jobs.
7. An illusory giant.
8. The libertarian Pirate Party emerged from amongst the fringe when it won 8.9% of the vote in the Berlin state election in September.



Gregor Gysi and Oskar Lafontaine: real leadership

OUR HISTORY

Questioning Irish tactics

Comrades who have followed this series will recall our reprint of the Communist Party of Great Britain executive committee statement of November 25 1920, which took a strong stand in solidarity with the forces of Irish revolutionary republicanism against the British occupation.¹

This statement boldly declared: “In such a case as Ireland’s - the case of a small nation held in forcible suppression by a great imperialist state - the national struggle and the class struggle are inseparable ... The struggle against imperialism for national independence is a necessary phase of the struggle against capitalism for the workers’ independence.” Even more significantly, it asserted: “The republican movement is essentially a working class movement. There are, it is true, middle class men as well as bourgeois by the chance of birth. But they do not mould it. They are being moulded by it. The strength and vigour and inspiration of the movement lies in the workers ...”

The solidarity and internationalism evidenced in this statement stood in stark contrast with the shameful stance of much of the rest of the workers’ movement in Britain - in particular, both the left and the right of the Labour Party. Ireland was the key to the British revolution, Marx had written.² So this statement from the new CPGB leadership was refreshing - but was it politically accurate? Sociologically, the class composition of the republican movement may have been largely working and popular classes, but what about the political content of its programme, its policies and methods of work?

In a contribution to the party’s weekly newspaper, comrade PL Gray offered a different take. He warns of the dangers for the workers’ movement of tailing nationalism and urges the CPGB to assist the formation of a Communist Party of Ireland. The task was to win the workers for a workers’ republic, he underlined. The comrade’s contribution perhaps hints at an economic underestimation of the importance of the working class in Ireland winning a hegemonic role in democratic struggles, such as the national question.

However, it is also a useful corrective to the rather crude definition of the republican movement as “essentially a working class movement” contained in the CPGB leadership’s original statement.

An Irish policy

What is to be our attitude towards the Irish revolution? Shall the Communist Party in Britain simply support Sinn Féin on the ground that the Irish workers’ republic will not come before the nationalist aspirations of the Irish are satisfied (*The Communist* March 26 1921)? Or because Connolly decided in 1916 that “an Irish republic was the precondition for an Irish workers’ struggle” (*The Communist* April 2 1921)? And is the only alternative to such a policy, apart from helpless neutrality, to support the terrorist activity of the British government ...?

These are questions demanding a speedy answer. It will not do to postpone clarifying our ideas on them; just as the capitalist world is beginning to point the finger of scorn at British imperialism, so the workers’

International will begin to look askance at a Communist Party which fails to grapple in a practical way with one of the most pressing problems discussed theoretically at the last congress of the Third International,³ the problem of the ‘subject race’.

The kind of easy formula for solving the problem which was quoted above will not do. It is too easy; it is too automatic in its operation; precisely because it is a formula, of a type often heard on Marxist lips, it tends too frequently to lead to absolutely non-Marxist - ie, non-revolutionary - conclusions. Communists can only be guided by principles whose form may change from week to week, but whose *essence* remains unchangingly revolutionary; and the form of 1900 or 1916 may not be suitable for 1921.

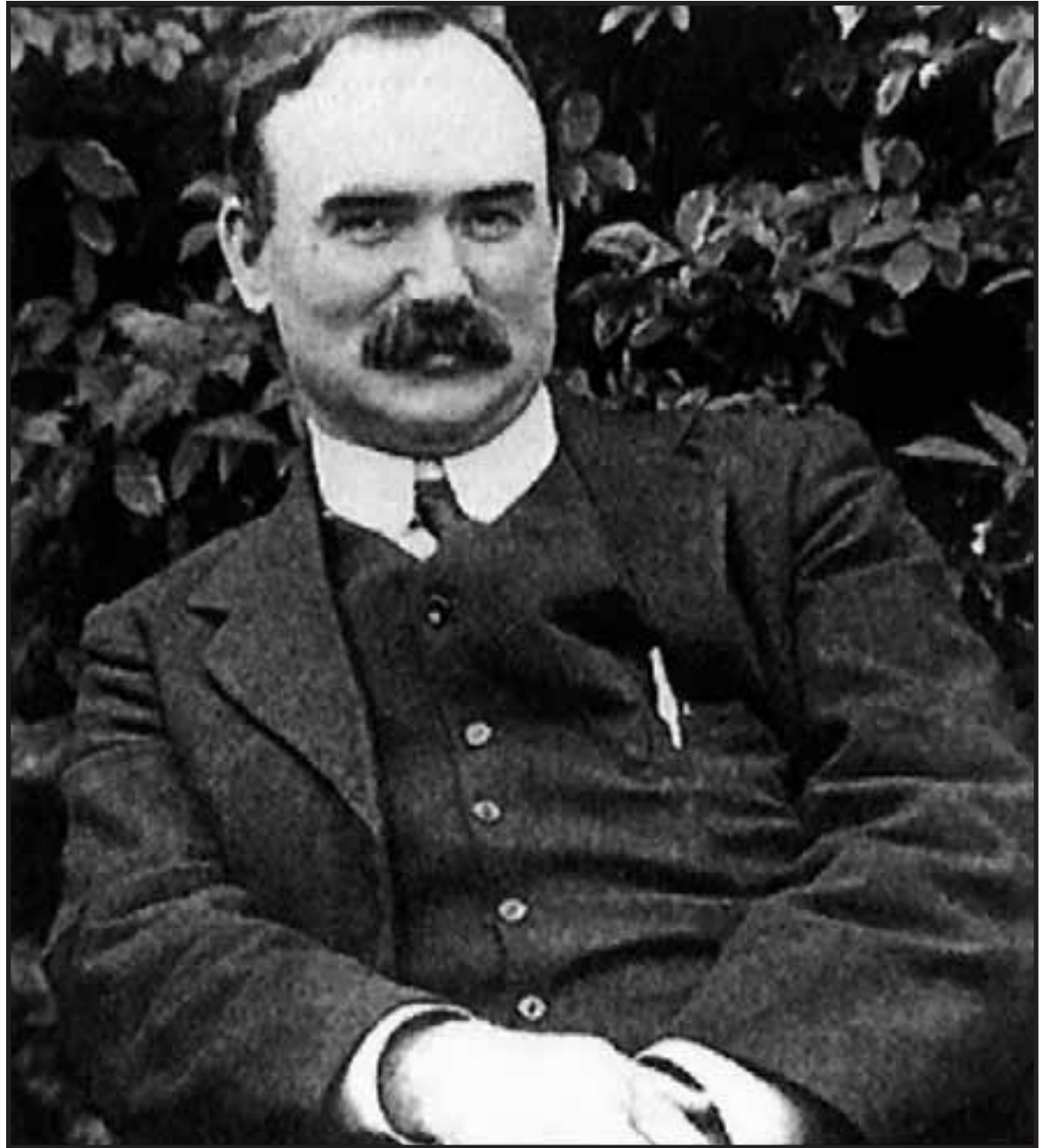
Here are a few tentative suggestions on what the policy of 1921 should take as its foundation.

In all countries in which the political subjection of a whole race helps to maintain the supremacy of an exploiting class belonging to another race, it is natural and revolutionary that communists should wholeheartedly support the nationalist struggle of the subject race. By supporting it they are striking a blow, and often a deadly blow, at the military or political power of the exploiters, and thereby relieving the pressure on the proletariat of the ‘ruling race’; which is assisted by this means in its battle for the complete overthrow of the ruling class and the establishment of its own rule.

That rule alone can and will completely set free the subject race; and, if it is still in the first stages of economic development, it becomes possible for it to step straight on the road to communism, with the fraternal help of the proletariat of the ‘dominant race’. That is why the communists support the struggle of the Koreans against the Japanese exploiters; of the Persians, Turks, Tartars, etc against the Russian tsardom; of the subject races of the British empire against our own rulers; of the Filipinos and negroes against the United States capitalists, and so on.

But there is another type of nationalist struggle in which we must act more circumspectly. It does not always happen that history gives us the opportunity of dealing with her changing phases at one time. She is capricious; she works dialectically; in other words, she often brings forth, at one and the same moment, both the movement which is ‘next on the agenda’ and the movement which logically is its negation. Even *before* the bourgeoisie has had an opportunity of shaking itself free from all fetters and impediments to its expansion, history may produce the strong proletarian movement which, in all previous cases, she taught us to believe could only come *after* the victory of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, providing the proletariat possesses a political party which has done its duty, it can become class-conscious and self-confident enough *itself* to strike the blow that at once removes the national enemy and opens the road towards socialist reconstruction of society.

It was in their inability to grasp this as practical politics that the Mensheviks in Russia were distinguished from the Bolsheviks from the very first. They repeated, and repeat today, that, according to the gospel, “a bourgeois revolution must precede the proletarian revolution”; and even today they continue to assert that the Bolsheviks have perpetrated a gigantic hoax upon mankind - their



James Connolly: nation and class

revolution is not a proletarian - it is a bourgeois - revolution, “and the poor fellows do not know it”.

We in Great Britain must guard against any self-inflicted mental castration. If the national Irish insurrection had come, on the scale and with the enthusiasm it has today, not today but 20 years ago, it would have been the duty of the communists to support it as unhesitatingly, with as little mental reservation, as it is their duty today to support the Koreans and the Cingalese. But economic progress, that does not wait for communist parties, has produced in Ireland an exploiting capitalist class; and British political sagacity has produced in Ireland a strong capitalistic farmer class; their activities, in their turn, have produced a true industrial and agricultural proletariat, with its own specific requirements, and even its own (joint) organisation, the ITWU and the Irish TUC.⁴ We have had good proof during the last five years - Connolly’s ‘Citizen Army’, Limerick, Belfast, last year’s ‘soviets’ during the Mountjoy prisoners’ strike⁵ - of the independent revolutionary capacities of the Irish workers. The rank and file of the IRA is composed of workers, who, in the large cities at any rate, have definitely divergent views from their leaders. Once this is so, communists *cannot* pursue the same tactics as before.

It would be absurd, of course, to deny that the Irish workers at present have ‘nationalist aspirations’; and it would be a crime on that account to slacken any agitation against the militarist and reactionary horrors that are being perpetrated in Ireland at the

present moment.

It would be a crime, whatever their mistakes, to refuse Irish workers our support, merely out of lofty theoretical considerations. But the fact remains that those nationalist aspirations, to the extent that they exist, have become a deadweight, and became so when Connolly spoke for the first time of the “workers’ republic”; they are being made use of by the Irish bourgeoisie, and, in so far as they prevent the Irish workers from clearly seeing their own peculiar revolutionary role in Irish affairs, they are preparing the way for the rule of an Irish class of exploiters in place of the British - a class nonetheless determined and powerful, by the way, because it is composed of solid farmers, with a stake in the country and a share in an agricultural cooperative society (to say nothing of the industrial capitalists for whom Sinn Féin is burning to provide an opportunity).

Objectively, actually, the Irish workers are quite capable of taking over affairs themselves. It remains, therefore, to prepare them psychologically, which is the function of the party.

What, then, are the duties of a practical and revolutionary Communist Party at such a moment? I submit that they are:

- To recognise that the ‘nationalist aspirations’ of the Irish workers, to the extent that they exist today, are dangerous illusions.
- To recognise that they do exist today.
- To agitate ceaselessly amongst the *British* workers, explaining that the

cause of Dublin Castle is the cause of the British capitalists.⁶

• To agitate seriously amongst *Irish* workers, with a view to getting them clearly to realise that they themselves, if they only decide on it and organise accordingly, are capable of taking over their country when the opportunity offers, and running it as a workers’ (soviet) republic, instead of allowing it to become the prey of Sinn Féin farmers and bankers and Sinn Féin manufacturers. Perhaps such agitation should take the form of helping the Irish workers to build a Communist Party of their own despite all the obvious difficulties at the present moment; that is for the party or the Communist International to decide ●

The Communist April 16 1921

Notes

1. *Weekly Worker* July 28.
2. “The English working class will *never* accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general” (Letter from Marx to Engels, December 11 1869: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1869/letters/69_12_10-abs.htm).
3. This was the second congress of Comintern, held in Moscow in July-August 1921.
4. The Irish Transport Workers Union, whose secretary, James Larkin, was described by Lenin as “a remarkable speaker, a man of seething Irish energy, who has performed miracles among the unskilled workers” (www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/aug/30.htm).
5. In 1914 the Irish Citizens Army proclaimed its intention “to arm and train all Irishmen capable of bearing arms to enforce and defend” the fight for Irish liberation. After a two-week mass hunger strike by republicans in Mountjoy jail in April 1920, the British had been forced - briefly, it is true - to concede them political status.
6. Dublin Castle was the fortified seat of British rule in Ireland until 1922.

FILM

Living in the end times

Lars von Trier (director) **Melancholia** Nordisk Films, 2011, general release



About the end of the world

Life is full of strange coincidences. After watching the hugely controversial Lars von Trier's latest contribution to the world of cinema, I picked up my copy of the *Weekly Worker* and read Eddie Ford's latest article¹ on the economic doom and despair that abounds today. "We have six days to save the world," US state treasury secretary Tim Geithner was quoted as saying. "The asteroid is approaching," comrade Ford added. It was as if the film was still running.

For in this extremely moving piece of cinema, planet Earth itself really has just six days to go. *Melancholia*, a strange planet 10 times the size of Earth, is heading our way. For some time, scientific experts, analysts and mathematicians have been carrying out numerous calculations: most are convinced that the planet will pass us all by. Others are of a different view.

We are not kept guessing as to whether the planet will hit. Any suspense is literally obliterated by the huge planetary collision of the opening act. With images reminiscent of the dream scenes in his 2009 *Antichrist*, von Trier paints a picture of apocalypse that is breathtaking and visually stunning. A castle and the lush fairways of a surrounding golf course provide the backdrop, with slowed-down scenes of the film's protagonists living out the end times. All the while we are accompanied by Richard Wagner's 'Tristan and Isolde'. This might be the end of the world, but it certainly has something of the beautiful about it.

Claire and Justine - opposites of a loving, if seriously fraught, sisterly unity - are the main characters, to whom the film's two subsequent chapters are dedicated. Justine, wonderfully played by the award-winning Kirsten Dunst, is a melancholic, whose depressions occasionally render her unable to do anything beyond sleep. While embodying success and even glamour, she is constantly

plagued by a feeling of "nothingness".

Her sister Claire is keen to pull her out of this malaise, using her rich husband's money to lay on the plushiest of weddings for her and her fiancé. "Are you happy?" Claire expectantly asks. Justine tries her best and smiles. But the cracks slowly begin to appear: their mother makes an embittered speech against marriage; Justine avoids most of the reception by taking a nap, and then shuns her new husband by having sex with a young colleague in a bunker on the golf course. Come night time, the marriage has failed and the new husband departs. Much to Claire's chagrin, Justine appears beyond salvation.

With the guests gone, the rest of the film takes place in the isolated bubble of the castle and its grounds. As the planet moves ever closer, von Trier zooms in on four characters: the sisters, Claire's husband, John, and their son, Leo.

Claire is at a loss as to how best to help Justine. When she cooks her favourite dish, Justine can only liken its taste to "ashes". John - a man of science who is excited by what he is convinced will be the planet's safe passing - eventually has enough of wasting time and money in an attempt to rid Justine of her gloom.

Indeed, Justine is utterly indifferent to their help. Is she some kind of incarnation of all that is bad, a harbinger of the apocalyptic doom that is soon to befall humanity? After following her sister onto the grounds one night, Claire catches Justine sunbathing naked in *Melancholia*'s planetary glow. She is almost revelling in its presence.

'Looking inside'

Yet we must seek to understand Justine not in the extra-terrestrial, but in the cerebral. As the film's title suggests, the inspiration for this film came in one of von Trier's therapy sessions for his depression. This illness is hardly the preserve of some slightly distressed film director: it is

estimated that a whopping one in four of the UK adult population will experience some sort of mental health problems within the course of a year. The most common of these is depression.²

Her own depression forces Justine, as von Trier puts it, to long for "shipwrecks and sudden deaths"³ - if only because this would at least be more genuine than the family speeches, the posing for photos while cutting the cake and her hated job of inventing 'tag lines' in the advertising industry.

So does depression stem from unfulfilled *ennui*? Or is von Trier linking it to the ability to "see things" that others do not see - or do not want to discuss? Whereas the wedding guests were happy to live the lie and carry on partying regardless, Justine simply cannot cope.

At other points, von Trier appears to imply that depression results from a restless pursuit for the truth, a nagging to go beyond the appearance of things. When the new couple have to guess the amount of beads in a jar, for example, Justine's husband rather ridiculously suggests that the figure is over two million. In fact, there are just 678 beads, something which Justine knew from the start. She never seems completely satisfied with John's repeated assertion that "this golf course only has 18 holes". For von Trier, Justine's "hankering for truth is too colossal ... We [melancholics] have high demands on truth".

Whether out of a feeling of superiority or sheer desire to see the end, Justine becomes increasingly calm and settled, as things invariably go very, very wrong. However, Claire's obsession with the approaching planet grows with Justine's increased calm. This descent into emotional turmoil forms the second part of the film. Always looking up at the sky, Claire either seeks solace in the scientific explanations of her husband (who is all the while setting up a telescope with Leo); or in the hope that, while Earth

itself may go, there must surely be life elsewhere. She is ever more reliant on the younger Justine, who seems unable to allay her fears about the future of existence itself: "Life is only on Earth ... and not for long," Justine chillingly warns.

The magic cave

The role-reversal between the two sisters culminates, as the deadly hour approaches. By now it becomes apparent that the so-called 'dance of death' theorists were right - the planet has indeed passed by, but it is making its way back again. Claire is out of control. Her husband's 'Trust me - I'm a scientist' demeanour has collapsed. He takes his life in despair.

Claire frantically runs around, first hiding John's body and then seeking to escape with Leo in a golf buggy. But she comes unstuck on the very 19th hole her husband swore did not exist. This is the apocalypse, but Justine is just as calm as she was when sunbathing.

She mocks her sister's idea of spending their last moments on the balcony with a glass of wine, implying that Claire is unable to imagine life beyond the ritualised inanity of the dinner party - even at a time when that life itself is about to end. "Maybe we should all sing Beethoven's ninth?" she scornfully suggests.

It is she who now takes the lead, suggesting to Leo that they build a "magic cave" out of sticks to protect them from what is to come. This does seem to calm all of them. And like in the opening scenes, their ending is not one of pain or suffering, but release. Hand in hand, the two sisters seem to genuinely relate to each other for the first time.

The unity of the utopian and the dystopian in their demise might indicate something about our world today: a time when the rulers cannot rule, when the supposed 'laws' that have governed our whole lives for so long suddenly are so evidently wrong, and

when - just as we think the proverbial planet (or asteroid) has passed us by and things will improve - it crashes back into us again.

In such times of increased despair, irrationality and mysticism, von Trier broaches perhaps the most morbid of all philosophical questions: 'If there was a switch to erase humanity, and with it all evil, would you press it?' That this question is still posed seems to reflect what Mark Fisher was getting at in his book, *Capitalist realism*. For most people on earth at this time, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine a world beyond capitalism: ie, the horrific way in which we currently organise it. This holds true of von Trier too. His desire to purge humanity of all evil is such that even its obliteration seems like a desirable option.

Yet in spite of what some critics say, this film transcends the introspection and self-indulgence of a rather troubled filmmaker.⁴ Whether you have already made plans for your 'magic cave' or not, this film cannot but leave many, many things for you to ponder, as the planetary dust settles and the credits roll. This is Lars von Trier at his quirky and provocative best. Perhaps it is his extreme estrangement from humanity that places him in such a unique position to evoke the beauty, the irony and the cruel brevity of life in equal measure. Some of the many things that make it worth living, of course ... ●

Ben Lewis
This article was written for Red Mist Reviews - redmistreviews.co.uk

ben.lewis@weeklyworker.org.uk

Notes

1. E Ford, 'Big bazooka or water pistol?' *Weekly Worker* October 20.
2. Statistics from Mental Health Services: www.mentalhealth.org.uk.
3. All von Trier quotes from an interview with Nils Thorsen, 'Longing for the end of all' (www.melancholiathemovie.com).
4. See, for example, Phillip French's review in *The Observer* (October 2).

MINERS

Images of a slaughtered past

Peter Tuffrey **Doncaster's collieries** Amberley Publishing, 2011, pp128, £14.99



Disciplined, solid and proud

Peter Tuffrey has filled a noticeable gap in the library of illustrated histories of the coalfields. In 128 pages of vivid, dramatic, black and white scenes from the dawn of the mighty coalfield at the end of the 19th century, through its peaks and then premature slaughter, largely in the 1990s closure programme of John Major, this wonderful book marks in pictures our rise, our triumphs, our tragedies and our fall.

This is not a 'strike book' or one just dealing with the decade between Thatcher and Major, when virtually the entire British coalfield was ruthlessly butchered. However, in featuring with such a wealth of imagery an industry so vast, productive and deeply entrenched among generations of the population, we are struck by how much we have lost and just how deeply that loss is felt. There is something of the crippled giant corpse of the once mighty Titanic lying beneath miles of ocean in these scenes of a mighty industry, proud and secure, firm as granite, but now swept from sight and banished from the pages of history, leaving tens of thousands in anomie.

The once thriving communities, confident in their hard work and skill, as shown on the faces of black-faced colliers and the women acting in comradeship through evictions, strikes, disasters, demonstrations and galas, are now wiped clean, as if it was all some age-long dream. In this sense the book is heart-breaking, like many a memorial before it though, it is also a monument to a mighty breed of people and massive human endeavour.

Peter has worked wonders gathering

such an extensive collection of photos, skillfully selecting a balanced portrayal of the birth, life and death of each of the featured collieries. I know that he struggled over which to put in and which to leave out and this was far from an easy task.

Peter's life has been steeped in the culture and vision of the Doncaster coalfield, although he was never a pitman himself. His definition of 'the Doncaster collieries' is not one we would be familiar with in the industry - he used the metropolitan borough council boundaries to select which are included and which are not. The DMBC does not, however, coincide with the old National Coal Board/National Union of Mineworkers Doncaster area, and so those we would number among 'Doncaster pits', like Goldthorpe, Highgate and Frickley, are excluded, while Barnburgh and Cadeby from the South Yorkshire NCB/NUM area are included. But the book loses nothing for that, it must be said.

I think the most tragic scenes portrayed are those of the bringing down of the characteristic colliery headgear, like great giraffes their legs are blasted from under them and they fall without dignity into the dust of their history. Mining families gather round - like so many earlier scenes in which it is the miners who have been killed - this time witnessing the severing of untold chains cutting across generations of happiness, death, injury and passion with the demise of the pit itself.

I finished this book with tears in my eyes and anger still in my heart - the one consoling factor being that Hatfield at the edge of the coalfield is still alive and working,

with hundreds of millions of tons untapped before it. Truth is, of course, that so many of the slaughtered Doncaster pits could have said the same thing, but nobody was listening. At a time of ever-rising energy costs, escalating gas prices, plans to build a forest of environmentally destructive wind estates and deadly nuclear plants, with a whole generation now on the unemployed scrapheap and millions joining them, this book will remind us, that none of this - none of it - was necessary.

Peter illustrates in his book the futuristic plan drawn up in 1979 for the redevelopment of Thorne - a massive, restructured colliery with three shafts and coal from Moorends to Cleethorpes. Reports at the time talked of mining 140 million tons of coal within a five-mile radius of the shaft: that alone would have provided work for 1,000 men for 70 years before the fruition of longer-term plans for a giant ventilation shaft at Goole and high-speed underground trains working 50 miles east and north-east.

The Doncaster collieries could and should be open now, employing tens of thousands in a highly paid industry, with vibrant communities strong in their solidarity and internal disciplines. The book records images of the brand new, futuristic headgear being blown up, the shafts filled in. It reminds us of who we were, and for the new generation of young Donnie folk, who have never seen a lump of coal or a wage packet and are searching for some sign of a future, perhaps it can at least illustrate their past ●

David Douglass

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 and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'. 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 member

Name _____

Address _____

Town/city _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Age _____

Email _____ Date _____

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

Printed and published by: November Publications Ltd (07950 416922)

Registered as a newspaper by Royal Mail. ISSN 1351-0150. © October 2011

weekly Worker

Gloating over the killing of Gaddafi

An inconvenient execution

"That's for Lockerbie!" screamed *The Sun* over a picture of Muammar al-Gaddafi (October 21). After more than four decades in power, the former Libyan dictator had just met his sorry end - hauled from a sewage drain and summarily executed. The rebel forces - supported by Nato bombardment - had finally concluded this phase of the Libyan civil war.

Gruesome shots of his bloody corpse dominated the next 24 hours of the news cycle. Slightly more disturbingly (death being, after all, one of the more common side effects of war), more than one paper in Britain led on reports that the erstwhile tyrant spent his last moments pleading for his life. To the likes of the *Mail* and the *Mirror*, as well as *The Sun*, this was cause for sadistic gloating.

Of course, it was most definitely not for Lockerbie. The soldiers who dragged him off chanting "God is great!" did not have the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over a Scottish town foremost in their minds as they cocked their rifles and took aim. The true nature of the forces which have now been left in charge of Libya - after six months of war effectively propped up by Nato - is becoming increasingly clear, and it is not a pretty picture to western eyes. The somewhat distasteful spectacle of Gaddafi's corpse on public display in a cold storage unit will not be the worst of it.

Gaddafi's career as *de facto* head of state was, to put it mildly, colourful. He came to power in 1969, on the back of a more or less bloodless military coup. Two contradictory dynamics were at work around him - firstly, the long process of decolonisation and nationalist struggle against imperialism; and secondly, the rolling back of pan-Arabism, which had suffered a serious setback in the wake of Israel's crushing victory in the 1967 war.

Gaddafi positioned himself as inheritor of the mantle of Gamal Abdul Nasser, the Egyptian president; he proceeded to concoct an ideology for himself which combined elements of pan-Arabism, Islamism and pseudo-socialistic rhetoric. He also cemented his power through purges of the army and complicated negotiations with the various tribal forces that populate the vast wilderness within Libya's borders.

Inevitably, he ended up at loggerheads with the US, which had other plans for the region; Libyan material support for forces as diverse as the Palestinian liberation fighters and the Provisional IRA hardly helped matters. The Lockerbie bombing, and other atrocities laid at his door, were wheeled out to justify economic sanctions and airstrikes alike.

Gaddafi bought himself a lot of cheap prestige with his anti-imperialist sabre-rattling, but ultimately he conformed to type - a cynical dictator, left after the fall of the Soviet bloc very short of allies, he was able to worm his way into the west's favour. The settlement of the Lockerbie case, which saw Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi carry the can, plainly had more to do with the exigencies of US-UK-Libyan *Realpolitik* than the facts of the case;



Brutal death: and what comes after

by providing the US with a scapegoat, and imperialism more generally with extremely lucrative business deals, Gaddafi's Libya was able to 'come in from the cold'. He happily danced to the Americans' tune for the best part of a decade.

Nonetheless, when the Arab awakening knocked on his door, and he responded (as dictators do) with violent suppression of demonstrations, the US and its allies - seeing favoured regional strongmen toppling left and right - took the opportunity to regain the initiative. That decision led eventually to the current situation.

It is hardly possible to say with certainty how things will pan out from here. Yet the omens, surely, are not good. The new regime is headed up by Mustafa Abdel Jalil, former minister of justice under Gaddafi, and he is not the only unreformed defector with a sniff of power.

He has also already given us a good

idea what he considers 'justice' - sharia law is to be the guiding principle for the new society. Polygamy is back, and no doubt the position of Libyan women is set to worsen further. Jalil is caught in something of a pincer movement; on the one hand there is the US and Nato, who want at least to spin this as a success. There is also the matter of establishing enough stability for all those billions of dollars of foreign business interests to function in good order. On the other, there are the Islamists, who represent the most ideologically coherent and longest-established element of the anti-Gaddafi alliance. He - and whoever emerges out of next year's promised elections in charge - will have to plot a course that will keep them both happy; and the US would rather have sharia law than civil war.

Further conflict, however, remains a very strong possibility. For all its longevity, Gaddafi's regime rested on

a relatively shallow institutional base. He was all too aware of his own road to power, through a military coup, and remained distrustful of his armed forces, preferring at many points (including the beginning of this year) to buy in mercenaries. No other consistent power base was available to him, and the very rapid pace of defections from his regime to the Benghazi rebellion before the war testified to an underlying weakness. The tribal leaders who tolerated his rule, meanwhile, were not much less mercenary than the mercenaries.

This is no accident. Libya is not an Egypt, or a Tunisia, or an Iraq. It is a vast territory, but - apart from a handful of urban centres, mostly in the north - sparsely populated. Indeed, because Gaddafi pursued a deliberate policy of *not* proletarianising the population and bringing in foreign workers to run the oil industry, Libyan society remains remarkably backward;

tribalism remains extremely strong. Any attempt at statecraft in Libya is faced with the fairly insurmountable difficulty that it is not in any sense a 'natural' state, suffering like much of the former colonial world from the legacy of arbitrary borders past.

The ruling class, in all its vile triumphalism, would like us to believe that 'the hard part is over', just as it peddled equivalent stupidities after the fall of Kabul and Baghdad in the last decade. Yet Libya is every bit as much the powder-keg that Afghanistan was; the question is whether imperialism will allow itself to be sucked into any further conflagrations, or if it will hope rather that nobody notices them.

It is a wilful blindness, alas, shared by some on the left - notable, as always, is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which contrary to its normal practice has consistently *downplayed* the Islamist (in AWL-speak, "clerical fascist") tilt to major parts of the Libyan rebel forces. After all, acknowledging that fact would force the AWL either to retrospectively consider the Libyan rebellion reactionary from the outset, or declare it perverted by the Nato intervention to which the AWL consented (sorry, 'refused to oppose'). It has certainly maintained a telling silence as regards the way the new order is shaping up, concessions to sharia and all; but then, each new social-imperialist line from this shabby outfit seems to bear still less relation to reality than the last.

This is not simply a matter of academic assessment of past lines. The involvement of the imperialist countries in Libya's affairs is not going to end now - whether it takes economic, military or any other form depends on the development of a fluid situation. Nonetheless, it remains the job of communists to oppose resolutely all attempts by our own governments to manipulate that situation and otherwise interfere in Libya. Iraq and Afghanistan should be evidence enough that the US and its lackeys bring only destruction and chaos in their wake. ●

James Turley

james.turley@weeklyworker.org.uk

Subscribe here

UK subscribers: Pay by standing order and save £10 a year. Minimum £10 every 3 months ... but please pay more if you can. Your paper needs you!

Standing order

	6m	1yr	Inst.
UK	£25/€28	£50/€55	£200/€220
Europe	£30/€33	£60/€66	£240/€264
Rest of world	£60/€66	£120/€132	£480/€528

New UK subscribers offer:

3 months for £5

Name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Email _____ Tel _____

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

I enclose payment:

Sub £/€ _____

Donation £/€ _____

Total £/€ _____

Date _____

To _____ Bank plc _____

Branch Address _____

Post code _____

Re Account Name _____

Sort code _____ Account No _____

Please pay to **Weekly Worker**, Lloyds TSB A/C No 00744310
sort code 30-99-64, the sum of £ _____ every month*/3 months*
until further notice, commencing on _____

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

Signed _____ Name (PRINT) _____

Date _____ Address _____