

weekly **worker**



Kautsky's 1919 'Guidelines for a socialist action programme' - first English translation

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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LETTERS



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

No dogma

Tony Clark is right that Labour needs to be won over to the idea of a "sustainable, democratic, socialist society" (Letters, November 3). But I am sure he would agree that socialism cannot be simply legislated from above by the 'next Labour government'. Unless Labour overcomes its belief that "predatory capitalism" can be made sweet, an Ed Miliband government pursuing a 'less deep, less quick' austerity programme in the 'national interests' of British capitalism, accompanied by traditional Labour hand-wringing and heart-searching, will undermine the working class, not strengthen it.

That is why Labour Party Marxists' motion to the Labour Representation Committee's annual conference at ULU on November 19 opposes the Labour Party forming a government to run capitalism. So long as the working class is not strong enough to challenge the system, Labour should back the development of the workers' movement as a principled opposition.

Socialism can only be delivered by a confident working class majority which has been won to the necessity of superseding the capitalist system, replacing minority capitalist class rule (capitalism) with majority working class rule (socialism), leading to classless communism. Working class rule is only sustainable, of course, on a continental scale and, ultimately, on a world scale. That perspective is the kind of Marxism that the working class - and the Labour Party - needs.

But comrade Clark is "not convinced" that the Labour Party needs Marxism, or which of "the many different versions of Marxism on offer" it needs. He is, of course, knocking Marxism as a whole on the spurious grounds that dogmatic, one-sided versions exist.

However, criticising "some Marxists" for reducing Marx's understanding of capitalist crisis to a single factor - overproduction - he offers us instead his own one-sided technological dogma. Marxism is supposedly outdated because of the growing shortage of cheap oil production. As if technological change and the revolutionising of productive technique were not always part and parcel of capitalism.

Saying that Marxism did not invent class struggle, comrade Clark is clouding what Engels and then Marx discovered about class struggle - that capitalism creates the working class, its own gravediggers; that only the working class can end capitalism; and that a working class semi-state is needed during the socialist transition from capitalism to communism. Marxist socialism is working class socialism.

Who can disagree with comrade Clark's proposition that we don't need, for example, Marxist economics in a "dogmatic form" or in the "one-sided way it is usually presented". But we do need it in its authentic, rounded, scientific form. It was Marx who broke through the limits of the classical political economy of Adam Smith, Ricardo *et al* with his theory of surplus value, showing how exploitation works under capitalism, a society of nominally free and equal individuals.

Lastly, I would ask comrade Clark not to fall for the idea that Marxist philosophical materialism is somehow undermined by what may be perfectly legitimate claims by "quantum physicists" that "consciousness can influence reality". It was pre-Marxist mechanical materialism which downplayed the active role of consciousness in shaping development.

Marxist materialism is dialectical: although matter is primary, mind and matter interact. Of course consciousness influences reality.

Stan Keable

Labour Party Marxists

Dangerous

Tony Clark asserts: "Quantum physicists claim that consciousness can influence reality at a quantum level. Where does this leave Marx's 19th century view on the relationship between mind and matter?"

It leaves Marx's view exactly where it was, comrade Clark. The clue is in the phrase "quantum level". Effects can occur at quantum level that, apparently, do not occur anywhere else. The major anomaly in physics today is that theories which describe the quantum world and the world of the 'big' are radically incompatible with each other. No doubt a Nobel prize awaits the first physicist who comes up with a 'grand unified theory' which can overcome this embarrassment.

Clark is also incorrect to assume that Marxism is comparable to a 'hard science' such as physics. In his *Minds, brains and science*, John Searle points out that there are three major types of science:

- *Hard science*, such as physics, where the variable to be tested can be reduced to one, and repeatability of the experiment is possible. Hard science is governed by laws.

- *Science of a special kind*, such as meteorology or biology. This is science where it is impossible to isolate variables and why even extremely complex computer programmes can rarely predict the weather for more than a brief time ahead.

- *Social science* shares with science of a special kind the impossibility of isolating variables, but also includes another major factor - mind. For example, simply by predicting people's behaviour, it might be changed as they respond to the prediction. In short, social science is subject to the unpredictability of human behaviour. This makes it extremely complex, but also a potentially exciting research area. Social science can only operate at the level of identifying patterns and tendencies. I concur with Searle when he says: "I think we need to abandon once and for all the idea that the social sciences are like physics before Newton, and that what we are waiting for is a set of Newtonian laws of mind and society" (p75).

The philosophical world outlook of Marxism has been abused by those who believe, or at least pretend to believe, that the doctrine is akin to a set of Newtonian laws for social science. Such abuse ranges from the Communist International to, more recently, followers of the 'WRP tradition', where regular 'predictions' of capitalist collapse were systemic to the party ideology. Paradoxically, it is when we understand the limitations of Marxism as akin to a social science that its potential power as an agent of liberation rather than a statement of quasi-religious dogma is revealed.

Tony Clark's letter indicates not so much the inadequacy of that 19th century theory, Marxism, but rather the continued efficacy of that 18th century epigram, 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing'.

Ted Hankin

Nottingham

Rapturist

Tony Clark says that I am probably not aware of the peak oil thesis (Letters, October 27). On the contrary, I have been very familiar with it, and the work of MK Hubbert, for more than a decade. Not only that, but I agree broadly with Hubbert's findings. The problem is that I do not see what Tony thinks this has to do with the long

wave. What Tony puts forward is not Marxism, but Malthusianism.

Unfortunately, I am old enough to have seen and heard these kinds of 'catastrophist' notions put forward a number of times - whether it be the forewarning of impending economic catastrophe of the kind that you can read most weeks in the *Weekly Worker* and most other left papers, or environmental catastrophe, or simply the ravings of the 'end-timers', who have forecast the end of the world at least three times during the last year. And, to be honest, I have no more time for the catastrophists of the first two kinds than for the latter. It seems to me that they all spend too much time waiting for their own version of *The Rapture*, which will save them, and not enough time actually focussing on the foundation of Marxism - an optimistic belief in the power of humanity to continually bring about improvements in its condition. We should be focussing on that, and how we can mobilise it, to bring about the changes we desire, rather than waiting for some exogenous event to come along and do the job for us.

Malthus and Ricardo had their own version of peak oil, contrary to what Tony says. For them, it was 'peak land'. They were writing at a time when land was still the most important input; and, like oil, no more of it was being produced, and what existed was being used up. On that basis, Malthus in particular forecast doom and starvation. Also on that basis, Ricardo built his model of the law of the falling rate of profit and the concept of diminishing returns. They were both wrong, as Marx and subsequent history showed.

The same is true with oil. In the 1970s, I remember the Malthusians of the environmental movement telling us that the environment was screwed (it wasn't) and that oil was about to run out (it didn't).

In 1973, a quadrupling in oil prices was the spark that set off a global recession. But what has happened since? I remember petrol hitting £1 a gallon back then. Had it risen in line with wages, today it would be £20 a gallon, as opposed to the £5 it actually costs. Moreover, there have been several spikes in oil prices bigger than that of 1973, but they failed to spark recessions in the same way.

The reason for this is simple, as Marx set out. Scientific development has intervened, just as it did with peak land. Today, higher prices mean more oil is worth recovering, so economic reserves increase. Secondly, scientific development means more can be recovered economically. Most importantly, science has reduced dependence on oil, so that the income elasticity of demand has risen - ie, a given percentage rise in GDP does not bring about the same percentage rise in oil demand as it once did.

In fact, just as previous conjunctures of the long wave were associated with the introduction of new and improved technologies - including, for example, the switch from coal-powered energy in the 19th century to electric, gas and oil in the 20th - so some of the new technologies fulfilling that role today are in the form of alternative energy production. This, along with new technologies based around the microchip, as well as biotechnology and nanotechnology, have produced the new long-wave boom is developing, and has enabled the expansion of exchange-value relations even wider. And, of course, those very technologies also provide the basis for massively reducing energy requirements even further (LED lighting and screens, for example).

Far from peak oil being an impediment to the new boom, it is a fundamental aspect of it, because

it provides a useful stimulus for developing these new industries and new technologies. If you doubt that, look at China, whose oil consumption has seen the largest increase of any economy, at a time when the price has been rising sharply. It is China which has seen by far the largest increases in its GDP, and in the standard of living of its citizens. But it is also China that is spending more money than anyone else in order to reduce its dependence on oil by developing new alternative forms of energy, and the industries that go with it.

Simply look at the facts, as I said in my article ('The crisis is financial, it is not economic', October 13). Contrary to Tony's assertion, the global capitalist economy continues to grow - the US achieved growth of 2.5% in the third quarter, for instance - and the potential for extremely rapid growth on the basis of all these new technologies, and the facilitation of world trade that they provide, means that, rather than continual decline, this boom is likely to be bigger than any seen previously in history.

I see that as a great thing and a marvellous opportunity for the working class, just like the long-wave boom after 1890, and the post-war long-wave boom. By contrast, the previous long-wave declines of the 1860s-90s, of the 1920s-30s and of the 1970s-2000 were all associated with hard times for the workers and with reaction, sometimes of the most brutal kind. That is why those on the fascist right who hope for that kind of crisis are at least more rational than are the left, even if they are no more rational in the arguments they put forward to justify their constant expectation of its arrival.

Marxists should leave the sandwich-board variety of analysis to the nutters on Hyde Park Corner. I'll stick with Marx, and an analysis of the facts.

Arthur Bough

email

Not loopy

James Turlay's 'Waking the dead' (November 3) makes the typical leftist mistake of dismissing as 'loopy' all things described as paranormal.

That UFOs exist is a well-known, documented fact. Not only did the Soviets and western governments investigate them and found this to be so, as documented in the late Donald E Keyhoe's books - he was a USAF major. Now NASA scientist and former astronaut Dr Ed Mitchell has also admitted that an alien craft did indeed crash at Roswell in the 1940s, and that there has been ongoing contact. Admissions by such an eminent person, in writing and on UK radio, cannot be easily dismissed. The denials and secrecy are easy to explain - governments do not like to admit that alien craft from wherever they come are invading their airspace with impunity.

As to other aspects of the so-called paranormal, such as contact with entities in other dimensions via mediums/channelers and other means, of course there are frauds and tricksters in all fields. There are also many genuine ones, and there is overwhelming evidence of survival of death which is now convincing an ever increasing number of agnostics, atheists and rationalists who believe it has a scientific basis.

Ronald Pearson is a scientist with an engineering background who dares to think 'outside the box' and he has come up with the 'big breed theory of the universe', which accounts for all paranormal activity, including survival of consciousness. His scientific theory is accessible on the internet and has been published in scientific journals in Russia.

In the UK, however, he has been refused publication in such journals because his theory conflicts with

some of Einstein's. Research grants and facilities depend on following the orthodox scientific line, but new ideas and theories upsetting the old ones are always treated as heretical at first. It took many years before Galileo's view of the solar system was accepted.

Quantum physics also gives us a very strange concept of reality, with sub-atomic particles which can be in more than one place at once and interact simultaneously at enormous distances, and sub-atomic particles which revert to wave function when there is no conscious observer. All this is scientific evidence that matter cannot even exist without a conscious observer, that the speed of light can be exceeded and the possibility of other dimensions interpenetrating our own.

Soviet scientists also discovered that all living things have a primary energy or 'bio plasma' body. Illnesses show up here before manifested in the physical body, and under certain circumstances the bio plasma body can be shown to survive damage to the physical body.

Another area of evidence for survival is near-death and out-of-the-body experiences - also remote viewing activities, as carried out by intelligence agencies like the CIA and others around the world. These cannot be dismissed as mere hallucination, as there is now a huge volume of evidence, backed up by professional witnesses, that things can be seen and heard accurately at long distance, and also when the person seeing and hearing them is unconscious. This proves that our five senses and the organs facilitating them are not the only means of gathering such information.

Of course, people who bury their heads in the sand and refuse to examine the evidence will know nothing of all this. They will continue to say that all mediums and psychics are cold reading or using tricks. I can vouch that I got a very accurate message from Colin Fry at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon some years ago which could not possibly have been cold reading, guesswork or available by research beforehand. It gave, among other things, an accurate description of renovations to my mother's kitchen, how and exactly where I'd damaged the working surface - all coming from my maternal grandmother. He gave her name and how she died.

I've been criticised by one of your comrades for referring to 'mysticism' in some of my emails, but this time it is comrade Turlay who has brought the subject up and I feel it deserves an answer from someone who has studied such things and knows what they are talking about.

Tony Papard

email

Consensus

Yes, there is a sort of consensus between David Douglass and me on the fact that the future generation will include, among many other things, coal and nuclear, at least going out to 2050 and beyond. No doubt we think the continuation of the others' 'favourite' forms of generation is unfortunate, but that's where the debate is.

I think it's unfortunate that carbon capture sequestration *seems* to be going away. I say this because, if coal is going to be with us, they should try to employ CCS and particulate mitigation as much as possible until, in my opinion, it can be phased out in favour of generation four nuclear energy. This is many decades away from happening.

I should clarify a point: the issue is the overall particulate effluent, not heavy metal content *per se*. Most radioactive 'contamination' in the environment (thorium, uranium) in the United States that I know of does, in fact, come from coal burning, but it's not particularly relevant statistically *outside* the chemical toxicity of both particulate and fly ash. Particulate as

a foreign matter in the lungs leads to cancers and heart disease. Tens of thousands of deaths a year are attributed to this in the US.

David Walters
email

SPEW theatre

Last weekend saw the Socialist Party in England and Wales's annual school, imaginatively entitled Socialism (perhaps not as imaginative as the SWP's insistence on calling theirs Marxism, in spite of everything).

CPGB comrades were on hand to sell the *Weekly Worker* and spice up discussions a little; it should be noted that, in flattering contrast to much of the rest of the left, the Socialist Party is rather more welcoming to speakers from other tendencies, and also a little better at responding intelligently to criticism from the floor. Alas, their comrades are no less sniffy when they meet the assorted 'sectarians' on the steps of University of London Union, selling their wares. Both we and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty had a tough time of it - but I suppose one cannot expect miracles.

I attended a meeting on the fallout from the Murdoch phone-hacking scandal and the appropriate socialist response - both the opening from comrade Philip Stott (of SPEW's Scottish sister organisation) and the subsequent discussion was wide-ranging, taking in the accelerated concentration of media conglomerates and the decline of quality and investigative journalism in the face of inexorable economic pressures.

I argued against comrade Stott's suggestion that wholesale nationalisation of the means of media production is conducive to the greatest possible freedom of the press (a position he interpreted as a *de facto* vote for the status quo) - but in contrast to the material put out by SPEW in the immediate wake of the affair, he did at least place great emphasis on the desirability of press freedom (except, somewhat ambiguously, for 'fascists'), as well as the importance of the development of the workers' movement's own press (indeed, his main example here - revolutionary German Social Democracy - could have been cribbed from any number of *Weekly Worker* articles).

Elsewhere, SPEW's head honcho, Peter Taaffe, grappled with the problems of democracy under socialism. Again, his vision was a little more expansive than the rather mundane image of his organisation might lead one to expect, covering under-represented matters such as the arts, sciences, social interactions and all the other little things that capitalism only cares about inasmuch as there is a buck to be turned out of them.

There was, of course, a major gap in his presentation - the importance of fighting for democracy *now*, as an integral part of the struggle for socialism. Challenged on this by CPGB comrade Sarah McDonald, he declared agreement with her demands for annual parliaments, the abolition of the monarchy and the Lords and so forth. Very good - but these matters very seldom make it into SPEW's propaganda, let alone the agitational material in which it places so much stock - restricted as it is almost entirely to 'bread and butter' economic issues. Even the democratic demand upon which SPEW places so much stress and in which it takes so much pride - the principle of a workers' representative on a worker's wage - gets quietly shelved when it comes to closely allied union bureaucrats.

Saturday's evening rally was attended by around 400-450 people (perhaps a few hundred more attended at some point over the weekend), and kicked off with the focus squarely on the SPEW front, Youth Fight for Jobs, and its Jarrow march, which finally arrived in London on the Saturday

afternoon. After a short film covering their trek, the young marchers trooped in to an extended standing ovation, and led the crowd in chanting. It was a well executed piece of political theatre, the SPEW/Militant tradition not being noted for its dramatic flair.

Notable by their absence were the usual array of left union tops who have bogged down Socialism rallies year after year (only SPEW's own Janice Godrich, PCS president, spoke on Saturday, although the Sunday rally featured further speakers from the PCS and the Prison officers). This made for a better rally, but may perhaps bode ill for the group's attempts at favour-carrying among these individuals. Time will tell.

Jacob Richter
email

Sexgate

Phil Kent seems to think that the socialisation of men is dependent on women acting as sexual gatekeepers (Letters, October 27). The quotation from Engels about "brothel-tinted glasses" relates to his view that conventional Victorian sexual morality could not account for women having multiple male sexual partners in any context other than prostitution. Therefore, practices such as, for example, group marriage were quite misunderstood.

My contention is that Chris Knight and Phil fall into a similar trap; they think it is quite obvious that women would trade reproductive sex (which they don't want for its own sake) for meat (which they are unable to get themselves). Meanwhile, men are prepared to make considerable material sacrifice for sex with women who don't really like it. Simultaneously, these men are uninterested in the survival of their own children. Women, in typical self-sacrificing maternal devotion, lie back and think, if not of England, at least of the palaeolithic Rift Valley. They don't want the sex and they don't even want the meat for themselves, only for their children. The attempt to put a radical gloss on this as female collective action, that transforms human evolution by controlling male sexuality, actually makes the theory even more reactionary.

The only other arena where these sorts of ideas are current is in radical (as opposed to socialist) feminism. This relies on the oppression of women by men being the inevitable result of male biology, consequent innate aggression and predatory sexual behaviour. It is quite remarkable, given the hostility usually expressed on the left to that body of work, that the two should have so much in common.

I do not accept that men are naturally sexual predators with no interest in the welfare of children, or that it is the inevitable responsibility of women to control men's sexual behaviour for the greater good of society. The continued commitment to these reactionary ideas is most unhelpful.

Heather Downs
email

Bureaucrat

Comrade Mike Macnair's recent *Weekly Worker* article on principled opposition made lots of key, solid points, but part of me feels that his usage of the word 'bureaucracy' is still part of that left tradition that treats it as a swear word.

One Eddy U wrote that: "If there is an analytical lesson to be learned from the demise of Soviet-type societies, it is not about capitalism's future as much as it is about the socialist alternative itself. Specifically, it is about the role of modern bureaucracy during the transition to socialism. The place of such administration is quite unclear in Marx's and Engels's famous but terse exposition of the transition to socialism ... But socialism, like capitalism, is a system of division of labour. Its long-term feasibility has to be based on members of the workforce consenting

to their assignments and subordination within the workplace ... Theories of possible future socialisms thus need to address not only the role of modern bureaucracy, but also its political implications during and after the transition to socialism" (<http://books.google.ca/books?id=bciQpfRc87IC>).

In my view, bureaucracy is a process, not mere proceduralism, specialised knowledge, division of labour, or hierarchy. What is the realistic alternative other than to establish, on a very permanent basis, an in-house bureaucracy as a means of preparatory organisation?

Jacob Richter
email

Be astute

I have read all the letters you have printed and been deeply impressed at the perspicacity of your correspondents. But, I humbly suggest something new has happened and the Communist Party must now react to it - not just with theory and dogma, but with political astuteness.

What has happened is that capitalism has finally died. Its appearance of life is due only to the heart-lung machine of the media, but it is dead. Even better, people all over the world are starting to realise this fact in spite of the rightwing propaganda of the media.

How should the CPGB react to this new situation? I believe it should offer a simple, easy to understand manifesto that would appeal to 90% of the people, a salient point of which should be to nationalise the petro-chemical industry, the power and nuclear industry, all public transport, major supermarket chains, the water industry and the banks. This would bring in hundreds of billions of pounds. For example, our petrol supplies are controlled by private companies who are showing joint profits of over £70 billion every year. Petrol is thus £1.40 a litre. In Venezuela, where the communist government controls the industry, petrol is 7p a litre!

By controlling all the main industries, we would halve the cost of living. People will thus have more in their pockets to spend, which would cause the shops to have to order more, and the factories to take on more and more operatives to fulfil the orders. The unemployment rate would gradually fall to almost zero.

Lastly, I believe it necessary to remind the people that Britain is a one-party country with an immovable head of state, because all three parties espouse the exact same political agenda and we, the people, have not the power to remove our royals, who cost us £202 million a year. Only a communist government will change this utterly undemocratic state of affairs.

Communism is no longer a political preference: it is now a political necessity.

David Lee
email

Shelf life

For some time now, Dave Cope, of the second-hand book trader, Left on the Shelf, and I have been compiling information on the history of radical bookshops of the past. You can find where we are up to at www.leftontheshelfbooks.co.uk, where there is as full a listing as we have managed so far, together with a bibliography covering mentions of radical bookshops in fiction and non-fiction.

We would appreciate help in filling in the gaps. Today, for example, we received a very comprehensive survey of Marxist-Leninist shops of the past, which will work its way onto the listings soon. I'm also planning a booklet on radical bookshops, which will be less list-based, and would be pleased to hear from any former workers or customers about their experiences.

Ross Bradshaw
info@fiveleaves.co.uk

CPGB podcasts

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

Northern Communist Forum

Sunday November 20, 3pm: 'The Russian Revolution and women's liberation'. Speaker: Anne Mc Shane. Friends 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 15: 'The origin of our species'. Speaker: Chris Stringer.

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.

Kautsky and the republic

Sunday November 13, 12 noon: Presentation, room 4421, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1.

Speakers: Ben Lewis (CPGB), Lars T Lih (author on Lenin).

Part of *Historical Materialism* conference: www.historicalmaterialism.org.

Don't deport Proscovia

Friday November 11, 9am: Demonstration, Taylor House, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1 (near Angel tube). Support Ugandan lesbian activist at asylum appeal hearing. Amnesty now for all immigrants.

Organised by Movement for Justice: karen@movementforjustice-org.ccsend.com.

Support census refusers

Friday November 11, 10am: Demonstration and vigil, magistrates court, Bodhyfryd, Wrexham. Support Judith Sambrook and others who refused to complete census forms in protest at involvement of weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin in processing data.

Organised by the Wrexham Peace and Justice Forum: wrexhamsaw@yahoo.com.

Deutscher Memorial Lecture

Friday November 11, 6.30pm: Lecture, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. 'History versus theory: a commentary on Marx's method in *Capital*'. Speaker: David Harvey. £3 online or £5 at the door.

In conjunction with *Historical Materialism*: www.historicalmaterialism.org.

Climate Justice

Saturday November 12, 12 noon: Conference, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. Speakers include: Rehad Desai (film-maker), Murad Qureshi (Labour GLA member), Derek Wall (Green Party).

Organised by the Campaign against Climate Change: info@campaignccc.org.

Alternative Lord Mayor's show

Saturday November 12, 11am: Parade, Mansion House, London. Action for democratic reform of the Corporation of London. March to occupation at St Paul's, where a people's mayor will be acclaimed.

Organised by Art Uncut: artuncut.org.uk.

Save our services

Saturday November 12, 1pm: Meeting, Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester M1.

Organised by Manchester Coalition Against Cuts: <http://coalitionagainstcuts.wordpress.com>.

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.

Housing emergency

Tuesday November 15, 4pm: Protest and lobby, House of Commons, London SW1. Protest against Localism Bill, and its powers to end access to council housing and remove thousands from waiting lists.

Organised by Defend Council Housing: www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk.

Unite the Resistance

Saturday November 19, 10am: National convention, Royal Horticultural Halls and Conference Centre, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1. Speakers include: Mark Serwotka (PCS), Matt Wrack (FBU), Annabel Lincoln (Wall Street protest), Kevin Courtney (NUT), Zita Holbourne (Black Activists Rising Against Cuts), Nikos Fotopoulos (Greek electricians union).

Organised by Unite the Resistance: uniteresist.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>.

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.

ITALY

Bye bye, euro too?

While the departure of Silvio Berlusconi will be a cause for celebration amongst workers, it will open the way for a more effective government of vicious austerity, warns **Toby Abse**

The Italian economic and political crisis is deepening by the day. After the fall of George Papandreou and the imposition on the increasingly restive Greek people of a government of national unity - the favoured solution of the European Union/International Monetary Fund - Italy is now at the centre of the crisis of the euro zone.

Whilst a Greek default or even a Greek exit from the euro would have very serious consequences, the collapse of the Italian economy - the third largest in the euro zone, with a national debt of €1.9 trillion - would be absolutely catastrophic for European and indeed world capitalism.

The spread between Italian and German bonds reached a new record of 497 points on Tuesday November 8, while the interest on 10-year bonds soared to a terrifying 6.77%, but only to reach even higher the day after. Yields on 10-years bonds reached 7.45%, or in other words around the level at which Ireland, Greece and Portugal were forced to ask for IMF/EU bailouts. Meanwhile, the Milan stock exchange continued to plunge, recover and fall again. It was very noticeable that its rapid fluctuations were connected with news about prime minister Silvio Berlusconi - rising when rumours of his resignation intensified and falling when the premier denied them. Finally, on November 9, the premier confirmed he would step down.

Berlusconi's statement after the November 3-4 Cannes G20 summit had been bizarre, even by his own eccentric standards. He had claimed that "Italy does not feel the crisis", that the selling of Italian bonds was a "passing fashion" and that "the restaurants are full, the planes are fully booked and the hotel resorts are fully booked as well". In reality Italy was already being treated as if it had asked for a bailout. Berlusconi claims that he refused an offer of an International Monetary Fund loan, something which IMF managing director Christiane Lagarde denies was ever offered, although "officials familiar with the deliberations told the *Financial Times* that they had been urged to accept as much as €50 billion" (*Financial Times* November 5-6).

Ever since the August letter to the Italian government signed by Mario Draghi and Jean-Claude Trichet on behalf of the European Central Bank, Berlusconi's Bonapartist regime - which often ignored the tenets of neoliberal orthodoxy in favour of a corrupt and clientelistic populism, enriching parts of its petty bourgeois mass base as well as a number of shady entrepreneurs close to organised crime - has been replaced by what is in effect an ECB protectorate.

Berlusconi's October 26 letter, setting out a detailed timetable for 'reforms' and delivered to the EU leaders a week before the G20, was not a spontaneous programme for action collectively devised by the Italian cabinet - indeed finance minister Giulio Tremonti gave very public signs of disavowing it - but a document written and rewritten in accordance with telephoned instructions from officials in Brussels under the guidance of Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy. The duo had clearly demonstrated their obvious lack of trust in Berlusconi on October



Berlusconi says he will go ... will he be followed by the euro?

23 with their uncontrollable public smirking when asked by journalists about their faith in the Italian premier's promises - an incident seen on television all over the world, even if Berlusconi managed to prevent it being shown on the major Italian television channels.

By agreeing at the G20 summit that IMF inspectors will monitor the progress of his promised 'reforms' on a monthly, rather than annual, basis, Berlusconi had abdicated the last vestiges of Italy's economic independence and severely compromised its political autonomy. There is now very little difference between Greece's subjection to the 'troika' (EU, European Central Bank and IMF), which has already aroused such overwhelming hostility amongst the Greek masses, and the ECB/IMF tutelage over Italy to which Berlusconi voluntarily consented. Whilst Berlusconi, unlike George Papandreou - who for a day or two, albeit belatedly and under enormous pressure from the Greek working class, showed some brief signs of resisting the appalling austerity package being imposed on his country - submits to German and French blackmail with the same alacrity that he has shown in other situations to Sicilians who have made offers he could not refuse, his grotesque servility no longer suffices as far as the international bourgeoisie are concerned.

In god's name, go!

The *Financial Times* editorial - "In god's name, go!" (November 5-6) - reflected the views not just of its own journalists or its proprietor, but of the European, and indeed the American, ruling class as a whole (it is significant that the only direct exchange between Berlusconi and Obama at Cannes occurred when the Italian vainly attempted to engage the president in conversation whilst the latter jogged past him).

The ECB had bought €70 billion of Italian bonds since August and despite attempts to increase the size of the European Financial Stability Facility, there is no way it could cover an Italian default, even if it might,

arguably, be able to cover a Greek one. It has been claimed that the ECB's buying of Italian bonds on November 7 was more intermittent and limited than on previous occasions when Italy was on the edge of a precipice. In such circumstances, the indulgence that was long accorded to Berlusconi by his counterparts - exemplified by Tony Blair's 2004 Sardinian holiday as Berlusconi's guest - was a thing of the past.

The afternoon of Tuesday November 8 signalled the end for Berlusconi. In the vote on the public accounts for 2010, Berlusconi obtained 308 votes, clearly less than half of the deputies (the opposition did not participate in the vote). This outcome suggested that Berlusconi would be unable to muster a working majority to pass any measure that the opposition was determined to obstruct and, even if the vote on the public accounts was not in itself a vote of confidence, it raised grave doubts as to whether Berlusconi any longer had the numbers to win one.

The leadership of Berlusconi's party, Popolo della Libertà (PdL), met in the immediate aftermath of the vote, following which Berlusconi went to see the Italian president, Giorgio Napolitano, to discuss the new situation. After this he announced his intention of resigning, but not, and this should be stressed, with immediate effect. Suddenly playing the patriotic card after weeks of ignoring calls to step down in the national interest, he said he would resign after the 2011 budget is passed, honouring his (and Italy's) undertakings to the EU and ECB.

This law would clearly be a neoliberal austerity package of a rather unpopular nature and Berlusconi is essentially blackmailing the parliamentary opposition to support - or at any rate not oppose - its passing. The Partito Democratico (PD), including its former 'official communists', would like to get it through with the same speed as was displayed with the August austerity package - allegedly it could all be done in 10 days if the opposition abstains and the government reduces

the measures to the essential ones and does not include anything, such as an immediate attack on pensions, which might seriously disrupt the PD's relationship with its supporters in the CGIL trade union confederation. The PD then hopes that after Berlusconi's resignation in a fortnight's time, Napolitano's consultations with the political parties will lead to a technocratic government led by Mario Monti, the economist and former EU commissioner, delaying the prospect of a general election for a year or so.

Berlusconi has a different plan. He hopes to drag out discussion of the budget for three weeks or more in the hope of sabotaging the chances of a technocratic government being formed. In Berlusconi's favoured scenario, after Napolitano's failure to bring a Monti government into being, the president would be forced to allow Berlusconi to continue as caretaker prime minister until an early general election in January or February 2012. Whether Berlusconi is sufficiently out of touch with reality to believe he has much chance of winning such an election or whether he is determined to take the PdL down with him in a Wagnerian or Hitlerian finale is unclear.

On Monday November 7 the *Corriere della Sera* put forward a number of scenarios, some of which remain valid. One that appeals to the more rational elements on the centre-right is that in which Berlusconi steps down in favour of Gianni Letta or Renato Schifani, both PdL senior figures, in the hope that the PdL and Lega Nord could then enlarge their majority to include the Unione di Centro (essentially the right wing of the old Christian Democrats and a grouping most of whose members were involved in Berlusconi's earlier governments in 1994 and 2001-06), effectively dividing the ranks of the current parliamentary opposition. The *Financial Times* categorises this scenario as a "glimmer of hope" (November 4). The *Corriere* gave this a 25% likelihood. Other options floated are the technocratic government led by Monti (to which the *Corriere* gave a 30% probability) and a government of national unity (15%). The Monti option is by far the *Financial Times*'s favourite - the "dream team", as it dubbed it.

Weak left

Berlusconi's promised resignation would, if it materialises, undoubtedly be regarded as a cause for enormous celebration amongst not just the organised working class, but a large spectrum of the more progressive forces in Italian society. It would give increased credibility to the idea that positive change is really possible and not just desirable in an abstract way. However, it has to be acknowledged that in the short run it would also increase the intensity of the neoliberal offensive against all that remains to the Italian workers of the gains of the 'hot autumn' of 1969.

The problem is that the parliamentary opposition is by and large in favour of the EU-ECB-IMF programme of 'reforms'. The PD is obviously still subject to a certain amount of pressure from the CGIL and might, to some degree, resist attacks on pensions and on

the protection against arbitrary dismissal in medium and large-scale workplaces embodied in article 18 of the workers' statute of 1970, but could not be relied upon to oppose privatisation and 'liberalisation' (ie, deregulation) in general. Any technocratic administration led by Mario Monti or any cross-party government of national unity is likely to try to implement the whole EU-ECB-IMF programme as rapidly as possible before spring 2013, during the remainder of the projected life of the present parliament, to avoid any test of popular sentiment at the ballot box. At present the PD leadership - which is anxious to keep on good terms with UdC, whose current stance favours such an austerity package - is very clearly inclined to support a technocratic or national unity government rather than call for early elections.

While Nichi Vendola's Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL) - currently running at 7% in the opinion polls - is still a left social democratic party, it is not represented in the present parliament and, whatever it might say in the course of a hypothetical general election campaign next year, is deeply committed both to an electoral cartel with the PD and Antonio Di Pietro's populist Italia dei Valori and to participation in a government with these forces in the event of a centre-left victory. Certain elements of the PD, especially Massimo D'Alema, would be very inclined to dump SEL if they could make a deal with the Christian Democratic UdC instead, but if SEL ended up as a left opposition within the parliament next year it would be from such a necessity and not through choice.

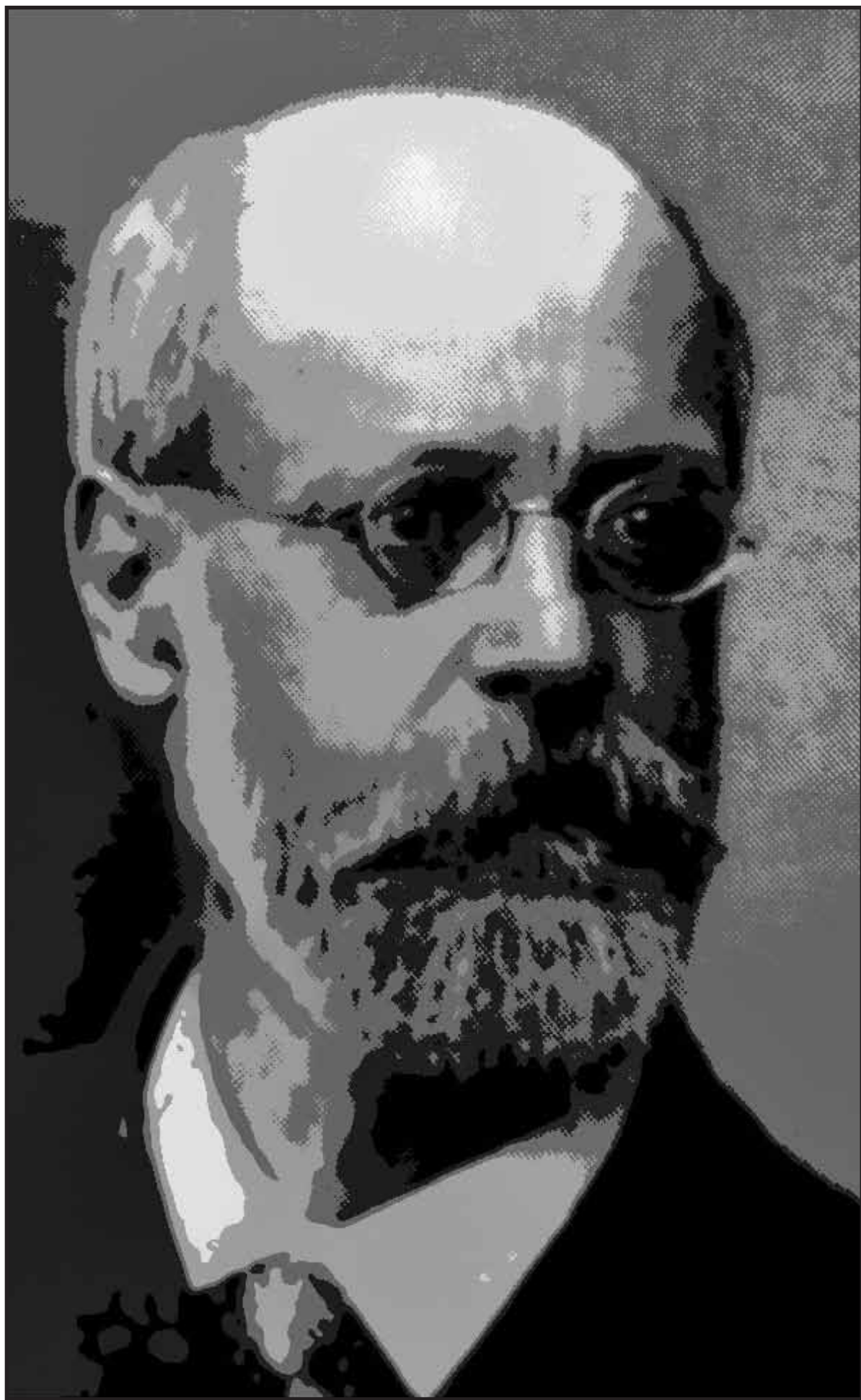
The latest opinion polls give the Federation of the Left (principally the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista and the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani) a dismal 1.5%. Whilst it is arguable that forces not represented in parliament might gain more publicity during the course of a vigorously conducted election campaign, during which they could raise clear demands opposing the EU-ECB-IMF consensus, the odds against a renewed communist presence in the Italian parliament are currently rather high because of the electoral system. This favours coalitions and sets relatively high thresholds on small parties that adopt an independent stance.

Whilst the objective situation in Italy may increasingly resemble that of Greece, as external pressure for austerity policies mounts, the Italian radical left does not have anything approaching the following of the left nationalist KKE or Syriza radical left coalition. The overwhelming rejection of neoliberal policies, such as water privatisation, in the June 2011 referenda, as well as the substantial numbers of participants in both the CGIL's general strike in September and the October 15 demonstration called by the Indignati in Rome, are indications that considerable potential for mass resistance to austerity can be found in Italian society. Nevertheless, the coming battles will be hard ones, given the lack of principled political representation currently available to workers, pensioners, the unemployed and other targets of the neoliberal offensive ●

KAUTSKY

From Erfurt to Charlottenburg

Ben Lewis introduces Karl Kautsky's *Guidelines for a socialist action programme*. This is the first published English translation



From Bolshevism to Menshevism

Karl Kautsky wrote the *Guidelines for a socialist action programme* at his home in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin at the beginning of January 1919. Street battles were being waged across the city in what have come to be known as the 'January days' of the German Revolution. Within a week of the publication of *Guidelines*, two of the German workers' movement's most brave and selfless leaders - Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht - were murdered in cold blood by the order of the ruling Social Democrat Party (SPD). Only two years previ-

ously, both had been active members of that very same party.

As part of the revolutionary wave unleashed across Europe by the Russian Revolution of 1917, the German working class turned to the left, organised workers' and soldiers' councils (*Räte*), and sought to radically restructure German society following the military defeat and subsequent collapse of the kaiser state.

The SPD - whose capitulation to that state had become evident when its Reichstag deputies voting for war credits on August 4 1914 - was quick to seize the initiative following the

German defeat on November 9 1918. With initial success, it sold itself to the population as a kind of caretaker government upholding 'order' before elections to a national assembly. This was conceived as the sole legitimate form of government, resting on the pillars of the old bureaucracy and the army supreme command. In order to do this the SPD required left cover and it sought to form a provisional government with the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), a left-centrist split from the SPD the previous year.

The USPD contained a veritable melange of trends, ranging from

Luxemburg and Liebknecht, through Kautsky, to the arch-revisionist, Eduard Bernstein himself. As such, the SPD had little difficulty in drawing the USPD leadership into what was a self-styled 'socialist government'. Three representatives from each party headed the new provisional administration, known as the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* (Council of People's Commissars), which was to run things until the national assembly elections in January 1919.

Yet none of these commissars was a departmental minister. Trusted socialists may have been assigned to keep an eye on the old state bureaucrats, but the results were farcical. At a time when the new government was colluding with the imperialist states of the Entente to keep German troops in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia so as to contain the Russian Revolution, Kautsky - sent as a USPD representative to watch over foreign policy - was packed off to investigate historical documents on the origins of World War I!

This, and much more besides, alienated the mass of the USPD membership from its three commissars. The final straw came on December 24 when the SPD commissars ordered general Lequis - a man well-known for his role in the suppression of the Herero uprising of 1904 in South West Africa - to launch an attack on an armed section of the revolutionary movement in the capital without the knowledge, let alone the consent, of their fellow USPD commissars. The latter had no choice but to resign.

These tumultuous events, as well as the so-called 'Spartacist uprising' of 1919 against the SPD government, form the backdrop to this pamphlet. Kautsky was still a member of the USPD at this point, but the opening lines of his text indicate that he was aiming his proposals at the SPD and its members: "The settlement of *all truly social democratically-minded workers* on such a programme has become an urgent necessity" (my emphasis).

This phrasing, along with the fact that Kautsky does not openly state his membership of the USPD, is revealing. His appeal for unity around a programme is not addressed to the left¹ - ie, to the newly-formed Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Spartakus), the KPD(S) - but to the right. He wishes to heal the wounds opened up by the 1914 split in the workers' movement,² stating the need to expand the SPD's Erfurt programme of 1891 - the SPD opposition had correctly accused the party's deputies of abandoning this through its actions of 1914.

In its own particular manner, *Guidelines* sets out to tackle some of the many ideas that were being debated at all levels of German society at that time. What was the nature of the new state formation in Germany? What was the role of the workers' and soldiers' councils? Was the proposed national assembly now irrelevant? How best to socialise industry following the havoc wreaked by World War I? How to deal with soldiers returning from the front? The debate was not confined to Germany's borders. The Russian Bolsheviks were taking the first steps in forming the Third, or Communist, International, and were therefore particularly keen to influence events in Germany.

Guidelines raises several questions about Kautsky's understanding of the German Revolution. What exactly

was he saying, and what lay behind it? What does it tell us about his transformation from a principled Marxist and prolific revolutionary writer to the "renegade" he later became - ie, when he *reneged* on some of the fundamental strategic ideas he had previously defended and developed?

Zinoviev v Kautsky

I tracked down the *Guidelines* pamphlet after translating and researching a series of Kautsky articles from 1905 entitled *Republic and social democracy in France*.³

In my introduction to that series, I pointed out that *Republic and social democracy in France* revealed something long forgotten, ignored or overlooked by far too many on the left today: Kautsky's original commitment to 'smashing the state' and replacing it with something along the lines of the Paris Commune of 1871. For Kautsky - as for Marx, Engels and Lenin - this was summed up in the phrase, the "democratic republic" - the *form* of working class rule.

Kautsky explains that the democratic republic is "a [state] organisation such as the one the Paris Commune started to create: that is, by means of the most comprehensive expansion of self-government, the popular election of all officials and the subordination of all members of representative bodies to the control and discipline of the organised people".⁴ He also quoted Marx's *Civil war in France*: what was needed was the suppression of the standing army, short terms for elected officials, local democratic control of the police, workers' wages for bureaucrats and officials, and so on.

The more I familiarise myself with Kautsky's writings, the more I am convinced of the truth of Leon Trotsky's assertion that, following the Russian Revolution, Kautsky was at pains to reduce his (Bolshevik) past to the level of his (Menshevik) present.⁵ He was exploiting the respect and high standing he had rightfully earned in the workers' movement to seek unprincipled unity with the SPD, which by the end of January formed a bourgeois coalition government on the basis of 38% of the popular vote.⁶

Kautsky's manoeuvres are partly revealed in *Guidelines*. In my introduction to his 1905 series, for example, I quoted an early 1919 article by the Bolshevik leader, Grigory Zinoviev.⁷ It mocked Kautsky for claiming that the German working class had *come to power* in November 1918! This is quite clearly false. To take just two of the criteria he outlined for the 'commune ideal' in 1905, in November 1918 the powerful German state bureaucracy of the old order remained intact and the army supreme command remained master of the situation - not the armed people.

Moreover, Kautsky actually recognises this state of affairs. Just a few lines later, he admits that a socialist action programme must bring about "the speediest dissolution of the standing army and the complete abolition of the dominant position hitherto assumed by the officer corps both in the army and in the state". And further: "the power of the centralised government bureaucracy must be broken".

Think about his arguments from 1905 on the Paris Commune: just how would it be possible for the working class of 1871 to have conquered

KAUTSKY

political power if there had remained a standing army with a dominant position in state and society, or a centralised government bureaucracy that had not been broken by the measures of extreme democracy outlined in Marx's *Civil war in France*? As Zinoviev cuttingly puts it, "Is it possible to imagine a greater lie than that contained in these words? ... At the beginning of January 1919, only a blind person could not see that it was actually the bourgeoisie at the helm of the state, propped up by their agents: social democracy."⁸

Had not Kautsky previously warned his 'revisionist' opponents like Alexandre Millerand that "the conquest of state power by the proletariat ... does not simply mean the conquest of [the existing] ministries, which then, without further ado, use these previous means of rule - an established state church, the bureaucracy and the officer corps - in a socialist sense"? Did he not say that working class power necessitated "the dissolution [*Auflösung*] of these means of rule"?⁹ As such, the USPD's decision to go into joint government with the SPD in 1918 was a betrayal similar to that of Millerand.

Zinoviev quotes from some other Kautsky texts of this period¹⁰ to make his point of departure appear even more ridiculous. In an article from December 1918, Kautsky writes: "The war aristocracy, who up until now have stood in the way of all progress, have been overthrown. But the old administrative and governmental apparatus continues to function nationally and in the army!"

Zinoviev twists the knife even further with another quote from the same December 1918 text: "We were given the choice of either destroying the apparatus with one blow, and with this rendering the country's administrative functions and the whole of public life [Zinoviev inserts an exclamation mark here!] impossible, or to maintain this apparatus, and at the same time maintain the basis of the old regime ..."

This rather desperate argumentation seems to reflect Kautsky's laboured attempts to defend the USPD-SPD administration of 1918. "You can't go any further to serve the bourgeoisie,"¹¹ Zinoviev concludes.

Evasion and dishonesty

Another reason for the SPD-USPD government being viewed with contempt by wide sections of the working class was its inability to achieve any real results in the field of socialisation. The much-vaunted 'socialisation commission' was nothing but a fig-leaf to buy time for the re-establishment of 'business as usual'. For leading SPD members, since it was impossible to "socialise need", socialisation had to be delayed further and further into the future.

Zinoviev is not sure what he is more surprised by: the "naivety or the shamelessness" of Kautsky's idea that "confiscation would only hit a few of the capitalists, not the majority of them - and it would not only hit capitalists, but smaller business people too". For Zinoviev, "every simple worker understands that confiscation affects the capitalist class as a whole", and that "the state will provide for the small business people, whose existence is crucial to the state."

But Zinoviev's polemic really begins to get heated when he refers to how syndicates are to be organised: "Will they be run by the workers?" he asks. No. Depending on the particular industry, up to three-quarters of the representatives are to be made up by non-working class elements. If, like Kautsky, one is of the opinion that the workers actually hold state power, then this is perhaps not too much of a problem ...

Finally, Zinoviev mocks Kautsky's

"scientific" and "ethical" arguments for the repayment of war loans, as well as his talk of "upholding the imperturbability of bourgeois credit ... in a workers' state" (!)

Telling conclusions can also be drawn from some of the things Kautsky does *not* say in *Guidelines*. For example, his rhetoric about standing "shoulder to shoulder with our brothers abroad" - under a foreign policy where "openness and truth must prevail", and where the aim is not "gaining the alliance of this or that government". Given that Kautsky was the official USPD 'observer' sent to keep an eye on the foreign ministry run by the reactionary, Wilhelm Solf, in 1918, he should know more than most about "gaining the alliance of



Karl Liebknecht:
socialist republic

this or that government" (the forces of the Entente against the Soviet republic in this particular case).

And Kautsky's silence on the Russian Revolution speaks volumes. In the face of imperialist hostility, the Bolsheviks were doing their best to spread "democracy and socialisation" across the world. Yet Kautsky does not even deign to mention them, apart from in a veiled side-swipe against secret state funding of the "world revolution". He viewed the Soviet republic with increasing hostility. And, as the minutes of the November 19 *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* prove, both he and USPD leader Hugo Haase were keen to delay the adoption of diplomatic relations with the young Soviet republic. They were convinced that it would be "finished in a few weeks".

These are just some of the points where Kautsky's betrayal is clear to see. Zinoviev concludes that "on every possible question, Kautsky puts forward the programme of the bourgeoisie, not the working class".

Minimum programme

However, to many of our readers - far too many, unfortunately - the very fact that Kautsky even mentions the "democratic republic" or the need for a minimum programme of immediate demands is evidence enough of his advancing the programme of the bourgeoisie, of attempting to 'complete the bourgeois revolution' or other such nonsense.¹²

It seems to pass our comrades by that the failure of the original Erfurt programme to openly proclaim the goal of the "democratic republic" was seen as its "one great fault" by none other than Engels himself. For him, the Erfurt programme's political demands lacked "precisely what should have been said. If all the demands were granted, we should indeed have more diverse aims of achieving our main political aim, but the aim itself [the democratic republic] would in no wise have been achieved."¹³

Perhaps the opposite could be said of Kautsky's Charlottenburg programme. The aim is proclaimed, but the demands are insufficient to achieve it.

In addition to some of the sup-portable demands Kautsky proposes in this text (land nationalisation, extension of self-government), a viable

minimum programme would do well to draw from some of the 'state of a commune type' measures put forward by the Kautsky of 1905: the abolition of the presidency in the new Weimar state, the election of judges and military officers, the strict separation of church and state, the arming of the people, a national assembly based on annual elections, recallable delegates on a workers' wage, and so on.

Indeed, the great strength of Kautsky's 1905 *Republic and social democracy in France* is that it goes to great lengths to explain why, for Marxists, republican agitation does not cease with the formal removal or abdication of a monarch and his or her hangers-on (as in November 1918 or February 1917), but continues until the conditions have been created for the working class to *take power*. This is the culmination of the political demands of the minimum programme.

There is a long list of theoreticians, historians and activists who deny this basic tenet of Marxist political strategy. Trotskyist historian Pierre Broué speaks for many when he states: "Kautsky did not renounce the maximum programme, the socialist revolution, which the expansion of capitalism had made a distant prospect, but laid down that the party could and must fight for the demands of a minimum programme, the partial aims, and political, economic and social reforms, and must work to consolidate the political and economic power of the workers' movement, whilst raising the consciousness of the working class. In this way, the dichotomy was created ... This separation was to dominate the theory and practice of social democracy for decades" (my emphasis).¹⁴

Broué certainly points to how there was a gradual move away from the real content of the SPD programme, with many minimum demands being deemed "too advanced" for the day-to-day work of the party. Yet it cannot be denied: the minimum-maximum approach characterised all programmes from the *Communist manifesto* (1848) through the Erfurt programme, to the programme of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in 1919. For those who believe it to have become redundant in 1914, April 1917 or whenever else, it is worth noting Lenin's response to Nikolai Bukharin's 'maximalist' proposal to dump the so-called 'outdated' minimum-maximum programme just before the revolution, in October 1917.

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

Indeed, looking at the situation in Germany in 1918, it is evident just *how* indispensable such a programme was. The German working class had not yet won, had not yet smashed the enemy. This is why it is so risible for Kautsky to claim that Germany had become a "democratic republic" in 1918. This was simply parroting the majority SPD mantra that the revolution had essentially been completed because peace had been restored, the right to vote for all men and women over 20 guaranteed, pre-war labour regulations reintroduced and an eight-hour day enforced. As with some of our contemporary comrades like those in the Socialist Party in England and Wales or on the left of the Labour Party, the SPD's 'socialism' was framed firmly within the existing capitalist constitutional order.

A minimum programme was necessary to break through this order, to chart an independent working class course from the destruction of the old to the creation of the new.

There were, however, problems with some of the other proposals stemming from the more radical trends in the German workers' movement of 1919 too. Just two weeks before Kautsky wrote this pamphlet, Rosa Luxemburg declared that the division between the minimum and maximum programme had become historically redundant with the 1914 vote for war credits. For her, the time had come when "the entire Social Democratic programme of the proletariat has to be placed on a new foundation ... For us there is no minimal and no maximal



Rosa Luxemburg:
the majority first

programme; socialism is one and the same thing: this is the minimum we have to realise today."¹⁶ The KPD(S) programme had some excellent demands, but - beyond the call for a "socialist republic" - it did not provide the necessary constitutional alternative to deepen the revolution, extend working class influence at all levels of society, win a majority and thus facilitate working class political power.

In the heat of the situation, and in understandable disgust at the experience at SPD betrayal, Luxemburg unfortunately threw the baby out with the bathwater and, like Bukharin, rejected the minimum-maximum programme *in toto*. But, unlike some of her comrades, Luxemburg did see the crying need to win the *majority* of the class to the Spartacus programme before power was possible. This explains her well-known outrage when, against the decision of the KPD(S) in Berlin just the day before, KPD(S) members Wilhelm Pieck and Karl Liebknecht met with the USPD in Berlin and decided to set up a 'revolutionary committee' to take power in the capital. "Is that our programme, Karl?" she famously said.¹⁷ It should be remembered that in November 1918, a time when his supporters could perhaps be counted in the hundreds, Liebknecht was declaring the "socialist republic".

The efforts that have gone into this translation¹⁸ are informed not only by a desire to provide new insight into the German Revolution (this text is hardly cited in any of the major accounts), but also to help re-equip our class with the programme it needs in order to win. It is a small contribu-

tion to grasping how, in the hands of the renegade Kautsky, key planks of Marxist political strategy such as the minimum programme and the democratic republic became *pretexts* for class-collaboration ●

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Notes

- Initially, Kautsky and Bernstein considered not joining the USPD due to the presence of Rosa Luxemburg and her supporters. However, after private discussions at its founding congress, they both agreed that the struggle for peace was paramount, even if this meant working with the Spartacists.
- He did not go as far as Eduard Bernstein though, who set up the 'Centre for socialist reunification', and was back in the SPD by May 1919.
- The three articles are reproduced in *Weekly Worker* April 28, May 19 and May 26 respectively. All being well, the entire seven-article series will be published as a book in 2012.
- K. Kautsky, 'Republic and social democracy in France' *Weekly Worker* April 28.
- "At the time, Kautsky himself fully identified himself with my views. Like Mehring (now deceased), he adopted the viewpoint of 'permanent revolution'. Today, Kautsky has retrospectively joined the ranks of the Mensheviks. He wants to reduce his past to the level of his present. But this falsification, which satisfies the claims of an unclear theoretical conscience, is encountering obstacles in the form of printed documents. What Kautsky wrote in the earlier - the better! - period of his scientific and literary activity (his reply to the Polish socialist, Ljusia, his studies on Russian and American workers, his reply to Plekhanov's questionnaire concerning the character of the Russian Revolution, etc) was and remains a merciless rejection of Menshevism and a complete theoretical vindication of the subsequent political tactics of the Bolsheviks, whom thickheads and renegades, with Kautsky today at their head, accuse of adventurism, demagoguery and Bakuninism." Quoted in LT Lih, 'Lenin disputed' *Historical Materialism* No18, Leiden 2010, pp108-74.
- It seems that Kautsky was not exactly unaware of this himself. In his 1918 work, *The dictatorship of the proletariat*, for example, he is at pains to stress the continuity between his current position and that of his earlier writings.
- G. Zinoviev, 'Die Sozialdemokratie als Werkzeug der Reaktion' in *Die Kommunistische Internationale* No2, 1919. Zinoviev seems to be quoting from a Kautsky pamphlet entitled 'A programme of socialist reform'. However, the German quotes he bases himself on are the same as those in the pamphlet translated here.
- Ibid* p69.
- K. Kautsky, 'Republic and social democracy in France' *Weekly Worker* April 28.
- One major obstacle to further research is actually accessing the original texts. I am still unable to get hold of *Vertiefung der Revolution* (1918) and *Ein Programm sozialistischer Reform* (1919), both of which were written for the USPD press. Any help readers could offer in tracking them down would be much appreciated.
- G. Zinoviev, 'Die Sozialdemokratie als Werkzeug der Reaktion' in *Die Kommunistische Internationale* No2, 1919, p70.
- However much many of our opponents on the left today may vent their spleen about 'centrism', it is clear that this *centrist* programme of Kautsky's is far to the left of many of their own operative programmes.
- K. Marx and F. Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p225.
- P. Broué *The German Revolution 1917-1923* Chicago 2006, p17.
- Quotes from VI Lenin *Revision of the party programme* (<http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/06.htm>). It is worth noting that, in 1918, Lenin once more defended the need for the minimum programme. Although the Bolsheviks were in power by this point, they could actually lose it again. The minimum programme had to be maintained.
- R. Luxemburg *Our programme and the political situation*, speech to the founding congress of the KPD(S): www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/12/31.htm.
- P. Fröhlich *Rosa Luxemburg* New York 1972, p290.
- Again, I must thank my comrade, Tina Becker, for her scrupulous proofing of my translation.

Head to head in Halle

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



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'Guidelines for a socialist action programme'

The renegade holds out the hand of friendship to the right, while trying to justify his past

On November 9 1918 the German proletariat conquered political power. Its large majority stands on the programme that German social democracy decided upon at the Erfurt congress of 1891.

Now it is time to go about carrying out this programme as quickly as possible. But in order to do so in a united and consistent fashion, the general ideas in the programme are not sufficient. This requires the formulation of a specific action programme. The settlement of all truly social democratically-minded workers on such a programme has become an urgent necessity if the proletariat is to exercise its political power as one, to maintain this power where it is threatened, or eventually to win this power back, should it temporarily slip from its hands. We are presenting the guidelines of such an action programme for discussion.

Democratisation

On November 9 the German people conquered the democratic republic. The democratic republic is the indispensable political basis of the new commonwealth we wish to construct. We must hold steadfastly to the democratic republic; we must consistently develop it in all directions.

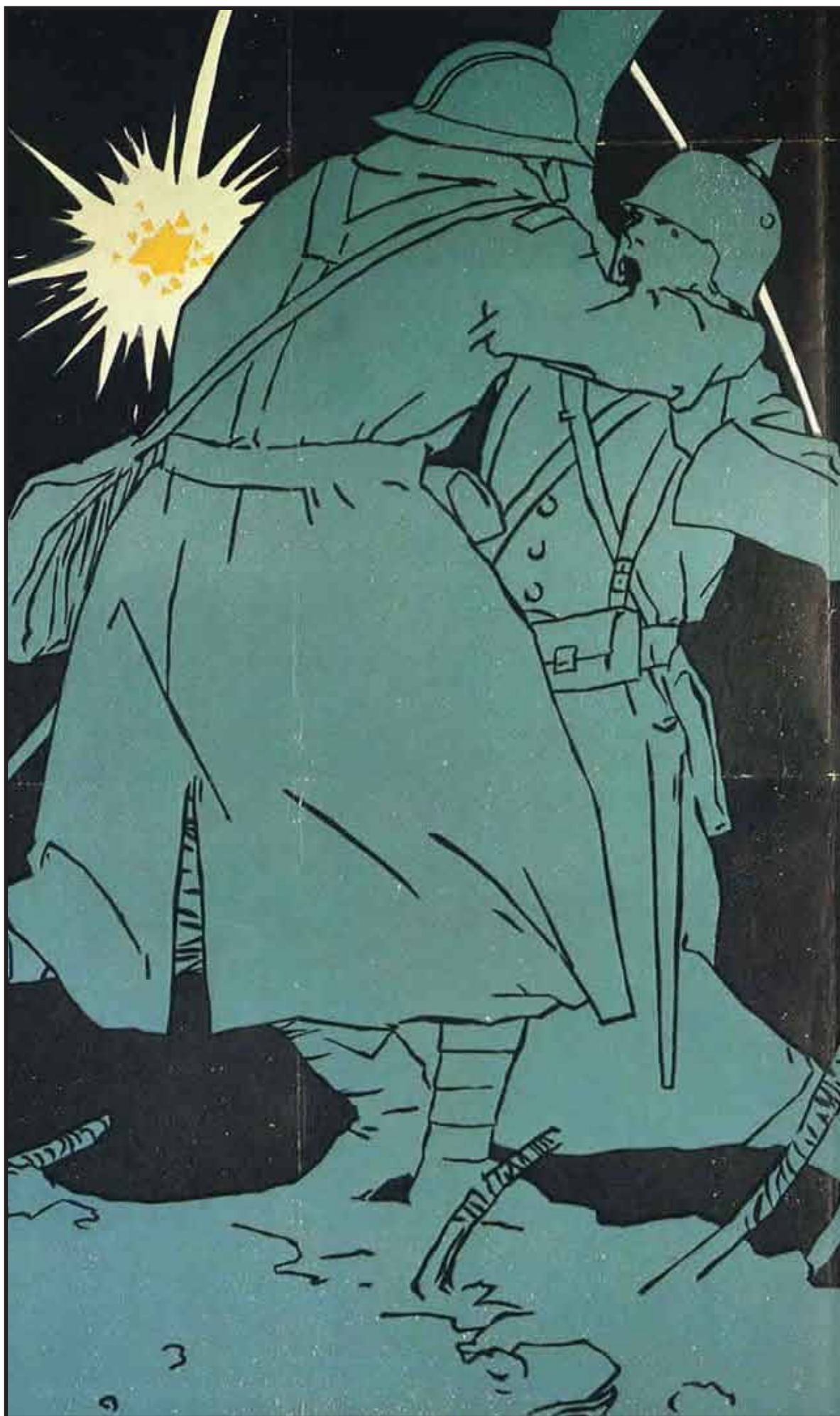
In a letter on the Paris Commune dated April 12 1871, Marx declared: "I say that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it, and this is essential for every real people's revolution on the continent."

That is our task too. It requires the speediest dissolution of the standing army and the complete abolition of the dominant position hitherto assumed by the officer corps both in the army and in the state.

Instead of a standing army, there should be a people's militia with a short training period of two to three months for each man. The officers of the lower ranks should not be professional soldiers either, but should receive training alongside their civilian occupation. Only the instructing officers and those of the higher ranks should remain professional soldiers. When off duty, no officer or soldier should wear uniform or carry weapons. Nor should superiors be entitled to any power of command over their subordinates.

If an international agreement on disarmament comes into existence, then the size of the people's militia must be adjusted accordingly.

The power of the centralised government bureaucracy must be broken by subordinating it to a national assembly elected by free and democratic suffrage, and by immediately granting the right of extensive self-government (within the framework of state laws) to the municipalities, administrative districts and provinces. The state must also hand over policing powers to the municipalities and districts. The highest representatives of this self-government should be democratically elected assemblies in the municipalities, districts and provinces. The state can also hand over some of its functions, such as tax collection, to the administrative bodies that will be appointed and monitored



After the horror of war, still more social pacifism

by these assemblies.

It goes without saying that the democratic rights that have been won - such as the freedom of the press, assembly and association - should be defended.

Raising production

The German republic should become a democratic republic. Yet it should be even more than that. It should become

a socialist republic - a commonwealth in which there is no longer any place for the exploitation of man by man.

However, the question of production itself is an even more urgent one than that of the *mode of production*. The war has forcibly interrupted production. Our most urgent task is to revive it again, to get it up and running. That is the precondition of any attempt to socialise production.

Production requires labour and the means of production. The state authority's next task is to procure from abroad any food that is lacking, in order to make the worker fit for work. The state authority should also supply industry with raw materials. Wherever it is not possible to supply sufficient raw materials to all the factories in a branch of industry, then above all it is the technically superior factories that should be supplied. For this, the state

should use existing laws that allowed factories to be closed during the war.

As for the workers, an employment agency must be established alongside unemployment benefit. This employment agency should stretch across the whole empire, consisting of equal numbers of workers' representatives, employers' representatives and representatives of the republic. The agency must have the right to set minimum wages, maximum working hours and working conditions for every branch of production and every region. It will refuse to allocate workers to firms which reject those arrangements. On the other hand, a worker will lose his right to unemployment benefit if he refuses - without compelling reasons - to accept a job which he is trained to do and which is carried out under the working conditions set by the employment agency.

In a state where authority is in the hands of the capitalist class, striking is an indispensable tool of the workers to defend themselves against capitalist oppression and to eke out better living conditions. But this tool is a destructive one - like weapons in war. A state where political power lies in the hands of the workers must strive to introduce other methods to protect workers' rights in all those branches of production where it cannot yet get rid of capital economically. These methods should not inhibit and disrupt the process of production as much as strikes do. This is particularly important today. After the war has so infinitely impoverished Germany, every strike can cause real devastation.

In as far as they are suited to it, we demand that the state syndicates all those branches of production which cannot be immediately socialised. This syndicate should procure raw materials, distribute products and oversee the conditions of production. This syndicate also has the right to close down superfluous or inefficient factories. Its elected leadership will consist of: a quarter of representatives from industry, a quarter of elected representatives from the workers' councils, and another quarter of representatives from the organised consumers of the particular branch of production. So if the branch produces the means of production, then these will consist of industrialists. If the branch produces consumer goods, then these will consist of representatives of the consumer cooperatives and districts. The final quarter will consist of representatives of the state, who represent the interest of the whole.

Within individual factories, workers' committees or workers' councils will work alongside the industrialists in order to oversee the implementation of the syndicate's decisions and to make sure they are carried out in the most expedient way and in compliance with the interests of the workers. Even workers who are not employed in those factories and are financially independent of the industrialist can be elected onto these workers' councils - for example doctors or employees of workers' organisations. Similar workers' councils should be set up in the non-syndicated factories.

Alongside this activity within the individual branches of production, the state must promote social policy

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through general worker protection laws. Thus, the eight-hour day must be expanded to all areas of industry, including the transport sector, the railways and the catering industry. There should also be a ban on women and young men working night shifts. In agriculture, these provisions are to be adapted depending on the size of the enterprise.

Socialisation

But the proletarian state must not only attempt to make the class struggle between capital and labour less destructive. It must also strive to remove the basis of this class struggle - a struggle which inhibits and disrupts production - by socialising production: instead of the worker confronting a boss who owns and controls the means of production, he confronts society, of which he is also a part.

This is the most important, the actual, task of the democratic republic, which is dominated by the proletariat. Socialisation will transform it into a social republic, instigating a new era in the history of humanity. But precisely because of the importance of this task, it cannot be carried out in the blink of an eye, but only gradually, following a careful examination of actual relations and preparation of the new order.

The main tool of socialisation - though not the only one - is the nationalisation of the ownership of the means of production. Land is the most important means of production and the easiest to nationalise - if, as is already the case in England, one differentiates between the land and the enterprises that are set up on it. Provided that it is farmed by large enterprises, land can be nationalised without further ado, and those enterprises can initially be allowed to carry on as they did before. This will not disrupt production in the slightest. The proprietors will simply be transformed from landowners into tenants.

Once peace has been concluded and clarity has been achieved over what extent the German people can preside over its state and national property, nothing stands in the way of nationalising all mines, forests and large estates (roughly, those over 100 acres), as well as all municipal land (excluding the houses built on it). This should occur in return for compensation - a figure to be set in the future. No compensation is required for land ownership stemming from feudal times - like free tail estates and princely possessions, which were not acquired through purchase. Neither is compensation required for lost income generated from this land (for example, charges for mining).

Enterprises operating on state land holdings would initially remain private enterprises, though they would be state tenants. Gradually they could be socialised. Forests could be socialised without further ado. Mines and large agricultural enterprises could also be socialised without much preparation. Such state enterprises would not be mere copies of the state enterprises set up by the centralised bureaucracy. Those would have to be reformed; their management must be granted the greatest independence possible.

If possible, whole branches of industry should be nationalised, not individual firms. In line with a bill on socialisation drafted by our German-Austrian comrades, for whose rich suggestions I am grateful, each of these branches of industry could be managed by a council, in which only a third of its members are made up of representatives of the state administration. The second third should consist of the workers' representatives of this branch of production, the final third of representatives of its organised consumers.

Here the interests of the workers and consumers clash to a certain extent: the former strive for higher wages and shorter hours; the latter for lower prices. This contradiction can only be overcome by progressing to a higher productivity of labour. Both parties have an equal interest in this. It is the only way that both of them can advance. Otherwise they can only paralyse each other. The common interests of the workers and consumers will replace the sting of increased productivity, which under capitalism is formed by the capitalist's drive for profit.

Within an individual nationalised company, production can then be regulated similarly to private companies (as described above). The only difference is that the manager is not a private owner or his representative, but an official deployed by the relevant industrial council. Bonuses and profit-sharing can serve to keep management and workers interested in carrying out the most diligent and attentive work possible.

The owners of the nationalised enterprises should be compensated. Those deciding on the amount of compensation should firstly take into account the value of the means of production, buildings, machinery and raw materials they encompass. Then they should consider the enterprise's current profitability after the general social reforms have been implemented.

Agriculture

One branch of production after another should be socialised in this manner. The various branches of production should be brought into an increasingly systematic connection with each other.

In agriculture we cannot quite proceed as we do in industry. It would not be practical to expropriate farmers' land. For the time being it is sufficient for the state to retain the right of first refusal when land is sold, so that gradually it can get all property holdings into its hands.

As I have already said, the forests could be taken over by state enterprises without further ado. Taking over the large estates and managing them in accordance with the rules I have set out for industry would cause no major problems either. Nor would the syndication of the remaining large agricultural enterprises. The pace and nature of further socialisation of the large agricultural enterprises would have to be contingent upon the experiences on the large estates.

Breaking up large enterprises into tiny plants would be a retrograde step and of no use at all. People are not being pulled from the town to the country. On the contrary, both large and small agricultural enterprises suffer from a lack of people. In agriculture it is urgently necessary to replace human labour with machinery, not to return to primitive working methods. The state must provide the village communities with a sufficient amount of agricultural machinery and promote its communal use.

But it is no less essential to raise the level of culture in the country in order to reduce the disparity between town and country, and with it the attraction of town over country. The reforms we must immediately set to work on are: improving schools and teachers' incomes, increasing the number of doctors, improving the means of communication and building extensive, individual housing for agricultural workers.

Communalisation

Nationalisation of the branches of production is the most important means of socialisation, but it is not the only one. Socialism means the democratic organisation of economic

life. This is prepared by large-scale production and the organisation of the *producers*. The organisation of the *consumers* also helps to move things in this direction, though not quite to the same extent. The former increasingly encompasses the manufacture of productive goods. The latter does the same for consumer goods.

As an institution of socialisation of the latter kind, the consumer cooperative is able to be effective wherever it encompasses large masses of consumers. However, the municipality will become even more significant in this regard, once it takes on the character of a consumer cooperative. As such, it can, for example, socialise bread production for itself alone, or it can do so in connection with the consumer cooperatives. This is also true of the pharmacies, or in supplying the city with milk and vegetables, etc. It can become one of the factors in the socialisation of agriculture.

Alongside this, the municipality (and similarly the district) must advance socialisation by taking over local monopolies - like the trams, for example.

Finally, it falls to the municipality to socialise the production of housing, to build and manage sound and cheap housing for the masses. How this will be best carried out depends on the maturity and organisation of the workers. The municipality might have to use private contractors and ensure that they adhere to good working conditions. Or it might construct the buildings itself. Alternatively, it might instruct the organisations of construction workers to build them according to its plans and under its management.

If the municipality seizes the city's monopolies; if it builds sound and cheap flats and produces cheap bread; if it builds enough schools which not only provide the children with education, but with food; if it finally provides the mass of the people with places of assembly, recreation and further education, then it can play an active part in the process of socialisation.

Tax policy

We have already pointed out that the expropriation of socialised enterprises has to occur through compensation, not confiscation.

This is not just a question of justice: confiscation would only hit a few of the capitalists, not the majority of them - and it would not only hit capitalists, but smaller business people, too. There are also economic reasons: at a time when the productive process requires the utmost protection, confiscation would most greatly alarm and disrupt the productive capitalists. Compensation would best occur by issuing government bonds at a moderate rate of interest.

Similar factors militate against simply cancelling war loans. Alongside reasons of justice it should also be noted that, before socialisation is completely carried out, capitalist enterprise will continue to exist. Further, we are still surrounded by capitalist states, whose food and raw materials we need. Initially, these can only be acquired through loans. The integrity of credit thus forms an important condition of our economic life.

Interest on war loans and debt repayments will require large sums of money, which should be acquired by taxing the propertied class. The technicalities of such a move are difficult. However, as this does not require the production of new value, but simply transferring already existing value, it is not difficult economically.

If, for instance, five billion has to be raised every three months to cover

interest payments, then the propertied class will pay this in September and the state will repay it in October - although not to the same people. Neither the state nor the capitalist class will become richer or poorer for it.

Things are different when it comes to interest that has to be paid to foreign countries in war compensation or in new loans. These payments leave the country, never to return. If the capitalist class has to pay them, then these payments signify a reduction in that class's income - and that of the state. Paying off these debts will become urgently necessary, something that will require new tax burdens.

On top of the state's normal administrative costs come the costs of supporting the unemployed and those injured in war. Some of this could be offset by reductions in spending. Above all, military expenditure must be reduced to a minimum - both by abolishing the standing army and by stopping all new armaments. This is not merely a political demand of the democracy, but also an economic one: this is a national economy threatened by bankruptcy.

Despite all those savings, enormous demands remain that must be covered by the country's income. Producing paper money will not do. It would simply drive up prices and increase instability in the monetary system to unbearable levels.

In the first instance, the empire's income should be made up of direct, progressive taxes on property and on the wealthy classes' income. Inheritance law can be restricted to a considerable extent. Yet we must not forget that if these taxes are to provide a significant yield, then this presupposes considerable property ownership and substantial income - the precondition of which is regulated production.

The basis of any sound fiscal policy is thriving production, which delivers a surplus of products. Only from these surpluses can taxes be paid without damaging the state and the population. They are to be paid by those classes who initially take possession of the surplus products. The strictest tax laws on the rich do not yield anything if production stagnates.

On the other hand, it runs contrary to purpose to burn the candle at both ends. The state is not in a position to take large tax sums from the capitalist class if the workers have previously abolished profit and interest through increases in their wages. The workers have to be clear about this: the more they succeed in reducing the surplus value scooped up by capital, the more of their own income will have to be taxed, if the state is to acquire the income needed for its survival.

The next source of the state's income should come from its own enterprises. This amount should not be set too high during the process of socialisation and compensation. Socialisation does not occur for fiscal purposes, but in the interests of the workers and consumers. If we do not want to damage this process, then we will initially be unable to attain increased income from those enterprises.

Eventually, however, all increases in income through higher rents or an increase in transactions at slowly rising costs - like on the railways - will accrue to the state. But this is for the future. In the immediate term, state enterprises can only generate increased income (without doing any damage to the workers or the consumers), if nationalisation reduces their overheads, such as by eliminating the costs incurred by competition between different enterprises, by closing unprofitable factories or by concentrating production.

Such profitable nationalisations (for example, in the creation of electric power) are desirable not just from a socialist point of view, but also from a fiscal one.

Of more concern are monopolies that are nothing more than disguised indirect taxes, and which rip off the great mass of consumers. Yet even amongst them there are manifold differences. Monopolies that increase the price of the necessities of life should be viewed quite differently from monopolies that produce non-essential or even harmful products like tobacco and alcohol. Socialising the coal industry and the coal trade is urgently needed, though a fiscal monopoly on coal with the aim of achieving great profits should be decisively rejected. One would rather put up with a monopoly on spirits than that. In its present state, the German people cannot cope with a fiscal monopoly on the necessities of life, just as it cannot cope with tariffs on such articles.

Under any circumstances, the state's most important income will have to consist of direct taxes on income, wealth and inheritance. Again and again it must be stressed that these taxes will only yield a greater return if production is vibrant and delivers rich surpluses. That is the name of the game, both in the policy of socialisation and in fiscal policy.

Foreign policy

Alongside *democratisation* and *socialisation*, a proletarian government has yet another task: *internationalisation*.

In his inaugural address to the International of 1864, Marx proclaimed that part of the working class's struggle for emancipation was the struggle for a foreign policy, where the simple laws of morality and justice that govern the lives of individuals should equally provide the best basis for the laws governing the interaction of nations!

It is now our task to champion such a policy. Both in our foreign and in our domestic policy, openness and truth must prevail. Down with all secret diplomacy, down with all the tools of secret agents and secret press corruption. Down with all diplomats who work with such methods, and down with all diplomats who hitherto saw their main task as courtly representation. Our foreign policy demands a fundamental departure from the old methods. It must no longer be directed towards gaining the alliance of this or that government so that it falls out with another. Instead, it must be aimed at establishing the league of all peoples, in which the German people can participate as equals amongst equals - with full self-determination and with the enthusiastic recognition of this right for other nations too.

Our policy must strive to win, above all, the trust of the democracy and the proletariat in other countries. The strength of our position abroad must be based on our trust in the strength of the proletariat abroad and, no less, the strength of our own proletariat.

Shoulder to shoulder with our brothers abroad, we will enthusiastically champion democratisation and socialisation across the whole world. But to this end we also reject using the old methods of secret diplomacy. We reject attempts to promote world revolution through secret agents or the secret use of state money.

In friendship with all peoples, we will express our international solidarity through joint international acts of peace and social progress ●

Notes

1. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_04_17.htm.

ECONOMY

EU leaders have no answers

As Greece and Italy edge closer to the brink, Eddie Ford looks at the latest developments

Last week the Greek drama was centre stage. Panic spread when George Papandreou announced on November 1 that there would be a referendum on the austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund, European Union and European Central Bank in return for the promised tranche of €8 billion bailout money. This was not part of the script. Decidedly off-message.

Obviously, Papandreou's high-risk move was a desperate attempt to pre-empt mass resistance to yet more vicious attacks on the living standards of the working class by providing a fig-leaf of legitimacy to the troika-imposed austerity regime. Margaret Thatcher, quite correctly as far as communists are concerned, memorably described referendums/plebiscites as a "device of demagogues and dictators" - or, in this case, a beleaguered bourgeois politician seeing his options rapidly run out. Inevitably, and rather ironically, Tory Eurosceptics and others immediately hailed the 'socialist' Papandreou as a noble democrat standing up to bullying Brussels bureaucrats: setting an example for the UK to follow. In reality, of course, Papandreou is a member of the state-bureaucratic elite and has no more interest in real democracy than those of his former colleagues - both internally and externally - now railing against him.

Having said that, the response to Papandreou's referendum gamble just as equally exposes the gaping *democratic* deficit that lies at the heart of the euro zone - an elite project from above that aims to advance the privileged interests of bourgeois/establishment politicians, Eurocrats, bankers, investors and the minority capitalist class as a whole. Feeling betrayed, angry euro zone leaders - especially the French and German governments - relentlessly piled on the pressure to get Papandreou to abandon his plans. Indeed, acting like control-freaks, Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel resorted to essentially blackmail tactics against Papandreou - bluntly declaring that any such referendum would also be a vote on Greece's continued membership of the EU. Therefore, there would be no further bailout money for Greece - inviting almost immediate bankruptcy for the country - until the referendum had been held and the masses had voted 'correctly' (ie, 'yes'). Ditto for any fresh elections that might be held as a result of the current instability gripping Greece. Until the political configuration and programme of the new government was known, and the bailout package formally ratified by parliament, there would be no cash.

Of course, it only took 24 hours for Papandreou to capitulate and unceremoniously dump the referendum idea - terrified by the prospect of Greece crashing not just out of the euro, but out of the EU itself. And maybe standing alongside Albania as proud, 'independent' nations forging their own destiny again. Anyway, Papandreou resigned and attempts are still being made - not very successfully at the time of writing - to cobble together a 'transitional' or 'national unity' government of a technocratic nature that will satisfy the troika and the markets.

According to Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the euro group, this '100-day government' must sign a "letter of intent" reaffirming their commitment to the programme of bailouts and 'structural reforms' demanded by the troika. Be obedient boys and girls. Concretely, this means



Angela Merkel: does she have the will to unite Europe?

that post-Papandreou 'emergency' government has to ram the troika's latest €130 billion austerity programme through parliament, draw up next year's budget and complete negotiations on a bond swap with the banks - all in record time. After which, new elections may be held sometime in February, depending on this or that circumstance.

Needless to say, any government which emerges from those elections - whenever they are eventually held - will be expected to play by the same rules of the game and continue the vicious attacks on the majority of the Greek population. But unfortunately for the troika and the government holed up in Athens, whatever its exact nature turns out to be, the workers' movement in Greece will undoubtedly keep on fighting.

Italy on the brink?

However, all eyes are now turned to Italy, where a crisis is developing to overshadow the events in Greece. Yes, Silvio Berlusconi survived a vote on November 8 in the lower house of parliament to approve last year's public accounts - but his coalition won the support of only 308 of the 630 members of the chamber after the opposition deputies boycotted the ballot. Even Berlusconi could see that the writing was on the wall and said he would stand down once the austerity measures contained in the budget had been ratified by the upper house, the senate. When the entire package has fully cleared the legislature, then he will go. Or so Berlusconi has said.

But, with or without Berlusconi, Italy finds itself on the brink of financial catastrophe. Rattled by recent developments, the markets have begun to lose confidence in Italy's ability to pay off its debts. Hence for the last few days, the yield (interest rates) on government bonds had been hovering around the 6.4-6.5% mark - the sort of critical levels seen in Greece, Ireland and Portugal before they requested a bailout. This is despite the fact that from August onwards the ECB bought up billions of euros worth of Italian government bonds so as to raise demand and temporarily forced the interest rates down to a relatively more

manageable level of 5.1-5.2%.

The efforts of the ECB appear to have been futile though - a mere finger in the debt dam. By the afternoon of November 9, the yield on government bonds had soared to 7.45%, the highest since the euro was founded in 1999. Unsustainable and unaffordable. In comparison, Germany's implied cost of borrowing for 10 years is 1.73%. Just as importantly, 7% represents a line in the sand of both practical and psychological importance to market movers and shakers, and Italy has well and truly crossed it - triggering off a klaxon alarm which loudly announces to the world that it is in deep, deep trouble.

The catalyst for the sudden increase in interest rates seems to have come from the fact that LCH Clearnet, a major City clearing house for buying and settling debt, has asked for a larger margin - or deposit - for trading debt of the euro zone's third-biggest economy. Or, to phrase it another way, it is demanding more collateral from investors who buy and sell Italian debt. Therefore LCH has hiked the margin that traders must post to insure trade against losses from 6.5% to 11.65% - a huge increase and one that could potentially signal ruination for Italy ... if these levels were allowed to continue.

Forebodingly, LCH's decision to up the rates is extremely reminiscent of a similar move last year involving Irish debt. On that occasion, after the clearing house increased Irish bond margin requirements, on November 10 2010, the bond yields inevitably surged and Ireland's financing costs became utterly unaffordable - in turn forcing the government to ask for a bailout on November 22. In the same vein, this year LCH removed Portugal from its single-A basket on March 25. Again, predictably, yields reacted negatively and Portugal had to apply for a bailout on April 6. In other words, what LCH does *matters*, as it is the largest clearer of fixed-income products (such as bonds) in Europe and as such effectively guarantees the trades that takes place in the market. If LCH becomes concerned that there is an increased risk of default, then investors take note and follow its lead.

Bleakly, the picture is even worse when it comes to Italy's *short-term* borrowing costs. The yield on one- and two-year Italian debt is now more than 8%, with an important auction of Italian debt (government bonds) due to take place on November 9. Obviously, under these conditions the return for the government will be substantially diminished - something it cannot afford to happen, quite literally. Revealing the depth of the financial crisis facing Italy, next year the country has to roll over more than €360 billion of debt - and, of course, its ability to do so is now seriously questioned. Furthermore, Italy's total and combined debt stands at €1.9 trillion, and is getting bigger each day.

Naturally, the markets started to plunge when the news about yield rates came out. Italian stocks dropped 3%, while the benchmark German and French stock indexes fell more than 1%. German and French financial stocks, which are heavily exposed to Greek debt, were worst hit. In the United States, the Dow Jones industrial average fell 254 points, or 2%, to 11,916, in a sharp early sell-off. And so on.

With such developments, you hardly need to be a professional doom-monger to entertain the notion that Italy's debt is spiralling out of control and it is in danger of defaulting. Contagion on stilts. Never mind about Greece, which looks like small beer now. To prevent this apocalyptic scenario, most analysts calculate that an Italian bailout could cost something in the region of €1.4 trillion - and getting bigger every day. For example, the extra costs incurred by the surging interest rates over the last day or so could alone see the Italian government having to fork out €7.6 billion in extra debt payments. That hurts.

ECB inaction

Clearly, the only financial institutions capable of mounting such a rescue operation are the IMF and the ECB - leaving aside sad fantasies about the Chinese becoming the saviours of the euro zone.

A 'beefed up' IMF was agreed by the G20 summit held in Cannes last week. More funds will be put at its disposal. Eg, British 'exposure' is set to increase from £10 billion to as much as £40 billion. However, non-euro zone members made it clear that they would not act as white knights. The political message is straightforward: euro zone countries have to clear up the mess that the euro zone has become. In short that means the ECB. And yet, as things stand now, that is not going to happen.

The German government is doggedly opposed to the idea of the ECB becoming a lender of last resort - or actually behaving like a *national* central bank. Merkel and her government fear that an ECB rescue of Ireland, Portugal, Spain ... and Italy would not only be hugely costly, but would have to involve so-called 'quantitative easing' on a massive scale. In other words inflation would be allowed to soar with all the negative consequences that follow, not least in terms of social stability.

As everyone knows, the European Financial Stability Facility does not remotely have the fire-power to halt the crisis by purchasing large amounts of Italian government bonds. The EFSF at the moment has €440 billion available, of which roughly half is expected to be consumed by the bailouts of Ireland, Portugal and Greece. So how about Italy as well? Just forget it.

In fact, the EFSF struggled to raise money in a paltry €3 billion auction on November 7. Which just about says it all. In the gloomy opinion of one market analyst, the EFSF is "basically doomed to be worthless" without a 'beefed up' ECB standing behind it. Without Germany sacrificing itself in the interests of global capitalism, there are grave doubts among investors about the EU's scheme to 'leverage' the EFSF fund to €1 trillion as a 'first loss' insurer of bonds - which to them only seems to *concentrate* risk, not reduce it.

Even worse, the ECB has strongly hinted that it will not carry on indefinitely purchasing Italian debt - there will have to be structural change - hence Berlusconi's imminent departure. Fuelling conspiracy theories to the effect that the ECB, under German direction, is bent on recreating the Third Reich. You do not have to buy into the hyperbole, but it is clear that Germany does want a closer union of the euro zone: indeed it has been perfectly open that with monetary union there must come fiscal union. Almost necessarily that means downgrading democracy and imposing the rule of technocrats and bureaucrats. However, at the moment, Germany is in no position to achieve that end: hence the paralysis.

But time is running out. There is near universal consensus that the G20 Cannes summit was a complete failure, if not a fiasco. Coming after the failure that was the Brussels meeting of October 26-27. Within three days, the much-trumpeted Franco-German 'complete strategy' solution - the supposed comprehensive package - which caused a temporary surge in share prices, collapsed in a pathetic and ignoble heap.

Therefore, the 50% 'haircut' (write-down) that private sector holders of Greek sovereign bonds "voluntarily accepted" - or so we read - was a myth. Truth be told, there was no resolution in terms of coupons, maturities or participation ratios - as was clear to anyone who looked beyond the headlines or examined the small print. Bluntly, the Greek bond-holders' deal - the triumphant centre-piece of the rescue-plan, was a shallow exercise in PR. A stunt without any substance.

The same goes, of course, for the hypothetically 'leveraged' EFSF, it being a mystery - if not a virtual state secret - as to *how* the bailout mechanism will raise the borrowed funds and exactly *who* will provide the monies, or collateral, to fund the insurance scheme envisaged. The whole 'rescue' machinery cooked up in Brussels, as is now painfully obviously, was a piece of fiction designed to assure to markets.

However, the markets will not buy it - no matter how much the European leaders try to pull the wool over their eyes. Nor will the masses, especially when for them it is all pain and absolutely no gain.

Meanwhile, a further blizzard of grim data has come out of Europe, confirming that most of the region is already on the cusp of recession. Growth has reached a "virtual standstill", acknowledged the EU commissioner, Olli Rehn. Euro zone retail sales fell 0.7% in September from the month before. German industrial output plunged 2.7%, the steepest drop since the depths of the crisis in January 2009. Factory orders fell 12%. You have to look *very* hard to find a silver lining ●

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SWP

No ambition, no vision

As the unions prepare for the biggest strike since 1926, the SWP cannot see further than recruiting to itself. **Peter Manson** reports on its second internal bulletin

The second of the three Socialist Workers Party *Pre-conference Bulletins*, distributed to members last week, is, even by the organisation's own standards, a big let-down.

SWP comrades have only three opportunities every year to make all their comments, suggestions and political criticisms available to the entire membership - and they are the *Pre-conference Bulletins* (also known as *Internal Bulletin* or *IB*), usually published in October, November and December prior to the annual conference. Incredibly, only four comrades submitted anything to the November *IB*.

In fact, out of the 26 discussion pages in *IB* No2, around 20 are taken up by the central committee itself. Those 20 pages are made up of seven separate CC submissions (on 'The centrality of November 30', 'Building the party', 'Fighting racism and fascism', 'Selling *Socialist Worker*', 'The fight for women's liberation', 'Arab revolutions' and 'Defending the right to protest'). Then there are two submissions - on 'Climate change' and 'LBGT work' - which, while appearing under the names of a group of individual comrades, are obviously putting forward the leadership position.

That brings us to the four independently submitted contributions. "Ian (Manchester)", who in *IB* No1 attempted to differentiate between the SWP's version of democratic centralism (in reality, bureaucratic centralism) and the genuine article, writes a piece entitled 'Positioning November 19 and 30 on the path to victory', which this time seems totally in line with what the CC is saying.

That just leaves "Martin (Manchester)", who writes on 'The role of the bookstall' (contain your excitement!); "Florence (South East London)", who makes a few rather vague and incoherent moans about "hero-worshipping of individuals in the party" ("leadership in the SWP does not mean exalting oneself above others"; "every member should be treated with respect"); and "Chris (Tyneside)", who, in 'Building in Middlesbrough', reports: "Every new attendee of the meetings are lent the *Arguments for revolution* book. This ensures they feel they have to come back at least once to return the book." Nice one, Chris!

Evidently, then - unless *IB* No3 is surprisingly lively - the January 6-8 2012 conference is not exactly going to be controversial. In fact, although the *IB*s are supposed to facilitate conference debate, it is clear that much of what the CC writes will already be out of date by the time January comes around. 'The centrality of November 30' speaks for itself in this regard.

In truth the leadership uses the *IB*s not to prepare for a democratic conference, but to repeat what for a very large part are pretty timeless exhortations to recruit, sell *Socialist Worker* and increase the SWP profile. This sectarian promotion above all of "the party" - and the CC's own leadership - distorts the organisation's analysis of current politics and renders it incomplete and one-sided.

State of the SWP

But before looking at those politics let us start with the CC's description of the current state of the SWP.



SWP: Potemkin village

"The revolutionary left can seem tiny, irrelevant and marginalised," states the leadership. However, "Our party has a profile in virtually every fightback and a high profile in most." In fact, "What the SWP does matters." Sorry, comrades, you were right first time: the revolutionary left is "tiny" and "marginalised" - in regard to both general political discourse and mass actions, such as those being prepared by the unions for November 30. Of course, we *ought* to be 'relevant' despite that. But the situation will not change just by talking up our own role.

However, the CC persuades itself through an historical analogy in 'The centrality of November 30' that it will be able to wield great influence: "In May 1926 the membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain stood at 5,000, roughly the same size as the SWP's today." The "tiny cog", as the leadership described the SWP in *IB* No1, will be able to help turn the great wheel of the working class movement by developing the right contacts and influencing the right people.

In its document entitled 'Building the party', the CC states: "... while engaging in every form of fightback, we also have to build the SWP ... We face a ruthless, centralised and brutal ruling class. We need our own organisation." In other words, the SWP itself must become "our own organisation" - the force capable of squaring up to that "ruthless, centralised and brutal ruling class". Understandably, then, the leadership recognises that: "The SWP is too small for the tasks we set ourselves. We find it hard to carry through the level of intervention we know is necessary. That is why we are determined to grow ..."

So what level of growth does the CC have in mind? "We are going to work hard to recruit as many people as possible, particularly around N30. But even if we were successful and recruited, say, 100 people around the strikes, it would still be far short of what the objective situation

demands." Yes, "far short" indeed! Our class needs a mass party of hundreds of thousands, capable of leading millions of workers, but the recruitment of 100 people would be regarded as "successful" by the SWP. How about trying to develop a winning strategy for our class, not one that aims to make the SWP marginally less tiny?

This time last year the organisation set itself the aim of recruiting "at least 2,000" during 2011, but it admits that it is not "on target". Up to October 18, 1,036 recruits had joined the SWP in 2011, taking the "registered membership" up to 7,127 - the CC gives figures to show a steady rise over the last three years: back in 2008 "registered membership" was only 6,155.

But what about that 5,000 figure, which the CC compared to that of the 1926 CPGB? Surely 7,127 is rather more than "roughly" that size? The truth is, both figures are a fantasy. That is because "registered membership" includes everyone who has filled in an application form over the previous two years, whether or not they are ever seen or heard of again.

As the CC puts it, "We are for 'open recruitment', spreading the net wide ..." Which means that "Everyone who says they want to be a member is to us." However, the leadership admits, "There are some comrades who doubt whether people who haven't met us before but join on demonstrations and sales are 'real members'." That's because they're not real members! In the CC's own words, "When they sign a form they are presenting an opportunity: a chance for us to win them." And "if we hold a good number of those we recruit in this way, it's worth it."

A very high proportion of those "who haven't met us before but join on demonstrations and sales" are students. A breakdown is provided which reveals that of the 1,036 'recruits' so far in 2011, only 179 are trade union members, while 515 are students, including school students. It is safe to say that most of those who "join" in this light-hearted way are not and will not become committed revolutionaries.

A fair indication of this is revealed by the proportion of "registered members" that pays dues. According to the CC, "The membership that pays a regular sub to the organisation stands at 38%, very slightly down on last year's figure." By my reckoning, that comes to 2,708 people - quite a bit below both the 7,127 official membership figure and the 5,000 approximation of it. But even that is likely to be a bit on the high side, since a number of comrades who never attend an SWP meeting or take part in SWP-organised actions will view their small subscription as a kind of regular donation in lieu of any real commitment.

In its 'Selling *Socialist Worker*' piece, the CC reports: "On a typical week at the moment we send out 2,500 papers on paid subscriptions and receive about £2,500 in cash from sales." While it is not clear exactly which sales are being referred to, these figures also seem to confirm a membership rather lower than even 5,000.

'All out, stay out'

In its 'The centrality of November 30' document, the CC writes: "... in

the run-up to November 30 and on the day, we have to demand that the union leaders name another day for mass strikes early in the new year." However, in the very next paragraph it exhorts: "But we mustn't wait until November 30; we need to be raising the demand, 'All out, stay out', now."

Does anyone notice the contradiction? 'All out, stay out' is a slogan for an immediate, indefinite general strike - not quite the same as a demand to "name the day" for another 24-hour action in a few months time. This surely exposes the sectarian use of 'All out, stay out'. It is not meant to be taken seriously - as a genuine proposal to be adopted by militant workers in the here and now. It is meant to demonstrate the SWP's revolutionary credentials to both current members and potential recruits, while in reality the comrades will be pressing the union leaders to think about the next one-day walkout.

The CC claims: "The SWP has played a major part in ramping up the pressure on the trade union leaders." Mentioning the 1926 general strike and France 1995, it states: "The role socialists play during such events can be crucial in their outcome."

Surely the "outcome" we are aiming for is one that sees a *political and organisational* advance for our class. One that brings us nearer to bringing into existence "our own organisation", capable of resisting and challenging a "ruthless, centralised and brutal ruling class". Obviously I am not talking about a slightly larger SWP - we ought to be much more ambitious.

The response of Marxists to the austerity assault ought to be rather different. We must strive to end our sectarian rivalry and bring together all socialists, communists and revolutionaries into a single, democratic-centralist organisation - one that could pose an attractive, united and *viable* alternative. With such unity, rather than talking up our pathetic membership figures and influence, we could actually start to deliver.

But that is not part of the SWP vision (nor that of any of

the other sects, for that matter). Instead it hopes to increase its own membership both by posing as the most militant revolutionaries and by mechanistically influencing the working class through an "intermediate cog", as it dubbed Unite the Resistance in *IB* No1. In *IB* No2 the CC says of this latest SWP front: "Its purpose is to both build the strikes and put pressure on the unions to lead the fight. We would like to see it become the framework for a future rank and file organisation."

Therefore, "we want everyone to sign up one or two reps or activists, so that we create a network of activists across the country ... If we achieve our goal of getting 1,000-1,500 activists to attend the [November 19] convention, it will give us a firm base to move on and attempt to push for further action ... In the immediate aftermath of November 30 we want Unite the Resistance to call local meetings to discuss 'Where next after the November 30 strikes?'"

To me the idea that an organisation like the SWP can call a few meetings under another name (attended by mainly its own members, supporters and contacts, obviously) and hope to see a "framework for a future rank and file organisation" spring up as a result is quite absurd. Isn't it self-evident that a rank and file organisation has to be built by ... the rank and file? That is, by members of the various unions - in the workplaces and localities - organising together for action, if necessary cutting across official union lines.

Of course, a mass workers' party would exert great influence on such a body - no doubt its members would be to the fore within it. But a genuine rank and file organisation cannot be brought into existence from the outside. That is why Unite the Resistance is clearly just the latest in a long line of SWP recruitment fronts.

Don't get me wrong: recruiting more people to the left, including the SWP, would be an excellent thing. But where is the ambition? Where is the vision? ●

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Fighting fund Upward trend

The online readership of the *Weekly Worker* is continuing its recent upward trend - even if only by a few dozen compared to a week ago. We had 17,759 visitors over the last seven days, which is a few thousand above what we were getting some months back (although still well down on the 30,000-40,000 we briefly notched up a couple of years back).

What is more, two of those internet readers actually gave us a donation! Yes, I'm pleased by that - far too few comrades show their appreciation in the way that PM (£20) and CM (£25) did. Thanks to both comrades, and to all the regular standing order donors last week - I won't list them all, but their contributions came to £105. Then there were three modest but welcome cheques in my mailbox - thank you, KP (£10), HS (£15) and PL (£5 added to his subscription).

That takes our November total to £391. Not really quite where I'd like us to be, especially as our target this month is up to £1,350 to make up for the £100 October shortfall. But there's still three weeks to go, so I know we can do it.

By the way, some readers may have received last week's paper late again - once more we had technical problems, when it came to getting the pdf to our printers. Once more the problem was resolved, but not early enough to allow the paper to be delivered on time to everyone.

The comrade who makes the pdf assures me that this week all will be well. If you get this on time, you know he was right!

Robbie Rix

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

ILP left looks to CPGB

The Independent Labour Party was the largest socialist party in Britain in 1920, with nearly 800 branches. It was a non-Marxist, left reformist party and had been instrumental in creating the Labour Party, to which it was affiliated. However, its rank and file were mostly militant workers opposed to capitalism, many inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.

At its 1920 conference the ILP voted to withdraw from the discredited Second International and investigate affiliation to the Communist International. This was a blow for the ILP's reformist leadership, though they were able to confuse the issue by posing the Vienna Union as an alternative. The Vienna Union, the so-called 'Two and a half International', set itself the impossible task of reconciling communist and reformist parties within one centre. The duplicity of ILP leader Ramsay MacDonald was revealed when in November 1920 he became secretary of the Second International.

Delegates from the Left Wing group within the ILP were present at the Leeds Unity Conference (2nd Congress of the CPGB). They outlined their campaign to win the ILP to revolutionary policies and affiliation to the Communist International.

These issues were to be debated at the Easter 1921 ILP conference. The Communist Party supported the Left Wing group, and published articles in *The Communist* backing its campaign, including this open letter from Tom Bell.

To the rank and file of the ILP

Comrades, the document submitted to you by your national administrative council, containing draft proposals for a new party policy, places a great responsibility on your shoulders. Need we say the importance of your decision is a matter of concern to others besides yourselves.

Not only the Communist Party of Great Britain, but the revolutionary workers throughout the world are looking to you with high hopes that the decision you are called upon to take will lift the ILP abreast of the best fighting units in the Communist International. A great opportunity is certainly within your grasp. You have to say whether or not the experience of the last six years of war has found any weak spots in your party policy or constitution; above all whether the heroic and courageous example of our comrades in Russia does not call for such a new outlook and policy in the ILP as shall clearly mark it off from the traditions of the past.

If you say yes, then you must fearlessly approach the task that awaits you. That task is none other than a clear declaration as to where you stand in the ferment at present agitating the socialist movement throughout the world. Nor must you be influenced in your decision by the fear of breaking with old associations, personal or otherwise. In face of the great opportunities that confront us today we can indeed truly say that our revolutionary movement is greater than the greatest figure amongst us.

It has ever been the proud boast of your old-time officials that schism or theoretic discussion in the socialist movement left the ILP untouched. They have pointed with pride to the attack of the old Marxist parties and the demands made by them upon the ILP for lip service - often nothing else - to the class struggle and the formulae of economic theory, and how the party went on its way doing the *practical* work of recruiting the masses to socialism. For years they flattered themselves that the attacks of the industrial unionist movement, first formulated in 1905, and the first breach in modern times in the sanctity of parliamentary institutions, was to no avail. They know better now. But the convulsions through which the



GDH Cole: dilettante and statistician

international socialist parties are passing at present strike deeper than mere academic formulae. The revolutionary ferment of modern times presages the decomposition and break-up of the world capitalist system, and not all the rhetoric of the Snowdens or MacDonalds can obscure its outward manifestations in the titanic struggle now being waged between communism and capitalism.¹

The communists everywhere have hailed with satisfaction the decision last year of your Scottish divisional council to adhere to the Third International. That decision indicated in no small way that a big section at least of the ILP were receptive to the ideas of the new communist movement, and when at your national conference (Glasgow) last Easter it was decided to leave the Second yellow International, which had so ignominiously failed the working class in its time of need, then the extent of the new ILP impulse was plainly to be seen. The ILP had broken with its traditional policy of compromise, and only the old-time leaders held it back from joining hands with the revolutionary communists. But your contribution to the struggle against the attempts of the socialist renegades to rear again their bastard International can no longer be withheld by your old-time leaders. You must take a decision *now*. You have to say definitely, once and for all, where you stand. Whether, though separated from the Second International, the party is still obsessed with all the paraphernalia of the parliamentary democracy - ie, 'constitutional' in its outlook, social reformist in its policy - or alternatively is prepared to take its place in the ranks of the Communist International.

The draft programme submitted by your NAC is not very helpful to you. It contains all the entanglements of bourgeois parliamentarianism, with a smattering of guild socialism thrown in - presumably as a sop to the idea of sovietism. Herein may be detected the hand of that dilettante intellectual and statistician, Mr Cole, who has suddenly become greatly interested in the work of the ILP.² The draft programme still talks of a "national representative assembly" and "systems of local government" in approved Fabian style. There is as yet no recognition of the primary task that confronts the industrial working masses of Great Britain: *viz*, the immediate struggle for the conquest of power. True, in the paragraph on 'methods', bouquets are thrown to direct action, but this direct action is merely, as the paragraph states, to be "extra-political", to ensure and buttress the "national will": ie, the government.

The seizure of power by the working class consists in the suppression of the capitalist governmental machine and its substitution by a proletarian organisation. The concrete form of that organisation is the workers' councils.

Your NAC also raises the question of a "transition period". Here the idea of a transition period savours of the old Fabian twaddle about evolution, as opposed to revolution. It talks of accepting "intermediate systems" of municipalisation and nationalisation towards the final stage of socialism, provided these "give the workers in the industry an effective control and responsibility for its administration". But when the workers have conquered power, the first essential, there can be no question or doubt about the control or responsibility in industry. The dictatorship of the proletariat will attend to that.

These two questions of parliamentarianism and dictatorship of the proletariat must be settled by you in no ambiguous manner, if you intend to take your place in the van of the workers' struggle for economic emancipation. They form the crux of the conflict now being waged throughout the international socialist movement, a struggle which can only have one issue: *viz*, the separation into the bourgeois camp of the respectable professional political traitors to labour from the revolutionary vanguard of the working class now joining up in increasing numbers with the third Communist International.

Against parliamentary democracy, comrades, you must oppose the principle of direct representation by the working class through the workers' councils. This dictatorship of the proletariat is and *must* be the means for the expropriation of capital and the elimination of private property in the means of production. There is no other alternative.

The ILP is at the parting of the ways. The issue is communism or capitalist reformism. On you, the rank and file, rests the final decision as to which it is to be.

Yours in the fight

Thomas Bell

The Communist December 2 1920

Notes

1. Philip Snowden (1864 -1937) campaigned against conscription during World War I, although he was not a pacifist. He became Labour's first chancellor of the exchequer in 1924, a position he occupied during MacDonald's National Government of 1931. Along with other scabs, he was expelled and in a radio broadcast of that year he dubbed Labour's policies "Bolshevism run mad".

2. GDH Cole (1889-1959) was a Fabian political theorist who promoted guild socialist ideas as an alternative to Marxist political economy.

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.

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**Burning
poppies should
be no offence**

Patriotism and pyromania

Police action against 'poppy-burners' reveals the murky chauvinist undercurrent to Remembrance Day, argues **James Turley**

It is that time of year, again, when the world is colonised by plastic poppies. No establishment luminary will be seen in a public forum without one of these slightly naff trinkets pinned to his or her lapel; and thousands more people around the country will likewise sport the designated symbol of remembrance for the war dead.

A consensus this cosy is invariably a brittle thing, and now the establishment is faced by a troubling bout of poppy-burnings. Last year, noted Islamist lunatic Anjem Choudhary, who founds new front organisations almost as fast as the state can ban them, burnt a poppy at a protest, which cost him a £50 fine. Obviously that is a small price for him to pay, as he intends to repeat the stunt this year too.

More troubling is the fate of three Northern Ireland teenagers, about whom little is known except their ages - two are 17 and one 16 - and that they were pulled up before Coleraine magistrates court, charged with 'incitement to hatred'. The 16-year-old also faces charges relating to 'improper use' of a social networking site, thanks to his publication of damning visual evidence of the 'crime' on Facebook.¹

From the point of view of any oppositional tendency, the criminalisation of dissent from this distasteful chauvinist jamboree is worrying. On a different level, however, one wonders whether this is really such a good idea from the point of view of the ruling class, and more specifically the paid persuaders for poppy-mania. It is not as though the general population is opposed to the remembrance ceremonies, or as though it is hard to portray such stunts as infantile and offensive.

But getting the police and courts in on the deal surely has the opposite effect. After all, if - as we are told - the poppy is simply a symbol for sober reflection on the depredations of war and its devastating impact, then the state would have nothing to hide. Attacking the image by burning it would then be plainly anti-social, and indeed ideologically unacceptable to all who do not possess a Hitleresque enthusiasm for the purifying effect of military carnage. The ever-reliable mechanisms of social ostracism would surely be enough to deal with such cranks.

The poppy appeal is *not* simply about commemorating the dead, however. It is about *our* dead - it is about a hundred years, give or take, of British history, during which 'our brave boys' (and girls) have been massacred in two truly apocalyptic wars, as well as picked off in countless relatively minor scuffles provoked by the decay of the empire.

The poppy ideology is, in fact, a bait-and-switch; the very real generalised empathy of the population to those who paid for capital's rapacious drive to war with their lives is mobilised to support the very same institution - the *state* - which feeds the meat into the



Remember, remember ... the imperialist slaughter

mincing machine. Like all ideology, it is participatory: the annual ritual of pinning the poppy to your lapel seals the compact, just as a few words of mumbo-jumbo transubstantiates cheap wine into the blood of Christ. The British Legion's orgy of emotional blackmail, which complements the whole thing - pictures of gravely wounded soldiers and bereaved families all over the tube - does not hurt, either.

Even this does not get to the bottom of how ingenious a device the humble poppy is. After all, if there is one thing *everyone* knows about World War I, after all, it is that old quote about 'lions led by donkeys' - the combination of hubris and incompetence that saw whole regiments of young men marching almost defenceless down the barrels of then-new machine guns. The carnage of the Somme, even by the standards of the bourgeoisie, was largely avoidable.

This annual funeral rite has the additional effect of smoothing over what is by any imaginable measure one of the worst crimes in history; it becomes a diffuse sort of tragedy, which even the successors to the

perpetrators can mourn as part of the grand national collective. (More worryingly, even some on the far left feel comfortable sporting the thing - remembrance poppies were in evidence at the annual Socialism weekend school of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, which tends to coincide roughly with the remembrance Sunday pageantry.)

So what, then, of the poppy-burners? Fire has the effect of inverting significance - the classic ritual of flag-burning is as direct an opposite of flag-waving as possible, and so it is with the poppy. Burning poppies amounts to an inversion of the widespread empathy with the armed forces - it is an expression of hatred towards them.

More to the point, it is always a *particular* effigy that faces immolation. It is the *British* army that is at issue here. An Islamist like Choudhary obviously has more than enough reason to despise the most loyal lieutenants to America's 'new crusade' of the last decade; and while no details at all are forthcoming at present about the Coleraine trio, it is worth noting that her majesty's armed forces do

not exactly have clean hands when it comes to the Six Counties either.

In that respect, it is a purely *negative* gesture. It would be easy to portray such actions as commendable expressions of anti-imperialist sentiment; indeed, this is precisely the attitude taken by one Abhijit Pandya, a far-right Tory and blogger on the *Daily Mail* website: "Burning poppies by a few Muslims: it's just a product of the intellectual left's loathing for the nation-state," runs his headline; as ever, the *Mail* makes it its business to tell those upstart Americans that nobody throws a tea party like the British.

"In essence, my thesis is as follows," he declaims: "Choudhary and his gang of poppy-burners are much more a product of anti-nation thinking that is fundamental to the left's critique of the world than of multiculturalism or failures of immigrant assimilation policy ... It is thus more appropriate to suggest that there is no Edmund Burke in this British Islamo-Marxism that is waiting for its apocalyptic day of sharia law, but there is quite a bit of Chomsky, and probably more of that than thoughts inspired by Islam."²

As it happens, Pandya's par-for-the-course paranoid red-baiting has a very precise grain of truth to it. However dominant chauvinist ideology may be, there is a certain elemental drive to internationalism present in the working class, and less sharply among the popular masses more generally. It is not, as our columnist suggests, imported 'from the outside' by 'left intellectuals'; rather, it is the left as such which has traditionally been able to give that internationalism content. Even something as degraded as the Soviet-defencist cretinism of the 'official communist' movement was an outlet for that drive. The multiplication of Occupy protests in recent weeks, though diffuse in form, is underwritten by the same tendency.

In historical terms, however, the left has shrivelled - devastated by the end of the cold war and the ruling class offensive that accompanied it. Into the breach step the likes of Choudhary (and, for that matter, Christian fundamentalists), with their own reactionary-utopian, but globally minded, political projects. Islamism is only a force in this country because spontaneous bonds of solidarity *do* exist across borders. Conversely, its ability to scandalise the establishment into imposing police actions on protest stunts is partly cheap demagoguery, but more significantly due to its disloyalty to the state - or, at least, *this* state.

Inverted chauvinism, however, is not many rungs above the original article, politically speaking. It is abundantly clear, at this point, that Anjem Choudhary is an idiotic reactionary provocateur, and poppy-burning is just the sort of hysterical stunt he substitutes for attempting to convince people of his odious programme.

The burning of American flags is certainly an understandable response to the crimes for which flag-waving is an apology; but it would be better (and, indeed, more scandalous) to hoist a different flag - perhaps a red one. Alternative symbols to the poppy, unfortunately, are a little thin on the ground; there is, of course, the white poppy, a creation of pacifists between the wars which persists (albeit somewhat less visibly) to this day. One minor, but nonetheless important, task of a mass communist movement would be to invent a better one ●

Notes

1. www.colerainetimes.co.uk/news/local/poppy_burning_teen_trio_in_court_1_3224755.
2. <http://pandyablog.dailymail.co.uk/2011/10/burning-poppies-by-a-few-muslims-its-just-a-product-of-the-intellectual-lefts-loathing-for-the-natio-1.html>.

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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 _____